

Welcome to the 2026-2027 Ready by Five Millage RFP Preconference!

Hosted by First Steps Kent
March 31, 2026



Virtual Guidelines

- Questions?
 - Please include your questions in the Q&A
 - We will answer as many questions as possible at the end of the presentation
 - All questions and answers will be included in the public Q&A document on the First Steps Kent Website
- Session will be recorded
- RFP documents are available on the First Steps Kent website
 - Go to "Millage" tab along the top
 - You can scroll to "Funding Opportunities" or click it in the drop down
 - Information about accessing Submittable is right beneath





Jennifer Headley-Nordman
President
jheadley-nordman@firststepskent.org



Lindsay Bloemers
Finance and Office Coordinator
lbloemers@firststepskent.org



Cati Cortes
VP of Finance
ccortes@firststepskent.org



Kiana Garcia Zaderej
VP of Community Investments
kzaderej@firststepskent.org



Carter Goldstein
Funding Administrator
cgoldstein@firststepskent.org



Elyse Greene
Funding Administrator
egreene@firststepskent.org



Jasper Tinoco
Data Specialist
jtinoco@firststepskent.org



Megan Streng
Communications Director
mstreng@firststepskent.org

About the Ready by Five Millage

Kent County voters overwhelmingly approved the Ready by Five Early Childhood Proposal in August 2024, approving the utilization of Kent county tax dollars collected to support early childhood programming.

The millage is funded by a .25 mil property tax increase that generates about:

\$8 million a year from
2024 to 2030

\$48 million in total



Purpose of the Pre-Conference:

Share funding requirements

Provide information regarding new funding categories

Share information for completion of the Letter of Intent

Dive into the RFP for 2026 funding

Outline the RFP timeline and the process to submit questions during the application period

Answer your questions about the application process and RFP



Funding Details

Contract Period: October 1, 2026 - September 30, 2027

For this round of funding, the following estimate is currently available for Kent County's 2026-27 fiscal year:

\$8,700,000

Services are paid on a reimbursement payment structure.

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.



Requirements Related to Funding

- Financial audit shows the organization to be in good financial standing.
- Program demonstrates a history of success. For agencies that have previously been funded, the program spending has been on track and program outcomes defined in the contract are met.
- Proposal is complete and provides ALL requested information.



Requirements Related to Funding

- Millage funds will not supplant existing private foundation or other philanthropic funds as well as state, local, and/or federal funds already in use by the Proposing Agency.
- The Proposing Agency agrees to seek other sources of funding in addition to Ready by Five Millage funding.
 - Other Sources of Funding (i.e., grants, state, local and federal funds)
 - Donations
 - Cost Sharing, if applicable to Program Type
 - See Service Provider Manual for full details



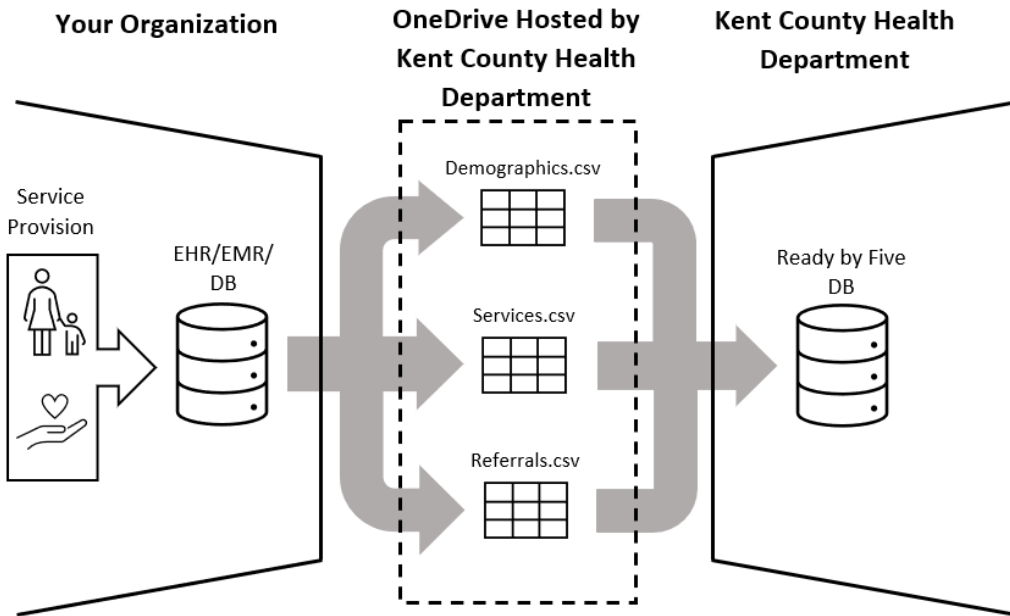
Program Monitoring & Reporting Requirements:

- Attend meetings including the Ready by Five Quality Improvement Consortium meeting, Provider Networking Breakfast, and Discover Day.
- Participate in an annual program assessment.
- Complete an annual fiscal assessment.
- Report actual costs for reimbursement purposes, submit monthly individual-level data, and submit quarterly reports.

	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			★	



Reporting Monthly Data Submissions



MDS Timeline:

- Begins: First day of each month
- Ends: Last day of each month

Data submission:

- Deadline: 15th of the following month

How we use this information:

- Reconcile invoices and track performance
- Track utilization of services
- Evaluation

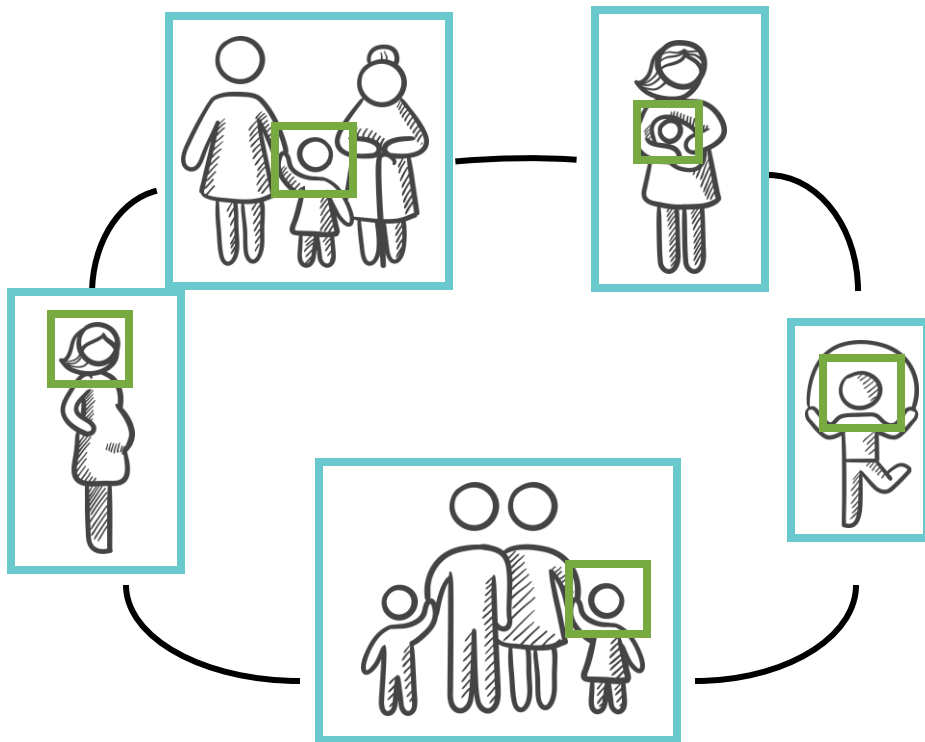
First Steps Kent will not count record if a child or expectant parent:

- Is over the age of five (child only)
- Is not residing in Kent County
- If data is not fully submitted per SPA/Data Profile requirements

****OneDrive links** are sent to the data contact in an encrypted email by Steve, the database administrator at Kent County Health Department each month**

 Steve.Lane@kentcountymi.gov

How will performance be tracked?



1. Individuals Served*

- Children through age 5
- Expecting parents

2. Encounters*

- Number of contacts or sessions provided to children through age 5 or expecting parents (determined in contracting process)

3. Actual Program Costs

**Note: This is not applicable to contracts providing Indirect Services*



Ready by Five Service Provider Manual

- The Ready by Five Service Provider Manual includes:
 - Programming requirements
 - Financial requirements
 - Reporting requirements
 - Organizational requirements
 - Description of service categories



RFP Opportunities

- This round of funding will be distributed across four separate funding opportunities.
- Agencies may apply for more than one opportunity.
- Only one program type may be selected for each proposal submitted.



