

**CONTENT WRITING AND EDITING
REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)**

Los Angeles County Children and Families First –
Proposition 10 Commission (aka First 5 LA)

RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 4, 2019

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I. TIMELINE FOR SELECTION PROCESS¹

ACTIVITY	DATE
RFQ Released	02/4/2019
Final date to submit questions and requests for additional information	02/14/2019
Posting of responses to questions	02/19/2019
Proposal Due	02/21/2019
Interviews	03/11/2019
Contractor Selected	03/15/2019
Contract Start Date	05/9/2019

In order to respond to this Request for Qualifications (RFQ) the proposer must submit all required documents through the online application system designated by First 5 LA no later than **5:00 p.m. PT on February 21, 2019**. It is the proposer’s responsibility to verify submission prior to the deadline. First 5 LA will not be responsible for any technical problems or submission failure. **Failure to submit ALL required documents by 5 p.m. PT may constitute an incomplete proposal and may be grounds for disqualification.**

Questions and requests for additional information must be submitted in writing to:

Uyen Nune, Contract Compliance Officer
E-mail: unune@first5la.org

All questions and requests for additional information regarding this RFQ must be received in writing by First 5 LA via email before **5 p.m. PT on February 14, 2019**. First 5 LA reserves the sole right to determine the timing and content of the responses to all questions and requests for additional information. First 5 LA may respond to individual inquiries and then post replies to all questions by the posting date.

Please check the Funding Center webpage regularly for updates and addenda. First 5 LA has the right to amend this solicitation by written addendum. First 5 LA is responsible only for that which is expressly stated in the solicitation document and any authorized written addenda thereto. Such addenda shall be made available via the online Funding Center. Failure to address the requirements of such addendum may result in the Proposal not being considered, at the sole discretion of First 5 LA. Addenda to this solicitation, if any, will be posted on First 5 LA’s website, which may be accessed by clicking <https://www.first5la.org/funding/content-writing-and-editing-request-for-qualifications-rfq/>. It

¹ Note: Dates are subject to change at First 5 LA’s sole discretion.

is the responsibility of proposers to ensure, prior to submission, that their application reflects the most recent information and RFQ requirements.

II. BACKGROUND

First 5 LA — Giving Kids the Best Start

In 1998, California voters passed Proposition 10, which levied a 50-cent per pack tax on all tobacco products. The resulting tax revenues were earmarked for the creation of a comprehensive system of information and services to advance early childhood development and school readiness within each county in California. In Los Angeles County, the First 5 LA Commission was formed as a public entity to develop and oversee various early childhood initiatives and to manage the funding from Proposition 10.

The projects in the scope of work in this RFQ support the Communications Department's goal of demonstrating our knowledge and expertise on issues that affect early childhood development and other factors affecting children prenatal to age five.

The First 5 LA FY 2015-2020 Strategic Plan

In November 2014, the First 5 LA Board of Commissioners adopted a new [Strategic Plan](#) to guide its investments from July 2015 through June 2020. The plan, [Focusing for the Future](#), lays out a clear path for First 5 LA to maximize its impact to strengthen families and improve outcomes for the greatest number of children prenatal to age 5 in L.A. County. The plan provides a roadmap for increasing First 5 LA's contribution to better outcomes for young children by strengthening families, the communities they live in, and the systems that support them.

As one of the six investment areas identified and approved by the Board as part of the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, communications is identified as a primary strategy for achieving First 5 LA's results for children and families.

The results for children and families that were approved by the Board in November 2018 include:

1. Families have the resources, opportunities, relationships and environments to optimize their child's development.
2. Children enter kindergarten without any previously unidentified developmental delays and connected to developmentally appropriate services and supports.
3. Children are safe from abuse, neglect, and other trauma.
4. Children have high quality early care and education (ECE) experiences prior to kindergarten entry.

