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Request for Proposals

Black PEARL Doula Network

January 6, 2025

1. **GENERAL INFORMATION**
2. **Description of First 5 Orange County, Children and Families Commission**

The Children and Families Commission of Orange County (hereafter referred to as First 5 Orange County) is a public agency with a legal mandate to promote, support, and improve the early development of children from the prenatal stage to five years of age in Orange County. The agency was established as a result of the voter-approved California Children and Families Act of 1998 (Health and Safety Code Section 130100-130155).

Since its inception more than 20 years ago, First 5 Orange County (First 5 OC) has become a leading convener and collaborator, valued capacity builder, and influential funder. In these roles, we place particular emphasis on addressing equity issues that affect the health, well-being, and early learning for our county’s youngest residents. We want children of every culture, background, and circumstance to thrive.

First 5 OC’s [2021 – 2026 Strategic Plan](https://first5oc.org/strategic-plan/) articulates our vision that *all* children, prenatal to age five, in Orange County reach their full potential from their earliest moments. To realize this vision, we collaborate with other county public agencies, community residents and organizations, and philanthropic partners, who share this vision for young children and are committed to working together to maximize resources and achieve the greatest possible impact.

1. **Background**

There is growing evidence that culturally appropriate doula care during pregnancy, labor and the post-partum period improves birth outcomes and mitigates risks associated with maternal and infant mortality. Despite its many benefits, access to doula care is often limited for low-income people and people of color due to barriers such as out-of-pocket costs, lack of information about services, lack of culturally competent, evidence-based care, and insufficient coordination between community-based doula services and health systems. In response to the benefits and barriers to doula care, particularly for historically marginalized populations, the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) added doula services to the list​​​​​​​​ of preventive services covered under the Medi-Cal program effective January 1, 2023.

Almost two years later, families in Orange County utilizing Medi-Cal continue to face access barriers due to the limited number of Medi-Cal certified doulas. For instance, the Medi-Cal factor for 2024-2025 is 30.8%, which means 31% of births in Orange County are paid for by Medi-Cal. According to the most recent data from the California Department of Health and Human Services, there were 29,886 births in 2023. Applying the Medi-Cal factor, approximately 9,265 births were eligible for doula support, yet there are currently less than 20 Medi-Cal certified doulas providers between the two Managed Care Plans that serve Orange County; far below the number of doulas needed to serve Orange County’s Medi-Cal population. Furthermore, Black, Indigenous, and Pacific Islander families in Orange County have the highest rates of morbidity, mortality, and lower birth weights, yet have the least access to culturally responsive doula support, which has been demonstrated to mitigate negative experiences and the associated stress that negatively impacts pregnancy and birth outcomes.

First 5 OC’s 2021-2026 Strategic Plan includes a commitment to increase access to support from doulas within Orange County for families enrolled in Medi-Cal. Aligned with this commitment, First 5 OC has been implementing a doula stipend program since 2023 to incentivize doulas to become Medi-Cal certified. Implementing this program has revealed the need to develop a robust, culturally affirming doula workforce in Orange County. Earlier this year, the First 5 OC Board approved a partnership with The University of California, Irvine (UCI) School of Medicine to address the doula shortage through the implementation of the Black PEARL (Promoting Equity, Anti-Racism, and Love) Model for Systemic Integration of Community Maternal Support Services (COMSS), funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health. The Black PEARL COMSS model (hereafter referred to as Black PEARL) integrates doula care and other community-based services within health systems to create an inclusive perinatal care system that improves birth outcomes for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) birthing patients. As part of Black PEARL, First 5 OC and UCI are partnering to expand a culturally responsive doula workforce, support Medi-Cal certification, and build a strong doula network in Orange County. These efforts are further supported by a grant from Kaiser Permanente’s Southern California Community Health Contributions Program.

1. **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)**

This RFP invites submissions from organizations or collaboratives that have experience and infrastructure to develop, lead, and manage the Black PEARL Doula Network. We encourage all interested organizations and collaboratives to apply including those that are fiscally sponsored, located outside of Orange County, or not currently funded by First 5 OC. Applicants responding to this Request for Proposals must have a clear plan for increasing visibility, building community trust, and providing services within Orange County.

