



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College

Request for Proposal #: 77-0001339

Full-Service Advertising/PR Services/Marketing Services

Date of Issue: 4/22/2025

Proposal Submission Due Date 5/12/2025 @ 2:00PM

Opening Date: 5/12/2025 @ 3:00PM

Direct all inquiries concerning this RFP to:

Carmalita Fortenberry

Purchasing Agent

Email: carmalitafortenberry@abtech.edu

Phone: 828-398-7151



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

Request for Proposal

77-0001339

For internal State agency processing, including tabulation of proposals, provide your company's eVP (Electronic Vendor Portal) Number. Pursuant to G.S. 132-1.10(b) this identification number shall not be released to the public. **This page will be removed and shredded, or otherwise kept confidential**, before the procurement file is made available for public inspection.

**This page shall be filled out and returned with your proposal.
Failure to do so may subject your proposal to rejection.**

Vendor Name

Vendor eVP#

Note: For a contract to be awarded to you, your company (you) must be a North Carolina registered vendor in good standing. You must enter the vendor number assigned through eVP (Electronic Vendor Portal). If you do not have a vendor number, register at <https://vendor.ncgov.com/vendor/login>

Electronic responses ONLY will be accepted for this solicitation.

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College

Refer <u>ALL</u> Inquiries regarding this RFP to: Carmalita Fortenberry, Purchasing Agent 340 Victoria Road Asheville, NC 28801 828-398-7151 carmalitafortenberry@abtech.edu	Request for Proposal #: 77-0001339
	Proposals will be publicly opened: 5/12/2025 @ 3:00PM Roberson 93 Victoria Road Asheville, NC 28801
Using Agency: Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College	Commodity No. and Description: 821018 Advertising agency services
Requisition No.: TBD	

EXECUTION

In compliance with this Request for Proposals (RFP), and subject to all the conditions herein, the undersigned Vendor offers and agrees to furnish and deliver any or all items upon which prices are bid, at the prices set opposite each item within the time specified herein.

By executing this proposal, the undersigned Vendor understands that false certification is a Class I felony and certifies that:

- this proposal is submitted competitively and without collusion (G.S. 143-54),
- none of its officers, directors, or owners of an unincorporated business entity has been convicted of any violations of Chapter 78A of the General Statutes, the Securities Act of 1933, or the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (G.S. 143-59.2), and
- it is not an ineligible Vendor as set forth in G.S. 143-59.1.

Furthermore, by executing this proposal, the undersigned certifies to the best of Vendor's knowledge and belief, that:

- it and its principals are not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible or voluntarily excluded from covered transactions by any Federal or State department or agency.

As required by G.S. 143-48.5, the undersigned Vendor certifies that it, and each of its sub-Contractors for any Contract awarded as a result of this RFP, complies with the requirements of Article 2 of Chapter 64 of the NC General Statutes, including the requirement for each employer with more than 25 employees in North Carolina to verify the work authorization of its employees through the federal E-Verify system.

As required by Executive Order 24 (2017), the undersigned vendor certifies will comply with all Federal and State requirements concerning fair employment and that it does not and will not discriminate, harass, or retaliate against any employee in connection with performance of any Contract arising from this solicitation.

G.S. 133-32 and Executive Order 24 (2009) prohibit the offer to, or acceptance by, any State Employee associated with the preparing plans, specifications, estimates for public contracts; or awarding or administering public contracts; or inspecting or supervising delivery of the public contract of any gift from anyone with a contract with the State, or from any person seeking to do business with the State. By execution of this response to the RFP, the undersigned certifies, for Vendor's entire organization and its employees or agents, that Vendor is not aware that any such gift has been offered, accepted, or promised by any employees of your organization.

By executing this proposal, Vendor certifies that it has read and agreed to the **INSTRUCTION TO VENDORS** and the **NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS incorporated herein**. These documents can be accessed from the ATTACHMENTS page within this document.

Failure to execute/sign proposal prior to submittal may render proposal invalid and it MAY BE REJECTED. Late proposals shall not be accepted.

