

First 5 California  
Child Signature Program (CSP)  
RFA #2  
Frequently Asked Questions  
May 16, 2012

**Program Questions**

1. **Q:** In Appendix C1, it states that the preschool teacher/provider child ratio is 1:8. I understand that for the existing PoP sites, a ratio of 1:10 is allowed for Head Start sites. Can you confirm that the ratio for all sites in RFA #2 must be 1:8? That would leave out most Head Start sites.

**A:** For RFA #2, counties may select preschool classrooms with a ratio of 1:10 to participate. However, those classrooms will not be eligible to apply for RFA #3 in 2013 unless the ratio is reduced to 1:8, which will be a requirement for those classrooms included in that application.

2. **Q:** Is it possible to waive the full day infant/toddler requirement?

**A:** No. Infant/toddler care is 6 or more hours per day operating for a 175 day school year or an equivalent plan. Infant/toddler programs would operate 1050 hours per year.

3. **Q:** Next year, can counties substitute newly identified county funded classrooms for a classroom eliminated due to funding cuts or FY 2013-14 with the understanding that they would not be eligible to apply to be a CSP PoP site (RFA #3) but would be eligible to receive training and technical assistance for the remaining two fiscal years?

**A:** No. Only classrooms listed on Form 4a - Classroom Profile Information at the time of application are able to participate. Requests received by June 15, 2012, to replace classrooms that were submitted on Form 4a with the application for RFA #2 will be considered provided the county submits documentation substantiating the need for replacement, identifies which classrooms were eliminated, and which were added. A new Form 4a marked "REVISED" also must accompany the request.

4. **Q:** Will counties working with Early Head Start and CDE Infant-Toddler programs be required to provide additional information on income eligibility?

**A:** No. However, this documentation should be available at the site for audit purposes.

5. **Q:** Does the “Early Education Expert” on page 17 of RFA #2 refer to the essential staff required in RFA #1, or is it a best practice of getting input from Early Education Experts in general throughout the field?

**A: Use of “Early Education Expert” on page 17 of RFA #2 refers to the essential staff required as part of RFA #1.**

6. **Q:** Will there be a tool or rubric designed to evaluate the implementation of the Principles on Equity and/or will they be imbedded into the Readiness Assessment?

**A: The Principles on Equity will be imbedded into the applicable content areas of the Readiness Assessment.**

### **Staffing Questions**

7. **Q:** Does the Assistant Teacher have to have an AA degree in order to be eligible for RFA #3 or will an alternative pathway be allowed (e.g., Associate teacher permit or CDA or ongoing progress toward those requirements)?

**A: In order for a classroom to be eligible to participate in RFA #3, all staff must meet the Teacher/Provider Qualification Quality Levels (Attachment D). This includes all Assistant Teachers having no less than an Associate in Arts degree by July 1, 2013.**

### **Fiscal Questions**

8. **Q:** While the classrooms listed on Form 4a are the proposed First 5 California Participating Classrooms, these Form 4a classrooms also receive First 5 local indirect dollars for comprehensive family support and mental health services. Should we re-enter the same classrooms on Form 4a in Form 4b?

**A: No. Any classroom that appears on Form 4a should not appear on Form 4b. Only classrooms supported by First 5 California funding for RFA #2 should appear on Form 4a. Form 4b is completed only in cases where the county decides to fund additional classrooms (not included on Form 4a) with their local funds or funding other than First 5 California RFA #2 funding.**

9. **Q:** Can “taxes” be included in allowable costs for the salary and benefits of the ELSS?

**A: All costs to fund a specific position will be fully reimbursed.**

First 5 California  
Child Signature Program (CSP)  
RFA #2  
Frequently Asked Questions  
April 27, 2012

**Program Questions**

1. **Q:** Can counties include preschool classrooms in RFA #2 that have some form of parent fees? Some counties have several preschool programs funded with First 5 dollars that serve a high-need population and charge a sliding scale parent fee. There are also classrooms that have successfully blended State Preschool, First 5, and parent fees.

