



[First5LA.org](http://First5LA.org)

**BEST START LEARNING AGENDA  
RESEARCH TEAM  
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)**

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

RELEASE DATE: April 20, 2021

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**I. TIMELINE FOR SELECTION PROCESS<sup>1</sup>**

ACTIVITY	DATE
RFP Released	April 20, 2021
Information Session	April 27, 2021
Final date to submit questions and requests for additional information	May 13, 2021
Posting of responses to questions	May 19, 2021
<b>Proposal Due</b>	<b>May 25, 2021</b>
Interviews	Week of June 14, 2021
Contractor Selected	June 28, 2021
Board of Commissioners Approval	September 9, 2021
Contract Start Date	September 10, 2021

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 May 25, 2021**. 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:

Sabel Morales, Contract Compliance Manager  
E-mail: [smorales@first5la.org](mailto:smorales@first5la.org)

All questions and requests for additional information regarding this RFP must be received in writing by First 5 LA via email before **5:00 pm PT on May 13, 2021**. 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 inquires and then post replies to all questions by the posting date.

Potential proposers are highly encouraged to participate in the Informational webinar from **1:00 - 2:00 p.m. PT on April 27, 2021** to learn more about the RFP requirements. Please register for the webinar at: [https://first5la.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_FJBAw7l6S8m-c0qbdK5M2q](https://first5la.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_FJBAw7l6S8m-c0qbdK5M2q). After registering, you

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

will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar. A recording of the webinar will also be made available on the Funding Center webpage: <https://www.first5la.org/news-resources/funding-center/>.

**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/news-resources/funding-center/>. It is the responsibility of proposers to ensure, prior to submission, that their application reflects the most recent information and RFP 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 First 5 LA 2020-28 Strategic Plan**

In November 2019, First 5 LA's Board of Commissioners approved the [2020-28 Strategic Plan](#) that boldly articulates the goal of the organization's "North Star" – that by 2028, all children in Los Angeles County will enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school and life. The new plan will help guide and accelerate all First 5 LA does to make a tangible difference in the lives of children today and tomorrow.

#### **A. First 5 LA's Values**

First 5 LA grounds its work in its **values**, that act as guiding principles for how it does its work, the culture it aims to promote, and as a benchmark to measure behaviors and performance:

- **Collaboration**: We promote a collaborative culture and strategies in all that we do.
- **Integrity**: We act in ways that reflect our Values and hold ourselves accountable for our behaviors and the outcomes of our work.
- **Learning**: We integrate learning into all aspects of our decision-making, commit to continuous improvement and share what we have learned.
- **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**: We embrace the diversity of L.A County, advocate for fairness and promote systems that advance the full participation of young children and their families.

#### **B. First 5 LA's Investment Guidelines**

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First 5 LA's Investment Guidelines serve as criteria for decision-making for all major components of the strategic planning process and as ongoing policy guidance for Board and staff during implementation. Together, the Investment Guidelines represent a "six-part identity statement for First 5 LA that explicitly prioritizes adopting an equity lens through our work and addressing the critical challenge of declining First 5 revenue:

- **Equity:** Prioritize children, families and communities in our target population that our work has the greatest potential to impact and advance our North Star.
  - Use data to elevate disparities and achieve equitable outcomes
  - Strengthen existing public systems to be child and family-centered
  - Incorporate the voice of families and communities in systems change
- **Sustainability:** Embed sustainability strategies within all of our work
  - Plan and operate within our fiscal reality
  - Create new revenue and fund leveraging strategies
  - Co-invest with partners
- **Partnership:** Engage partners throughout planning, development, and execution of our work
  - Demonstrate how committed partnerships are engaged and fundamental to our work
- **Prevention:** Focus on early intervention and prevention
  - Invest in early intervention and prevention as the primary focus of our work
  - Link downstream investments to prevention
- **System Change:** Focus on systems change and implementation to impact the most children and families.
  - Focus on strengthening existing systems; rather than creating new systems
  - Consider direct services only when there is significant potential to demonstrate models for scalability and sustainability
- **Evidence and Innovation:** Prioritize scaling up evidence-based practices, balanced with investments in innovative and promising approaches to address community needs
  - Pursue and test innovative and promising approaches, as necessary, to respond to community needs and achieve scale.