First 5 LA recognizes that every mode, medium and method in which it communicates – on its own or in partnership with external groups – is an opportunity to advance the programmatic and policy goals of the Strategic Plan, and to help achieve these results for children and families.

First 5 LA's Communications Department is using communications to build the agency's brand, engage decision makers, elevate awareness, create urgency, and drive support for internal communications to advance its goals.

III. PROJECT OVERVIEW

First 5 LA is seeking up to two (2) qualified contractors (firms or individuals) that can provide First 5 LA with content writing, editing and proofreading services. Specifically, First 5 LA seeks experienced writers with the ability to translate complex, research-based, technical information into easy-to-comprehend written content for a broad array of audiences.

The awarded contractor(s) will provide writing, copy editing and proofreading services that include creating written content for articles, blogs, broadcast emails and electronic newsletters, along with making structural changes to research-based content to help the narrative flow and emphasize crucial points; checking that research is well-substantiated and clearly delineated; and writing text that has the appropriate level of detail for audiences that may include elected officials, decision makers, stakeholder, parents and the general public.

IV. SCOPE OF WORK

The selected contractors shall provide writing and copy editing on a range of writing projects requiring different techniques and styles to suit the medium and the audience. The selected writer shall interpret and translate complex ideas and findings into accurate, yet easy-to-understand language, write for the intended audience, process and apply feedback provided by First 5 LA staff.

The objective, timeline and deliverable for each writing and editing project will vary in frequency and length.

Projects will be related to early childhood development issues, specifically:

1. Education, with a focus for Early Childhood Education (ECE) issues
2. Health care systems, with a focus for how these systems affect young children
3. Current events that affect young children such as, but not limited to, prenatal care, nutrition, wellness, physical activity, child development, parent resiliency, family strengthening (protective factors) and general parenting advice

Projects will include, but not be limited to:

- Creating, editing and proofreading copy for articles and short-and long-form blog posts intended for publication on First 5 LA digital properties, and other external websites, such as news outlets or partner organizations
- Creating copy for external stakeholder and internal communication campaigns, including broadcast emails
- Writing opinion editorials
- Writing press releases, and other official public statements
- Copy editing of studies and reports
- Writing executive summaries of reports and studies

Other projects may include summaries of past and current research on topics of interest to First 5 LA, such as articles, briefings and reports, and other disparate sources of information to create compelling original research and articles.

For each project or assignment, the First 5 LA's Communications Department and successful applicant will agree upon the timeline and process, such as when drafts are due for review and an approximation of how many rounds of edits will be required to bring a project or assignment to completion.

Writing for First 5 LA requires that the contractor be familiar with the goals of the Communications Department as discussed in “Section II. Background” and develop an understanding of First 5 LA’s Strategic Plan. As part of the onboarding strategy, First 5 LA staff will meet with the selected contractors to share the goals of the Communications Department and information on First 5 LA’s Strategic Plan which is critical knowledge in writing for First 5 LA.

In addition, the selected contractor(s) must adhere to the First 5 LA Brand Guidelines (Appendix E) and Associated Press style guidelines, which should be applied to all work products requested under the scope of work.

V. SUMMARY OF DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS

The following qualifications are desired:

- Three or more years of experience producing written content for decision makers and elected officials, such as executive summaries or reports and studies, and blogs to demonstrate thought leadership
- Three or more years of experience producing written content for media and news outlets, such as op-eds and blog posts
- Experience in interpreting and translating complex topics, such as state budget proposals, policy briefs and research findings into easy to understand language that appeals to a wide audience
- Familiarity with early childhood development issues, specifically:
 1. Education, with a preference for Early Childhood Education (ECE) issues
 2. Health care systems, with a preference for how these systems affect young children
 3. Current events that affect young children such as but not limited to prenatal care, nutrition, wellness, physical activity, child development, parent resiliency, family strengthening (protective factors) and general parenting advice
- Experience in producing a variety of written content under aggressive timelines
- Backgrounds in journalism and writing for executives or elected officials are preferred
- Ability to attend meetings at First 5 LA’s office as needed preferred

