



Early Years
Request for Proposal
Online Portal and Application Build
March 2026

Project Summary

We are seeking to develop a comprehensive public facing portal that will allow members of the early childhood workforce to easily apply to multiple programs offered by Early Years, and have their information sent into the appropriate FileMaker Pro backend database. Application processes include form completion as well as uploading supporting documents.

We anticipate rolling this out in phases to ensure maximum confidence and success. Here is an example of what those phases might look like:

1. Public facing portal for individuals to complete and submit an application to the WAGES and/or STEP\$ programs. Early Years staff will collect batches of completed applications (via export or similar) and manually enter application data into the existing FileMaker Pro database for full processing. Both of these programs utilize the same FileMaker Pro database.
2. Connect the public facing portal to the FileMaker Pro database (via API) to allow for automated 'pushing' of application data into FileMaker Pro by Early Years staff.
3. Expand the public facing portal to allow for two-way data transmission. This would add functionality for notifications, communications with Early Years staff, and a read-only summary of payments generated by the FileMaker Pro database.
4. Expand and enhance the public facing portal to allow child care facility administrators to log in and see tasks for their completion, including completing and signing off on the employment verification portion of applications completed by their staff and periodic completion of employment confirmation data for specific program participants.

Our long term goals related to this project include expanding the portal to include applications for other programs at our agency (and sending to those FileMaker databases) and the possibility of providing similar functionality to our national partners. This work does not need to be included in this proposal, but should be kept in mind:

5. Repeat phases 1 - 4 (as applicable) for the TEACH Early Childhood® Scholarship Program and connection to that program's FileMaker Pro database.
6. Make a portal environment available to our national partners that are running their own licensed versions of TEACH and WAGE\$ and maintain their own FileMaker Pro databases within their own network environments.

About Early Years

Founded in 1974, the mission of Early Years is to lead efforts to strengthen accessible and affordable high-quality early care and education by providing support for families, communities and the workforce.

Using a holistic approach, Early Years supports children and families, helps child care professionals improve the quality of early education children receive and ensures all families can afford and access the high-quality early care and education that is so important for a child's early development. Through its Meal Services Program, Early Years also provides nutritious meals to children at child care centers, where they may eat 50-100 percent of their meals. Our TEACH Early Childhood® Scholarship, Child Care WAGE\$® and STEP\$ programs give child care professionals the means to obtain an education and supplement their salary based on that education. Early Years also licenses TEACH and WAGE\$ across the U.S. and conducts early childhood systems research and policy development statewide and nationally.

Audience/User Roles

The audience for the portal consists of the following unique user roles:

- *Applicant/Participant.* Individual members of the early childhood workforce who are applying to Child Care WAGE\$ or STEP\$ for a salary supplement based on their level of education. Once actively participating in the program, these users may log in to see the status of an expected payment to them. These individuals are from a variety of backgrounds and technology may be a challenge. Approximately 3,000 applications come in annually between these programs.
- *Approved Contact.* Facility administrators who are authorized to provide employment data for employees at their child care facility(ies). These users provide employment verification related to individual program applications. They also complete employment confirmation data related to specific program participants at various times during the year. Facility administrators may also be program participants and their portal experience must allow for this without maintaining separate login credentials and separate accounts. These individuals come from a variety of backgrounds and technology may be a challenge. In addition to providing employment verification for the

3,000 annual applications, there are approximately 1,000 monthly employment confirmations happening each month across both programs.

- *Early Years Program Staff.* Program staff of Early Years who review application data for eligibility. It should be easy for staff to get application data out (prior to API connection) and then there must be a clear process for application review and approval for automated submission to FileMaker Pro (after API connection). Once the portal is enhanced, staff need to be able to post communications, reply to communications and push requests for employment confirmations to the appropriate individuals. Staff should have the ability to assist portal users in completing either applications or employment confirmations and/or complete either item on their behalf.
- *Early Years Program Administrators.* Database and program administrators with a higher level of access. These individuals should have the ability to modify application questions, etc.

Objective

Our objective is to have an online portal and application for our program participants to utilize to more easily apply for our programs. Currently applications are received in paper form, or scanned and emailed and staff must manually interpret and enter all applications. A portal for facility administrators, allowing them to complete the survey and employment verification for program participants would represent a significant increase in efficiency for this process. It would reduce the number of phone calls and outreach program staff are doing currently.

To be effective, the portal must be intuitive to use for all users and easy to support internally and perform simple modifications by Early Years database administrators.

Scope of Project

Application Features

- Screening questions prior to start of actual Application to assess basic eligibility based on county of employment and self-reported current level of education. If entry for these fields does not meet acceptable criteria, the user is notified of ineligibility.
- Application uses logic rules to show/hide questions and for prompting for upload of documents
- Portal user experiences must be available in English as well as Spanish.

Applicant/Participant Portal Features

- Create a new application in a secure environment. Application data includes SSN.
- Upload supporting documentation to be attached to the application.

- Visual way of tracking application completion (example, check mark when a section or task is considered complete) and sections yet to be completed
- Ability to easily save application and come back to same point at a later time
- Ability to see history of applications from that applicant (status, date submitted, program, etc.)
- Posted information about how to submit an official transcript to WAGE\$/STEP\$ for formal assessment of supplement level. This will be submitted separately from the portal application.
- Upload documentation not directly related to a specific application at any time. Examples would include updated pay documents or grade reports for continuing education. Uploads would trigger a notification to program staff for review and processing within FileMaker Pro.
- Ability to submit a notice of contact info change, such as address, phone number or email. Submission would trigger a notification to program staff to review and manually update live data in FileMaker Pro.
- Ability to autofill basic information about the applicant onto subsequent applications to any program, to save on data entry.
- Ability to engage in two-way communication with program staff regarding application questions, need to submit additional information, or program participation (Phase 3)
- Ability to view recently processed payment data such as date processed and amount (Phase 3)
- Early Years Program Administrators will be able to control updates and modifications of program applications.
- Should be built with the flexibility to easily expand to allow for use with other Early Years programs (Phase 5). Eligibility and screening questions differ between programs.