The selected applicant will also serve as a strategic partner with First 5 OC and UCI School of Medicine on the implementation and evaluation of the Black PEARL model. We anticipate an executed agreement to begin March 1, 2025, and be implemented over three fiscal years (March 2025 – September 2027) for an amount not to exceed $160,000 annually for an estimated total of $480,000. The timing and/or amount may be adjusted based on funding availability. **All proposed work outlined in this RFP is contingent upon the execution of a contractual agreement between UCI and First 5.**

**SCOPE OF WORK**

1. **Doula Training and Technical Assistance**

* Develop and implement a culturally responsive doula training program that meets the requirements of California Department of Health Care Services and incorporates findings from doula research and input from UCI School of Medicine and First 5 OC.
* Enroll community members in culturally responsive doula training with a goal of at least 10 new doulas per year completing the training and becoming Medi-Cal certified doulas.
* Conduct workshops and provide technical assistance (in-person and virtual) on business development, which includes obtaining a business license and National Provider Identifier (NPI) number, understanding Medi-Cal billing and payments, contracting with Medi-Cal managed care health plans in Orange County, and ways to mitigate the administrative burden of being a Medi-Cal provider.
* Provide a stipend for each new doula (up to 10) participating in the training per year and incentives such as doula kits including items such as breast models, peanut balls, pelvic models, medicine balls, name badges, mobile carts, infographics, community resource lists, etc. for all doula participants.
* Provide technical assistance to help doulas complete the Medi-Cal application, certification, and PAVE portal approval.

1. **Doula Wellness Support**
   * Host a series of wellness sessions (e.g., workshops, support groups, day retreats) to address isolation and burnout.
   * Provide 1:1 individualized check-in meetings and connect doulas to community resources as needed.
   * Identify and incentivize experienced doulas to serve as mentors for new doulas.
   * Pair 10 new doulas per year with experienced doulas and conduct periodic in-person and/or virtual convenings for ongoing professional development beyond initial training sessions.
2. **Network Management**
   * Coordinate the integration of First 5 OC and CalOptima’s doula stipend programs to incentivize Medi-Cal certification and PAVE portal approval.
   * Assist doulas in securing contracts with CalOptima and Kaiser to provide Medi-Cal doula services.
   * Partner with First 5 OC and UCI to develop and implement a plan for integrating doulas into UCI Health and other health systems as feasible.
   * Develop mechanisms for sharing information and resources within the Black PEARL Doula Network.
   * Develop strategies and protocols for engaging local programs and collaboratives (e.g., BreastfeedLA/Black Infant Health, Sacred Path Indigenous Wellness Center, Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance, Health Equity for African Americans League, MOMs OC, etc.) to connect BIPOC families to the Black PEARL Doula Network.
   * Identify and implement strategies for securing additional funding and other resources to support the sustainability of the Black PEARL Doula Network.
3. **Community Awareness and Engagement**
   * Contribute to the development and implementation of a community outreach and engagement plan to promote the Black PEARL Doula Network. This may include social media campaign, tabling community events, speaking on panels, conducting meeting presentations, etc.
   * Partner with First 5 OC and UCI to host a series of community listening sessions in Irvine, Anaheim, and Santa Ana.
   * Develop and implement a Doula Advisory Committee to inform the approach and implementation of the scope of work outlined in this RFP.
4. **Data and Evaluation**
   * Develop and implement an evaluation plan for the Black PEARL Doula Network that includes, but is not limited to, the following annual targets, which may be adjusted as needed:
     + By March 31, outreach to various community partners to enroll at least 14 community members in 16 hours of doula training with a goal of 10 newly trained doulas (72% completion rate).

* By August 31, each of the 10 newly trained doulas will provide culturally responsive doula services to 3 families to meet the requirements to enroll as a Medi-Cal provider, with the goal of serving a total of 30 families.
* By October 31, provide PAVE portal technical assistance to the 10 new doulas with at least 80% completing Medi-Cal provider enrollment requirements.
* By December 31, at least 6 of the new doulas that have completed Medi-Cal provider enrollment will contract with at least one Medi-Cal managed care plan in Orange County.
  + Collect and analyze program data to assess effectiveness and impact including number of doula training hours completed per participant, collect pre- and post-survey data to assess participants’ knowledge and understanding of core content, observe or collect evidence of births supported by doula trainees, and track participant progress with Medi-Cal enrollment and contracting.
  + Share progress updates and evaluation findings at least quarterly with the Doula Advisory Committee, doula participants, system partners, and other key stakeholders to address emerging barriers and make mid-course adjustments as needed.
  + Partner with First 5 OC and UCI to fulfill the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health reporting requirements.
  + Contribute to the Black PEARL COMSS program evaluation in collaboration with First 5 OC and UCI.