VI. TERMS OF PROJECT

The Commission anticipates that two contractor(s) will be awarded. For each selected contractor, the initial contract term per contractor is expected to be 13 months (May 9, 2019 through June 30, 2020) with an initial budget not to exceed \$87,000 (\$12,500 in FY19-20 and \$74,500 in FY20-21) and \$74,500 per year in subsequent years, if renewed. A final budget will be negotiated with the selected contractor based on experience and expertise. First 5 LA reserves the right to negotiate the proposed hourly rates. The contracts will be renewed for an additional 12 months at First 5 LA’s sole discretion. The contracts are not a guarantee of work with First 5 LA. First 5 LA reserves the right to use contractors based on the need, objective, timeline and capacity for assignment which will vary in frequency and length. The selected contractor(s) are responsible for supplying all business equipment needed to carry out all tasks as outlined in the Scope of Work (e.g., computer, printer, fax, internet access, etc.).

First 5 LA will execute a Task Order contract. First 5 LA will issue task orders for each assignment with a specific scope and schedule. The number of hours per assignment shall be negotiated before work commences. Invoices will be paid based upon the negotiated rate by assignment type (see Appendix F) and number of hours per assignment. First 5 LA reserves the right to terminate the

contract if services are no longer needed or if quality of product is not consistent with original sample submission or to First 5 LA's satisfaction.

VII. SELECTION PROCESS AND REVIEW CRITERIA

First 5 LA will review the applications based on the multi-stage review process detailed below. Application must score satisfactorily in each level of review, as applicable.

Level 1 Internal Review:

First 5 LA will evaluate all applications for completeness and minimum requirements. Basic requirements include: timely receipt of application, submission of all required attachments, and adherence to eligibility requirements. Applications with omissions of any required documentation are subject to disqualification.

First 5 LA will also conduct a due diligence review which includes a review of the Litigation and Contract Compliance form and a review of whether applicant (current and former contractors, grantees and vendors) currently remains placed in non-compliant status by First 5 LA under any existing and past agreement with First 5 LA. First 5 LA reserves the right to request additional information, if needed, to validate eligibility and/or minimum requirements.

Level 2 Proposal Scoring

Applicants that pass Level 1 review will proceed to Level 2 Proposal Scoring review. First 5 LA staff members will review and score applications. Reviewers will score applications using the review tool listed as Appendix A. Prior to beginning their review, reviewers will be assessed for conflicts of interest with applicants and sign a Conflict-of-Interest form to certify that there are no conflicts of interest. Reviewers will participate in a calibration session prior to finalizing scores. Applicants scoring highly in Level 2 Review will proceed to Level 3 Review.

Level 3 Interview

Highly scoring applicants from Level 2 Review will proceed to Level 3 Interview. First 5 LA reserves the right to conduct interviews via phone or in person at First 5 LA's offices. Tentative interview dates are included in *Section I: Timeline for Selection Process*, and are subject to change at First 5 LA's sole discretion. Only key personnel on the proposed RFQ can participate in the interview. The interview panel will be comprised of First 5 LA staff. Reviewers will be assessed for conflicts of interest with applicants and sign a Conflict-of-Interest form to certify that there are no conflicts of interest. Reviewers will participate in a calibration session prior to finalizing scores. Further written materials may be requested prior to or after the interview. First 5 LA reserves the right to schedule additional interviews/meetings should additional questions arise.

Reference Checks:

If necessary, reference checks will be completed. If conducted, information obtained through reference checks will complement the results from Level 3 review. First 5 LA must be able to contact a minimum of two (2) references provided by the applicant. If two (2) references cannot be reached, First 5 LA may deem the applicant ineligible for this opportunity.

