

Request for Proposals (RFP)

Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage



RFP Issued: April 1, 2026

Proposal Deadline: May 15, 2026, by 5 p.m. ET

Anticipated project period: 12 months; Oct. 1, 2026 - Sep. 30, 2027

Total funding available: \$8,700,000.00

**Note: First Steps Kent reserves the right to modify the estimated amount of funding allocated at any time. These figures represent the best current estimate of the total maximum funds to be allocated. Actual amounts available may vary as they are contingent on the actual annual Kent County property tax capture.

About the Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage

The Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage was established by Kent County leaders and approved by voters to provide dedicated, sustainable funding for early childhood services that improve health, development, and school readiness for children prenatal through age five and their families.

Administered in partnership with community organizations, the millage invests in locally driven, evidence-based programs that help ensure children are born healthy, thriving and developmentally on track, and able to access high-quality early learning opportunities in every community across Kent County.

VISION

Every young child in Kent County will enter kindergarten healthy and ready to succeed in school and life.

MISSION

To strengthen a coordinated and accountable early childhood system with policies, programs, and services that support and empower all families in Kent County with a focus on eliminating disparate outcomes and closing inequitable gaps.



Purpose

Research shows that most brain development occurs before kindergarten, when children are rapidly building the foundations for later learning, behavior, and health. Ready by Five focuses on these early years to help ensure children are born healthy, thriving, and developmentally on track with access to high-quality early learning opportunities.

The purpose of this Request for Proposals (RFP) is to invest Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage funds in services that address persistent gaps in access, quality, and outcomes for young children and families in Kent County. This funding seeks proposals that expand or enhance evidence-informed services for healthy pregnancies, infants, toddlers, and children through age five, with a particular focus on families experiencing barriers related to income, language, race, ethnicity, disability, or geography. Eligible applicants include nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and other qualified entities serving Kent County families with children prenatal through age five directly or through partnership with community-based organizations. Funded projects should align with the Ready by Five mission and vision by strengthening a coordinated early childhood system and delivering high-quality services across priority areas that support children entering kindergarten better prepared to learn and succeed, which is associated with improved school performance, lower absence rates, and higher graduation rates.

12-MONTH EXPECTED OUTCOMES

By the end of the 12-month period, recipients of dedicated millage funds may achieve one or more of the following outcomes:

- Increase access to high-quality early childhood services for families who currently face barriers related to race, income, language, disability, or geography, with particular attention to services that support children being born healthy, thriving and developmentally on-track, and able to access early learning opportunities.
- Strengthen families' knowledge, confidence, and skills to support their children's health, development, and early learning at home and in community settings, contributing to more infants being born healthy and more young children on a path to long-term wellbeing.
- Improve early identification of developmental, behavioral, and health concerns and connect children and families to appropriate follow-up services in a timely manner, so that more children are developmentally on-track and ready to learn.
- Expand participation in high-quality early learning and care settings and family-based literacy opportunities that build strong cognitive, language, and social-emotional foundations before kindergarten entry.
- Enhance coordination and collaboration among early childhood providers so families experience more seamless, responsive, and culturally affirming supports across Born Healthy, Thriving and Developmentally On-Track, and Access to Early Learning Opportunities services.
- Contribute data and learnings that inform continuous improvement of the Ready by Five early childhood system in Kent County, including understanding which strategies most effectively advance these result areas for priority populations.





Service Categories

Ready by Five organizes Millage investments into a set of service categories that reflect the essential supports children and families need from pregnancy through kindergarten entry. These categories help ensure that funding is aligned to a shared results framework, rather than a collection of disconnected programs, and they clarify for applicants and community partners where their work fits within the broader early childhood system and how it contributes to community impact. Ready by Five uses these categories to organize investments around three core areas: healthy births, on-track development, and access to high-quality early learning, along with cross-cutting implementation supports that strengthen the system’s overall capacity. Together, this framework helps align programs, funding decisions, and outcomes, and helps applicants understand how their proposed services contribute to long-lasting support for children and families in Kent County.

1

Born Healthy

All children in Kent County are born into conditions that support safe births, healthy beginnings, and infant well-being. Families have access to programs and services that promote healthy pregnancies, strong parent health, and optimal development during the first year of life.

2

Developmentally on Track

Young children are healthy, engaged learners who are socially and emotionally secure within nurturing families and communities. They meet key developmental milestones across health, learning, and social-emotional domains with equitable access to supports that help them flourish.

3

Early Learning

Every young child and family in Kent County can access affordable, high-quality early learning and care environments that promote development, literacy, and school readiness, regardless of income, language, neighborhood, or ability.

4

Accessible Resources

These supports focus on the people, processes, and infrastructure that help families find, access, and benefit from Ready by Five services. They may include professional development for service providers, resource and service navigation for families, language access services, and structures for authentic community input and involvement. Together, these efforts build workforce capacity, improve coordination across providers, and ensure that services reflect the needs, cultures, and languages of Kent County families.