COMPLETE/FORMAL NAME OF VENDOR:		
STREET ADDRESS:	P.O. BOX:	ZIP:
CITY & STATE & ZIP:	TELEPHONE NUMBER:	TOLL FREE TEL. NO:
PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS ADDRESS IF DIFFERENT FROM ABOVE (SEE INSTRUCTIONS TO VENDORS ITEM #21):		

Proposal Number: 77-0001339

Vendor: _____

PRINT NAME & TITLE OF PERSON SIGNING ON BEHALF OF VENDOR:		FAX NUMBER:
VENDOR'S AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE*:	DATE:	EMAIL:

VALIDITY PERIOD

Offer shall be valid for at least one hundred twenty 120 days from date of bid opening, unless otherwise stated here: _____ days, or if extended by mutual agreement of the parties in writing. Any withdrawal of this offer shall be made in writing, effective upon receipt by the agency issuing this RFP.

ACCEPTANCE OF PROPOSAL

If your proposal is accepted, all provisions of this RFP, along with the written results of any negotiations, shall constitute the written agreement between the parties ("Contract"). The NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS are incorporated herein and shall apply. Depending upon the Goods or Services being offered, other terms and conditions may apply, as mutually agreed.

FOR STATE USE ONLY: Offer accepted and Contract awarded this _____ day of _____, 20____, as indicated on

The attached certification, by _____.

(Authorized Representative of Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College)

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1.0 PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College (A-B Tech) in collaboration with Forsyth Technical Community College, and Stanley Community College is seeking proposals from qualified vendors to provide various marketing and public relations services to promote the Behavioral Healthcare Workforce Development Grant project. Services include but may not be limited to Research and Message Development, developing collateral and booth assets and assisting in the development of marketing strategy ad campaign utilizing social media assets.

The Behavioral Healthcare Workforce Development grant project is a collaborative initiative led by a coalition of three colleges: **Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College (A-B Tech), Forsyth Technical Community College, and Stanley Community College**. A-B Tech will serve as the info collection hub. This partnership aims to address the critical shortage of skilled professionals in the behavioral healthcare field by developing innovative training programs and expanding access to education and workforce opportunities across North Carolina. Together, the colleges will leverage their collective expertise and regional networks to create a sustainable pipeline of professionals equipped to meet the growing demand for behavioral healthcare services.

The project focuses on enhancing workforce readiness through tailored in-demand courses and certificates, curriculum pathways, culturally responsive training, and strategic partnerships with healthcare providers. By uniting resources and best practices, the coalition is committed to improving access to high-quality education and professional development for diverse populations, ultimately strengthening the capacity of the behavioral health workforce to improve outcomes and serve communities effectively throughout the state. In anticipation of credential changes at the state level, we expect interest in behavioral health programs to explode in North Carolina during the next couple of years.

The intent of this solicitation is to award an Agency Contract.

1.1 CONTRACT TERM

The Contract shall have a term of 14 months, beginning on the date of final Contract execution (the "Effective Date). The Vendor shall begin work under the Contract within *five (5)* business days of the Effective Date

Proposals shall be submitted in accordance with the terms and conditions of this RFP and any addenda issued hereto.

2.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

2.1 REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL DOCUMENT

This RFP is comprised of the base RFP document, any attachments, and any addenda released before Contract award, which are incorporated herein by reference.

2.2 E-PROCUREMENT FEE

ATTENTION: The E-Procurement fee may apply to this solicitation. See the paragraph entitled ELECTRONIC PROCUREMENT of the North Carolina General Terms and Conditions.

General information on the E-Procurement Services can be found at: <http://eprocurement.nc.gov/>.

2.3 NOTICE TO VENDORS REGARDING RFP TERMS AND CONDITIONS

It shall be the Vendor's responsibility to read the Instructions to Vendors, the North Carolina General Terms and Conditions, all relevant exhibits and attachments, and any other components made a part of this RFP and comply with all requirements and specifications herein. Vendors are also responsible for obtaining and complying with all Addenda and other changes that may be issued in connection with this RFP.

