

# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

## Mini-Grants

(July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026)



March 2025

## I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The purpose of First 5 Merced County's Mini-Grants program is to provide (Proposition 10) funding for **one-year** grants and encourage community participation and development of projects that address First 5 Merced County's vision and mission.

### **Vision Statement**

All children in Merced County will thrive in supportive, loving, and nurturing environments and enter school healthy and ready to learn.

### **Mission Statement**

To provide for the optimal physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth of young children in Merced County.

### **Guiding Principles**

- Practicing wise stewardship and maintaining accountability.
- Being transparent about funding decisions and expectations.
- Respecting the diversity, strength, uniqueness, and potential of all children, families, and communities.
- Promoting sustainable change by investing in long-term policy, institutional, funding, and systemic changes that extend First 5 reach and impact.
- Soliciting and listening to the ideas of stakeholders and others and encouraging an open dialogue.
- Establishing partnerships and collaborations with similar mission-driven organizations to facilitate programs and services.
- Investing in systems-level changes to promote cultural equity and sustainability, while allowing for program innovation.
- Improving evidence-based programs and practices based on solid evaluation.

Awards of up to \$10,000.00 are available through an application process to support local, community-driven projects that benefit children ages 0-5 years and their families in Merced County.

## II. MINI-GRANT ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

### **A. Applicant Eligibility Criteria**

Applications will be accepted from:

- Non-profit agencies or organizations
- Private/for-profit businesses or corporations
- Community groups

- Governmental units
- Qualified individuals
- Local Education Agencies (LEA)

Applicants who do not meet the requirements for contracting with First 5 Merced County may be required to work with a fiscal agent (please contact First 5 Merced if you need assistance identifying a qualified fiscal agent).

Family childcare providers, preschools, and IMPACT participants are NOT eligible. Please contact First 5 Merced County for opportunities available to family childcare providers and preschools.

## **B. Eligible Activities**

First 5 Merced County is funded by California Proposition 10 passed in 1998. Proposition 10 legislation mandates that funding is used to serve pregnant mothers, children 0 through 5, their parents, or caregivers. Proposed projects should be short-term service efforts, and/or activities with goals to improve the well-being of children 0-5 years and their families.

Funding requests that are eligible for consideration include, but are not limited to:

- Development of training programs
- Outreach to increase access to resources available for young children and their families
- Development of cross-system policies and procedures to improve service delivery
- Purchase of educational materials and supplies
- Enhance service delivery of current programs
- Development of a new program
- Research, needs assessments, or pilot projects
- Targeted outreach to increase participation in existing programs
- Community education campaign

Examples of funding requests that are NOT eligible include, but are not limited to:

- Requests supporting family child care providers/preschools
- Requests supporting providers or centers participating in the First 5 IMPACT initiative
- Activities supported financially by First 5 funding through any other First 5 funding mechanism
- Purchasing equipment or upgrading preschool playground
- Giving away free groceries to needy families
- Fundraising
- Starting a new preschool/childcare facility

- Ongoing expenses, including ongoing salaried staffing costs or operational expenses, and salaries to support supplemental services are ok.
- Capital project or improvements (defined as any improvements to one's property such as construction, additions, alterations, and/or modifications that may increase the value of that property.)

Eligible applicants are limited to one Mini-Grant per fiscal year (July 1 through June 30). Eligible applicants can apply for additional Mini-Grants in future years of the First 5 Merced County Strategic Plan 2020-2026. First 5 Merced Staff will determine eligibility, for clarification please contact First 5 Merced at [first5@countyofmerced.com](mailto:first5@countyofmerced.com).

Program activities must take place during the 2025-26 fiscal year (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026).

### C. Availability of Funds

The First 5 General Mini-Grants Program will provide one-time funding up to \$10,000.00 depending upon the scope of the proposed project. The Commission plans to award approximately \$100,000 in mini-grants for fiscal year 2025-26. Qualified applicants may only receive one mini-grant per fiscal year.

Funds may not be used to supplant state or local money or to fund existing levels of service.

Funds awarded through this funding mechanism must be expended by June 30, 2026.

### D. Application Requirements

To apply for a General Mini-Grant, review and complete all of the documents listed below. The application will be submitted through the web portal below, you will not be able to save and return to your application. Please make sure you have all the required documents completed before starting your application in the web portal.

A complete application packet must be submitted online at:

<https://a114508.socialsolutionsportal.com/apricot-intake/27800a33-49ef-4038-b73b-9edfa1fa9c76>

Applications will need to upload the forms listed below, these forms can be downloaded online at: <https://app.box.com/s/6meynrj7qjqt6v03w57fwlvlwzu39t7a>

- ☐ Budget Template
- ☐ Action Plan Template
- ☐ Applicant's Policy on Tobacco-Free Environment
- ☐ Documentation of Tax Exempt Status (if applicable)
- ☐ Copy of Business License (if applicable)

If you lack access or ability to apply online, please contact First 5 Merced County staff at [first5@countyofmerced.com](mailto:first5@countyofmerced.com) or (209) 385-7337.

#### **E. Submission**

Applications are due: Friday, May 23, 2025, 5:00 P.M.

A complete application packet must be submitted through the Web Portal before 5:00 PM on the deadline. Packets, regardless of postmark or circumstance, received after the submission deadline will not be considered.

Submit an original of the complete packet through the web portal:

<https://a114508.socialsolutionsportal.com/apricot-intake/27800a33-49ef-4038-b73b-9edfa1fa9c76>

If all funds are not expended during the initial review, additional Mini-Grant applications will be accepted continuously and are considered in the order received throughout the year until allocated funds are exhausted. First 5 Merced County staff will review Mini-Grant Applications and present qualified applications to the First 5 Merced Commission at a future Commission Meeting.