Submission Requirements

Directions for proposal submission

1. The deadline for proposals is May 15, 2026, at 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST).
 - a. This deadline is firm, no exceptions will be made. First Steps Kent is not responsible for delays. Under no circumstances shall submissions received after the time be considered.
2. Proposals will only be accepted in electronic format and must be submitted through **Submittable**.
 - a. Prior to completing proposals, organizations must complete a Letter of Intent (LOI) indicating the following:
 - i. Service Category of interest, brief program description, estimated funding request, and partnership information. *Deadline to submit LOIs is April 22, 2026.*
 - ii. Organizations will receive notice of approval to proceed with completion of a proposal within 1-3 business days
 - b. It is the responsibility of the proposing organization to review all service category specifications within the RFP and respond to all questions.
 - c. Should your organization encounter technical issues with the submission platform, you may contact First Steps Kent at readybyfivekent@firststepskent.org.
3. Agencies are required to submit the following information with proposals to be considered complete. **If a proposal is missing elements, First Steps Kent reserves the right to disqualify the proposal from further consideration.**
 - a. Attachment A: Agency Staff and Leadership Diversity. One form per program is submitted.
 - b. Attachment B: Proposing Agency Agreement. This agreement must be signed by the Executive Director, President, or CEO -AND- the Board Chairperson of your organization. An uploaded PDF version of this agreement must be included with the proposal submission.
 - c. Attachment C: Proposal Certification Statement. This statement must be signed by the Executive Director, President, or CEO -AND- the Board Chairperson of your organization. An uploaded PDF version of this agreement must be included with the proposal submission.
 - d. The agency's most recent annual financial audit. (Note: First Steps Kent may complete a financial review for an organization having annual contributions under \$550,000 in lieu of the audit.)
 - e. Organizational chart at the program level that clearly identifies all positions included in the proposal's budget.
 - f. One to three letters of support for each agency bound in one PDF file. Letters should come from partner organizations that can speak to the Proposing Agency's experience in providing quality services within the focus areas included in the proposal(s).
 - g. If applicable, a fee schedule giving the pricing methodology with attention to detail that includes all associated costs to successfully provide services as described in your response.
 - h. A complete program budget to better illustrate all expenses and how the other sources of funding contribute to the full program.
4. An agency may include, but is not required to share an annual community report.
5. In some cases, applicants may be asked to share a short 3-5 minute video presentation with the Resident Proposal Review Board to give context beyond the written proposal. See page 11 to learn more.



Proposal Checklist

<p>Please use the following to help guide you in completing your proposal. Not all items are required*.</p>	
Completed Letter of Intent with invitation to move forward with completion of a Request for Proposal	
Completion of Request for Proposal using Submittable Platform	
Attachment A: Agency Staff and Leadership Diversity. One form per agency is submitted.	
Attachment B: Proposing Agency Agreement. This agreement must be signed by the Executive Director, President, or CEO -AND- the Board Chairperson of your organization. An uploaded PDF version of this agreement must be included with the proposal submission.	
Attachment C: Proposal Certification Statement. This statement must be signed by the Executive Director, President, or CEO -AND- the Board Chairperson of your organization. An uploaded PDF version of this agreement must be included with the proposal submission.	
Most recent financial audit attached to proposal (if not attached with the LOI)	
Organizational chart attached to proposal	
Letter(s) of support attached to proposal	
Completed budget, including specific line items within each budget category	
Full program budget which illustrates all expenses and other sources of funding	
*Not Required: Annual community report	
*Not Required: A 3-5 minute video shared to readybyfivekent@firststepskent.org <i>**If you're unsure if your organization/program should make a video for reviewers, please reach out Ready by Five for insight and video criteria**</i>	
<p>Be sure to review service category criteria to ensure your program proposal narrative covers outlined criteria for funding</p>	



Funding Overview

If awarded funds, an agency will be required to sign a Service Provider Agreement with First Steps Kent. The contract period will begin on October 1, 2026, and end on September 30, 2027. The millage supports community organizations that provide critical services for young children ages 0 through 5, and is designed to strengthen the early childhood ecosystem, helping children enter kindergarten healthy and prepared to learn and succeed. Children who participate in early childhood programs are more likely to perform better in school, have lower absence rates, and increase their chances of graduating from high school and thrive in community.

Please note that funding of the full RFP monetary request is never guaranteed, and organizations that receive funding are **required** to seek out additional funding sources to supplement any millage dollars awarded. All eligible organizations are invited to submit proposals. Previous or current millage funded services are not at an advantage for consideration.

All services will be paid on a reimbursement payment structure that may vary by service and program type. Funding will be awarded in one of two ways:

- Actual Cost Reimbursement
- A Defined Rate reimbursed, set on a fee schedule

Service Provider Agreements will include the following terms related to funding:

- Agencies will agree to expend any and all payments solely for the purpose(s) as specified in the Service Provider Agreement.
- Funds must be spent within the contract period for which they are awarded and cannot be carried over.
- Agencies awarded funds may not invoice Ready by Five above the awarded allocation for each contract period.
- Reimbursement will be only for the actual, reasonable, and allowable costs of program delivery and allowable, related expenses (refer to the Service Provider Manual for more on allowable costs).
- Agencies awarded funding will provide a program implementation timeline during the contracting process. Services are expected to commence with the contract's start date and in accordance with this timeline.

All awards are contingent on the annual Kent County tax capture and are subject to the availability of actual tax funds captured and the appropriation by the Kent County Board of Commissioners for each fiscal period.

Funding is designed to cover the cost of direct services and reasonable administrative costs. Unless specified in the RFP, Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage funding cannot be used to purchase equipment and property. Please refer to the [Ready by Five Service Provider Manual](#) for complete details.

By applying, the Service Partner agrees that all additional available sources of funding will be leveraged to cover program costs. This may include funds from a private foundation or other philanthropic source of funding, as well as state, local, federal funding, the collection of donations by the agency, or the implementation of cost-sharing strategies.