**A:** **Preschool classrooms that meet all requirements of RFA #2 (e.g., “Eligible Applicants,” “Target Population”) and impose a parent fee, are eligible to be included in RFA #2 provided all classrooms that do not impose a fee have been targeted without success. Documentation confirming unwillingness to participate in RFA #2 for each targeted classroom that does not impose a fee must be maintained by the county for audit purposes. If classrooms that charge a fee are included in RFA #2, they will not be eligible to apply for RFA #3.**

2. **Q:** Are privately owned child development centers able to participate in RFA #2?

**A: No. Privately owned child development centers are not eligible to participate in RFA #2. This is consistent with the PoP program and RFA #1.**

3. **Q:** As a current PoP county whose CSP candidate sites do not qualify for RFA #3, how will we keep those sites so that our reimbursement won't be reduced because they drop out?

**A: For current PoP Bridge counties, all classrooms participating in RFA #2 will remain Promise Sites throughout the three-year period. Training covering the three quality enhancement Program Elements will be available to Promise Sites that, through the Readiness Assessment, have demonstrated that they meet the CSP Baseline Criteria (Attachment C2).**

4. **Q:** Is the expectation that if the E4 does not provide needed training it will be the responsibility of the county to do so?

**A: The E4 is designed to develop training based on the results of the Readiness Assessment with input from the ELSS. If the targeted training areas available through the E4 do not include additional training desired by a county, the county may elect to fund that additional training. It is solely at a county's discretion as to whether it chooses to fund training not available through the E4.**

### **Eligible Applicants Questions**

**5. Q: Would a Community College Child Development Center located in a school catchment area with an API decile greater than 5 be eligible to participate in RFA #2 if documentation is provided demonstrating that the children in care reside in elementary school catchment areas with an API in deciles 1-3?**

**A: A Community College Child Development center may be included in RFA #2 provided documentation is provided that supports the children enrolled reside in elementary school catchment areas with an API score in deciles 1-3. Children enrolled in Community College Child Development Centers can come from all parts of the county. In this instance, the location of the center is not reflective of the API for which children reside.**

**6. Q: Can a classroom like Head Start that targets high risk low-income children that is located in an elementary school catchment area with an API score greater than 5 participate in RFA #2?**

**A: Yes. Programs such as Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant Child Care and State Preschool that have strict eligibility requirements targeting low-income high risk children can be included in RFA #2 regardless of the API where the program is located.**

**7. Q: What if a county only has one infant-toddler center and it is located in an API district with a decile 5 or below, does this automatically disqualify them from participation?**

**A: No. Section IV of RFA #2 under "Eligible Applicants - Overview" states that "classrooms selected by the county must serve children ages 0 to 5 who live in elementary school catchment areas with a current Academic Performance Index (API) score in deciles 1-3. An exception will be made to extend the API to 1-5 only for counties that can demonstrate that they have no elementary school with an API ranking at or below the 3<sup>rd</sup> decile." In limited cases, exceptions may be considered based on documentation supporting the exception request.**

First 5 California  
Child Signature Program (CSP)  
RFA #2  
Frequently Asked Questions  
April 24, 2012

**Program Questions**

1. **Q:** Do classrooms selected to participate in RFA #2 have to meet the CSP Baseline Criteria and teacher/provider: child ratio at entry?

**A:** No, meeting the CSP Baseline Criteria and/or teacher/provider: child ratio at entry (July 1, 2012) is not a requirement for selecting classrooms to participate in RFA #2. Also, classrooms selected to participate may be at different quality levels at the time of application for RFA #2 as described below:

- Counties may choose to select some classrooms they believe meet all the CSP Baseline Criteria and teacher/provider: child ratio and may be eligible for RFA #3 funding.
- Counties may select classrooms that do not yet meet all the CSP Baseline Criteria and teacher/provider: child ratio at entry but are close enough to possibly meet these requirements during FY 2012-13 making the classrooms eligible to apply for RFA #3.
- Counties may choose to include classrooms that do not meet the CSP Baseline Criteria and/or teacher/provider: child ratio. Those classrooms will remain as “Promise Sites” throughout the term of RFA #2 (July 1, 2012, through June 30, 2015).

**Please note, classrooms must participate in RFA #2 in order to be included in the application for RFA #3.**

2. **Q:** Will a Family Child Care center be considered one classroom or will it be based on the number of students served?