Approved Contact Portal Features

- Approved Contact portal users would be attached to one or more child care facilities and would have access to records related to any employee at those facilities.
 - Note: a child care facility may have multiple 'approved contacts' associated with it.
- Ability to view requests for employment verification related to program application from specific applicants.
- Ability to view and complete full "employment confirmation" records for program participants. These requests contain a read only view of previous answers plus specific questions to be answered by the approved contact. These are generally completed on a six month cycle, each participant has their own cycle.

- Ability to view a list of current program participants, which program they are on, and next expected date of employment confirmation (for WAGE\$/STEP\$).
- Ability to notify program staff when a program participant is no longer employed at the child care facility. This would trigger a notification to program staff for review and record update within FileMaker Pro.
- Ability to engage in two-way communication with program staff regarding questions, need to submit additional information, or program participation.
- Should be built with the flexibility to easily expand to allow for use with other Early Years programs (Phase 5).

Early Years Program Staff Interface Features

- Ability to view applications still in process.
- Ability to communicate directly with portal users regarding application status and/or documentation needs.
- Ability to complete application or employment confirmation on portal users' behalf as needed.
- Ability to review submitted applications for completeness and eligibility. Initially, staff should be able to easily export completed applications for manual entry into the FileMaker backend. Eventually, staff should be able to easily complete the workflow necessary to 'push' an application into the FileMaker Pro database for final processing (once API is in place).
- Ability to 'push' a new employment confirmation record from the FileMaker backend into an approved contact's account in the portal, for that approved contact to complete, once API is in place. The record would have a due date and automated reminders sent to approved contact.
- Ability to review submitted employment confirmations for completeness and complete the workflow necessary to 'push' a completed employment confirmation into the FileMaker Pro database for final processing, once API is in place.
- Ability to identify incomplete and overdue employment confirmations and complete them on approved contact's behalf. These completed confirmations would then follow the workflow to review and 'push' the completed employment confirmation record into the FileMaker Pro database for full processing, once API is in place.
- Early Years program administrators need to be able to modify and/or update the application as needed (for example, adding, revising, or removing a question).

Project Current Status

- Salesforce Education Cloud with partially completed applicant and facility portals

- We have a partially completed public facing portal built in Salesforce for program applicants/participants. We are open to finishing this portal as a solution, as long as it could easily be connected to FileMaker Pro. Additional refinement is needed for a more intuitive experience.
- We have a partially completed public facing portal built in Salesforce for approved contacts. We are open to finishing this portal as a solution, as long as it could easily be connected to FileMaker Pro. It is not known if proper functionality is in place to allow for the many-to-many relationships needed between approved contacts and facility records.
- FileMaker Pro databases are currently used as the system of record for program data. This fully functioning system is currently used for complete program management and payment processing. The programs are currently paperless and utilize Sharepoint for most document storage. This FileMaker database is expected to continue functioning as the system backend.
- Web hosting and services are managed internally.
- Our agency employs FileMaker Pro database developers that will be available to help support this work and collaborate with as it progresses.
- Our agency employs developers fluent in Laravel and Vue, currently in use for other program systems within our agency.
- Our agency is open to a variety of solutions for this project. We would consider the completion of the Salesforce portals, but would also be open to the development of a custom portal utilizing another program.

Proposal Submissions

Submissions should consist of the following:

- Letter of interest
- Overview and background of the firm or individual submitting this proposal.
- Proposal narrative, including proposed architecture, integration approach with FileMaker Pro, your understanding of the Scope of Project and other information you would like to include.
- Hosting, document storage, and security considerations.
- Detailed timeline of creation, implementation and training. Deliverables of this project should include training of Early Years Program Administrators (and training materials) to ensure future support.
- Explanation and pricing of post go-live support that might be available.
- Overview of vendor's project management system and routine to ensure transparency and effective communication.
- Samples of or links to previous design work relevant to this project.

- Three reference contacts for similar projects, including names and contact information for individuals who can speak to the team's qualifications.
- Sample contract for proposed services
- Detailed and itemized cost proposal to encompass all factors necessary for development and implementation of phases 1-4 listed at the beginning of this RFP. Proposals should include all recommended plug-ins or third party apps, and any additional and/or ongoing expenses that may be expected.

Selection Criteria

Applicants will be judged based on the following criteria:

- Qualifications of the development team
- Ability to show understanding of the scope
- Past experience on similar projects
- References
- Stability of firm
- Detailed total cost breakdown

Timeline

RFP Sent: March 26, 2026

Proposals Due no later than 5pm ET on Monday, April 27, 2026

Questions about the Proposal should be emailed to rfp@earlyyearsnc.org no later than Friday, April 10, 2026. Questions and their answers will be published to

<https://www.earlyyearsnc.org/about/rfpupdates/> as they are available. All Submissions will be evaluated immediately thereafter.

Early Years reserves the right to request meetings with finalists.

Early Years reserves the right to cancel this RFP at any time, without penalty.

The selection of a proposal will be made no later than Friday, May 29, 2026 .

Proposal Delivery Address

Proposal submissions should be sent to:

Early Years
rfp@earlyyearsnc.org