



**REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)
Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)
Environmental Rating Scales (ERS)**

**RFQ Release Date: February 14, 2019
Application Due Date: March 4, 2019 at 5:00 PM
Contract Start Date: March 15, 2019**

For more information, please contact:

First 5 Santa Cruz County
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Quality Rating and Improvement System

ERS Assessment RFQ

RFQ APPLICATION PROCESS AND TIMELINE*		
ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	DATE
Release Date	Applications are available online at www.first5scc.org .	February 14, 2019
Questions & Answers	Questions regarding the application may be addressed via email to vboriack@first5scc.org . All questions and responses will be posted on the First 5 Santa Cruz County website: www.first5scc.org .	February 14 - February 21, 2019
Application Submission Deadline	The completed application packet must be emailed to Barbara Dana at: bdana@first5scc.org Application Packet shall include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cover letter (1 page) 2. Completed Application Form (available on website) 3. A resume or equivalent for each individual that will be involved in the services outlined in this RFQ. 4. Documentation of participation in the appropriate ERS training at least 3 days in duration within the past 5 years and achievement of 85% reliability with annual re-calibration across 3 ratings with an Anchor. 5. A project budget including hours and rate, (use form available on website) 6. Writing Sample – Completed Assessment Report & Score sheet 	March 4, 2019 - by 5:00 p.m. Applications packets received after the deadline will not be reviewed or considered for funding.
Application Review	Applications submitted by the deadline will be reviewed by First 5 Santa Cruz County staff.	March 4 - March 6, 2019
Initial Award Recommendation	The selected applicant will receive an initial award recommendation by email. Those applicants who are not selected to move forward in the process will also receive notice via email.	March 7, 2019
Contract Execution	First 5 Santa Cruz County will award the contract to the most qualified applicant(s).	March 11, 2019
Contract Term	Term: The term of this agreement is for one-year, with execution of the Scope of Work beginning March 15, 2019 through March 14, 2020. Billable assessment rates and total contract amount will be negotiated between FIRST 5 and the selected applicant.	March 15, 2019



*All dates throughout this RFQ are subject to change at First 5's discretion. Notice of any date change will be posted on First 5 Santa Cruz County's website: www.first5scc.org.

Bilingual ERS (Spanish/English) Quality Rating and Improvement System Assessment REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS March, 2019 – March 2020

Summary:

First 5 Santa Cruz County (First 5) is seeking submittals from reliable and certified independent assessors to conduct valid Environmental Rating Scales (ERS) assessments for early learning programs participating in Quality Counts Santa Cruz County (QCSCC), a local Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). First 5 needs to conduct approximately 90 ERS assessments in Quality Counts Sites by December 15, 2019 (50 center-based assessments and 40 Family Child Care home assessments).

Under the supervision of the Quality Counts Program Manager, the Bilingual ERS Assessor(s) will be responsible for conducting valid and reliable ERS assessments using the ECERS instrument for Pre-K (approximately 35), the ITERS for infant classrooms (approximately 15) and the FCCERS for family child care (approximately 40). The Bilingual Spanish ERS assessor(s) will also provide detailed technical assistance reports based on ERS scores and classroom observational notes.

Background on First 5

The purpose of the California Children and Families First Act of 1998 (Proposition 10), locally named First 5 Santa Cruz County, is to create and implement a comprehensive, integrated system of information and services to promote, support, and optimize early childhood development and school readiness. Under the Act, each county is charged with the development of a comprehensive strategic plan guiding services and supports for children from prenatal to age five (0-5) and their parents and caregivers. In June 2015, First 5 Santa Cruz County adopted a new strategic plan, which describes the Commission's priorities and funding allocations for 2015-2020. For a copy of the strategic plan, visit our web site at www.first5scc.org.

Quality Counts Overview

Concerted state and local efforts to improve the quality of early learning and care programs for California's children have been underway for more than a decade, most recently with help from the federal Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant, First 5 California's IMPACT (Improve and Maximize Programs so All Children Thrive), and the California Department of Education's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Block Grants. In March 2016, leaders from across the state agreed to consolidate these efforts into Quality Counts California; California's statewide, locally-driven QRIS. Collectively, these investments provide the opportunity to serve a full spectrum of program types, expand the reach of QRIS, and effectively increase quality throughout the state.