**A:** A Family Child Care center is considered one classroom provided it meets the classroom minimum number of preschool children and/or infants and toddlers. (See RFA #2, Section IX, Part A)

3. **Q:** Who will participate in RFA #2? Is it the center director or all center staff?

- A: The center director will likely participate in some of the activities of this RFA, especially in providing assistance with completion of the Readiness Assessment. The implementation of the quality improvement plans will likely include participation of all classroom staff and perhaps the center director when appropriate. Staff of the county commission will also be engaged as they may have additional resources to commit in support of ECE quality enhancement.**
4. **Q:** Attachment D indicates teacher education levels. Do RFA #2 participants need to meet this requirement?
- A: Participants in RFA #2 do not need to meet the “Teacher/Provider Qualification Quality” levels from Attachment D at entry. However, a classroom that will be included in a county’s application for RFA #3 must meet those qualifications at time of application. The Attachment D requirements may be selected as an area of improvement a classroom will focus on during the 3-year program period.**
5. **Q:** Who will be conducting the Readiness Assessments and verify that the results meet the CSP Baseline Criteria?
- A: Completion of the Readiness Assessment is the responsibility of the classroom with the assistance and support from the ELSS. A sample of classrooms may receive site visits to verify Readiness Assessment reporting (refer to RFA #2, Section VII).**
6. **Q:** Has First 5 California determined who will be conducting the assessments of classrooms? Will there be a cadre of assessors available? How will you ensure reliability and validity across the state?
- A: The ERS and CLASS assessments only need to be completed on classrooms that the county projects will apply for RFA #3. Counties should be looking toward their own resources or available resources within their county to ensure the completion of child-level and classroom assessments (e.g., ERS or CLASS). Assessments need to be completed by external assessors however, not all classrooms will need to be assessed. The county may establish protocols for when an assessment would be warranted as they are a costly investment. The E4 will not be conducting these assessments for sites.**
7. **Q:** How can a county identify sites and obtain their commitment to participate in RFA #2 by the application deadline if sites that are identified may be eliminated due to state budget cuts?

**A: First 5 California recognizes that the state is experiencing challenging fiscal times and that there is uncertainty about future funding of early childhood programs. Therefore, we expect counties to include classrooms that can make a commitment to participate at the time of application. For a limited time before program implementation begins, First 5 California will allow a county to replace classrooms that have been eliminated or find that they are no longer able to participate due to funding cuts. The county must request and provide substantiation for the classroom replacements to First 5 California by June 15, 2012.**

**8. Q: In RFA #2 on page 21, there is a reference to the “CSP Program Coordinator.” What is the function of this position relative to the E4 and ELSS?**

**A: The “CSP Program Coordinator” pertains only to PoP Bridge counties funded in RFA #1. The CSP Program Coordinator (previously the PoP Coordinator) is one of the essential (required) staff to implement RFA #1. The expectation for RFA #1 counties that also participate in RFA #2 is for the CSP Program Coordinator to collaborate with the ELSS and coordinate county-specific training and technical assistance each will receive from the E4.**

### **Eligible Applicants Questions**

**9. Q: If a county is unable to secure participation of classrooms in API deciles 1-3 because of unwillingness of classrooms to participate, can the county request an exception to extend participation to classrooms in API deciles through 5?**

**A: If a county has solicited participation from all classrooms in elementary school catchment areas with current API scores in deciles 1-3 and are unable to secure their participation, the county may request an exception to extend the API to deciles 1-5 (unwillingness to participate in RFA #2 by all classrooms in API deciles 1-3 is comparable to having “no elementary schools with an API ranking at or below the 3<sup>rd</sup> decile” as described in Section V). The county must provide supporting documentation with its application that corroborates the exception request. Counties must have attempted to establish relationships with the classrooms in catchment areas with an API in deciles 1-3 within the past 12 months.**

**10. Q: Can Head Start classrooms participate in RFA #2?**

**A: Head Start classrooms and centers can be included as CSP Promise Sites in the county application. Additionally, Head Start may serve as**

a subcontractor to county commissions; however, Head Start cannot apply directly or be a Lead Agency for RFA #2.

### **Staffing Questions**

**11. Q:** Will First 5 California allow flexibility for who staff can report to in cases where it is problematic for the ELSS to report to the county commission?

