

Application Report



Applicant Organization: AbilityFirst
Project Name: AbilityFirst Grupo de Padres Abriendo Puertas
Application ID: App-22-525
Funding Announcement: FY 22-23 Service Access and Equity Grant
Awarded Amount: \$170,000

Project Summary: The project builds on the success of our existing diversity, equity and inclusion initiative Grupo de Padres Abriendo Puertas (Parent Group Opening Doors) to increase awareness of and access to services and supports. It is parent-led, parent-empowered, and staff supported. Formed to target disparities, inequitable access, and difficulty obtaining services identified by Spanish-speaking parents of our participants, the project will expand to include families in communities where disparities exist.

Authorized Certifying Official: Keri Castaneda kcastaneda@abilityfirst.org 626 639-1743

Project Director/Manager: Keri Castaneda kcastaneda@abilityfirst.org 626 639-1743

Project Manager/Coordinator: Araceli Gonzalez araceli.gonzalez@abilityfirst.org 626 316-7962

Compliance/Fiscal Officer: Kashif Khan kkhan@abilityfirst.org 626 396-1010

Section Name: Applicant Eligibility

Sub Section Name: Applicant Information

1. Applicant Question: Project Title

What is the Project Title?

Applicant Response:

AbilityFirst Grupo de Padres Abriendo Puertas

2. Applicant Question: Awarded Amount

What is the total amount requested for the project?

Applicant Response:

\$170,000

3. Applicant Question: Organization Type

Choose the response that best describes your organization.

Applicant Response:

Community Based Organization (CBO), 501(c)(3)

4. Applicant Question: Description of Organization/Group

Provide a brief description of the organization or group. Explain what experience your organization has managing a project similar to the proposal and state the outcomes of that project. You may upload your brochure or add a website link.

Applicant Response:

AbilityFirst (www.abilityfirst.org) provides person-centered programs to help people with disabilities achieve their full potential throughout their lives. They empower children and adults to discover what is important to them and develop skills that are important for them to achieve their goals. Programs include community participation and skills development; camp; employment training and placement; support for college students; warm water aquatics; and 2 group homes. This project builds upon the success of our diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts to expand access to services, focusing on strengthening parent advocacy and leadership skills among Hispanic and Spanish-speaking families. It addresses barriers to service by enhancing knowledge of opportunities and services, communication of needs and wants, and understanding of the Regional Center system and generic resources. Empowered advocates will help responsive Regional Centers mitigate disparities and barriers to service.

5. Applicant Question: Applicant in Good Standing

Is the applicant in good standing with the California Secretary of State, California Franchise Tax Board, and California Department of Tax and Fee Administration? Please upload confirmation letter(s) or proof of good standing.

Applicant Response:

Yes

Attachment:

[FTB Entity Status Letter 10-5-22.pdf](#) - PDF FILE

[Secretary of State Certificate of Status 10-5-22.pdf](#) - PDF FILE

[Sellers Tax Permit 10-5-22.pdf](#) - PDF FILE

6. Applicant Question: Subcontractors in Good Standing

Are the applicant's subcontractors in good standing with the California Secretary of State, California Franchise Tax Board, and California Department of Tax and Fee Administration?

Applicant Response:

Not Applicable

Section Name: Grant Reapplication Information**Sub Section Name:** Grant Reapplications Only**1. Applicant Question:** Previous Award(s)

Did your organization receive DDS grant funding in fiscal year 2020-21 or 2021-22? If yes, go to question 2 to complete each column. If no, skip this category and go to category 3.

Applicant Response:

No

2. Applicant Question: Previous Grant Award(s)

Since fiscal year 2020, complete a row for each DDS Service Access and Equity grant your organization was awarded funding.

Applicant Response:

3. Applicant Question: Previous Grant Outcomes

Provide a brief grant summary of your project outcomes for fiscal year 2020-21 and/or 2021-22.

Applicant Response:

Not Applicable

Applicant Comment:

Not Applicable

4. Applicant Question: Project Transition

If awarded, how will your current project(s) transition into the 2022-23 proposed project? Does your proposed project expand or continue your current project, if so how? What activities, measures, or target groups are being added? Provide a summary of the differences and reasons why you are proposing the change.

Applicant Response:

Not Applicable

Applicant Comment:

Not Applicable

Section Name: General Application

Sub Section Name: Proposal Summary

1. Applicant Question: Project Type

Choose the project type that best describes your activities from the list below:

Applicant Response:

Community Connector

Applicant Comment:

Community connector

2. Applicant Question: Duration of project

Choose the duration of your project.

Applicant Response:

24 months

3. Applicant Question: Regional Centers

Choose the Regional Center(s) that your project will serve. Check all that apply. If you are proposing a statewide project, select the All Regional Centers/Statewide option.