### C. What's Needed to Make First 5 LA's North Star a Reality?

To reach its North Star, First 5 LA wants systems to work better for all families in L.A. County by making them more family-centered and child-focused with a focus on four results areas that 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 will seek these results through policy change, practice change and public-will building. It will do so with diverse partners who share First 5 LA's aspirations for children and bring an intentional focus on equity for children and families facing disparities in outcomes and opportunities.

#### **D. First 5 LA's 2020-2028 Strategic Priorities**

Based on learnings and reflections over the past five years, First 5 LA has developed four strategic priorities that articulate how it will focus its efforts and contributions to achieve system change outcomes and ultimately targeted results for children and families:

1. **Strengthen Public and Community Systems**: Improve, integrate and expand systems of early prevention, intervention and learning to become family-centered, child-focused and promote equitable outcomes.
2. **Advance and Build on Community Experience**: Connect, maximize and coordinate public resources, relationships and local assets and relationships within our 14 Best Start geographies.
3. **Expand Influence and Impact with Data**: Expand the availability, use and power of data and parent voice to call attention to disparities, amplify advocacy, and drive policy change, practice change, and will building.
4. **Optimize Our Effectiveness**: Heighten organizational performance to enhance our impact.

For an expanded description of these priorities, please review [First 5 LA's 2020-28 Strategic Plan](#).

#### **E. Best Start: First 5 LA's Place-Based Initiative**

First 5 LA believes that children thrive and families flourish in strong, safe, healthy, and engaged communities where parents, residents, community-based organizations, advocacy groups, funders and public systems have strong relationships, support each other, and act together to affect positive change. Since 2010, First 5 LA has worked to strengthen community leadership and infrastructure in 14 geographic areas, situated in 5 regions in Los Angeles County through the Best Start Initiative, an approach that emphasizes the critical role of "place" and its impacts on a child's development. With the approval of its 2020-2028 Strategic Plan, First 5 LA affirmed its commitment to Best Start as an anchor investment to build community power to create and sustain thriving and healthy environments for all children.

As documented in our recently released indicator report,<sup>2</sup> many communities in LA County face social, environmental, and economic challenges that make it difficult for young children and families to thrive. Economic and social factors such as inadequate wages and lack of affordable housing prevent fair and equitable opportunities for the stability that children need to thrive. Overcoming the historic, institutional, and systemic obstacles that families confront daily requires an identification and understanding of the issues and working towards solutions that support children's healthy development and success in school and life. Developing community-identified solutions that address these disparities is a central component of the Best Start initiative.

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<sup>2</sup> [Pathway to Progress: Indicators of Young Child Well-Being in Los Angeles County \(2020\)](#).

Achieving population level results like First 5 LA's North Star and long-term results for children and families is too ambitious for any one funder, public entity, or stakeholder to achieve alone. The Best Start initiative strengthens community voice, leadership and power in the Best Start geographies by strengthening the network of partners committed to achieving results for children and families. Best Start is cultivating networks of parents, residents, community-based organizations, public systems, built-environment advocates, funders, key leaders, and other partners that collectively act towards shared results and continue to be powerful catalysts for change. First 5 LA, through its investments and activities, is seeking to link a diverse collection of strategies, capacities and perspectives, while centering communities, to achieve greater impact with Best Start geographies. A principal tenet of Best Start is that the families most affected by historic, institutional, and systemic obstacles, must be at the center of systems change efforts, voicing their opinions, and participating in decision-making, to benefit their children's and communities' future.

In 2018, following a comprehensive community planning process, the investment has evolved into five regions, consisting of 14 geographic areas, (see Appendix A – Map of Best Start Geographies), and supports the emergence of regional and local networks of parents, residents, other community leaders and organization partners, including but not limited to the Best Start community partnerships<sup>3</sup>. This shift to networks recognizes the critical role networks play in developing, uplifting, and sustaining systems changes. Five Regional Network Grantees were selected to implement the evolved Best Start initiative in each of the regions.

