



**REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)
Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)
Classroom Scoring System (CLASS®)**

**RFQ Release Date: September 25, 2024
Application Due Date: October 9, 2024 at 5:00 PM
Contract Start Date: October 15, 2024**

For more information, please contact:

First 5 Santa Cruz County
Attn: Vicki Boriack, Senior Program Officer
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**Quality Rating and Improvement System
CLASS Assessment Request for Qualifications**

RFQ APPLICATION PROCESS AND TIMELINE*		
ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	DATE
Release Date	Applications are available online at www.first5scc.org .	September 25, 2024
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 .	September 26 - October 8, 2024
Application Submission Deadline	The completed application packet must be emailed to Vicki Boriack at: vboriack@first5scc.org Application Packet shall include: 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 holding current certification from Teachstone as a reliable CLASS® observer for the CLASS 2008 Pre-K tool. 5. A project budget including hours and rate (use attached form) 6. Writing Sample – Completed Assessment Report & Score sheet	October 9, 2024 - by 5:00 p.m. Application 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.	October 9 - October 11, 2024
Contract Execution	First 5 Santa Cruz County will award the contract to the most qualified applicant.	October 15, 2024
Contract Term	Term: The term of this agreement is for 5 months, with execution of the Scope of Work beginning October 15, 2024 with all documentation completed by January 15, 2025. Contract term ends March 15, 2025 to allow time for appeals if necessary. Billable assessment rates and total contract amount will be negotiated between FIRST 5 and the selected applicant.	October 15, 2024 – March 15, 2025

*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 CLASS® 2008 PreK (Spanish/English) Quality Rating and Improvement System Assessment
REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)
October 2024 – March 15, 2025**

Summary:

First 5 Santa Cruz County (First 5) is seeking submittals from reliable and certified independent assessors to conduct valid Classroom Scoring System (CLASS®) assessments for California State Preschool Programs (CSPP) participating in Quality Counts Santa Cruz County (QCSCC), a local Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). First 5 needs to facilitate approximately 20 CLASS® assessments by December 20, 2024 in CSPP center sites utilizing the CLASS® 2008 PreK tool. Final written reports and data entry need to be completed by January 15, 2025. Any site/agency appeals and subsequent reconciliation will take place between January 15 and March 15, 2025.

Under the supervision of the Quality Counts Program Manager, the Bilingual CLASS® Assessor(s) will be responsible for conducting valid and reliable CLASS® assessments using the CLASS® 2008 PreK instrument. (Note: all assessments will use this tool rather than the CLASS 2nd edition Pre-K – 3 tool.) The Bilingual Spanish CLASS® assessor(s) will also provide detailed technical assistance reports based on CLASS® 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 2020, First 5 Santa Cruz County adopted a new strategic plan, which describes the Commission's priorities and funding allocations for 2020-2025. For a copy of the strategic plan, visit our web site at www.First5scc.org.

Quality Counts Overview

Quality Counts California (QCC) is a statewide initiative dedicated to supporting and improving the quality of early care and education throughout California. The goal of QCC is to ensure consistent high-quality early care and education experiences for California's infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children, whether in center-based or home-based programs. The initiative is a partnership at the state level, by the California Department of Education (CDE), First 5 California (F5CA), and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), and is implemented at the county or regional level through locally tailored and operated Quality Improvement Systems (QIS) and Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS).

Both types of systems engage early learning and care programs, in a continuous quality improvement process based on a common set of program quality standards. A QRIS includes quality ratings and in Santa Cruz County is conducted only in CSPP sites. A rating is based on a tiered rating structure with progressively higher quality standards for each tier that provides supports and incentives for programs, teachers, and administrators to reach higher levels of quality, monitors and evaluates the impacts on child outcomes, and disseminates information to parents and the public about program quality. One element of the tiered rating structure utilizes an external assessment of the classroom via the CLASS® 2008 PreK tool, and is conducted by a certified CLASS® assessor.

Santa Cruz County has been operating a local QRIS since 2012, under the guidance of the Quality Counts Santa Cruz County 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.

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 CLASS® Pre-K assessments in accordance with Quality Counts California QRIS Implementation Guide assessment protocols.
2. Coordinate scheduling and logistics with the First 5 Santa Cruz County Quality Counts Program Manager.
3. The approximate number of CLASS® 2008 Pre-K assessments between October and December 2024 is 20*, all within CSPP classroom sites.
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 and of the children, a certified and reliable Spanish CLASS 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 October 15, 2024 – March 15, 2025.

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

Qualifications and Requirements

- Hold current certification from Teachstone as a reliable CLASS® observer for the CLASS® Pre-K 2008 tool.
- At least one (1) qualified Spanish-speaking CLASS® assessor must be available to conduct assessments in the CSPP sites where the language of instruction and of the children is predominantly Spanish.
- 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 CSPP 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 Quality Counts Santa Cruz County assessment protocols.
- Provide written reports within 15 working days (3 weeks) 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.
- 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 CLASS® 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 settings.
- Access to an assessor pool with qualifications in CLASS® 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 Quality Counts California HUB Region 4 (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
- 2) Completed application form (available on website or attached to email)
- 3) A resume or equivalent for each individual that will be involved in the services outlined in this RFQ.
- 4) Documentation of holding current certification from Teachstone as a reliable CLASS[®] observer for the CLASS[®] 2008 Pre-K tool.
- 5) A project budget including hours and rate (use attached form)
- 6) Writing Sample – Completed Assessment Report & Score sheet

Response to the request for qualifications is due Wednesday, October 9, 2024, at 5:00 pm via email to Vicki Boriack at vboriack@First5scc.org. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that applications are received on time. **Please include in subject: "FIRST 5 CLASS[®] 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 CLASS[®] 2008 PreK assessments in California State Preschool (CSPP) center based settings.
2. Describe your experience managing a CLASS[®] 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 CLASS[®] assessment process? How would you ensure alignment with the QCC Implementation Guide assessment procedures?
4. Describe how you select CLASS[®] 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 within diverse early care and education environments?
5. Describe how you will ensure reliability and validity of CLASS[®] 2008 PreK 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 CLASS[®] 2008 PreK 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 provide a budget of your proposed expenses. Please provide both your fixed costs for overhead, administration, and quality assurance (including anchoring) as well as the per session cost for a CLASS[®] 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.