The requested millage funds may not supplant or replace existing private foundation or other philanthropic funds as well as state, local, and/or federal funds already in use by the Proposing Agency.

Additionally, services funded by the Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage are not “free” as there is a cost to Kent County taxpayers for these services. By asking families who participate in specific types of services to share some of the cost, there is an increased awareness of the value of a service as well as increased buy-in as families may assist with covering some of the cost. Unless stated as an exempt program type or scenario, each Service Provider must implement the Ready by Five Cost Sharing and/or Donation Policy. (Organizations may reach out to readybyfivekent@firststepskent.org to determine if a program is required to implement the Cost Sharing policy.)

Cost sharing is a policy that requires a co-payment from the family for whom services are provided. Shared costs are based on a sliding scale. Cost Sharing is different than a donation contribution that is given on a voluntary basis by a family participating in services. For complete details and requirements on Cost Sharing and Donations, see the Cost Sharing Policy and the Donation Policy in the Ready by Five Service Provider Manual.

Budget Specifications

Note: Agencies requesting funds under **Accessible Resources** may follow a different budget format, which is specific to their service category and programming.

As agencies prepare a budget request, they must consider the following:

- Costs included must be specific to supporting the proposed program. This means that budgets may only include costs that can be identified specifically with a program and therefore are charged to that program.
- Request for funding may include necessary program-related and administrative costs. Funds should not be utilized to fill general gaps within the organizational budget that are unrelated or disproportionate to programming costs.
- Cost estimates should be based on the actual time for individuals that is necessary to implement the program.
- Agencies will be able to provide a calculation for each line item included in the budget.
- Costs should not support more than 50% of an organization’s overall budget.

All agencies requesting funds will be asked to submit a proposed budget that includes the following four sections:

Section 1: Direct Program Expenses

Expenses to support positions that are essential to service delivery that directly support families and young children. Any position that gives supervision to Direct Service Positions would be included in this section.

Note: If the proposed program does not provide “face-to-face” services to families, it is considered an indirect service.



Examples of direct program expenses to include in this section:

- Wages/benefits of direct professionals (this includes professionals who support with family outreach, recruitment, and intake)
- Wages/benefits of the immediate supervisor or manager position
- Mileage/travel/parking for Direct Positions
- All program supplies
- All program specific technology (may include subscriptions such as Zoom, Microsoft, etc., hardware under the set \$1,000 threshold, or mobile phone services)
- All program-related professional development
- All program-related printing and postage
- Translation and interpretation*

Excludes:

- Incentives for families to participate in programming
- Bonus or incentives for paid professionals
- Meeting expenses for meals or food (for paid professionals)
- Purchase of equipment or property
- Unless they provide dedicated and direct program supervision, the CEO or other executive leadership, time may not be allocated to this section. The organizational chart must illustrate % FTE they are providing and the positions they are overseeing in this type of situation.
- General or unrelated administrative assistant staff time may not be allocated to this section.
- Backoffice costs included in the budget's Administrative Expenses section

*Note: As of Oct 1, 2024, requesting Ready by Five programs may cover the cost of other specific languages that are not currently offered by Ready by Five Translation and Interpretation Services with designated funds in their individual contract's program budget.

Section 2: Supportive Program Expenses (Indirect program expenses)

This section is reserved for costs that are identified specifically with the proposed program but are not the resources providing face-to-face or direct support to families.

Examples of expenses to include in this section:

- Wages/benefits for positions that provide community convening supports
- Wages/benefits for positions that support scheduling or other program coordination efforts that do not require direct contact with families
- Data support
- Program-specific compliance or quality assurance
- Program-specific marketing and communications professional supports

Excludes:

- CEO, executive leadership, and general or unrelated administrative assistant staff time may not be allocated to this section unless they provide dedicated and direct staff time in this area. The organizational chart must illustrate % FTE they are providing and the specific role in this type of situation.
- Bonuses or incentives for paid professionals
- Meeting expenses for meals or food (for paid professionals)
- Purchase of equipment or property
- Back-office costs included in the budget's Administrative Expenses section
- Fundraising expenses



Section 2: Administrative Expenses

This section is for specified “back-office” costs only. Cost estimates are based on the actual time for individuals that is necessary to implement the program.

Ready by Five will not be utilized to fill general gaps within the organizational budget that are unrelated or disproportional to proposed programming costs.

Administrative expenses must be broken down by line item. Examples of expenses to include in this section:

- Occupancy/rent/utilities
 - Financial services
 - IT services
 - HR
 - Insurance
 - Payroll
 - Audit
 - Leadership support
-

Section 4: Subcontractor Expenses

Any partner agency or contractor included in the supportive/direct expense section who will be receiving Ready by Five funds through the contract is considered a subcontractor.

This includes any agency providing work on behalf of the program that does not fall under an administrative cost.

Includes:

- Partner agency subcontracts/MOU's
- Independent contractors providing services
- Third-party evaluation

Unless specified in the RFP, costs allocated to Ready by Five funding should not include major purchases of equipment or the development of intellectual property. Items developed or acquired with Ready by Five funds remain vested with First Steps Kent and Kent County.

It is recommended that organizations include a full program budget attached within the proposal to better illustrate how other sources of funding contribute to the full program, if applicable. Organizations who attach a full program budget should include an itemized list of funding sources and indicate whether the source is 'confirmed' or 'pending' at the time of submission.