Applicant Response:

- Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center
 - Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center
-

4. Applicant Question: Counties Served

List the county or counties your project proposes to serve. Check all that apply. If you are proposing a statewide project, the select All Counties / Statewide option.

Applicant Response:

- Los Angeles County
-

5. Applicant Question: Community Based Organizations

Will you be working with one or more Community Based Organizations? If so, provide the name of the organization and how you will be working together.

Applicant Response:

Fiesta Educativa will provide technology training and support for parents who are participating in the AbilityFirst Grupo de Padres Abriendo Puertas project. We will also work closely with the Los Angeles Unified School District and schools, faith communities, and other trusted organizations within the project's catchment area to promote awareness and education and address misconceptions about the developmental disabilities system in California.

6. Applicant Question: Multiple Organizations

Does your project include partnership with one or more organizations either as a co-applicant or subcontractor? If "yes", please upload a letter of support from each organization, that includes an explanation of their role in the partnership.

Applicant Response:

No

7. Applicant Question: Strategies and Sustainability

How will your project continue its work after the grant funding has concluded?

Applicant Response:

Expanding access and reducing barriers to services is a core value of AbilityFirst, which has self-funded its DEI initiatives to date. AbilityFirst has a comprehensive fundraising plan to ensure that we continue to secure the resources needed to address the growing needs of individuals with I/DD into the future, while mitigating barriers to attendance. A diverse revenue stream includes service fees, individual and corporate donations, special events, grants, and investment income. The project will assess the feasibility of expanding the program to other communities and individuals not currently receiving Regional Center services at AbilityFirst (or at all). Successful outcomes will motivate donors to support the project, especially individuals and foundations that are invested in promoting DEI. As more families become aware of the services available for their children, they will be able to obtain appropriate vendored and mainstream services to help their children and themselves.

Sub Section Name: Target Population

1. Applicant Question: Ethnicity Groups Served

Select the ethnicity group(s) the project will serve. For "Indian", "Pacific Islander", "Slavic" or "Other" use comment section to list specific groups.

Applicant Response:

- Hispanic

2. Applicant Question: Ethnicity Group(s), Language(s) and Number of Individuals Served

For each ethnicity group, provide the number of individuals your project intends to serve and the related language(s).

Applicant Response:

Ethnicity Group(s)	Individuals Served	Language(s)
Hispanic	600	Spanish

3. Applicant Question: Age Group(s) Served

Select all Age Groups the project will serve.

Applicant Response:

- Birth up to Three (Early Start)
- Three to Five
- Three to 21
- 16 to 21
- 22 and older

Section Name: Project Application

Sub Section Name: Project Application

1. Applicant Question: Project Summary and Organizational Experience

Provide a clear and concise project summary that includes a defined target population, catchment area, and project design. Specifically describe what your project will accomplish and how it will benefit the community served. In your answer, include what experience your organization has working with the target population and how your organization will work with the local RC(s).

Applicant Response:

AbilityFirst has served individuals with disabilities for 96 years. All programs are community focused and person-centered. This project builds on the success of our existing DEI initiative, Grupo De Padres Abriendo Puertas (Parent Group Opening Doors) to increase awareness of and access to services and supports. It is parent-led, parent-empowered, and staff supported. Formed to target disparities, inequitable access, and difficulty obtaining services identified by Spanish-speaking parents of our participants, the project will expand to include families in communities where disparities exist.

Grupo de Padres Abriendo Puertas was formed in 2021 to create community among Spanish-speaking parents of AbilityFirst participants, increase advocacy skills, and develop understanding of the developmental services systems and resources. The group exists to inform, empower, and connect through collaboration, shared activities, and educational resources that are important to and for them and their families. All activities and materials are provided in Spanish. Training has included a 4-part Emerging Leaders Program through Disability Voices United; training on accessing mental and behavioral health services; and linguistically and culturally responsive technology training by Fiesta Educativa. The group meets twice monthly. All of these activities will be part of this proposed project, and will be virtual or in-person, and presented in Spanish. We expect to reach 350 community members through workshops, personal interactions, and small groups.

In year 1, the project will contact 250 families and seek to increase the average number of parents who attend the group. A key activity in year 1 will be to develop and educate 6 parent leaders ("ambassadors") incorporating the activities and resources described above. In year 2, parent ambassadors will make presentations and work with schools, faith communities, and other trusted community groups to provide accurate information about Regional Center and mainstream resources for people with disabilities. Outreach and training will be held both in person at various locations, and online, by telephone, or in 1:1 or small group settings, to accommodate work and personal schedules and maximize participation. The project navigator will make arrangements and lead the advocacy component; parent ambassadors will share their stories, successes, and struggles. We believe that parents will organically and naturally respond to the ambassadors, and share their needs, experiences and barriers in obtaining resources; ambassadors can relay that information to staff for follow-up and direct assistance as needed. In-person activities will follow existing health and safety protocols for the applicable venue, including indoor masking where required.