**A. A county may include in its application an alternative designee to whom the ELSS will report and provide documentation that substantiates the need for an alternative reporting structure.**

### **Fiscal Questions**

**12. Q:** What is the difference between classrooms reported on Form 4a and classrooms reported on Form 4b?

**A: The classrooms reported on Form 4a are those supported with First 5 California funding through RFA #2. If a county commission elects to include additional classrooms in their application, the county commission must fund those classrooms at a level equal to or greater than the funding to classroom ratio reflected in the chart in Section XI, Part A. Form 4b will only be completed in cases where the county commission has elected to fund additional classrooms that will be eligible to receive training and technical assistance from the E4.**

**13. Q:** When completing forms 4a and 4b, how will the county know in advance of completing the assessment whether or not more than 50% is DLL/SN/Migrant? If the answer is “no” or “unknown,” can the classroom still go on the list?

**A: Counties can provide an estimate for those classrooms (based on county or regional demographic data) that they intend to include and indicate that they will verify the information during the Readiness Assessment. The county must notify First 5 California in writing of any changes to the information and data included in its application.**

**14. Q:** What is the suggested allocation for project-related travel?

**A: Estimated project-related travel costs must include costs for the ELSS to attend the annual 2-day training. The E4 will deliver training**

**in the most cost effective way to minimize travel costs. Travel costs will differ from county to county based on the parameters the county establishes for travel and the cost to travel within and outside the county.**

**Evaluation Questions**

**15. Q:** Can RFA #2 funds be used for evaluation activities? If so, where in the budget should this amount appear?

**A:** Evaluation expenses are an allowable expense provided the expenditure promotes and supports the requirements of RFA #2. Evaluation costs should appear under “Operating Costs” on the line designated as “Other.”

First 5 California  
Child Signature Program (CSP)  
RFA #2  
Frequently Asked Questions  
April 13, 2012

**Program Questions**

1. **Q:** For current Power of Preschool (PoP) counties wanting to apply for RFA #2, will the emphasis be on training and quality improvement for the new classrooms (Promise Sites) we identify in the application since we are not eligible to apply for RFA #3?

**A: Yes. For current PoP counties, funding from RFA #2 will provide training, technical assistance, and support from the Early Education Effectiveness Exchange (E4) and the Early Learning Systems Specialist (ELSS) for quality improvement of the CSP Promise Sites.**

2. **Q:** Please provide some examples of how this is being coordinated with Race to the Top.

**A: Coordination between RFA #2 and Race to The Top (RTT) is a local decision. Each county will determine the extent of coordination based on their resources. RFA #2 participants must meet all requirements contained in the RFA. However, counties participating in RTT will be able to benefit from training provided by the E4 and ELSS that overlap with both the CSP Baseline Criteria (Attachment C2) and CSP Quality Enhancement Elements (Attachment C1).**

3. **Q:** If “Promise Sites” participating in RFA #2 do not qualify to participate as CSP Candidate Sites” in RFA 3, how are counties to maintain training requirements without incentives?

**A: Each county will be responsible for selecting centers/classrooms that agree to engage in quality improvement activities throughout the three-year funding period. Incentives to participate include free support from the ELSS and training and technical assistance that would otherwise not be available. This training and technical assistance is designed to enhance quality in participating centers/classrooms in areas identified for needed improvements.**

4. **Q:** If the classrooms/agencies fall into the category of CSP “Promise Sites,” can these sites continue to participate through 2015 as long as they continue to maintain the Promise Site label?

**A: All participating centers/classrooms that do not eventually qualify to receive RFA #3 funding (CSP Promise Sites) will engage in quality improvement activities throughout the three-year funding period: FY 2012-13 through 2014-15 (Section IV, A). Centers and classrooms that meet the CSP Baseline Criteria and do not receive RFA #3 funding are to remain as Promise Sites and work toward meeting the CSP Quality Enhancement (Attachment C1) elements, receive all services and benefits, and complete all requirements of RFA #2.**

**5. Q: Who is required to complete the on-line Tobacco Training?**

**A: At a minimum, “All participating classroom staff will complete an on-line tobacco training” (Section VII). The tobacco training provides useful information for all staff working in early care and education. It is our hope that all center staff will be encouraged to take the training regardless of whether their classroom participates in RFA #2 or not.**

