

**First 5 Commission of San Diego County**  
January 16, 2020  
**Learn Well Initiative – Contract Sole Source**

**Request**

The request before the Commission is to approve a sole source contract with the San Diego County Superintendent of Schools (dba San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) for the Learn Well Initiative. The Learn Well Initiative contract period will be from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2025.

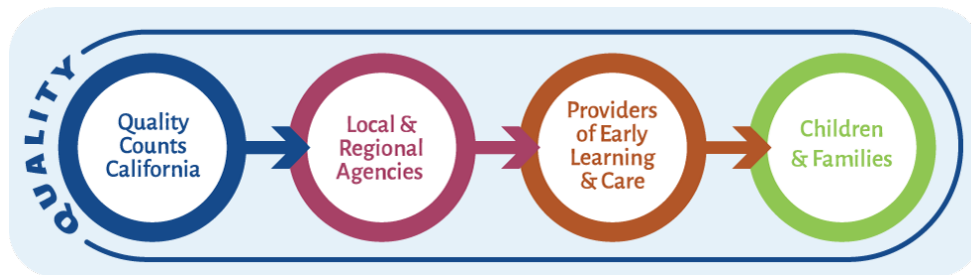
**Background**

The Commission approved a total of up to \$136,219,537 to fund the Quality Preschool Initiative (QPI) for eight years (FY 2012-13 through FY 2019-20). The goal of QPI is to positively impact the growth and development of preschool-age children to ensure that they have the foundation they will need to transition to kindergarten, experience success in school, and become life-long learners. The approach to achieve this goal has been through direct support to participating early care and education providers throughout San Diego County in order to achieve the highest quality rating according to the Quality Counts California (QCC) rating matrix (see attached).

Quality ratings are based on how well the programs meet the five-tiered set of program standards, which cover three core areas:

- Child Development and School Readiness
- Teachers and Teaching
- Program and Environment

The governing structure for quality early learning programming is directed by Quality Counts California (QCC) and is the statewide Quality Rating and Improvement System. QCC is a statewide, locally implemented quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) that funds and provides guidance to local and regional agencies, and other quality partners, in their support of early learning and care providers. QCC helps these agencies enhance the quality of early learning and care programs and informs parents and families on what different quality levels mean for the child's early learning and care setting (see graphic below).



In 2006, First 5 San Diego began supporting quality early learning efforts with the Preschool For All initiative supporting local subsidized providers working with preschool age children. This included local early childhood education providers that received funding from the California Department of Education (CDE) and the Office of Head Start. This aligned with the statewide quality rating and improvement system that provided a Rating Matrix outlining 7 quality elements in the three core areas outlined above.

In 2012, First 5 San Diego created the next phase of supporting the quality journey by funding the Quality Preschool Initiative (QPI) through an open competitive procurement process. QPI has engaged many providers throughout the County and supported them on the path towards achieving the highest quality rating and sustaining the quality elements throughout their programs by providing targeted teacher and

administrator coaching to participating agencies. The coaching intervention supports the growth and development of both the teacher working directly with children and families, and the administrator that supervises the teaching teams. The goal is to see an improvement in the quality of the interactions between teachers and children to support the child's growth and development. Additionally, the San Diego QPI has focused on family strengthening efforts by providing parent workshops on positive parenting, nutrition and linking families to needed supports.

Participation in Quality Counts California mandates the following representation within each County in the State to create a local QCC Consortium: 1) **First 5 Commission**, 2) **County Office of Education**, 3) **Resource and Referral Agency** and 4) **Public Institution of Higher Education**. The funding structure from CDE requires First 5 Commissions to work directly with their respective County Office of Education in applying for quality early learning funds. Ultimately, aligning local First 5 quality early learning funds to support the greater initiative that is known as the San Diego Quality Preschool Initiative.

First 5 San Diego has contracted directly with the San Diego County Superintendent of Schools, also known as, the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE), to oversee the local First 5 San Diego QPI contract and has the primary role of integrating the various quality funding that is received through CDE and First 5 CA. SDCOE is the designated San Diego County rating entity for the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) in California, which is called Quality Counts California (QCC). The QCC effort is funded via multiple sources at the state level and it is required that the local county office of education apply for all funds allocated by the California Department of Education (CDE) for this purpose. There are currently three CDE QRIS grants being leveraged in the San Diego Quality Preschool Initiative effort, totaling \$5,059,921 in the 2019-20 school year. In addition, First 5 California also leverages funding toward QRIS through the IMPACT and IMPACT Hub allocations. All of these funding sources are leveraged to expand the locally funded San Diego Quality Preschool Initiative.