Program Types

- Early Learning and Literacy Experiences



Program Types

- Environmental Healthy and Safety
- Infant Health and Safety
- Prenatal and Post Health Supports

Program Types

- Language Access Services
- Professional Development
- Resource and Service Navigation

Program Types

- Developmental and Social Emotional Screening
- Ongoing Parent Education and Support
- Specialized Family Support



RFP Service Category 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.

RFP 1 addresses maternal, paternal, and infant health before, during and after pregnancy. This includes education, clinical support, and connection to health services.



RFP Service Category 2: Thriving & 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.

Organizations applying under RFP 2 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.



RFP Service Category 3: Access to Early Learning Opportunities

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.

Organizations applying under RFP 3 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.



RFP Service Category 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.

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.



Start Here: Letter of Intent (LOI)

For organizations interested in providing services with Ready by Five funding, a Letter of Intent (LOI) should be completed prior to requesting to complete the RFP. The LOI serves as an initial step in demonstrating an agency's interest and qualifications to complete the RFP.

The LOI requests the following:

- **Define Funding Category:** Choose a funding category that aligns with your program type.
- **Determine Funding Type:** Are you new service or currently funded organization?
- **List Partner Organizations and/or Subcontractors**
- **Share the amount of funding you plan to request**
- **Upload a one-page summary of your program.**



Application Process: LOI

- All agencies must complete the LOI regardless of current funding status.
- The LOI can be completed at this [link](#)
- LOIs will be reviewed by the Ready by Five team on a rolling basis. If approved, you will receive a link to complete the RFP when open.
- **LOIs are due no later than April 22, 2026**



The Request for Proposal (RFP)

- Full RFP
 - Available on the FSK Website
 - Click “Millage” → Scroll to “Funding Opportunity”
- Document includes:
 - Funding details
 - Requirements of all funded agencies
 - Description and specifications of service
 - Directions to submit a proposal
 - Information on how proposals will be reviewed and evaluated.

Please take time to review the full document!



Request for Proposals (RFP)

Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage



Supported by the Kent County Ready by Five 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: \$X,XXX,XXX.XX

**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.



Request for Proposal (RFP) Contents

All RFP documents are posted on the First Steps Kent website.


- Section One - Overview Ready by Five Millage Funding
 - Funding Details
 - Overview of all RFPs
 - Requirements of all Funded Agencies
 - Equity and Inclusion
- Section Two - Submission Requirements
 - Proposal Checklist
 - Required Information
- Section Three – Service Category Information & Criteria
 - Detailed breakdown of new service categories and related RFP requirements
 - Agency Requirements
 - Equity and Inclusion
- Additional Materials to Reference:
 - Today's Slides
 - Submittable Agency Training Manual (online application)
 - Q&A Document (will be available on FSK's funding website)

The image shows the cover page of a Request for Proposal (RFP) document. The title is 'Request for Proposals (RFP) Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage'. Below the title is the 'First Steps Kent' logo, which includes a stylized 'K' and the text 'Supported by the Kent County Ready by Five Millage'. The page is primarily blue with white text. Key information includes: 'RFP Issued: April 1, 2026', 'Proposal Deadline: May 15, 2026, by 5 p.m. ET', and 'Anticipated project period: 12 months; Oct. 1, 2026 - Sep. 30, 2027'. The total funding available is listed as '\$X,XXX,XXX.XX'. A small disclaimer at the bottom states: '***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.' There is a decorative graphic of overlapping colored squares (yellow, green, red, orange) in the bottom right corner of the slide.

Request for Proposals (RFP)

Ready by Five

Early Childhood Millage



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Application Process: RFP

- The RFP will be posted on the First Steps Kent website and shared with applicants on April 1, 2026.
- You will be provided a link to complete the RFP. Please do not share the RFP link with individuals outside your organization
- Proposals will be completed via Submittable and are due no later than May 15, 2026 at 5 p.m. No late submissions will be accepted.





Section 1: Agency Information and Service Category



Section 1: Determine your Service Category

- After completing the LOI, you will receive an invitation to complete the RFP if your LOI was approved.
- If approved, please select the SAME service category that you selected when completing the RFP.
- Providers may receive a provisional approval to complete the RFP under a different service category than selected in the LOI. Funding Administrators will reach out if you need to choose a different category to proceed.