The highest scoring applicants based on Level 3 Interview Scoring in combination with information obtained through reference checks, if conducted, will be recommended for award of the contracts.

VIII. REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

The documents listed in this section are required to respond to this RFQ. Appendix H – Application Checklist is available to assist in application completion. Omission of any document/form will constitute an incomplete application and may be grounds for disqualification. Applications that exceed First 5 LA’s page limitation requirements will be adjusted by the removal of page(s) from the application. Pages will be removed before the Level 2: Proposal Scoring review. The removed page(s) will not be made available to reviewers.

Formatting Documents:

All narrative sections should be single-spaced Arial 10.5 font for all text and 1” margins.

Required Documents:

1. Online Application: In order to respond to this RFQ, applicants must complete an online application form and submit all required documents specified below through the online application system. Applicants must set-up an online account in order to access the application form. Instructions on setting up the account and access the online application may be found at <https://www.first5la.org/funding/content-writing-and-editing-request-for-qualifications-rfq/>.
2. Narrative of Qualifications and Relevant Experience: no more than seven (7) pages (excluding attachments) providing the following information:
 - a. Description of relevant experience (for either the firm or individuals) producing written content for policy and decision makers and elected officials. Written content includes, but is not limited to executive summaries of reports and studies, blogs to demonstrate thought leadership, opinion editorial pieces, and other research-based content on internal or external audiences.
 - b. Description of relevant experience (for either the firm or individuals) producing written content for the media, such as press releases for media distribution, and other research related-based content such as op-eds and blog posts.
 - c. Description of relevant experience in interpreting and translating complex topics, such as state budget proposals, policy briefs and research findings into easy to understand language that appeals to a wide audience.
 - d. Description of the lead personnel and anticipated supporting personnel to be employed during performance and their qualifications to perform the work. If subcontractors are contemplated, identification of those persons or firms, how they were selected and why, and a description of how subcontracted work will be controlled, monitored, and evaluated.
3. Resumes: Resumes for key personnel, including subcontractors, who will play a major role in carrying out the services. Resume(s) must include education, work experience, and qualifications that demonstrate desired qualifications under Section V. Summary of Desired Qualifications.
4. Samples: Applicant must provide sample(s) of similar/comparable articles, which demonstrate applicant’s skill as a writer, and relevant experience and expertise. Samples related to early childhood development issues as outlined in Section IV. Scope of Work preferred, but not

required. Proposer may submit up to five (5) relevant articles (no more than five and no less than two). Electronic version of samples must be included with the proposal by the due date listed.

5. Proposed Rates (see Appendix F): Clearly indicate proposed hourly rates for services described in Section IV. Scope of Work for all proposed personnel
6. Writing Exercise (see Appendix G): Write an opinion-editorial for First 5 LA's Executive Director Kim Belshé on the importance of child abuse prevention services for families with infants and preschool-aged children living in Los Angeles County that will be pitched to the *Los Angeles Times*. The content should elevate awareness, create a sense of urgency and engage decision makers in order to build public support on solutions to this issue. This exercise is intended to demonstrate RFQ applicant's ability to digest complex information and craft clear, compelling and persuasive arguments to an audience of decision makers and elected officials.
7. References (see Appendix B): Using Appendix B, provide references for similar work. A minimum of three (3) current or former references are required. First 5 LA must be able to contact a minimum of two (2) references provided by the applicant. If two (2) references cannot be reached, First 5 LA may deem the applicant ineligible for this opportunity.
8. Litigation and Contract Compliance Form (see Appendix C): Please read the information on the required Litigation and Contract Compliance Form thoroughly and include a signed copy by the application deadline. If you checked "Yes" to any of the questions on this form, please explain whether this will impact the project on this solicitation. Omission of the form will constitute an incomplete application and may be grounds for disqualification.
9. Business License: (if applicable)

Failure to submit all required attachments may constitute an incomplete application and may be grounds for disqualification. Applicants are responsible for any errors or omissions in their proposals and applications. In order to respond to this RFQ, please complete and submit your application and all required documents to First 5 LA no later than **5:00 p.m. PT on February 21, 2019. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered.** It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure, prior to submission, that its application reflects the requirements of this solicitation. Applicants should not wait to submit documents through the online application system minutes before the closing time. First 5 LA will not be responsible for any delays applicants may encounter with the online application system due to multiple applicants uploading documents before the closing time.