Example Budget

EXAMPLE Program/Agency Budget	
Direct Program Expenses	<i>\$109,475.00</i>
Staff 1	\$46,000.00
Staff 2	\$61,500.00
Professional Development	\$775.00
Travel, Mileage, Parking	\$1,200.00
Indirect Program Expenses	<i>\$900.00</i>
Staff 1	\$350.00
Staff 2	\$250.00
Marketing	\$300.00
Administrative Expenses	<i>\$16,600.00</i>
Insurance	\$2,000.00
Audit	\$4,100.00
IT services	\$3,175.00
Occupancy	\$7,325.00
Subcontractors	<i>\$24,500.00</i>
Uplifting Children	\$15,200.00
Therapeutic Dance	\$9,300.00
Overall Budget Total	<i>\$151,475.00</i>
Percent of Organizational Budget	38%



How budgets will be reviewed

All proposed budgets will be reviewed to ensure that funding requests are reasonable, aligned with program goals, and reflect responsible use of Ready by Five resources. The review process considers both the program's costs and the financial health of the applying organization.

Comparing budgets across proposals:

To promote fairness and consistency, average budget amounts are calculated across all proposals for:

- Direct program expenses
- Supporting program expenses
- Administrative expenses
- Subcontractor expenses

Each proposal is compared to these averages to help identify differences in cost structure. Proposals with higher-than-average costs won't be automatically excluded – applicants may simply be asked to provide additional context, such as special program features or unique service needs.

Cost per individual served:

Cost per individual (CPI) is calculated as the total request/the projected number of individuals to be served included in the proposal. Each individual proposal will be compared to the overall average established. Additionally, this CPI may be compared to previous years for each program if a program was previously funded. Any programs with costs higher than the established average may be asked to provide supporting information for included costs.

Financial health and funding mix:

Beyond individual program costs, the organization's overall financial picture is considered to ensure capacity to manage grant funds responsibly. Reviewers will look at:

- The percentage of program costs covered by Ready by Five compared to other funding sources.
- How the request relates to your organization's total annual revenue.
- The organization's general financial soundness, reviewed by First Steps Kent's finance team.

This helps reviewers understand both the sustainability of each program and how Ready by Five funds fit within the broader funding landscape.

Additional supports for reviewers, including service category criteria:

**In some cases, applicants may be asked to share a short 3-5 minute video presentation with the Resident Proposal Review Board to give context beyond the written proposal. This may include organizations that:

- Are new to Ready by Five funding
- Have requested a significant increase in funding or plan to serve more participants
- Consistently show higher than average costs
- Have had incomplete performance in previous contract periods or unfulfilled contractual obligations

The video is an opportunity to explain programming more fully while highlighting community impact. Should an organization feel the need to provide a video, they may contact Ready by Five to request criteria for submission. Videos are provided outside of the online proposal system, and should be shared directly to readybyfivekent@firststepskent.org.



Service Category Information & Criteria

Proposing Agencies may only apply under one program type per proposed service. If an agency is interested in applying for more than one service/program type, they must submit a separate proposal as multiple service/program types cannot be combined into one proposal.



Services are for expecting parents and children birth through the age of five living in Kent County. This round will be deployed across the following separate funding opportunities.



Born Healthy

For children to be born healthy, Ready by Five has a targeted goal for children born in Kent County to have access to programs and services that promote healthy pregnancies, safe births, and strong foundations for infant well-being during their first years of life. This means infants enter the world safely, with strong beginnings for both their own health and that of their birthing parent, and with conditions that support survival and thriving in the first year of life. Funded activities can span direct services to families and systems-level strategies that improve the environments in which infants are born and grow.

Proposals may support maternal, paternal, and infant health before, during, and after pregnancy. This may include education, clinical support, and connection to health services. Programs may also provide material goods, such as cribs, pack'n'plays, diapers, formula, and clothing to infants and children. Service providers may educate caregivers on the importance of safe sleep practices, engage families with lactation consultations, provide nutrition education, and share resources to ensure appropriate developmental milestones are achieved. Those funded may also provide metrics for instances that led to infant mortality. Additionally, proposals may address environmental health and safety by identifying and mitigating risks such as lead exposure, poor air quality, or other environmental hazards affecting infant and maternal well-being. Funded partners should track and report data related to infant and maternal health outcomes, including factors contributing to infant mortality, where relevant.

Proposals must include mechanisms to collect and interpret parent or caregiver feedback about their level of satisfaction with services, as well as engage parent, caregiver, or family voice within programming. Each proposal must describe how parents, caregivers, or families will be engaged as key stakeholders by:

- a) Collecting and incorporating parent feedback in programming and
- b) Engaging with parent partners to provide voice within programming decisions

Proposals should outline which of the following will be accomplished:

- Clearly describe how services support prenatal and postnatal health (e.g., education, home visiting, lactation, nutrition, connection to medical homes).
- Demonstrate how they will promote safe infant environments (e.g., safe sleep, car seat safety, well-child visits, vaccination, basic needs support).
- Identify how they address environmental health and safety (e.g., lead education, home health screenings, asthma/injury risk, connection to remediation resources).
- Use evidence-based or evidence-informed approaches and employ professionals with appropriate expertise (e.g., nurses, social workers, community health workers).
- Describe how developmental and/or maternal well-being screenings will be implemented and how families will be referred and connected to needed services.
- Explain how the program will reach families with the greatest need, including families with incomes at or below 200% FPL and those in under-served geographies.
- Show how parents will be engaged as partners, including collection and use of parent feedback and satisfaction data.
- Identify the result indicators they expect to impact (e.g., healthy birthweight, breastfeeding, reduced lead exposure, increased well-child visits) and how they will track these.



