

First 5 California
Comprehensive Approaches to
Raising Educational Standards
(CARES) Plus

Frequently Asked Questions
Posted on December 10, 2010

EVALUATION

1. The RFA indicates that the CLASS assessment results will be shared with the participant, advisor, and state. Can this confidential information also be shared with the local commission?

Answer: Yes. CLASS assessment results will be shared with participants, as well as their CARES Plus advisor, CARES lead agency staff, and First 5 California. All parties with access to the confidential data (including personal identifiers, employment and education information, and CLASS assessment scores) will be informed of its confidential nature, and specifically that assessment scores may be used only for ongoing professional development and not for an employer's staff evaluation. The protocol for information sharing and to ensure data confidentiality will be reviewed and approved by the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (the Institutional Review Board [IRB] used by First 5 California) in February 2011. Partners will be informed of any changes to this data access plan should any occur.

2. Will the CLASS observer and the trainer be “reliable”?

Answer: Yes. Staff performing CLASS assessments will be trained and authorized to perform assessments only when they have reached reliability, as defined by the training vendor. CLASS assessors will be retrained as necessary for ongoing reliability. We do not anticipate a “train-the-trainer” model at this time.

3. Will the CLASS assessors consist of State Commission staff?

Answer: No. First 5 California is working to secure the services of a third-party vendor to provide CLASS assessments.

4. If an individual is already a trained and “reliable” CLASS assessor, may the county use this individual to conduct the assessments for the statewide evaluation?

Answer: No. As stated above, First 5 California is working to secure a third-party vendor to provide CLASS assessments for the statewide evaluation. However, a county may choose to conduct additional CLASS assessments to augment local evaluation.

5. The CLASS currently is not available in Chinese. Does this mean that someone who speaks only Chinese can not participate in CARES? Is the state open to county translation?

Answer: The current CLASS is not available to monolingual individuals outside of English. First 5 California is exploring additional translation options to support future expansion to other languages.

6. When will teachers get their pre-CLASS scores?

Answer: CLASS assessments will commence in Summer 2011. An individual teacher’s assessment and results will be coordinated with their assigned assessor.

7. In Appendix L, First 5 California CARES Plus Required Data Field Reporting for FY 2011-12 and FY 2012-13 Family Child Care (FCC) providers are not listed under program type or position title. Are they able to participate in CARES Plus?

Answer: Yes. Licensed Family Child Care providers are eligible to participate in CARES Plus. In the CARES Plus Database, FCC providers are identified under “Setting Type.”

FISCAL

1. Are local costs subject to 15% administrative costs cap?

Answer: No. The 15% administrative costs cap pertains to First 5 California reimbursable costs.

2. Is it possible to “overmatch” for just one year, or do we need to do it for both years to be eligible for the higher match incentive?

Answer: In order to be eligible for the higher match incentive, lead agencies must demonstrate a higher match commitment for both fiscal years. The two-year commitment is necessary to support program continuity and participant retention.

3. Are Phase I Planning and Development funds available up front?

Answer: No. First 5 California will reimburse lead agencies for approved expenditures for Phase I funds. (For additional information on reimbursement provisions, refer to the CARES Plus RFA, Section IV.A, Phase I—Planning and Development Funding and Section VI.M, Reimbursement Terms.)

4. Are there any limits to a lead agency subcontracting with other agencies to do some of the work?

Answer: No. However, the lead agency is fully responsible for the fiscal and programmatic oversight of the program, and there is a 15% total administrative cap for First 5 California funds regardless of the number of subcontract agreements.

5. Are CARES Plus advisors part of the administrative cap or direct services?

Answer: Advisors are considered direct service (program) costs.

6. Could a county First 5 Commission, as the lead agency, write into a subcontract that the contractor will house the fiscal records?

Answer: No. The lead agency is required to have all required records onsite.

7. Under “local public entity,” what constitutes a public corporation?

Answer: A “public corporation” is defined as a corporation established for a specific public purpose by government, but with a large degree of financial and operational independence from the government authority that created it (e.g., a municipal hospital).