In 2012, SDCOE was awarded the QPI contract following an open competitive procurement process. At that time, the only funding allocation was from First 5 San Diego. Subsequently, additional funding was secured from First 5 California. Starting in FY 2014-15, SDCOE and First 5 have collaborated on applications to also draw down funding made available from CDE. A partnership and collaboration between the SDCOE and the First 5 San Diego Commission are required for San Diego County to be able to draw down the CDE and First 5 California funds allocated to support our local QRIS, The San Diego Quality Preschool Initiative. In addition, First 5 San Diego and SDCOE are required to also leverage efforts with the Resource and Referral agency (YMCA-CRS), the Local Child Care and Development Planning Council, and Institutions of higher Education. SDCOE also serves as the convener of this, the local Quality Counts California (QCC) Consortium, in our collective effort to support increased quality in early learning and care settings.

In order for San Diego County to continue to leverage state-level funding to support the local First 5 San Diego early education initiative to continually increase quality in early learning and care settings, it is necessary to contract with the SDCOE as a Sole Source entity through the next local First 5 initiative funding cycle therefore assuring continued and future access to state-level funding sources. SDCOE is the designated organization in San Diego which oversees QCC because its Early Education Programs and Services Unit provides:

- Early intervention services to infants/toddlers with special needs birth to three years of age and their families.
- Unique positioning in the County to leverage existing formal relationships with Local Educational Agency (LEA) and public/private partnerships across San Diego County
- Professional development and coordination to support quality early education programs for children birth to five, in alignment with California Department of Education Early Learning tools, assessments and recommended practices for birth through 5-year-olds in all types of early learning settings.
- Leadership in developing cross-sector and cross-agency systems to support preschool experiences for birth through 5-year-olds that are developmentally appropriate and designed to promote school readiness for all children.
- Operates the Local Child Care and Development Planning Council, funded by the California Department of Education, under a subcontract from the County of San Diego.

Additionally, SDCOE's Credentialing Department is the only local agency that provides the credentialing services to school districts, charter schools, universities and individuals, which includes, but is not limited to, child development permits and English Learner authorization.

On April 18, 2019, the Commission approved a 5-Year Strategic Plan that supports Health, Learning, Family and Community as critical Strategic Goal Areas. While the previous two strategic plans (2010-2015 and 2015-2020) were built from an extensive and collaborative process, change will be evident in the First 5 San Diego's implementation efforts of the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. First 5 San Diego will elevate its leadership in changing the systems of care to generate better outcomes through stronger collaboration, coordination and integration of the services and programs that support our youngest children and their families. As tobacco revenue declines, direct investments from First 5 San Diego in service and program delivery will also decline, thus, leveraging funding and collaborating with partners is more critical than ever so First 5 San Diego can continue its ongoing commitment as a leader in developing a stronger system of care.

### **Design of the Learn Well Initiative**

The purpose of the Learn Well Initiative is to continue as a partner within the San Diego Quality Preschool Initiative (SDQPI) and build the early care and education systems and supports providers need to serve families with children ages birth to 5 years of age. Learn Well will expand upon the foundation established by the Quality Preschool Initiative through a Multi-Tiered systems of support (MTSS) framework to provide quality improvement strategies and supports based on providers' needs. The MTSS framework approach will focus on Systems Structures, Instructional Practices and Data reviews to continually assess the effectiveness of strategies in changing adult practices that result in improved learning opportunities for children. Participation in Learn Well will allow SDCOE to support providers through self-assessment and determine what level of support they need to make systematic and continuous improvements towards achieving the highest quality rating. Three (3) levels of support will be made available: 1) Access to structures and supports to **ALL** providers; 2) Intentional Structure and supports designed and provided to **SOME** providers based on assessed need; and 3) Intensive supports to a **FEW** providers also based on assessed need. Support level (i.e. **ALL**, **SOME**, **FEW**) is determined based on the evidence of the provider's ability to 1) Implement practices that support achieving or maintain a quality Tier 3 or higher rating; 2) continually make progress towards quality Tier 3 or higher by accessing all available resources and supports available to all participating sites.

The primary goal is to support providers, serving families with young children ages birth to 5 years of age, to continually improve the quality of the learning environment and adult-child interactions, while receiving support in the form of technical assistance, instructional support, coaching and ongoing professional development. The targeted early care and education provider base will be expanded to include family childcare homes, faith based and private providers. This priority aligns with the direction of both the CA Dept of Education and First 5 CA Commission funding that is forthcoming. Participation in and maintenance of site Tier ratings are optional for providers. This is due to the expansion to include early learning and care settings and family childcare homes in an asset-based approach.