Born Healthy - Review

All proposals will be reviewed by the Ready by Five Resident Proposal Review Board. This body will recommend which proposals are funded and for how much. The Ready by Five Resident Proposal Review Board may consider historical performance of previously funded programs as well as the outlined criteria in the selection process. Organizations must meet all requirements listed below to be considered for funding.

Criteria for review:

1. Proposing agency's financial audit shows the organization to be in good financial standing.
2. Proposing agency has adequate funding to cover program costs, including additional sources of funding in addition to Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage funds.
3. Proposing agency has clearly demonstrated that current funding will not be replaced or reduced as a result of receiving Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage funds.
4. Program has demonstrated a history of success. For agencies that have previously received funding, program spending has remained on track, and contractual outcomes have been met or surpassed. Success is evidenced by:
 - a. Achievement of intended program outcomes (e.g., increased participation, improved child or family outcomes, or progress toward key performance indicators).
 - b. Effective fiscal management and alignment with approved budgets.
 - c. Positive feedback from participants, partners, or community stakeholders.
 - d. Documented improvements or innovations resulting from prior funding cycles.
5. The submitted proposal is complete.

*****All proposals must meet a minimum 70% total points to be considered for funding*****

Programming criteria – Born Healthy	Total points
The proposal clearly addresses Born Healthy specifications and describes how the services promote healthy pregnancies, safe births, and infant health and safety.	20
Services include clear, feasible strategies for prenatal and postnatal supports (e.g., education, home visiting, lactation, nutrition, connection to medical homes) and are appropriate for the target population.	20
Proposal describes how environmental health and safety risks (e.g., lead, home hazards, safe sleep, car seat safety) will be identified and addressed or mitigated.	15
Proposal presents a clear plan to reach families with the greatest need, including those with lower incomes and those in under-resourced communities, and describes how equity and inclusion are embedded in the program.	15
Proposal includes a realistic plan to track key outputs and outcomes (e.g., participation, screenings, well-child visits, breastfeeding, reduction in environmental risks) and report data as	15
Parent/family engagement is clearly described, including how parent feedback and satisfaction will be collected and used for program improvement.	10
Overall proposal and budget are clear, complete, and reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and scale of services.	5
Total possible points	100



Developmentally on Track

Thriving and developmentally on track describes young children who are healthy, engaged learners, and socially and emotionally secure within nurturing families and communities that support their long-term wellbeing and success. It reflects children meeting key developmental milestones across health, learning, and social-emotional domains, with equitable access to environments and services that help them flourish.

Organizations applying under this category should provide services or systems-level strategies that measurably increase the proportion of children who are developmentally on track in health, learning, and psychosocial wellbeing and who are on a path to long-term flourishing in school and life.

Proposals may support children's healthy development and social-emotional well-being through systematic assessment and regular monitoring of developmental progress. This may include navigation to appropriate services and clinical interventions when developmental concerns are identified. Funded programs may also offer tailored services for families facing specific challenges that require specialized expertise, such as disability supports, therapeutic interventions, and targeted programming for children and families with unique needs. In addition, programs may provide ongoing educational opportunities and coaching to strengthen parents' knowledge, skills, and confidence in supporting their child's growth across all developmental domains.

Proposals must include mechanisms to collect and interpret parent or caregiver feedback about their level of satisfaction with services, as well as engage parent, caregiver, or family voice within programming. Each proposal must describe how parents, caregivers, or families will be engaged as key stakeholders by:

- a) Collecting and incorporating parent feedback in programming and
- b) Engaging with parent partners to provide voice within programming decisions

Proposals should outline which of the following will be accomplished:

- Describe how they provide developmental and social-emotional screenings and ensure follow-up navigation and clinical interventions when concerns are identified.
- Explain specialized family supports they offer (e.g., disability-specific services, therapeutic interventions, supports for families facing housing instability, refugee or child welfare involvement).
- Describe ongoing parent education and coaching (e.g., home visiting, group sessions, parenting supports) that strengthen parent-child relationships and build skills.
- Use evidence-based or evidence-informed models and employ staff with expertise relevant to the model (e.g., therapists, educators, community health workers).
- Explain how they will track and report on screenings, referrals, and service connections (e.g., ASQ-3, ASQ-SE, referrals completed, length and intensity of engagement).
- Demonstrate how they will tailor services to specific populations and address equity in access and outcomes.
- Describe how parent voice and feedback will inform service delivery and continuous improvement.
- Identify which result indicators will be impacted (e.g., increases in developmental/social-emotional screenings, successful referrals, engagement in supportive services) and how these will be measured.



Developmentally on Track - Review

All proposals will be reviewed by the Ready by Five Resident Proposal Review Board. This body will recommend which proposals are funded and for how much. The Ready by Five Resident Proposal Review Board may consider historical performance of previously funded programs as well as the outlined criteria in the selection process. Organizations must meet all requirements listed below to be considered for funding.