**6. Q: Is the number of classrooms defined by the sessions or classroom ( i.e., would a classroom with an A.M. and P.M. session be counted as 2 or 1)?**

**A: The classroom number is defined by the number of sessions, the classroom with both A.M. and P.M. sessions will be counted as 2 classrooms.**

**7. Q: What is the rationale for the requirement of having a minimum of 1 preschool classroom serving no fewer than 12 preschool children?**

**A: The decision to require applicants to “include a minimum of 1 preschool classroom serving no fewer than 12 preschool children” (Section IX, A) is based on California Child Care Licensing (January 2007) Section 101216.3 “Teacher – Child Ratio” that states: “There shall be a ratio of one teacher visually observing and supervising no more than 12 children in attendance.”**

### **Target Population Questions**

**8. Q: The RFA talks both about API scores in deciles 1-3 and the areas defined by the Local Child Care Planning Council (LPC). Do the areas defined by the LPC only kick-in after the API scores in deciles 1-3 criteria have been met?**

**A: The target population requirements identified in Section V must first be met before the “Additional Eligibility Target Population” requirements are met.**

9. **Q:** (Rural County Question): Can we qualify an entire school district as a catchment area if the majority of children attend schools with a API score in deciles 1-5, are geographically isolated, and have high concentrations of Dual Language Learners (DLL) and students qualifying for free and reduced lunches?

**A:** According to the California Department of Education (CDE), the API reflects a school's, a school district's, or a subgroup's performance level, based on the results of statewide testing. Only in cases where CDE has based the API on the academic performance of the district and not on individual schools will the API of the school district be allowed.

### **Staffing Questions**

10. **Q:** Is the assumption that a full-time ELSS would be able to handle up to 30 classrooms? If so, would that mean that an ELSS for 10-14 classrooms would be at or below 50% FTE? So, if an application came in for 10-14 classrooms, would a part-time ELSS be acceptable?

**A:** The ELSS position will need to be staffed proportionate to the funding allocated based on the number of identified classrooms (up to 30). A full-time ELSS would serve no more than 30 classrooms. A county that has:

- 10 - 14 participating classrooms and receives \$35, 000 will need to hire an ELSS at no less than 20% FTE
- 15 – 19 participating classrooms and receives \$52,500 will need to hire an ELSS at no less than 40% FTE
- 20 – 24 participating classrooms receives \$70,000 will need to hire an ELSS at no less than 60% FTE
- 25-29 participating classrooms receives \$87,500 will need to hire an ELSS at no less than 80% FTE
- 30 participating classrooms receives \$105,000 will need to hire a ELSS at no less than 100% FTE

11. **Q:** Will you be issuing guidelines for the staffing of the ELSS position beyond those in the RFA?

**A:** The full set of guidelines for the ELSS is included in the Job Description (Attachment E). No additional guidelines for the ELSS beyond what is included in the RFA #2 document and attachments will be issued.

12. **Q:** Can the Early Learning Systems Specialist (ELSS) job description be considered services that can be contracted through a team or organization, and not a person?

**A: Section XI, Q5 of RFA #2 allows the First 5 County Commission to subcontract with another agency to implement the CSP. However, Section XI, E states that “First 5 California will not reimburse administrative and/or indirect costs for the ELSS position and related expenses.” It is up to the county’s discretion as to whether a team or organization will fulfill the responsibilities of the ELSS. The county is responsible for meeting all requirements detailed in the ELSS duty statement. The county will need to explain how each requirement of the ELSS will be accomplished through an alternative delivery structure.**

**13. Q:** There are no funds allowed for administration, indirect costs, etc. This assumes that the First 5 county commission will provide this as in-kind. Is it appropriate for the ELSS to complete all the required reports?