Santa Cruz County has been privileged to be among the original 16 counties participating in the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC). Over 4 years, a local Consortium (QELI – Quality Early Learning Initiative) came together to create a coordinated QRIS that has the Continuous Quality Improvement Hybrid Matrix as its foundation. Santa Cruz County has been operating a local QRIS since 2012, under the guidance of the QELI Consortium, comprised of local early childhood experts including the Local Planning Council, County Office of Education, Subsidized Programs Consortium, Early Head Start, Head Start, State-funded programs, First 5, Alternative Payment, private non-profit, licensed family child care, and Migrant Seasonal Head Start child care programs. In 2018, the QELI Consortium voted to name our QRIS efforts Quality Counts Santa Cruz County.

How does Quality Counts California support continuous quality improvement?

Under the banner of *Quality Counts California*, this state and local quality improvement effort relies on locally tailored and operated quality rating and improvement systems (QRISs). As the name suggests, a QRIS assesses and rates the quality of programs that are ready to be rated. The results of independent assessments are used as a benchmark for quality improvement and many sites receive coaching and other supports related to their assessment results prior to rating. Equally important, the ratings are made available to parents and families when deciding what early learning and care programs might be best for their child. However, regardless of whether they have been rated, all participating programs (e.g., centers; family child care homes; family, friends, and neighbors; license-exempt providers) can receive resources and incentives to help them continuously improve.

Key Responsibilities

The selected applicant will work under the supervision of First 5 Santa Cruz County’s Quality Counts Program Manager. Key responsibilities include:

1. Provide qualified assessors to conduct valid and reliable ECERS-R, FCCERS-R, and ITERS-R assessments in accordance with Quality Counts California QRIS Implementation Guide and Bay Area Quality Early Learning Partnership (BAQELP) assessment protocols.
2. Coordinate scheduling and logistics with the First 5 Santa Cruz County Quality Counts Program Manager and First 5 contracted staff (FCC Coordinator).
3. The approximate* number of ERS assessments between March, 2019 and February, 2020 is 90 for both center-based and family child care homes as follows:

March 2019 – February	# of ERS Assessments
Center-Based	50
Family Child Care	40
Total	90

4. Assessors are required to observe in classrooms where either Spanish or English is the language of instruction. For centers where Spanish is the predominant language of instruction, a certified and reliable Spanish ECERS-R or ITERS-R assessor is a requirement. For all family child care assessments, a certified and reliable Spanish FCCERS-R assessor is a requirement.
5. Provide written electronic reports with detailed scoring information (item-level and global scores) with sufficient detail about observations so meaningful technical assistance can be provided to early learning program directors, coaches, and teachers. If necessary, assessors must be available for questions from First 5 program/evaluation staff and/or technical assistance providers by phone.
6. The term of the contract is March 15, 2019 – March 14, 2020.

*The number of assessments may increase or decrease by up to 10% .

Qualifications and Requirements

- Have participated in an Early Care Environmental Rating Scale training at least 3 days in duration within the past 5 years and have achieved acceptable reliability to standards set by Quality Counts California. ERS assessors must have achieved 85% reliability with either a California Department of Education master anchor or an anchor deemed reliable by CDE or the Bay Area Quality Early Learning Partnership (BAQELP).
- At least one (1) qualified Spanish-speaking FCCERS assessor must be available to conduct all family child care assessments.
- Provide quality assurance and supervision of assessors to include review of reports prior to submission by an anchor level observer. Quality assurance will ensure that reports include specific descriptive information to support item level scores.
- Coordinate scheduling and logistics to assign assessors to ECE sites and coordinate with the First 5 Santa Cruz County Quality Counts Program Manager to provide necessary information to site directors, teachers, parents and children so that they are prepared for the observation visit(s). Pre-assessment communication expectations are described in the attached BAQELP assessment protocols.
- Provide written reports within 20 working days (4 weeks) of the site observation on each assessment after the site observation on each assessment to the First 5 Santa Cruz County Quality Counts Program Manager. Written reports will provide detailed scoring information including sufficient detail about observations so that technical assistance providers can offer meaningful feedback to directors, teachers and providers. Assessors must be available for questions from the First 5 Santa Cruz County Quality Counts Program Manager and First 5 contracted staff (FCC Coordinator).
- Provide anchors for reliability checks of ERS assessments in accordance with the standards set by the Quality Counts CA Implementation Guide and BAQELP assessment protocols.
- Sign a conflict of interest statement that describes any early care settings for which the applicant may have a conflict.
- Demonstrate ability to conduct themselves professionally and respectfully in a wide variety of early childhood education settings.
- Monitor quality of assessments and assessor conduct by soliciting feedback from site directors or supervisors.
- Participate in rating appeal reviews if ERS scores are requested for an appeal.
- Experience in the area of early care and education in early learning settings.
- Demonstrate strong interpersonal, oral, and written communication skills.
- Demonstrate strong organizational skills and careful attention to detail.
- Demonstrate dependability with strong ability to work independently and under direction.
- Demonstrate strong ability to work well under deadlines and effectively manage multiple timelines simultaneously within an active team environment.
- Show proof of passing a criminal background check (i.e. LiveScan).
- Show proof of submitting to and passing a TB test.