Criteria for review:

1. Proposing agency's financial audit shows the organization to be in good financial standing.
2. Proposing agency has adequate funding to cover program costs, including additional sources of funding in addition to Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage funds.
3. Proposing agency has clearly demonstrated that current funding will not be replaced or reduced as a result of receiving Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage funds.
4. Program has demonstrated a history of success. For agencies that have previously received funding, program spending has remained on track, and contractual outcomes have been met or surpassed. Success is evidenced by:
 - a. Achievement of intended program outcomes (e.g., increased participation, improved child or family outcomes, or progress toward key performance indicators).
 - b. Effective fiscal management and alignment with approved budgets.
 - c. Positive feedback from participants, partners, or community stakeholders.
 - d. Documented improvements or innovations resulting from prior funding cycles.
5. The submitted proposal is complete.

*****All proposals must meet a minimum 70% total points to be considered for funding*****

Programming criteria – Thriving & Developmentally on track	Total points
Proposal clearly addresses all specifications for this category and describes how services will support children being developmentally on track across health, learning, and social-emotional domains.	20
Proposal clearly describes developmental and/or social-emotional screening strategies and follow-up navigation or clinical interventions when concerns are identified.	20
Proposal clearly describes specialized family supports (e.g., disability-specific services, therapeutic interventions, supports for families experiencing complex challenges) and how they are tailored to family needs.	15
Proposal outlines ongoing parent education and coaching strategies that strengthen parent-child relationships, build caregiver skills, and support responsive caregiving.	15
Proposal includes a clear and feasible plan for tracking outputs and outcomes (e.g., number of screenings, referrals, completed services, engagement levels) and submitting required data.	15
Equity and inclusion are evident in staffing, outreach, and program design, including plans to reach populations who experience disparities in developmental outcomes.	10
Overall proposal and budget are clear, complete, and reasonable in relation to the intensity and duration of services.	5
Total possible points	100



Early Learning

Every young child and family in Kent County can participate in high-quality early learning and care settings that support development, literacy, and school readiness, regardless of income, language, neighborhood, or ability status. It emphasizes both the availability and affordability of nurturing environments, such as early learning programs, child care, and family-based literacy activities that build strong cognitive, language, and social-emotional foundations before kindergarten entry.

Organizations applying under this category should provide services or systems-level strategies that measurably expand access to early learning experiences and child care, particularly for families who face barriers due to cost, geography, language, or other factors.

Programs may offer developmentally appropriate learning experiences and literacy-building activities for young children, delivered through play-based groups and community-based settings. These learning opportunities may include interactive parent-child sessions, early literacy storytelling, and activities that promote social-emotional development. Service providers may also guide caregivers in fostering language and cognitive growth at home, support family engagement in early learning, and connect participants to additional community resources that strengthen school readiness. Funded partners should track and report data related to child developmental progress, caregiver participation, and improvements in early literacy outcomes.

Proposals must include mechanisms to collect and interpret parent or caregiver feedback about their level of satisfaction with services, as well as engage parent, caregiver, or family voice within programming. Each proposal must describe how parents, caregivers, or families will be engaged as key stakeholders by:

- a) Collecting and incorporating parent feedback in programming and
- b) Engaging with parent partners to provide voice within programming decisions

Proposals should outline which of the following will be accomplished:

- Describe how they provide early learning and literacy experiences (e.g., play and learn groups, early literacy curricula, library-based programming) that are developmentally appropriate and play-based.
- Explain how programming supports language, early literacy, social-emotional development, and school readiness, and, when applicable, how it aligns with relevant early childhood standards.
- Describe how they will increase access for families who face barriers (e.g., through scheduling, location, cultural and linguistic responsiveness, accessibility for children with disabilities).
- If applicable, explain how they will support child care access and navigation (e.g., helping families find licensed care, connecting families to available slots, coordinating with local and state systems).
- Explain how they will track and report on participation, dosage, and reach (e.g., number of children and families served, repeat participation, number and locations of groups, materials distributed).
- Demonstrate how they will tailor services to specific populations and communities and address equity in access and outcomes.
- Describe how parents and caregivers will be engaged as partners in their child's learning and how feedback will shape program design and improvement.
- Identify which result indicators will be impacted (e.g., increased participation in early learning, improved parent knowledge of literacy-building, kindergarten readiness skills) and how these will be measured.



Early Learning - Review

All proposals will be reviewed by the Ready by Five Resident Proposal Review Board. This body will recommend which proposals are funded and for how much. The Ready by Five Resident Proposal Review Board may consider historical performance of previously funded programs as well as the outlined criteria in the selection process. Organizations must meet all requirements listed below to be considered for funding.

Criteria for review:

1. Proposing agency's financial audit shows the organization to be in good financial standing.
2. Proposing agency has adequate funding to cover program costs, including additional sources of funding in addition to Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage funds.
3. Proposing agency has clearly demonstrated that current funding will not be replaced or reduced as a result of receiving Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage funds.
4. Program has demonstrated a history of success. For agencies that have previously received funding, program spending has remained on track, and contractual outcomes have been met or surpassed. Success is evidenced by:
 - a. Achievement of intended program outcomes (e.g., increased participation, improved child or family outcomes, or progress toward key performance indicators).
 - b. Effective fiscal management and alignment with approved budgets.
 - c. Positive feedback from participants, partners, or community stakeholders.
 - d. Documented improvements or innovations resulting from prior funding cycles.
5. The submitted proposal is complete.