IX. TERMS OF THE RFQ

First 5 LA has the right to amend this solicitation by written addendum. First 5 LA is responsible only for that which is expressly stated in the solicitation document and any authorized written addenda thereto. Such addenda shall be made available via the online funding center. Failure to address the requirements of an addendum may result in the proposal not being considered, at the sole discretion of First 5 LA. It is the responsibility of proposers to ensure, prior to submission, that their application reflects the most recent addenda information and RFQ requirements. Addenda to this solicitation, if any, will be posted on First 5 LA's website at <http://www.first5la.org/Funding-Center>.

First 5 LA reserves the right to reject all proposals and re-solicit for proposals. Failure to comply with proposal specifications shall be grounds for disqualification of proposals. Each proposer shall be required to honor the price and specifications quoted for a minimum of sixty (60) calendar days following submission of the proposal. First 5 LA also reserves the right to cancel this RFQ, in its sole discretion, at any time before execution of a contract.

First 5 LA shall not be liable for any costs incurred in connection with a proposer's preparation of a proposal in response to this RFQ. Any cover letters, résumés and curriculum vita, including attached materials, submitted in response to this RFQ shall become First 5 LA's property and subject to public disclosure.

Each proposal shall be retained for official files and will become public record upon submittal unless the proposal or specific parts of the proposal can be shown to be exempt from disclosure by law. The budget, scope of work and other contractual information may be included in First 5 LA Board of Directors materials which are made public if the contract requires Board approval. Each proposer may clearly label parts of a proposal as "CONFIDENTIAL" if the proposer thereby agrees to indemnify and defend First 5 LA for honoring such a designation. The failure to so label any information that is released by First 5 LA shall constitute a complete waiver of all claims for damages caused by any release of the information. If a public records request for information labeled confidential is received by First 5 LA, First 5 LA will notify the proposer of the request. Within seven (7) calendar days after First 5 LA's notification to the proposer, it will be the proposer's duty to act in protection of the labeled information. The proposer's failure to do so act shall constitute a complete waiver.

The proposer agrees that, by submitting application proposal, the proposer authorizes First 5 LA to verify any or all information and/or references submitted in the proposal.

False, misleading, incomplete, or deceptively unresponsive statements in connection with a proposal shall be sufficient cause for rejection of the proposal at any time. The evaluation and determination in this area shall be at First 5 LA's sole judgment.

First 5 LA may elect to waive any minor irregularity in a proposal if the sum and substance of the proposal is present.

First 5 LA may, at its discretion, request that the contractor undertake additional, unanticipated, activities that are aligned to the project objectives of this RFQ and incorporate such activities into the final Scope of Work/Performance Matrix and Budget, if applicable.

X. CONTRACTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

The successful proposer must sign and adhere to the provisions of the First 5 LA Contract (see sample Contract - Appendix D). The successful proposer must execute the Contract without substantive alteration. All proposers must review the sample Contract in detail and fully understand the contractual obligations described in the Contract, including all insurance requirements. If a satisfactory agreement cannot be negotiated within 30 days of award, First 5 LA may, at its sole discretion, begin negotiations with the next qualified proposer, as determined by First 5 LA. First 5 LA may, after contract award, amend the awarded contract, scope of work and any other exhibits in accordance with the terms of the contract and as needed throughout the contract term to best meet the needs of First 5 LA.