Work Environment

- Travel throughout Santa Cruz County.
- Possession of a valid California driver's license, car insurance and a reliable means of transportation.
- Home or agency office.

Notice

This position may be changed or cancelled at any time. Additional information and/or clarification may be requested from any or all applicants. All submittals and applications become the property of First 5.

Eligibility

First 5 is seeking a Contractor that has expertise and demonstrated ability in the following areas:

- Demonstrated infrastructure to manage, schedule, mentor, and maintain a group of assessors and maintain documentation for scheduling, reporting, and invoicing in a timely manner.
- Proven track record of successfully implementing large scale assessment assignments under strict timelines from assessment to finished reports.
- Demonstrated experience implementing valid and reliable assessments in center based and family child care settings.
- Access to an assessor pool with qualifications in ERS as described above.
- Access to an assessor pool of sufficient size to meet the assessment demand within projected time periods.
- Ability to work in culturally and linguistically diverse early care and education settings.

Experience working in Bay Area Regional Partnership (Alameda County, San Francisco County, Contra Costa County, San Mateo County, Santa Cruz County, San Benito County, Santa Clara County, and Monterey County) is preferred

Application Instructions

Applicants must submit the following:

- 1) Cover letter (1 page)
- 2) Completed Application Form (available on website)
- 3) A resume or equivalent for each individual that will be involved in the services outlined in this RFQ.
- 4) Documentation of participation in the appropriate ERS training at least 3 days in duration within the past 5 years and achievement of 85% reliability with annual re-calibration across 3 ratings with an Anchor.
- 5) A project budget
- 6) Writing Sample – Completed Assessment Report & Score sheet

Response to the request for qualifications is due Monday, March 4, 2019 at 5:00 pm via email to Barbara Dana at bdana@first5scc.org. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that applications are received on time. **Please include in subject: "FIRST 5 ERS Assessor RFQ"**

Using the Application Form, please respond in no more than six (6) total pages of narrative in font size 12. Budget forms, sample reports, and client references do not count toward the narrative page limit.

1. Describe your qualifications to conduct bilingual Spanish/English ERS assessments in center based and family child care settings.
2. Describe your experience managing an assessment project of a similar scope and scale, including how you envision a timely submission process would work and how you would manage the scheduling of visits.
3. How does the QRIS Implementation Guide inform your assessment process? How would you ensure alignment with First 5 Santa Cruz County, Regional QRIS, and Quality Counts California's assessment procedures?
4. Describe how you select assessors. How do you ensure that they are appropriately trained and qualified? How do you ensure that your assessors will conduct themselves in a culturally responsive and respectful manner in their work with a wide variety of early care and education environments?
5. Describe how you will ensure reliability and validity of assessments. How will you provide quality assurance for assessment conduct and reporting quality?
6. What do you anticipate the challenges will be? How will you address these challenges? Some examples of challenges might be staffing, scheduling, timely reporting, etc.
7. Please provide 3 client references
8. Please provide a sample of one ERS written report. Please include any sample pre-assessment packet shared with sites that introduces the assessor or assessment. Provide a sample timeline that includes initial contact, scheduling, site visit, assessment documentation, follow ups, submission of reports, and any other important tasks that occur during the assessment time frame.

Budget

Using the document provided, please submit a budget of your proposed expenses. Please provide both your fixed costs for overhead, administration, and quality assurance (including anchoring if needed) as well as the per session cost for an ERS assessment. The budget form does not count toward the 6 page limit. Please provide a narrative description of the line items in the budget form.