*****All proposals must meet a minimum 70% total points to be considered for funding*****

Programming criteria – Access to Early Learning Opportunities	Total points
Proposal clearly addresses all specifications for this category and explains how services expand access to high-quality early learning and care, including play-based and literacy-focused experiences.	20
Proposal describes developmentally appropriate early learning and literacy strategies (e.g., play and learn groups, curriculum, library programming) and how they support school readiness.	20
Proposal clearly explains how the program will reduce barriers to participation (e.g., location, hours, language, disability supports, transportation) for families facing the greatest challenges.	15
If applicable, proposal describes strategies for child care access and navigation (e.g., helping families find licensed care, connecting to open slots, coordination with child care systems).	15
Proposal presents a plan to track participation and dosage (e.g., number of children and families served, repeat participation, group frequency, materials/books distributed) and report on results.	15
Proposal describes how parents will be engaged as partners in their child's learning and how feedback from families will inform programming.	10
Overall proposal and budget are clear, complete, and reasonable for the scope and scale of early learning activities proposed.	5
Total possible points	100



Accessible Resources

Accessible Resources describe the people, processes, and infrastructure that help families find, access, and benefit from Ready by Five services. This includes workforce development, navigation supports, language access, and authentic community and parent input, all aimed at strengthening the early childhood ecosystem.

Organizations applying under this category should provide services or systems-level strategies that measurably improve the capacity, coordination, and responsiveness of the Ready by Five network so that families experience easier access, higher-quality interactions, and more culturally and linguistically appropriate services.

Proposals should strengthen both the workforce and the systems that families depend on. They may include coordinated professional development that equips providers with the knowledge and tools to deliver high-quality, culturally responsive care; resource and service navigation that helps families connect to the right programs at the right time; and language access services that ensure information is available and understandable to all families. These supports work together to reduce fragmentation, improve service quality, and promote equitable access, so that every family, regardless of language or circumstance, can easily find and benefit from Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage funded services.

Proposals must include mechanisms to collect and interpret parent or caregiver feedback about their level of satisfaction with services, as well as engage parent, caregiver, or family voice within programming. Each proposal must describe how parents, caregivers, or families will be engaged as key stakeholders by:

- a) Collecting and incorporating parent feedback in programming and
- b) Engaging with parent partners to provide voice within programming decisions

Proposals should outline which of the following will be accomplished:

- Clearly define which of the accessible resources they will provide (e.g., professional development for service providers, resource and service navigation, child care access technology/navigation, translation and interpretation, community input and engagement structures).
- For professional development, describe training content, target audiences, delivery methods, and how training will improve provider knowledge, skills, and practice.
- For navigation supports, explain how families will be identified, screened, and connected to services; how referrals and follow-through will be tracked; and how efforts align with the broader Ready by Five network.
- For child care access technology/navigation, describe the platform or processes, how families and providers will use them, and how efforts will coordinate with local and state systems.
- For language access, describe the interpretation and translation services offered, languages available, and how these supports will be accessible and culturally responsive.
- Explain how parents and residents will be engaged as partners (e.g., advisory groups, review boards, feedback loops) and how their insights will be used to shape decisions and improvements.
- Explain how they will track and report on outputs and outcomes (e.g., number and type of trainings, navigations, interpretations, platform users, changes in provider capacity or family access).
- Demonstrate how equity and inclusion are embedded in the implementation support approach, including how supports address barriers for historically under-served families and communities.



Accessible Resources - Review

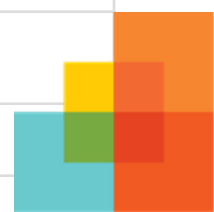
All proposals will be reviewed by the Ready by Five Resident Proposal Review Board. This body will recommend which proposals are funded and for how much. The Ready by Five Resident Proposal Review Board may consider historical performance of previously funded programs as well as the outlined criteria in the selection process. Organizations must meet all requirements listed below to be considered for funding.

Criteria for review:

1. Proposing agency's financial audit shows the organization to be in good financial standing.
2. Proposing agency has adequate funding to cover program costs, including additional sources of funding in addition to Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage funds.
3. Proposing agency has clearly demonstrated that current funding will not be replaced or reduced as a result of receiving Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage funds.
4. Program has demonstrated a history of success. For agencies that have previously received funding, program spending has remained on track, and contractual outcomes have been met or surpassed. Success is evidenced by:
 - a. Achievement of intended program outcomes (e.g., increased participation, improved child or family outcomes, or progress toward key performance indicators).
 - b. Effective fiscal management and alignment with approved budgets.
 - c. Positive feedback from participants, partners, or community stakeholders.
 - d. Documented improvements or innovations resulting from prior funding cycles.
5. The submitted proposal is complete.

*****All proposals must meet a minimum 70% total points to be considered for funding*****

Programming criteria – Implementation Supports	Total points
Proposal clearly identifies which of the accessible resources is being provided (e.g., professional development, navigation, child care access technology, language access) and demonstrates how the full scope of work is aligned with the Ready by Five network.	20
For professional development: proposal clearly describes training content, target audiences, delivery methods, and how trainings will build provider knowledge and skills in key early childhood areas.	15
For resource and service navigation and/or child care access: proposal clearly describes how families will be identified, supported, and connected to appropriate services and how referrals and follow-through will be tracked.	15
For language access services: proposal describes the interpretation and/or translation services provided, languages available, and how services will be culturally and linguistically responsive.	15
For community input and involvement: proposal describes how residents and parents will be engaged as partners in design, feedback, or decision-making and how their input will lead to action.	15
Proposal includes a clear plan to track and report outputs and outcomes relevant to the support type (e.g., number of trainings, participants, navigations, platform users, interpretations, advisory activities).	10
Equity and inclusion are evident in organizational practices and in how the implementation supports will improve access and experience for families who face barriers.	5
Overall proposal and budget are clear, complete, and reasonable relative to the role of the implementation support in the broader Ready by Five network.	5
Total possible points	100



Equity & Inclusion Statement

Ready by Five investments will support an early childhood system that helps all children and families thrive, regardless of income, geography, language, disability, family structure, or other circumstances that may affect access to services and positive outcomes. Ready by Five and First Steps Kent are committed to advancing equity by ensuring that funding, policies, and practices respond to the varied needs of children and families across Kent County and reduce barriers that prevent full participation in services.