Current and former First 5 LA grantees, contractors and vendors must be in good standing and compliant with all aspects of current and former agreements with First 5 LA in order to be eligible to

respond to this RFQ. First 5 LA may deem a proposer ineligible to respond to this RFQ if it finds, in its sole discretion, that the proposer has done any of the following: (1) violated any term or condition of a First 5 LA agreement; (2) committed any act or omission, or engaged in a pattern or practice, that negatively reflects on the proposer's quality, fitness or capacity to perform services listed in this RFQ; (3) committed an act or offense that indicates a lack of business integrity or business dishonesty; or (4) made or submitted a false claim to First 5 LA or any other public entity.

As stewards of public funds [First 5 LA's Funding Guidelines](#) are intended to provide information about the restrictions on the use of First 5 LA funds. Although these Funding Guidelines are applicable generally, the terms of individual funding agreements will always take precedence over these guidelines.

The award of a contract by First 5 LA to an individual/agency/organization that proposes to use subcontractors for the performance of work under the contract resulting from this RFQ process shall not limit First 5 LA's right to approve subcontractors, assemble teams and/or assign leads. Each proposer will be evaluated independently for added value to the overall team. A copy of executed subcontract(s) related to Program funding must be provided to First 5 LA.

First 5 LA, in its sole discretion, may conduct an evaluation of this project. Contractors will be required to comply with First 5 LA's evaluation and any requests for information arising out of such evaluations within the timeframe specified by First 5 LA.

If the awarded contract is not signed prior to the intended start date, the commencement of any activities under the contract's Scope of Work/Performance Matrix (Exhibit A) will not begin until the contract execution date (the date all parties have signed and delivered the contract) and the successful proposer will not be eligible to obtain reimbursement for any costs incurred prior to the contract execution date, unless otherwise approved in writing by First 5 LA. If the awarded contract is not signed by the successful proposer within thirty (30) calendar days from the proposed intended start date, First 5 LA may withdraw the contract award. First 5 LA may revise the proposed effective date prior to final execution of the awarded contract.

If the value of the contract is \$75,000 or more in the aggregate in any fiscal year, the award and execution of the contract is subject to First 5 LA's Board approval. Any performance of services commenced prior to obtaining all written approvals by First 5 LA shall be considered voluntary.

Unless otherwise submitted during the RFQ process, the successful proposer will be required to submit additional required documentation including, but not limited to, the following documents before the awarded contract can be fully executed:

- Litigation and Contract Compliance Form
- By-laws (if applicable)
- Articles of Incorporation (if applicable)
- Board of Directors or List of Partners (as applicable)
- Signature Authorization Form
- Annual Independent Audit for prior fiscal year or calendar year (if applicable)
- Appropriate business licenses (for vendors or private organizations)
- Completed IRS Form W-9
- Memorandums of Understanding and Subcontracts (for any sub-contractors, collaborators, and/or partners)
- Certificates of Insurance for all insurance requirements outlined in the sample Contract.

XI. APPEALS POLICY

First 5 LA reserves the right, without prejudice, to reject any or all submitted proposals. An appeal shall be permitted only on the grounds that the decision violated applicable law, First 5 LA policies and procedures, or the terms of this RFQ. Appeals challenging First 5 LA's decision on the merits or qualifications of proposers or the scoring of proposals shall not be permitted. An appeal of a First 5 LA decision shall be in writing and filed with the office of the Executive Director, or his or her designee, within ten (10) business days following the date the notification of decision is made by First 5 LA. For more information, please refer to the Appeals Policy located at <http://www.first5la.org/About-Us/Policies>.

APPENDICES

- Appendix A – Level 2 Review: Proposal Scoring Criteria
- Appendix B – Reference Sheet
- Appendix C – Litigation and Contract Compliance Form
- Appendix D – Sample Contract
- Appendix E – First 5 LA's Style Guide
- Appendix F – Proposed Rates
- Appendix G – Writing Exercise
- Appendix H – Application Checklist