#### **F. Best Start Learning Agenda**

First 5 LA has embraced learning as a primary way to improve impact and effectiveness for our investments and inform strategy. A learning agenda has been developed for Best Start to focus our inquiry and to craft a plan to investigate, collect, and analyze information to derive insights, improve our work and help understand our progress. First 5 LA employs learning agendas to prioritize the questions that we want to understand and data sources to address those questions. Learning agendas are focused on developing actionable information to inform decision-making, continuous improvement, and evidence-building. They are intended to be flexible, inclusive and realistic – that is, learning agendas adapt to changing priorities and circumstances, involve diverse stakeholders to capture various perspectives and uses, and invite stakeholders to focus and prioritize areas of inquiry. Through this RFP, First 5 LA is supporting the ongoing refinement and implementation of the Best Start Learning Agenda (BSLA).

First 5 LA has developed an initial set of learning questions for the BSLA with input from stakeholders and the First 5 LA Board of Commissioners. See Appendix B – Best Start Learning Agenda Questions for more details. Over the last two years of implementation, early findings from the BSLA identify strengths, areas of improvement, and opportunities for adaptation that have been compiled by staff and with input from partners. No formal study was completed to answer the learning questions reflected in Appendix B, though initial work was completed by First 5 LA staff and

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<sup>3</sup> Historically, various terms have been used to describe the 14 local entities supported by F5LA funding, including Best Start Communities, Best Start Partnerships, Local Partnerships and Community Partnerships. See Appendix B- BSLA Questions for more detail.

a contractor, including an analysis of the overall learning and evaluation happening in each of the Best Start regions, interviews with program and evaluation representatives from each region, and synthesis of learnings and reflections from the Regional Network Grantees and First 5 LA Program Officers. All summaries and analyses of the learning conversations conducted in each region will be shared with the selected proposer along with all available information upon award.

### III. PROJECT OVERVIEW

The purposes of the Best Start Learning Agenda (hereinafter referred to as BSLA) is to help First 5 LA and key stakeholders document and communicate initiative-level results emerging from the Best Start investment, understand and describe the components, connections and emergent strategies that enable those results, generate learning for ongoing improvements, and uplift promising practices of the regional network approach as proof of concept for complex, community-driven, systems change initiatives. The BSLA will provide a comprehensive framework for guiding and improving First 5 LA community-level systems change strategies, as well as describing how First 5 LA's work is unfolding within the five Best Start regions and contributing to the long-term systems outcomes and results for children and families.

In order for the BSLA to achieve these purposes, it must include perspectives of key stakeholders – including First 5 LA staff and Board of Commissioners, communities, grantees and contractors – and also include perspectives and learnings from other First 5 LA efforts within the five Best Start regions across our strategic priority areas. See Appendix C – Communities Team Initiatives Summary Table and Briefs for more information. The BSLA will not evaluate efforts from other projects detailed in Appendix C, rather, the selected Proposer should incorporate perspectives and learnings from the other F5LA efforts happening in the Best Start regions into the Learning Agenda implementation given that all First 5 LA investments are interconnected and contributing the systems change efforts happening within each region. Additionally, the BSLA will examine a diversity of data sources and methods for data collection, analysis and dissemination. First 5 LA prioritizes community participation in the BSLA as an important voice in prioritizing questions and areas for review and as an important source of qualitative data to inform the BSLA implementation and learnings.

This solicitation seeks proposals from entities interested in leading the Best Start Learning Agenda Research Team (hereinafter referred to as the BSLA Research Team) that will drive the conceptualization and execution of the BSLA and serve as a strategic thought partner, primary architect and implementer of the BSLA. Due to the scope of the project, First 5 LA expects that successful implementation of the BSLA will require a team approach that consists of multiple staff supporting implementation or can include a team of subcontractors to support implementation. If proposers intend to partner with subcontractors, it is the expectation that the submitted proposal will include proposed subcontractors. First 5 LA has final approval of the design and implementation of BSLA. **Regional Network Grantees are not eligible to apply for this funding opportunity.** The selected proposer will work in partnership with First 5 LA and key stakeholders to achieve the following objectives:

**Objective 1:** Develop, support and lead the refinement of the BSLA.

**Objective 2:** Develop and implement a research strategy, including the collection and analysis of primary and secondary data, to answer the learning questions.