#### **F. Application Review and Selection**

All application packets submitted timely will first be subject to technical review to ensure that the proposal meets the requirements from Section D of this document. Proposals will then be scored by a panel of Staff, the First 5 Merced Commissioners, and Community Stakeholders. Once scoring is complete proposals scoring over 70 will be forwarded to the First 5 Merced County Commission for final consideration.

A total of 100 points may be awarded, according to the following criteria:

- 1. Organizational Capacity** – Applicant is qualified to implement the project and achieve stated objectives. (20 points)
- 2. Project Plan/Action Plan** – The Project Plan is clear with a realistic timeline; project activities are well-defined and technically feasible, and/or within eligibility criteria described in the application. (25 points)
- 3. Benefiting Children and Their Families** - Applicant describes the overall need of the target population and the project serves children 0-5 and their families. (20 points)
- 4. Outcomes/Impact** - Objectives are clearly stated, specific, realistic, measurable, and consistent with First 5 Merced County's vision, mission, and guiding principles. At least one measurable outcome must be identified and the data source identified (i.e. pre-test/post-test). (25 points)

- 5. Financial Viability** - Applicant demonstrates other sources of funding or in-kind support for the project, provides a sound budget, and clearly states how Commission funding is supporting, not completely funding, the proposed project/event. To receive maximum points a 1:1 match needs to be documented on the budget. (10 points)

If the Review Committee scores the proposal at 70 or above, the applicant will be requested to attend a Commission meeting for further clarification or questions about the proposal.

The Commission may waive any immaterial deviation or defect in an application. Any waiver of an immaterial deviation or defect by the Commission shall in no way modify this General Mini-Grants Program Guidelines and Application document, or relieve the successful applicant from full compliance with the grant terms in the Agreement if a grant is awarded.

Applications may be recommended for full or partial funding.

#### **G. Notification**

Applicants will be notified of the decision to award funds (or not) for submitted applications within ten (10) days of Commission action. The Commission reserves the right to reject any applications and to waive informalities and irregularities.

#### **H. Appeals Process**

Applicants that are not accepted for funding may appeal the Commission's decision in writing. The Executive Director must receive written appeals within 15 days from the date of the Commission's vote. Appeals will only be accepted based on a violation of law, rule, regulation, or terms of this document. Mere disagreement with the decision of the Commission is not grounds for appeal. The Commission is the sole and final authority regarding the approval or disapproval of applications and the conditions under which they are funded. The Commission will review accepted appeals at the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting.

All appeals must be made in writing, dated, and signed by the applicant or an individual authorized to sign contracts on behalf of the protesting Applicant, and contain a statement of the reason(s) for protest; citing the law(s), rule(s), and regulation(s) on which the protest is based. Such appeals may be sent either by U.S. mail, postage paid, or hand delivered to:

First 5 Merced County  
ATTN: Executive Director  
260 E. 15<sup>th</sup> Street  
Merced, CA 95341



### III. EXPECTATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

#### A. Award of Contract

Upon approval of funding by the Commission, the successful applicant organization or entity will be required to enter into a performance-based contractual agreement with First 5 Merced County. Program activities must occur in fiscal year 2025-26 (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026).

#### B. Marketing and Development

Any marketing materials (flyers, posters, signs, etc.) for First 5 funded events/activities shall include attribution to First 5 Merced County in the form of an attribution statement and/or official logo (both provided upon funding approval). Organizations are required to submit copies of all marketing materials to First 5 **at least 14 days before** distribution to the public via the Attribution Request in Apricot 360. Notification of media events shall be shared with First 5 **before** recording. Submissions of photos for project activities and/or events are required 10 days after the event.

Recipients of funding under this project will be required to complete a survey and participate in any program-level evaluation activities as required by the Commission. Failure to complete required documentation before closeout could result in the exclusion of subsequent funding opportunities.

#### C. Compensation

Organizations will submit one invoice for all project expenses and be paid on a reimbursement basis. In special circumstances, and with advance approval, multiple invoices may be accepted. Based on organizational capacity, grant recipients may request an advanced payment of up to 50% of the approved grant amount. Receipts for all project expenses outlined in the budget must be provided.

A copy of a financial audit or CPA review of the funded project may be requested within the contractual agreement, to be determined on an individual project basis.

Please review Section 3. Grant Amount and Section 4. Terms of Payment of the Draft Mini-Grant Agreement for additional compensation information.

#### D. Funding Restrictions

Funds will be disbursed to successful applicants in the manner specified in their contractual agreement. Approved funds must be used in fiscal year 2025-26 (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026).

#### E. Notice Regarding Merced County Contract Requirements

First 5 Merced County utilizes the administrative structure, policies, and procedures of the County of Merced to distribute Proposition 10 funds. A Draft Mini-Grants Program Agreement is included in the Attachments section to provide applicants with an understanding of likely contract conditions. Please review the draft agreement (Attachment E) before applying to become familiar with these requirements.

#### **IV. QUESTIONS OR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Technical assistance is available upon request through the following dates:

April 25, 2025 at 5:00 P.M.

All questions and requests for technical assistance concerning the Mini-Grant Program are to be directed to the official contact person:

First 5 Merced County  
Email – [first5@countyofmerced.com](mailto:first5@countyofmerced.com)

#### **V. ATTACHMENTS**

**Attachment A – Project Narrative/Requirements**  
**Attachment B – Budget Template**  
**Attachment C – Action Plan Template**  
**Attachment D – Sample Policy on Tobacco-Free Environment**  
**Attachment E - General Mini Grant Sample Agreement**

These Attachments can be downloaded online at:  
<https://app.box.com/s/6meynrj7qjqt6v03w57fwlvlwzu39t7a>