1. **DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS**

First 5 OC is seeking an organization or collaborative with the experience, knowledge, and capacity outlined below.

Experience

* A strong history of developing and delivering culturally affirming doula training and support services.
* Demonstrated success in collaborating with community-based organizations, health plans, research institutions, and/or public agencies to address health inequities and maximize resources for greater impact.
* Successfully managing federal contract requirements.
* Demonstrated ability to cultivate community trust.
* Experience developing and facilitating an advisory committee including recruitment of participants, meeting facilitation, navigating diverse perspectives to achieve agreement around shared goals.

Knowledge

* Understanding of the factors that impact BIPOC maternal and infant health.
* Familiarity with PAVE portal, contracting with health plans, Medi-Cal billing, and doula business development.
* Knowledge of the key issues that impact the doula workforce and promising practices for doula retention and well-being.

Capacity

* Strong management and team building approach with open communication.
* Big picture perspective with the ability to connect the dots between multiple resources and strands of work.
* Financial and operational stability with the capacity to administer doula stipends, manage federal and other public funding, and adhere to tracking and reporting requirements.

1. **Award**

The opportunity to respond to this Request for Proposals is open to all organizations and collaboratives, including those that are fiscally sponsored, located outside of Orange County, or not currently funded by First 5 OC. An award will be made based on an assessment of how well applicants demonstrate qualifications aligned with the *Scope of Work* (Section II), *Desired Qualifications* (Section III), and one or more of the following criteria:

* Capacity to ramp up quickly and implement the Scope of Work within the specified timeframe.
* Experience or quality of performance with previous contracts or services, if applicable.
* Ability to establish and cultivate community trust within Orange County.
* Organization or collaborative has additional compatible resources that can be leveraged.

Applications will be scored by a review panel consisting of First 5 OC and UCI School of Medicine staff, consultants, and community partners.

Questions about this RFP and the process must be submitted to First5OC@cfcoc.ocgov.com by January 10, 2025. Applicants are advised not to contact First 5 OC staff or consultants to discuss this RFP. All questions received will be addressed and shared on the website: www.first5oc.org on January 15, 2025.

1. **TERMS OF THE PROJECT**

First 5 OC expect to enter into an initial service agreement through September 2025 with the selected applicant with an anticipated start in March 2025. This initial service agreement is subject to renewal annually beginning October 2025 through the end of the project.

Funding for the Black PEARL Doula Network is $480,000 over three fiscal years, contingent upon continued funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, contractual agreements between First 5 OC and UCI, and approval by the First 5 OC Commission. This will be a cost reimbursement service agreement. In a cost-reimbursement agreement, costs are reimbursed through monthly invoices based on services rendered and actual expenses incurred. Therefore, applicants must anticipate sufficient cash flow. First 5 OC will negotiate a final budget with the selected applicant.

First 5 OC may enter into more than one agreement with the selected partner to meet program needs. This scope of work is supported by multiple funding sources, each with specific compliance requirements.

1. **SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

The complete RFP submittal package must include all required documents listed in this section. Incomplete submissions may be grounds for disqualification. Submit required documents electronically to First5OC@cfcoc.ocgov.com **no later than January 21, 2025** **by 3:00 pm (Pacific Time)**. Submissions after this date and time will be automatically rejected.