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**Objective 3:** Design and implement engagement structures and processes that support participation of stakeholders in the development and implementation of the BSLA.

**Objective 4:** Inform and strengthen First 5 LA's efforts to compile and disseminate findings through a variety of presentations, technical and non-technical research products, and communication tools to facilitate learning with First 5 LA, our grantees, contractors and the broader field.

The selected proposer will assume direct responsibility of compliance to the agreement with First 5 LA, including but not limited to fiscal management, reporting, invoicing, subcontracting and monitoring. The selected proposer is expected to remain the lead project manager of the BSLA Research Team and will be responsible for implementing the key functions/activities.

#### IV. SCOPE OF WORK

##### A. Objectives

To successfully implement the BSLA, First 5 LA expects the BSLA Research Team to achieve the objectives outlined in this section. The following describes the types of activities we foresee to be carried out by the BSLA Research Team; however, the activities, as well as the combination and order of activities, will be determined in the development of the scope of work during contract negotiations with the selected proposer. Activities and timing may be refined throughout the life of the project as new learning emerges.

This section describes four key objectives and related activities the BSLA Research Team is expected to complete. The objectives are designed to be interdependent and implementation will be an iterative, evolving process, rather than a linear one.

**Objective 1:** Develop, support and lead the refinement of the BSLA.

The BSLA Research Team will serve as the primary project manager of the BSLA and will be responsible for leading the refinement of the learning questions<sup>4</sup>, learning priorities and parameters for the efforts. The selected proposer will work with First 5 LA and Best Start partners including grantees, contractors and community leaders, in order to reflect the interests of the multiple stakeholders in the BSLA (as described in Objective 3). The BSLA will be grounded in First 5 LA's 2020-2028 Strategic Plan and will help communicate progress and cultivate accountability and learning towards the results we seek for children and families. The BSLA is an integral component to develop proof of concept for the Best Start effort and is expected to adapt and evolve as the field changes and new learnings emerge. The first objective is broad and is supported by the subsequent objectives that provide more detail.

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<sup>4</sup> Upon engaging with stakeholders, the BSLA Research Team may propose entirely redesigned learning questions. There is not an expectation that the current learning questions remain. See Objective 3 for more information.

**Objective 2:** Develop and implement a research strategy, including the collection and analysis of primary and secondary data, to answer the learning agenda questions.

Once learning questions are refined, the BSLA Research Team will develop a research strategy that will answer the learning questions. The research design should reflect the complexity of the Best Start initiative and should be able to capture and support the dynamic, evolving nature of the work, while centering community. The research design should also reflect an understanding of the role of evaluation and measurement in broader learning and accountability efforts for placed-based setting work, which will be evident in how the approach integrates various levels of primary and secondary data sets. Primary data sets will include qualitative and quantitative sources that are collected by the BSLA Research Team from first-hand sources such as grantee and partner interviews, community member and partner feedback, surveys, etc. Secondary data sets will include data collected consistent with Best Start grantee contract requirements<sup>5</sup>, documentation or “stories” of community members experiences, existing and future child well-being indices, and any related or relevant data sources. The research design should provide real-time updates through regular memos or other documentation for F5LA and partners to communicate success, progress and inform adjustments and strategy refinement.

**Objective 3:** Design and implement engagement structures and processes that support participation of stakeholders in the development and implementation of the BSLA.

The BSLA Research Team will take a lead role in convening, designing and facilitating engagement efforts to effectively codesign the refinement of the BSLA questions, answer the BSLA questions and learn from the findings of the BSLA.