**A. The ELSS position responsibilities can include completion of required reports and corresponding administrative responsibilities. However, it would be more cost effective for the county to provide the administrative support for the ELSS so that they can make better use of their time and skills to work with the participating centers and classrooms and formulate responses to the reports.**

### **Fiscal Questions**

**14. Q:** What is the definition of “First 5 California funded classrooms” and “county funded classrooms”?

**A: Section XIII, Part D, Form 6, Section 6B of RFA #2 describes First 5 California funded and county funded classrooms. The term “First 5 California funded classrooms” refers to First 5 California funding used to support, not directly fund, up to the maximum of 30 classrooms through this RFA. First 5 California funds will be used to provide training, technical assistance, and support from the Early Education Effectiveness Exchange (E4) and Early Learning Systems Specialist (ELSS). In addition, Section XI, Part A, provides an option for counties to include up to 30 additional classrooms (above the 30 classroom maximum supported with First 5 California funds). Including additional classrooms as part of RFA #2 is strictly at the discretion of the county. Funding for these additional classrooms (“county funded classrooms”), added at the county’s discretion, will be at the county’s expense. As with First 5 California funded classrooms, those classrooms must comply with all RFA #2 requirements to receive support from the E4.**

**15. Q:** Commissions will want some indication of the state's thoughts regarding the required "match" associated with RFA #3.

**A: The RFA #3 match amount has not been determined; however, it is likely that it will mirror the county match requirement contained in RFA #1.**

**16. Q:** If a region applies for funding, will the formula be the total of what each county could apply for separately? For example, one county has 30 classrooms (\$105,000), one county has 10 classrooms (for \$35,000) and one county has 20 classrooms (for \$70,000) – can the region apply for \$210,000?

**A: No. The RFA allows for a First 5 county commission or consortium to apply for RFA #2. A consortium may apply only in cases where a single county is unable to meet the minimum number of classrooms for participation in RFA #2 (Section IV, D). The funding formula is then based on the total number of classrooms served up to a maximum of 30 classrooms. Additional classrooms may be added (up to a total of 60) at county expense. (See Question #4)**

**17. Q:** Form 4a-reflects "State Funded Classroom Profile Information." Are we limited to state funded classrooms? Is Head Start also accepted?

**A: The title for "Form 4a" should be "First 5 California Participating Classrooms" and not "State Funded Classrooms." First 5 California will not fund classrooms per se, in this RFA. Instead, RFA #2 funds the training, technical assistance, and support provided to participating centers and classrooms through the E4 and ELSS. Any center or classroom that meets the "Target Population" (Section V) criteria is eligible to participate (this includes State Funded Preschool, Early Head Start, Head Start, etc.). In PoP counties, all centers and classrooms already included in RFA #1 are NOT eligible to be included in RFA #2 (Section IV, C)**

**18. Q:** In reference to the preview of First 5 California CSP Readiness Assessment: For those classrooms/agencies referred to as "CSP Promise Sites," what assistance will they receive for external evaluators regarding ECRS/CLASS in order to be promoted to "CSP Candidate Sites"?

**A: Funding for external evaluators for ECRS and CLASS is an allowable budgeted expense for all centers/classrooms identified for**

**participation in RFA #2 as it is directly related to the core RFA #2 program requirements (Section XI, B).**

**19. Q:** Please explain the section on “Program Compliance Review” and provide information on what it entails as it appears to be new.

**A:** The purpose of a program compliance review is to ensure that contractors are complying with the program requirements of the agreement. A program compliance review is typically performed onsite and may include confirmation of program-related requirements such as participation eligibility, use of funds, maintenance of documentation to support program expenditures, etc. The contractor would be notified in advance of the guidelines for the review and the schedule for the review. The Program Compliance Review component is a necessary state program oversight function.

**20. Q:** How much has been allocated for RFA #2? How competitive will this be among counties?

**A:** RFA #2 is not a competitive process. First 5 California has available funding for all 58 counties to participate.

**21. Q:** Please clarify the issue of “reimbursement” vs “carryover.”

**A:** The definitions for “reimbursement” and “carry over” are included in the CSP RFA #2 Fiscal Glossary, Attachment I.

**“Reimbursement” is the cash issued by the state to the contractor as repayment of the cost of work or services performed through RFA #2 up to the maximum amount of the agreement. Reimbursement may also include repayment of expenditures made for or on behalf of another governmental unit, fund, or department.**

**“Carryover” is the unobligated (unspent) award balance from a previous year's award that a contractor requests to have transferred to the current year's award, and are available to spend in addition to the current year's award. A carryover request is accomplished through the budget revision process.**