8. Can a CARES Plus participant receive AB 212 funding and CARES Plus funding?

Answer: No. An individual cannot participate in the CARES Plus Program if she/he is receiving AB 212 stipend funds.

9. If we have a 24-month contract for services (an example would be prepayment for a 24-month contract for a Web site for CARES Plus participants), can we charge that to the Phase I start-up funding?

Answer: No. Phase I funds can be used only for expenditures or services occurring between February 16, 2011, through June 30, 2011. State policy does not allow for pre-payment of services.

10. What do "administrative costs" include, and are salaries for staff actually working in the program a part of the 15% administrative cap?

Answer: The definition for administrative costs can be found in the CARES Plus RFA (Revised December 1, 2010), Section VI.B and in Appendix C, CARES Plus Fiscal Glossary. In addition, First 5 California Fiscal Memorandum No. 05-01 provides further definition regarding Administrative Costs and Functions. The on-line link to Fiscal Memorandum No. 05-01 is

<http://www.cafc.ca.gov/pdf/fiscal/Fiscal%20memo%2005-01%20Admin.pdf>

Staff costs may be assigned to program costs, provided that the time is limited to actual time spent on program-specific activities.

PROGRAM

1. If a participant is randomly selected for Component D, can the participant decline?

Answer: Yes, a person initially identified for participation in Component D may decline to participate.

2. Is there a time limit for each participant to stay in each Looking at CLASSrooms (LAC) module?

Answer: Yes. Each participant is given a 6-month user license and must complete the 20-30 hour LAC training within that time frame.

3. Could LAC be completed over 12 months instead of six months?

Answer: No, the 6-month user license for Looking at CLASSrooms cannot be extended. However, the course was designed specifically so that it can easily be completed within a 6-month time frame. The power of the program design is lost if the process becomes too lengthy. The time frame was designed to maximize the content and to keep it fresh in the user's mind during the designated time period.

4. If someone is interested in participating in CARES Plus and they do not speak English, what are their options given that all of the CORE requirements are available only in English?

Answer: The Dimensions Guide is available in Spanish, and Teachstone has informed us that the Intro to CLASS training will also be available in Spanish on July 1, 2011.

5. Do CARES Plus advisors need to be a specific level? What are their qualifications?

Answer: Component C (Advisors) requires that individuals used as advisors have a Bachelor's degree in early childhood education (ECE) or a related field including, but not limited to, elementary education, early childhood special education, etc.

If a county does not elect to participate in Component C, then local qualifications for advisors apply and may include, for example, counselors from two- or four-year institutions of higher education; local county staff trained as advisors; participants trained to be first-level peer advisors; individuals identified as mentors; etc. This is, however, a local decision.

6. Is there a list of ECE-related fields?

Answer: No. There is no official list of ECE-related fields; this is a local decision. However, please refer to the examples cited in #5 above.

7. With regard to Priority Zones described in Section I.1, must local programs target all of those areas?

Answer: Yes. The lead agency is required to first target those priority areas as described in Section I.1 of the RFA. However, if a county can provide a justification in the Application and explain the rationale for choosing another area, it will be considered.

8. Are all of the research-based trainings for Component A offered through the California Department of Education (CDE), or do counties have local flexibility?

Answer: No. The trainings included in Component A are only provided and/or sponsored by CDE through an authorized contractor.

9. Is there an alternative plan for participants who don't have the access to the technology or ability to complete the CORE?

Answer: No. However, a lead agency may offer this support if deemed necessary and appropriate.

10. In the CARES Plus agenda item presented to the State Commission, there was a provision for Higher Education Pathway Partnerships. Was this eliminated? Is it forthcoming?

Answer: CARES Plus Component B is compatible with the Higher Education Pathway Partnerships described in the Commission item. Limited resources for CARES Plus resulted in the RFA directing activities for participants in the initial stages of the ECE degree-granting process, namely, participants completing the Core 8 (or comparable curriculum) at a two- or four-year institution.

We envision that future CARES Plus funding will enable us to revisit and expand the higher education pathway component.