- a) **Engagement to Codesign BSLA Refinement:** The BSLA Research Team will, early on in the project, design an engagement approach to help maximize participation and inclusion of Best Start partners in the BSLA question refinement (Objective 1). The BSLA Research Team will work with F5LA to establish a body of stakeholders that will play a critical role in shaping the BSLA over the life of the project. The role, parameters, powers and composition of that group will be designed at the onset of the project, with the advisement of F5LA, F5LA Board of Commissioners, F5LA’s grantee partners and contractors. F5LA envisions a body of people that includes resident leaders, as well as grantee partners to guide the BSLA design and implementation. Upon engaging with stakeholders, the BSLA Research Team may propose that the learning questions should be redesigned entirely. There is not an expectation that the current learning questions remain. The questions that become the BSLA questions should be informed by engagement of F5LA grantee partners and contractors and staff.
- b) **Engagement to Answer BSLA Questions:** The BSLA Research Team will reengage with the established body of stakeholders who assisted in BSLA question refinement to help answer the BSLA questions. Additional stakeholders may be engaged as needed.

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<sup>5</sup> Includes semiannual reports, scope of work objectives tracker, monthly check in meeting notes, etc.

- c) **Engagement to Learn from the Findings:** The BSLA Research Team will be responsible for engaging a broader audience of stakeholders in the Best Start network in reflective sessions to make sense of the learnings uncovered through the BSLA. The engagement structures and processes should ultimately become robust feedback loops that support ongoing reflection and flow of information for ongoing accountability efforts, communicating progress and strategy refinement of the Best Start initiative.

**Convening Logistics:** The BSLA Research Team will be responsible for logistics required to authentically and equitably convene partners and stakeholders, including but not limited to providing interpretation during meetings, materials translated in multiple languages, providing food for in person convenings, and venue reservation.

**Objective 4:** Inform and strengthen First 5 LA's efforts to compile and disseminate findings through a variety of presentations, technical and non-technical research products, and communication tools to facilitate learning with First 5 LA, our grantees, contractors, and the broader field.

The BSLA Research Team will support F5LA in sharing project findings with Best Start partners and key stakeholders to catalyze critical conversations that lead to collective and coordinated action. Additionally, the BSLA Research Team will support F5LA in sharing best practices and project findings with the field broadly through presentations, research products, and other field building activities. The sharing of best practices will come in the form of co-designing conference or publication abstracts, identifying and speaking at key systems change funder tables, and building relationships with other funders interested in improving communities for families with young children. The BSLA Research Team will work with First 5 LA to plan and coordinate the activities in this objective. This objective is intended to share findings from our learnings of Best Start efforts- both what is working well and lessons learned, influence and strengthen the values, mental models, changes in practice, changes in policy, and other actions within F5LA, our partners, and others committed to this work in LA County and beyond.

## **B. Additional Activities**

First 5 LA may require the BSLA Research Team to perform additional activities related to the work described above based on emergent learning and our desire to respond to unique needs of this project. These activities may be incorporated in a revised project plan, budget, and scope of work, as appropriate.

## V. ELIGIBILITY

**Regional Network Grantees are not eligible to apply for this funding opportunity.** Proposers must meet the following criteria:

- (1) Availability of key staff to attend virtual and in-person meetings in Los Angeles County, and a capacity to conduct virtual and in-person research and learning activities throughout Los Angeles County.
- (2) Minimum of five (5) years of experience in leading community-based projects or research and evaluation projects

Proposers that do not meet the requirements above will not pass the first level of review (see *Section VIII. Selection Process and Review Criteria*).

## VI. DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS

The ideal proposer will demonstrate the following qualifications:

### **Research Experience**

- Experience navigating complex and ambiguous research settings to identify opportunities and generate solutions for dynamic situations
- Experience conducting research on place-based or community-based initiatives, programs, and/or investments
- Experience conducting developmental or emergent learning evaluations
- Experience developing qualitative data collection tools and conducting interviews, focus groups, and document review
- Experience developing and administering quantitative data collection tools including, but not limited to, surveys, administrative data and structured observations
- Experience conducting meta-analyses of existing reports, analysis, and synthesis products to identify patterns and themes within and across concurrent and interrelated learning efforts

### **Research Knowledge**

- Knowledge of contextual, methodological, and logistical issues associated with place-based or community-based research
- Knowledge of systems thinking, systems change initiatives, and approaches to systems research (please refer to [2020-28 Strategic Plan](#) for what these terms pertain to First 5 LA)