Another priority area of Learn Well is to continue building on the priority to connect the work in early care and education with the k-12 system. Learn Well will aim to expand its commitment from Lead Educational Agencies (LEAs) to establish and align school-wide, data-driven systems of academic and behavioral supports to more effectively meet the needs of San Diego County's youngest diverse learners in the most inclusive environment. California's vast and complex educational system requires a multi-faceted approach that is sustainable and scalable that can weave together multiple resources and supports to enhance student learning into a comprehensive Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework to improve child and student outcomes from birth through school-age.

The Learn Well Initiative's MTSS Framework supports whole system engagement in the most inclusive environment over a sustained period through the following structure:

- **Students and Family:** One coherent system of support begins with students and families.
- **Learning/School Site:** Schools have the most direct influence on students, and they are the place where transformation occurs.
- **Lead Educational Agency (LEA)/District:** The LEA/District is the point of intervention that enables sustainable interventions and school-wide transformation.

## **Commission History**

- On April 18, 2019 (Item 3): Commission approved a 5-Year Strategic Plan that supports Health, Learning, Family and Community as critical Strategic Goal Areas.
- On April 24, 2017 (Item 3): Commission approved allocation of additional funding of \$14,377,277 per year for FYs 2018-19 and 2019-20 for the SDCOE QPI contract.
- On February 13, 2017 (Item 2): Commission approved an amendment to include the California Quality Rating and Improvement System Certification in the QPI contract. This action allowed contracting with the SDCOE for this service for FY's 2016-17 and 2017-18.
- On April 4, 2016 (Item 3): Commission approved an increase to the funding for the QPI project to add the Improve and Maximize Program so All Children Thrive (IMPACT) Technical Assistant Hub Grant. This approval resulted in additional funding of \$377,277 annually for FYs 2016-17 to FY 2019-20. (\$14,377,277 for each fiscal year.)
- On June 29, 2015 (Item 4): Commission approved an amendment to add an additional \$1,175,000 for FY 2015-16 to the QPI project.
- On April 13, 2015 (Item 2): Commission approved to allocate funding of up to \$42 million for FYs 2015 through 2018 (\$14 million for each fiscal year).
- On September 10, 2012 (Item 3): Commission approved an amendment to add up to \$3.3 million to the QPI project for FY 2012-13.
- On May 7, 2012 (Item 1): Commission approved to restore and increase the original funding level of the QPI project to up to \$17 million for FY 2012-13, \$18.5 million for FY 2013-14, and \$19.5 million for FY 2014-15.
- On March 5, 2012 (Item 2): Commission approved a contract with SDCOE for up to \$47.1 million FY 2012-13 through FY 2014-15 and included two additional option periods of one-year each (FY 2015-16 and FY 2016-17) for the QPI project.

## **Link to the Strategic Plan**

The following key objectives from the Commission's 2020 – 2025 Strategic Plan will be directly addressed by the First 5 San Diego Learn Well Initiative:

- Parents and primary caregivers have access to mental health care
- Children with developmental delays and social emotional concerns are identified early and receive treatment
- Children attend quality preschool
- Parents and caregivers use positive parenting practices
- Community has capacity to identify, treat, and support the needs of children and pregnant women.

## **Link to Live Well San Diego**

The First 5 San Diego Learn Well Initiative supports Live Well San Diego by providing a variety of opportunities to promote healthy behaviors, including providing early identification of health-related issues (including social-emotional) for children and their families and caregivers.

## **Staff Recommendations**

- 1) Find that the proposed First 5 San Diego Learn Well Initiative is consistent with the Commission's Strategic Plan, furthers the support and improvement of early childhood development within the County and provides a public benefit.
- 2) Authorize the Executive Director, or her designee, to award a sole-source contract with SDCOE for the Learn Well Initiative for up to \$60 million over five years (FYs 20/21 through 24/25).

## **Fiscal Impact**

Up to \$8 million for FY 2020-21 through FY 2024-25 from the Commission's allocation for Programs. Additional funds from the CA Dept of Education and First 5 CA Commission are to be leveraged to support

the countywide San Diego Quality Preschool Initiative. These funds were approved in the 5-year Financial Spending Plan approved in April 2019 as part of the \$115.5 million authorized for Programs for FYs 20/21 through 24/25.

**Attachments**

1. QCC Rating Matrix
2. QCC Partner Graphic