**REQUIRED DOCUMENTS**

1. **Letter of Interest (limited to 5 pages):** The letter of interest must include the following information:
   * Lead person’s name, title, organization, and contact information. The letter must be signed by the corporate officer who has the authority to act on behalf of, and bind, the lead organization.
   * Description of the organization or collaborative, your values and driving philosophy, and why you are interested in implementing the Black PEARL Doula Network in Orange County.
   * Description of how your organization or collaborative meets the *Desired Qualifications* (Section III) to implement the *Scope of Work* (Section II). Please include the following:
     + 1-2 examples of past projects that demonstrate your organization or collaborative’s ability to effectively lead the implementation of the Black PEARL Doula Network.
     + Existing resources, relationships, and/or curriculum your organization or collaborative can leverage to support implementation.
   * Initial thoughts about how your team will increase the visibility of the Black PEARL Doula Network, attract new doulas, build community trust, and provide services within Orange County.
   * Based on your experience implementing similar projects, please describe any challenges you anticipate occurring during implementation of this project, proposed solutions, and how can First 5 OC best support you to be successful.
2. **Budget**: Submit a proposed project budget for each year of the project as listed below. Include a budget narrative describing line-item costs.
   * Year 1: March 2025 – September 2025 (7 months)
   * Year 2: October 2025 – September 2026 (12 months)
   * Year 3: October 2026 – September 2027 (12 months)
3. **Proposed Team Members.** Include a short bio of each proposed team member that will exercise a major policy, administrative, or consultative role in carrying out the work described in the *Scope of Work* (Section II). Include their role and depth of experience that will contribute to successful implementation of the Black PEARL Doula Network.
4. **References -** Include three references (**Attachment 1**) recently familiar with the quality and reliability of respondent’s work in organizational development. Include the organization’s name, mailing address, contact person and title, phone number, email and a general description of services provided for each reference.
5. **Financial Audit.** Submit complete, unqualified independent financial audit for two consecutive years OR one complete, unqualified independent audit and two consecutive years of Form 990. Audits and Form 990s should be no older than 2021.
6. **RFP CONTRACTING**

First 5 OC reserves the right to contract with any organization providing responses to this RFP that meets First 5 OC contracting requirements. Submission of required documents and/or responses to follow up questions does not obligate First 5 OC to contract with applicant organizations. All awarded organizations, including subcontractors, must be able to meet federal and state requirements regardless of whether they receive state or federal funding.

General requirements required to contract with First 5 OC include, but are not limited to:

1. **Contract** - First 5 OC will develop a contract based on its usual and customary terms and conditions incorporating the requirements outlined in the RFP document and the responses of the selected applicant(s). A draft of the contract template may be provided upon request**.**
2. **Non-Resident Tax Withholding** – Please note that First 5 OC is required to comply with all State laws and regulations related to non-resident withholding pursuant to California Revenue and Taxation Code Section 18662 which requires 7% of all payments exceeding applicable amount in a calendar year to be withheld and sent to the California Franchise Tax Board.Nonresident payees include corporations, limited liability companies, partnerships, and individuals that do not have a permanent place of business in California.
3. **Personnel** - Project partners, managers, other supervisory staff, and specialists may be changed if those personnel leave the agency, are promoted, or are assigned to another office. The personnel may also be changed for other reasons with the expressed prior written permission of First 5 OC. However, in either case, First 5 OC reserves the right to accept or reject any or all replacements.

Specialists identified in response to the RFP can only be changed with the express prior written permission of First 5 OC, which reserves the right to approve or reject any or all replacements.

Other staff personnel may be changed at the discretion of agencies provided that such replacements have substantially the same or better applications or experience.

1. **RFP Interpretations and Addenda** - Any change to or interpretation of the RFP by First 5 OC will be posted on First 5 OC’s website, and any such changes or interpretations shall become a part of the RFP for incorporation into any contract awarded pursuant to the RFP.
2. **Public Record** - All applications submitted in response to this RFP will become the property of First 5 OC and a matter of public record.
3. **Additional Services** - The general service requirements outlined above describe the minimum work to be accomplished. During initial contract negotiations and any subsequent negotiations for contract renewals, the scope of service may be modified and refined based on the needs of First 5 OC.
4. **Undue Influence** – The responding Organization declares and warrants that no undue influence or pressure is used against or in concert with any officer or employee of First 5 OC in connection with the award or terms of any contract that may be executed as a result of award of this RFP, including any method of coercion, confidential financial arrangement, or financial inducement. No officer or employee of First 5 OC will receive compensation, directly or indirectly, from the Organization, or from any officer, employee, or agent of the Organization, in connection with the award of any contract or any work to be conducted as a result of an ensuing contract. A violation of this provision shall be a material breach of any contract entered into, entitling First 5 OC to any and all remedies at law or in equity.
5. **Submittal Preparation Expenses –** First 5 OC shall not be liable for any expenses incurred by the Organization in the preparation or submission of its applications, and such expenses shall not be reimbursed under a resulting contract.
6. **Insurance Requirements –** The insurance requirements for standard First 5 OC contracts are set forth below, including coverage amounts, types of coverage, and policy requirements. The insurance requirements for specific contracts may be adjusted at time of contract negotiations based on the scope of services to be provided.