### **Research Dissemination**

- Experience producing findings, research briefs, and other products for a variety of audiences (technical and non-technical)
- Experience illuminating trends, themes, and opportunities across complex data
- Experience designing and implementing effective dissemination strategies

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### **Facilitation**

- Experience effectively facilitating or convening stakeholder discussions in *virtual spaces and in-person settings* that include divergent perspectives and insights.
- Experience working with funders, grantees, contractors, community members, and other stakeholders

### **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Experience and Knowledge**

- Experience working with culturally, ethnically, linguistically, and social-economically diverse groups in Los Angeles County.
- Experience working within communities that have been historically and systemically excluded from resources and have a moderate infrastructure of public, nonprofit, and community-based support systems for young children and their families.
- General understanding of the context of Los Angeles County, including, but not limited to, racial inequities and issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

### **Project Management**

- Experience successfully managing projects in complex and changing environments with competing priorities and deadlines that require flexible and nimble responses

## **VII. TERMS OF PROJECT**

The total project term is estimated to be up to 2 years (24 months) and an amount not to exceed \$1.5 million. The Commission expects to enter a 2-year agreement with the selected proposer with an anticipated start date of September 10, 2021 subject to approval by the First 5 LA Board of Commissioners. Based on learnings and performance, this project may be extended through 2028. While there is no guarantee of an extension, First 5 LA is seeking proposer's that can potentially continue beyond the estimated project term.

This will be a cost-reimbursement contract. A final budget will be negotiated with the selected proposer. In a cost-reimbursement contract, selected proposer will be reimbursed through monthly invoices based on services rendered and actual expenses incurred. Therefore, proposer must anticipate a cash flow to support a 90-day billing cycle. First 5 LA will negotiate a final budget with the selected grantee. Additional contract management requirements and/or reports will be determined by First 5 LA during negotiations

Contract renewal will be based on contractor performance and contingent upon approval by the First 5 LA Board of Commissioners. First 5 LA reserves the right to terminate the contract if the quality of services are not to First 5 LA's satisfaction. Additional contract management requirements and/or reports will be determined by First 5 LA during negotiations. First 5 LA may require the selected proposer to perform additional activities related to the scope of work described above based on emergent learning and First 5 LA's desire to respond to the unique needs of this project. The selected proposer will be responsible for furnishing the necessary personnel, materials, services, and technological capabilities for efficient communication (phone and email) needed to carry out all tasks as outlined in Section IV. Scope of Work. The final Scope of Work will be negotiated with the selected proposer. First 5 LA will retain sole ownership of the primary data gathered and/or generated by the BSLA Research Team.

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COVID-19 Pandemic Considerations: Given the COVID-19 pandemic, the selected proposer will conduct their work through virtual and telephonic communication platforms to complete their scope of work until further notice by First 5 LA. The selected proposer shall ensure that its employees and subcontractors, as well as the participants in any program or service conducted hereunder, comply with all applicable federal, State and local public health orders to protect against the spread of the COVID-19 virus or other public health threat, including, without limitation, maintaining social distancing requirements, avoiding unnecessary or non-essential gatherings, and providing or requiring personal protective devices such as face masks, gloves and cleaning supplies

## **VIII. SELECTION PROCESS AND REVIEW CRITERIA**

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

### Level 1 Administrative Review:

First 5 LA will evaluate all proposals for completeness and minimum requirements. Basic requirements include: timely receipt of proposal, submission of all required attachments, and adherence to eligibility requirements. Proposals 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 proposer (that are current and former contractors, grantees and vendors) currently remain placed in non-compliant status by First 5 LA under any existing and past agreement with First 5 LA. If applicable, First 5 LA will evaluate past and current performance under a First 5 LA agreement to inform Level 1 review. First 5 LA reserves the right to request additional information, if needed, to validate eligibility and/or and minimum requirements.

Additionally, First 5 LA will conduct a conflict of interest review of proposers including subcontractors.