2. Applicant Question: Data and Community Input

Explain why you have selected your priority population(s) using RC POS data and other data as supporting evidence of the disparity or inequity. Include how your organization used input from the community, target population, and RC to design the proposal.

Applicant Response:

Both Regional Centers (ELARC and FDLRC) report significant disparities in services to Hispanic and Spanish-speaking individuals, especially those living at home, including not using all authorized services or not receiving services at all, and lower per capita expenditures than members of other ethnic and language groups. AbilityFirst staff met with ELARC staff, leadership, and parents at the Perez Career and Transition Center, and it is clear there is a high need for adult programs in East LA. Stakeholders, including parents, said that once youth leave high school they either stay home or have to travel outside the area for services. The project manager also met with Monserrat Palacios, cultural specialist at ELARC. Parents of individuals in our programs have also encountered barriers and problems accessing services they need. In September 2021 FDLRC staff described a need for improved access and advocacy for Spanish-speaking and Hispanic residents (specifically in the Pico-Union/Westlake area), and provided supporting POS data. The AbilityFirst DEI Project Manager has also collaborated with Joe Perales from FDLRC, whose 2023 goals include increased collaborations with community partners to ensure access to Regional Center services.

3. Applicant Question: Uniqueness

How is the proposed project unique from a currently funded grant (e.g., strategies, activities, and goals) in the proposed RC catchment area? If the project is similar to a currently funded grant listed on the Department's website, how is the proposed project different?

Applicant Response:

This project represents an organic/natural expansion of an existing program, driven by family and individual needs, that has a track record of success. AbilityFirst is well-regarded and has worked closely with these Regional Centers. The agency has cultural and linguistic competence to serve Hispanic and Spanish-speaking people. The project goal is to equip parents and other family members to advocate for services and resources and to achieve better outcomes and more community inclusion for their children. The project is specifically targeted to the needs and challenges of Hispanic and Spanish-speaking individuals. It will be led by family members who are already recipients of Regional Center services, not staff members. The project will target individual schools and districts, where most families who qualify for early intervention and other resources can be found, and other trusted organizations such as faith communities. Last year no community connector grants were awarded exclusively for this population, or this combination of Regional Centers.

4. Applicant Question: Improve Equity and Service Access

How will your project measurably improve equity, access, and reduce barriers to services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families?

Applicant Response:

The project will reach approximately 350 parents, caregivers, and community residents with reliable, culturally and linguistically appropriate information about what services and resources are available for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities, and how to access them. Key to this effort is the use of trained, motivated parent ambassadors, who speak from experience with their own challenges and barriers. By empowering parents to advocate for their children, the project will help them overcome barriers to service and seek resources to enhance the quality of their lives.

5. Applicant Question: Support of RC Plan

Does the project support the RC plan to promote equity and reduce disparities in their catchment? If you are a RC, how does this project support your recommendations and plan to promote equity and reduce your identified disparities? How will your project collaborate with other organizations to promote community inclusion?

Applicant Response:

The project supports the ELARC and FDLRC plans to promote equity and reduce disparities in service delivery in their respective catchment areas. In implementing the project, we will continue to collaborate closely with them to achieving our shared goals. We have discussed our DEI strategic goals and focus on addressing and overcoming barriers to access with them.

6. Applicant Question: Project Activities and Measures

Note: Before answering this question, applicants must complete the Activities Template located in the middle tab directly above.

The schedule of activities clearly and specifically demonstrates the steps that the project will take to achieve its stated objective and measures. Do the proposed measures appropriately track the project objective and activities, provide insight into the effectiveness of project, and demonstrate impact on the target population?

Applicant Response:

y empowering parents and family members with knowledge of the Regional Center system and mainstream resources available for individuals with developmental disabilities, the project will address barriers to access and service disparities, primarily targeting the East Los Angeles and Pico-Union/Westlake regions of Los Angeles. In year 1, the project will train and equip parent ambassadors to provide advocacy and training to other community residents. Culturally accessible Spanish-language materials to accompany the workshops and trainings will be developed. In year 2, parent ambassadors, supported by staff, will make presentations at schools, faith communities, and other trusted community groups to provide accurate information about Regional Center and mainstream resources for people with disabilities. To accommodate personal and work schedules, presentations and information sessions may be in person, virtual, telephonic, or 1:1 or in small group settings. The project navigator will make arrangements with the schools and organizations and lead the advocacy component; parent ambassadors will share their stories, successes, and struggles. We believe that parents will organically and naturally respond to the ambassadors, and share their needs, experiences and barriers in obtaining resources; ambassadors can relay that information to staff for follow-up and direct assistance if needed. Parent ambassadors will have an opportunity to attend (at no cost to them) several annual conferences, including the ones presented by Fiesta Educativa, Special Needs Network, and Let's Talk LD.