Section 1: Agency Information & Organizational Capacity

- In this section, you will be asked to provide the following information:
 - Basic contact information for your program
 - Year incorporated, agency type (public, private, etc)
 - Mission, accreditations, org chart, staff credentials
 - Policies regarding staff support and child safety





Section 2: Narrative Responses



Section 2: Complete the Narrative Section

- Overview and Target Population:
 - Determine dollar amount requested
 - Describe elements of your program, including target population and alignment with selected service category.
- Program Model, Equity, and Service Delivery
 - Describe procedures around intake, service delivery, and discharge
 - Share your organization's equity focus





Section 3: Describe budget details



Section 3: Budget Request Specifications

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

- Costs included must be specific to 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 disproportional to programing 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 must not support more than 50% of an organization's overall budget, not the program budget.



Section 3: Describe Budget Details

This section asks agencies to share a breakdown of direct program expenses, staff wages, subcontractors, and administrative expenses.

- Please include the line-item title, description, justification, and amount requested.
 - Leave "match" items and "project amount" blank

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	Line Item	Description	Amount Requested	Justification	Match Amount	Type of Match	Match Description	Project Amount
1	★	★	★	★	⊘	⊘	⊘	⊘
2								
3								
4								
5								



Section 3: Full Budget

Section 1: Direct Program Expenses	Section 2: Supporting Program Expense	Section 3: Administrative Expenses	Section 4: Subcontractor Expenses
<p>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.</p> <p>Note: If the proposed program does not provide “face-to-face” services to families, it is considered an indirect service. Wages and benefits for professionals would be included under Section 2.</p>	<p>This section is reserved for costs that identify specifically with the proposed program but are not the resources providing face-to-face or direct support to families.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Ready by Five will not be utilized to fill general gaps within the organizational budget that are unrelated or disproportional to proposed programing costs.</p>	<p>Any partner agency or contractor included in the indirect/direct expense section who will be receiving Ready by Five funds through the contract is considered a subcontractor.</p> <p>This includes any agency providing work on behalf of the program that does not fall under an administrative cost.</p>



Section 3: Sustainability and Resources

In this section, you will provide details of your program's overall funding structure, including:

- Total amount of request for Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage dollars
- Actual percentage of total program cost (Request/Total Program Cost = Actual Percentage)
- Total cost of program itself
- Program operations details





Step 4: Goals, Outcomes, Data, and Learning



Section 4: Outline Data Goals

- Determine individuals served
- Determine number of encounters
- List up to 3 program goals
- Describe changes in service that may affect quality, delivery, or frequency



Section 5: Certifications and Attachments



Section 5: Attachments A B & C

- Attachment A: Agency Staff and Leadership Diversity. One form per program.
 - 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.
- Note: These forms can be downloaded from the funding page on the First Steps Kent website.**



Section 5: Additional Required Attachments

- The agency's most recent annual financial audit (if not already attached in applicant profile)
- 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).
- 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.
- Community/annual report (not required)



Section 5: Video Submission

- Not all proposals will be asked to submit a video, however, new services or services with a significant increase or expansion of services will be asked to complete a proposal video.
- Proposals that express interest in completing a 3–5 minute video to be shared with the Resident Proposal Review Board may indicate on the RFP form whether they would like to receive additional information. Indicating interest or requesting the criteria does not guarantee that your organization will be invited to submit a video.



Step 6: Double Check Proposal for Accuracy



Please use the following to help guide you in completing your proposal. Not all items are required*.

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>	
Be sure to review service category criteria to ensure your program proposal narrative covers outlined criteria for funding	

Please note: This checklist can also be found in the RFP



Things to check before you submit:

- Narrative
 - Double check for accuracy, grammar, and spelling.
- Staff positions:
 - The positions described in the Budget Narrative should be itemized in the Budget Expense section.
- Partnerships:
 - Any partnerships where funds will be exchanged should be itemized and included in the Budget Expense section.



Equity and Inclusion

- First Steps Kent has a comprehensive interest in improving equity among all demographic groups, especially communities of color as well as any families in households with incomes at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level living throughout Kent County.
- In their approach to identifying needs in Kent County, agencies will consider group-based factors and deploy targeted approaches that address the varying needs and circumstances of each group eligible for Ready by Five funded services.