### Level 2 Financial Review

Proposers that pass Level 1 review will proceed to Level 2 review. First 5 LA will review the following documents to ensure the financial capacity of proposers:

- Audited Financial Statements for Fiscal Year 2019-2020 OR Calendar Year 2019 OR Calendar Year 2020; OR
- Two years of Financial Statements with two (2) years of Form 990s (if applicable) no older than 2018

If First 5 LA identifies concerns as a result of reviewing the proposer's financial documents, the proposer may be required to submit additional information. Proposers that fail to submit requested additional information will be reviewed based on documents provided at the time of application. For proposers that advance to Level 3, the information collected during Level 2 may inform negotiations if recommended for award of the agreement.

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### Level 3 Proposal Review:

Proposers that pass Level 2 review will proceed to Level 3 review. Reviewers will score proposals using the Review Tool listed as Appendix D. The Proposal Review Panel will be comprised of First 5 LA staff. Prior to beginning the review process, proposal reviewers will be assessed for conflicts of interest with proposers and required to 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. Proposers must score a minimum of 70% or higher to continue to Level 3 Review.

### Level 4 Interview

Highly scoring proposers from Level 3 Review will proceed to Level 4 Review. Tentative interview dates are included in *Section I: Timeline for Selection Process* and are subject to change at First 5 LA's sole discretion. Interviews will be held via video conference. The Interview Panel will be comprised of First 5 LA staff members. Members of the Interview Panel will be assessed for conflicts of interest with proposers and required to sign a Conflict-of-Interest form to certify that there are no conflicts of interest. Members of the Interview Panel 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 or meetings.

### Award of Contract

The highest scoring proposer based on combined Level 3 and Level 4 scores will be recommended to First 5 LA's Board of Commissioners for award of the contract.

## **IX. REQUIRED DOCUMENTS**

The documents listed in this section are required to respond to this RFP. Appendix E – Proposal Checklist is available to assist in application completion. Omission of any document/form will constitute an incomplete proposal and may be grounds for disqualification.

Proposals that exceed First 5 LA's page limitation requirements will be adjusted by the removal of page(s) from the proposal. Pages will be removed before the Level 3: Proposal Review. The removed page(s) will not be made available to reviewers. Please do not submit cover pages.

- **Online Application:** In order to respond to this RFP, proposers must complete an online proposal form and submit all required documents specified below through the online proposal system. Proposers must set-up an online account in order to access the proposal form. Instructions on setting up the account and access the online application may be found at <https://www.first5la.org/article/best-start-learning-agenda-research-team-request-for-proposals-rfp/>

To access the online application:

[https://www.GrantRequest.com/SID\\_725?SA=SNA&FID=35352](https://www.GrantRequest.com/SID_725?SA=SNA&FID=35352)

- **Scope of Work:** Complete the Scope of Work Template (Appendix H) and describe key activities to carry out the objectives for the 2-year (24 month) agreement period. Refer to Section IV for Scope of Work.

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- **Proposal Narrative (12 pages max, double space, font 10, 1” margins):** In your narrative, please address the following elements:
  - a. Please detail your overall approach to achieve the BSLA 4 (four) objectives outlined in *Section IV, Scope of Work*. Please include what you plan to achieve in the initial 6 months of the project, and a high-level map outlining the progress you would make on the objectives by the end of the 2-year agreement period.
  - b. Please include your views on the role of evaluation and measurement in broader learning and accountability efforts for complex, systems change work.
  - c. Please detail your approach to DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) for this project. Share your perspective on the potential challenges, trade-offs and opportunities of engaging the key stakeholders listed in Objective 3 on page 10.
  - d. To illustrate your responses to narrative elements a-c, please reference at least three examples of prior work that demonstrate your team’s ability to meet the objectives.
  - e. If entities applying for this project intend to partner with subcontractors, it is the expectation that the submitted proposal will include proposed subcontractors. Please identify key project team members, including subcontractors, and their qualifications to perform the work described in this RFP. Include descriptions of the role(s) each member would serve on the project team.
- **Resumes or Curricula Vitae:** *Maximum of three (3) pages per resume or CV* – Include resumes or curricula vitae for any project team members and any proposed subcontractors who will exercise a major role in carrying out the project.
- **Work Samples:** Proposers must provide two (2) samples of no more than five (5) pages each of completed projects that demonstrate your agency’s strategy, approach, experience and expertise. Please use the Cover Pages located in Appendix I – Work Sample Submission, for each sample.
- **Detailed Budget Form:** Please provide an estimated budget breakdown for all activities and tasks using the template provided as Appendix J: Detailed Budget Form. Please explain the component costs in the budget narrative. Please refer to Appendix G: Instructions for Detailed Budget Forms and Budget Narrative for instructions on how to complete the Detailed Budget Form.
- **Budget Narrative:** Please provide a narrative that briefly explains the assumptions and reasoning used to calculate the estimated budget. No additional budget figures are needed in this section, although they may be presented if desired. Please refer to Appendix G: Instructions for Detailed Budget Forms and Budget Narrative for instructions on how to complete the Budget Narrative.
- **Litigation and Contract Compliance Form:** Please read the information on the required Litigation and Contract Compliance form attached as Appendix K thoroughly and include a