Equity means recognizing that families do not all begin from the same place and that some children and caregivers experience greater challenges related to transportation, housing instability, language access, disability, caregiving demands, work schedules, health, education, or economic hardship. To support fair outcomes, Ready by Five investments may provide greater attention, resources, or service adaptations to communities and families facing the greatest barriers to access, participation, and success.

This commitment to equity also means that proposals should describe how services will be designed to be accessible, welcoming, and responsive to different family circumstances. Applicants should explain how they will reduce barriers to enrollment and participation, strengthen connections to care and support, and tailor services to the needs of families who have historically had less access to early childhood opportunities.

The goal of Ready by Five funding is to improve outcomes for all children while intentionally directing attention and resources toward the gaps that keep some children and families from thriving.

Please see the Ready by Five Service Provider Manual for the full Ready by Five Equity and Inclusion Impact Statement.



Agency Requirements

All awarded proposals agree to the following program requirements:

- A. All agencies awarded funding will be expected to comply with all the policies, procedures, responsibilities, guidelines, terms, and conditions stated in the manual. The Ready by Five Service Provider Manual lays out all policy expectations and guidelines for programs funded by the Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage.
- B. All agencies will attend each scheduled Service Provider meeting throughout the contract term:
- Quality Improvement Consortium
 - Provider Networking Breakfast
 - Discover Day
 - Annual Assessment (on-site)
- C. All agencies are required to participate in an annual program assessment. During the assessment, compliance with specifications in the Service Provider Agreement and the Ready by Five Service Provider Manual will be reviewed.
- D. Each year First Steps Kent will conduct one fiscal assessment of Service Provider's performance to assure financial compliance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and all financial policies as outlined in the Ready by Five Service Provider Manual.
- E. Unless otherwise specified, agencies that are awarded funding will be required to submit monthly data submissions at the individual level for each child and expectant parent served to the Kent County Health Department via a secure link.
- Information for each individual served includes demographics, service information, and referral tracking (if applicable to your program).
 - This data submission follows a very specific .csv file format with required fields and codes as defined in the Ready by Five Data Standard document available on the First Steps Kent millage portal.
- H. Agencies will be required to sign a data agreement with First Steps Kent and Kent County Health Department as part of the contracting process.
- I. Unless otherwise specified, agencies that are awarded funding will be required to report actual costs for reimbursement purposes, submit monthly individual-level data, and submit quarterly reports as follows:



Ready by Five program submission requirements

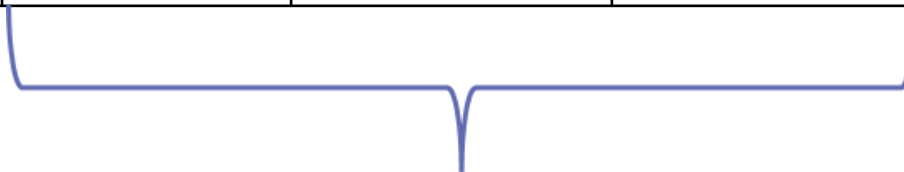
	Monthly Invoice (By the 10th of the month)	Monthly Demographic, Service, and Referral Data Submission (by the 15th of each month)	Quarterly Report (By 30th of April, July, October, and January)	Additional Details
How information is Submitted:	Completed through Submittable Platform	Submitted to KCHD	Completed through Submittable Platform	
Actual Expenses	★			Program financials provided upon request from First Steps Kent
Number Served		★	★	
Number of Encounters		★	★	
Ready by Five Indicators		★		
Program Specific Outcome			★	
Narrative Explanation of Variances & Implementation Timeline Update			★	



From data and reports submitted as described above, contract metrics will be tracked as follows:

1. First Steps Kent uses the average monthly amount as an estimation to identify programs that may be underspending or overspending. All Service Providers will be required to provide a narrative to explain why there is a deviation from the average monthly amount (specifically, the annual award/total number of months in the award period) of projected expenses if 10% or greater.
2. The actual number of individuals served by a Service Provider will be compared to the projected number as detailed in the Service Provider Agreement. Service Provider will be required to provide a narrative to explain why there is a deviation in the estimated number of individuals served if 10% or greater.
3. Encounter units will be tracked as part of the contract monitoring process. Actual encounters will be compared to the projected number of encounters per individual served stated in the Service Provider Agreement. The number of encounters per individual will be confirmed during the contracting process. Service Providers will be required to report on encounters completed. If applicable, agencies will explain why there is a deviation in the number of actual units completed throughout the contract period.
4. Information from the monthly Demographic, Service, and Referral data submissions sent to Kent County Health Department will be reconciled with the number of individuals served and encounter units stated in the contract as well as numbers submitted in the quarterly reports and overall spending.

Source of Information	In Contract	Quarterly Report (Submittable)	Monthly Data Submission	Monthly Invoices
We are Looking at:	Numbers Served Number of Encounters	Numbers Served Number of Encounters	Numbers Served Number of Encounters	Spending to Date



Do these match?