Question and Answer Period

All questions related to the RFP must be made in writing!

- Deadline to submit questions: April 22, 2026, by 5 p.m.
 - Use the link provided to submit questions
 - No questions will be accepted after this period.
 - Technical questions related to Submittable will be accepted by email.
- FSK will update the Q&As periodically and will provide all final answers to questions and amendments to the RFP no later than April 23, 2026, on FSK's website.
- Please Note: It is the respondent's sole responsibility to monitor all inquiries (including those submitted by other agencies and published by First Steps Kent) to properly prepare proposal for submission.



Submittable Technical Questions



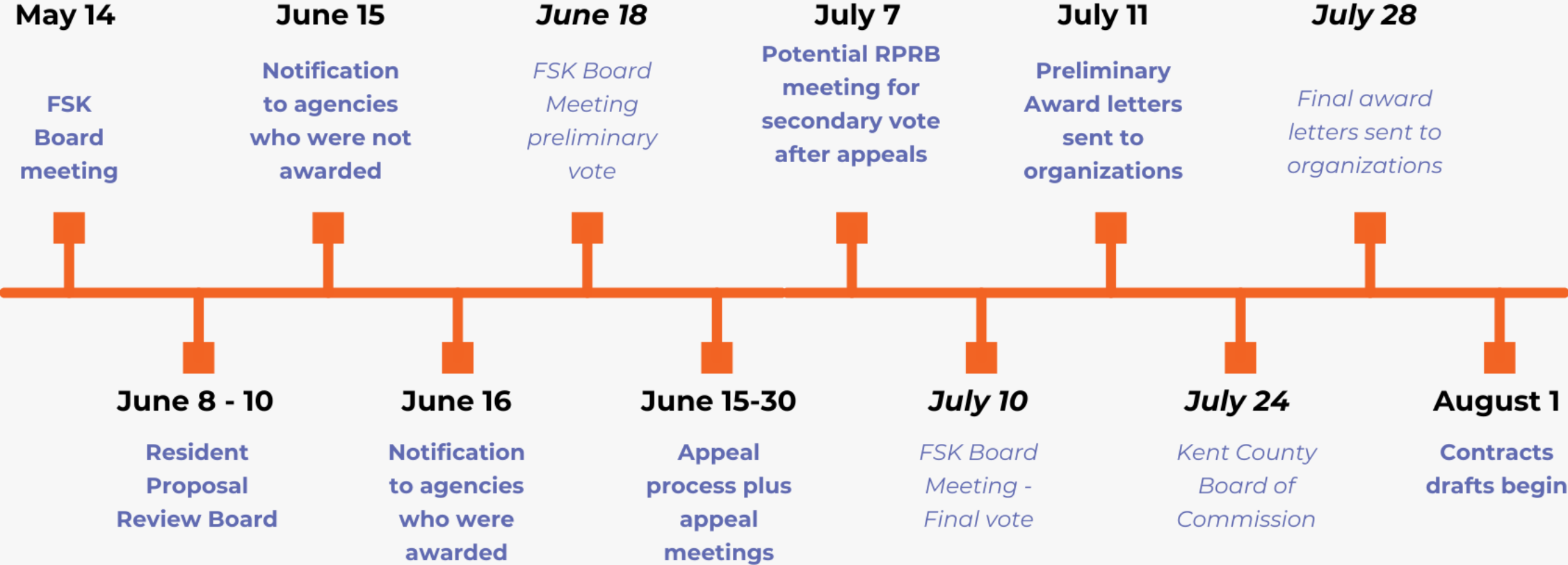
If your agency has technical issues with the Submittable system, please reach out to First Steps Kent staff at:

readybyfivekent@firststepskent.org*

****Note: First Steps Kent is available to assist with questions and issues specifically related to the Submittable online application process. We are unable to answer questions related to the RFP unless they are submitted through the written process as described in the RFP documents.***



TIMELINE



Subject to change



Supported by the Kent County Ready by Five Millage



Questions?

Please add your question in the chat.

Remember, after this Q&A session ends, all questions will need to be asked through the online process outlined in Section Three of the RFP.

Any questions not answered today will be answered on the Q&A document posted on the First Steps Kent website.