11. In terms of the Lower Division Core 8 Courses, does everyone in Component B have to complete these?

Answer: Yes. A participant must complete the Core 8. However, comparable courses meeting the requirements may be substituted, as determined by an advisor.

12. If a lower division course Core 8 course is not available to participants, can they move on to the next course?

Answer: Yes. If a participant is in an area that does not provide access to the Core 8 classes, the participant should work with an advisor to determine an alternative or replacement class. Additionally, if a participant has completed the Core 8 classes prior to the community colleges' alignment process, there is no need to repeat the courses.

13. If a CLASS observer gives an advisor feedback, can this drive the curriculum selection instead of strictly adhering to the order specified in the RFA in Section II, G.2.b?

Answer: Yes. As long as the Core 8 classes are completed first, a participant, through discussion with an advisor, can determine other curriculum selections based on feedback from the CLASS observation.

14. What is the role of Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) providers in CARES Plus?

Answer: Although FFN providers are not currently eligible to receive a stipend or incentive in the CARES Plus design, local funds may be used for this purpose.

15. Is My Teaching Partner (MTP) available in languages other than English?

Answer: No, not at this time.

16. If a preschool teacher completes only the CARES Plus CORE program requirements as stipulated in Year 1, are they are eligible for a stipend?

Answer: Yes. After completing the CORE requirements in Year 1, a participant is eligible for a stipend. However, during Year 2, a preschool teacher must add a component to be eligible for a stipend in Year 2.

17. Will there be guidelines for determining the stipend amount?

Answer: No. The determination of the stipend amount is a local decision. Please refer to Section II, I.3 Local Stipends for Participation, to review the statewide stipend requirements.

18. If individuals don't participate in CARES Plus, can they still participate in the California Department of Education (CDE)-sponsored trainings mentioned in the RFA?

Answer: Yes. Individuals not participating in CARES Plus may participate in the California Department of Education (CDE)-sponsored trainings. These trainings are not designed exclusively for CARES Plus, although CARES Plus funds may be used for these trainings as necessary for CARES Plus participants. Please visit the Child Development Division Web site at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd> for additional information on CDE-sponsored trainings.

19. Why are participants limited to selecting either Component A or B?

Answer: The lead agency determines the local program design, and it must include either Component A or B, or both A and B. A participant, with guidance from an advisor, reviews the county design and determines the appropriate component or components in which to participate. If a local design includes both A and B, and the advisor recommends that a participant complete both components, there is no reason to limit the participant to a single component.

20. Where can I find more information about My Teaching Partner (MTP) that will be used for the CARES Plus Component C?

Answer: Additional information on MTP may be found at: <http://www.myteachingpartner.net/>

21. Is a CARES Plus participant considered a new participant even if they previously participated in CARES?

Answer: Yes. CARES Plus participants are considered new regardless of past participation in CARES.

22. Is there an expectation in terms of the number of CARES Plus participants?

Answer: No, there is no set number of individuals who can participate in CARES Plus.

23. If a lead agency is interested in applying to participate in Component D, when do they submit Form 11?

Answer: A completed Form 11 should be submitted with the Letter of Intent that expresses interest in participating in Component D.

24. Are license-exempt providers eligible to participate in CARES Plus?

Answer: Yes. Center-based license-exempt providers are eligible to participate in the CARES Plus Program. This would include MEES “family literacy center” teachers, along with those from other child care centers located on educational sites. License-exempt family child care providers, however, are not eligible at this time.

GENERAL

1. Can a First 5 county commission submit a Letter of Intent and then subcontract?

Answer: Yes. Subcontracting is permissible. However, the lead agency is fully responsible for the fiscal and programmatic oversight of the program.

2. Can the Local Child Care Planning Council be part of the CARES Plus collaborative?

Answer: Yes. A Local Child Care Planning Council can be part of a collaborative.

3. Some of the reporting continues beyond July 1, 2013. Are the lead agencies expected to comply even though this is after the end of the program?

Answer: Yes. The lead agency is required to submit the reports on all completed activities and data, some of which go beyond the contract period.