* Comprehensive General Liability Insurance for bodily injury (including death) and property damage which provides not less than $1,000,000 combined single limit per occurrence and not less than $2,000,000 annual aggregate.
* Comprehensive Automobile Liability Insurance for bodily injury (including death) and property damage which provides total limits of not less than $l,000,000 combined single limit per occurrence applicable to all owned, non-owned and hired vehicles/watercraft, $1,000,000 annual aggregate.
* Workers’ Compensation Insurance for all employees engaged in project services with the California statutory amount of $1,000,000 per accident (only if the Applicant is a firm with employees).
* Employers’ Liability Coverage of not less than $1,000,000 per occurrence for all employees engaged in project services or operations (only if the Applicant is a firm with employees).
* Professional Liability of not less than $1,000,000 for professional licensed staff engaged in project services or operations (only if the Applicant will provide a service which requires a professional license).

1. **Conflict of Interest -** A conflict of interest exists when a responding Organization and its staff have the opportunity to advance or protect a personal interest, or the interests of others with whom he/she has a relationship, in a way that is detrimental or potentially harmful for the integrity or fundamental mission of First 5 OC. Responding Organizations will be required to disclose potential conflicts of interest as soon as it becomes known to them, or prior to engaging in any services with First 5 OC or a First 5 OC-funded organization, whichever comes first. Even the perception of a conflict of interest must be avoided and may require the restriction of the Organization’s scope of work or may give rise to the disqualification of an Organization from providing further services on behalf of First 5 **OC** in a particular area of expertise. First 5 **OC** staff will consult with legal counsel regarding potential conflicts of interest. Remedies may include, but are not limited to, removing the Organization from any decision making, limiting the Organization’s exposure to the decision-making process, and other means as available to avoid the conflict of interest.
2. **Cancellation of RFP** – First 5 OC may cancel this RFP at any time for any reason without notice.
3. **Compliance with Laws** - All information submitted in response to this RFP shall comply with current federal, state, and other applicable laws related thereto.
4. **Severability** - If any provisions or portion of any provision of this RFP are held invalid, illegal or unenforceable, they shall be severed from the RFP and the remaining provisions shall be valid and enforceable to the extent feasible.
5. **RFP KEY ACTIVITIES AND DATES**

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| **Release Date:**  **January 6, 2025** | Instructions for submission will be available on First 5 OC’s website: [www.first5oc.org](http://www.first5oc.org) |
| **Final Date to Submit Questions: January 10, 2025** | Submit questions to [First5OC@cfcoc.ocgov.com](mailto:First5OC@cfcoc.ocgov.com) on January 10, 2025 by 3:00 p.m. |
| **Responses to Questions:**  **January 15, 2025** | Responses to questions posted on First 5 OC’s website: [www.first5oc.org.](http://www.first5oc.org.) |
| **Required Documents Due:**  **January 21, 2025** | Submit required documents as outlined in *Section VI. Required Documents* to [First5OC@cfcoc.ocgov.com](mailto:First5OC@cfcoc.ocgov.com) no later than January 21, 2025 by 3:00 p.m. No submissions will be accepted after this date and time. |
| **Awarded Applicant Notified by**  **January 27, 2025** | The successful applicant will be notified on or before January 27, 2025. |
| **Anticipated Board of Commissioner Approval:**  **February 5, 2025** | All awards contingent on First 5 OC Board of Commisioner approval. |
| **Anticipated Contract Start Date: March 2025** | First 5 OC reserves the right to change the start date of the contract for any reason. |

### **Attachment 1: Reference Table**

### Include three references recently familiar with the quality and reliability of applicant’s work. These references will be contacted by First 5 Orange County staff.

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| **Organization Name:** |
| **Contact Person and Title:** |
| **Mailing Address:** |
| **Phone and Email:** |
| **General description of services provided:** |

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| **Organization Name:** |
| **Contact Person and Title:** |
| **Mailing Address:** |
| **Phone and Email:** |
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