AbilityFirst has a strong outcomes tracking and evaluation system in place, which will be used in the project. The staff conducts annual program reviews through an agency-wide outcomes management system. Each program has specific goals that are reviewed annually. Data is collected and maintained at the project/program level, under the direction of the Senior Director of Quality and Data Management. Quality assurance reviews evaluate programs against regulatory requirements and best practices. Other evaluation tools include constituent satisfaction surveys; quality assurance reviews; review, compilation, and analysis of participant progress; collection and review of participant demographics; tracking of job placement outcomes; and more. We also continue to monitor participation in online and alternative program activities. Outcomes are reviewed by senior management and the board of directors. Results inform strategic and financial planning, including future program changes and enhancements.

Data for this project will be collected and analyzed by the project manager. In addition to data and surveys required by DDS, we will collect the following for the project: (a) Number of persons attending each meeting or workshop; (b) Number and description of outreach activities; (c) Number of individuals attending technology or leadership training and conferences.

7. Applicant Question: Budget Template and Narrative

Note: Before answering this question, applicants must complete the Budget Template located in the tab directly above.

The project budget is consistent with the stated project objective and activities, and clearly and concisely explains how the proposed expenditures support the overall project design and outcomes. The project budget costs are clearly associated with the activities and does not include non-allowable costs or costs funded by other sources.

- Budget Template example is located at [Attachment C](#).
- Budget Details and Restrictions are available [here](#).

Applicant Response:

The budget reflects the costs of operating the project for two years: the project manager (an existing position, at 50% FTE), and resource navigator (a new position, at 50% FTE, beginning in year 2). The project manager oversees the project, supervises the resource manager, maintains books and records about the project, measures project performance, and prepares and submits budget and activity reports. The resource navigator will collaborate with the parent ambassadors to help expand the reach of service access engagement efforts. The resource navigator will share information with the ambassadors, and gather information from the ambassadors and community residents. Personnel costs, including benefits, total \$124,238, for two-years.

Non-personnel operating expenses of \$46,018 include training and education, travel, curriculum development and translation services, and equipment and supplies. Equipment and supplies include telephone, computer, internet access, and office supplies; costs related to event venues and activities, honoraria, parent ambassador costs, etc.

None of these costs is covered by other sources.

Section Name: Proposal Certification

Sub Section Name: Certification

1. Applicant Question: Confirm Proposal Discussion with RC(s)

CBOs are required to discuss their proposal with each RC(s) the CBO is intending to serve. If you are a CBO, have you discussed your proposal with each RC you are intending to serve?

Applicant Response:

Yes

2. Applicant Question: RC Contact

CBOs are required to submit their application concurrently to the Department and to each RC(s) catchment the CBO is intending to serve. If you are a CBO, state the name(s) of the contact person(s) at each RC you have emailed your proposal application. The RC contact list is available here at [Attachment F](#).

Applicant Response:

Gloria Wong, gwong@elarc.org

Adriana Roman, aroman@elarc.org

Melinda Sullivan, msullivan@lanterman.org

Rose Chacana, rchacana@lanterman.org

3. Applicant Question: Code of Conduct

Grantee Code of Conduct

The Department is committed to supporting services and programs with integrity that foster collaboration and professionalism. Grantees are expected to conduct project activities in a professional and respectful manner that include:

- **Valuing Diversity and Inclusion.** Grantees should embrace diversity that includes but is not limited to: ability, race, language, national origin, citizenship, age, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, and religion.
- **Conducting Activities with Personal and Professional Integrity.** All activities with individuals, families, community organizations, regional centers, and state, local and federal agencies should be conducted with professionalism, dignity, respect, and fairness. Grantees should be open to listening to different points of view and fostering productive communication.
- **Providing a Positive Work Environment:** All projects should foster a positive and respectful work environment with their colleagues and other grantees.

Applicant Response:

- I acknowledge that I have reviewed the Code of Conduct.
-

4. Applicant Question: Applicant Certification

By submitting this application, the Applicant is certifying the truth and accuracy of the proposal. The applicant also certifies that if you have subcontracting organizations, each participating organization has reviewed your project and agrees to their assigned activities, measures, and the budget.

Applicant Response:

Yes