signed copy by the proposal 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 proposal and may be grounds for disqualification.

- **Financial Statements:** Please submit the following documents:
  - Audited Financial Statements for Fiscal Year 2019-2020 OR Calendar Year 2019 OR Calendar Year 2020; OR
  - Two years of Financial Statements with two (2) years of Form 990s (if applicable) no older than 2018
- **Business License** (if applicable)

**Failure to submit all required attachments may constitute an incomplete proposal and may be grounds for disqualification.** Proposers are responsible for any errors and omissions in their proposals and proposals. In order to respond to this RFP, please complete and submit your proposal and all required documents to First 5 LA no later than **5:00 p.m. PT on May 25, 2021**. **Proposals received after this deadline will not be considered.** It is the responsibility of the proposer to ensure, prior to submission, that its proposal reflects the requirements of this solicitation. Proposers should not wait to submit documents through the online proposal system minutes before the closing time. First 5 LA will not be responsible for any delays proposers may encounter with the online proposal system due to multiple proposers uploading documents before the closing time.

## **X. TERMS OF THE RFP**

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 proposal reflects the most recent addenda information and RFP requirements. Addenda to this solicitation, if any, will be posted on First 5 LA’s website at <https://www.first5la.org/news-resources/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 RFP, 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 RFP. Any cover letters, résumés and curriculum vita, including attached materials, submitted in response to this RFP 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 board materials which are

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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 so act shall constitute a complete waiver.

The proposer agrees that, by submitting 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 RFP and incorporate such activities into the final Scope of Work/Performance Matrix and Budget, if applicable.

## **XI. CONTRACTUAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The successful proposer must sign and adhere to the provisions of the First 5 LA Contract (see Appendix F - Sample Contract). 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 RFP. First 5 LA may deem a proposer ineligible to respond to this RFP 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 RFP; (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.

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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 RFP 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.

The Contractor shall ensure that the Contractor, its employees and subcontractors, as well as the participants in any program or service conducted hereunder, comply with all applicable federal, State and local public health orders to protect against the spread of the COVID-19 virus or other public health threat, including, without limitation, maintaining social distancing requirements, avoiding unnecessary or non-essential gatherings, and providing or requiring personal protective devices such as face masks, gloves and cleaning supplies.

Unless otherwise submitted during the RFP 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)
- IRS Determination Letter for non-profit status (if applicable)
- 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.

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It is First 5 LA's intent to contract with independent contractors as defined under California's AB 5 and not to create an employer/employee relationship.

## **XII. 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 RFP. 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 <https://www.first5la.org/policies/>.

## **XIII. APPENDICES**

### **FOR INFORMATIVE PURPOSES:**

- Appendix A - Map of Best Start Regions and Geographies
- Appendix B: Best Start Learning Agenda Questions
- Appendix C: Communities Team Initiatives Summary Table and Briefs
- Appendix D: Level 3 Review: Proposal Scoring Criteria
- Appendix E: Proposal Checklist
- Appendix F: Sample Contract
- Appendix G: Instructions for Detailed Budget Forms

### **FOR SUBMISSION:**

- Appendix H: Scope of Work Template
- Appendix I: Work Sample Submission
- Appendix J: Detailed Budget Form
- Appendix K: Litigation and Contract Compliance Form