If Vendors have questions or issues regarding any component of this RFP, those must be submitted as questions in accordance with the instructions in the PROPOSAL QUESTIONS Section. If the State determines that any changes will be made as a result of the questions asked, then such decisions will be communicated in the form of an RFP addendum. The State may also elect to leave open the possibility for later negotiation of specific provisions of the Contract that have been addressed during the question-and-answer period, prior to contract award.

Other than through the process of negotiation under 01 NCAC 05B.0503, the State rejects and will not be required to evaluate or consider any additional or modified terms and conditions submitted with Vendor's proposal or otherwise. This applies to any language appearing in or attached to the document as part of the Vendor's proposal that purports to vary any terms and conditions or Vendors' instructions herein or to render the proposal non-binding or subject to further negotiation. Vendor's proposal shall constitute a firm offer that shall be held open for the period required herein ("Validity Period" above).

The State may exercise its discretion to consider Vendor proposed modifications. By execution and delivery of this RFP Response, the Vendor agrees that any additional or modified terms and conditions, whether submitted purposely or inadvertently, shall have no force or effect, and will be disregarded unless expressly agreed upon through negotiation and incorporated by way of a Best and Final Offer (BAFO). Noncompliance with, or any attempt to alter or delete, this paragraph shall constitute sufficient grounds to reject Vendor's proposal as nonresponsive.

2.4 RFP SCHEDULE

The table below shows the intended schedule for this RFP. The State will make every effort to adhere to this schedule.

Event	Responsibility	Date and Time
Issue RFP	State	4/22/2025
Submit Written Questions	Vendor	4/29/2025 @ 5:00PM
Provide Response to Questions	State	5/2/2025 @ 5:00PM
Submit Electronic Proposals via EVP	Vendor	5/12/2025 @ 2:00PM
Bid Opening	State	5/12/2025 @ 3:00PM
Contract Award	State	Upon Approval

2.5 PROPOSAL QUESTIONS

Upon review of the RFP documents, Vendors may have questions to clarify or interpret the RFP in order to submit the best proposal possible. To accommodate the Proposal Questions process, Vendors shall submit any such questions by the "Submit Written Questions" date and time provided in the RFP SCHEDULE Section above, unless modified by Addendum.

Written questions shall be emailed to carmalitafortenberry@abtech.edu by the date and time specified above. Vendors should enter "RFP # 77-0001339 Questions" as the subject for the email. Question submittals should include a reference to the applicable RFP section and be submitted in the format shown below:

Reference	Vendor Question
RFP Section, Page Number	Vendor question ...?

Questions received prior to the submission deadline date, the State's response, and any additional terms deemed necessary by the State will be posted in the form of an addendum to *the electronic Vendor Portal (eVP)*, <https://evp.nc.gov>, and shall become an Addendum to this RFP. No information, instruction or advice provided orally or informally by any State personnel, whether made in response to a question or otherwise in connection with this RFP, shall be considered authoritative or binding. Vendors shall rely *only* on written material contained in the RFP and an addendum to this RFP.

2.6 PROPOSAL SUBMITTAL

IMPORTANT NOTE: This is an absolute requirement. Late bids, regardless of cause, will not be opened or considered, and will be automatically disqualified from further consideration. Vendor shall bear the sole risk of late submission due to unintended or unanticipated delay. It is the Vendor's sole responsibility to ensure its proposal has been received as described in this RFP by the specified time and date of opening. The time and date of receipt will be marked on each proposal when received. Any proposal or portion thereof received after the proposal deadline will be rejected.

If applicable to this RFP and using eVP, all proposal responses shall be submitted electronically via the electronic Vendor Portal (eVP). Additional information can be found at the eVP updates for Vendors link: <https://eprocurement.nc.gov/news-events/evp-updates-vendors>.

If confidential and proprietary information is included in the proposal, also submit one (1) signed, REDACTED copy of the proposal. Such information may include trade secrets defined by N.C. Gen. Stat. § 66-152 and other information exempted from the Public Records Act pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. §132- 1.2. Vendor may designate information, Products, Services or appropriate portions of its response as confidential, consistent with and to the extent permitted under the statutes and rules set forth above. By redacting any page, or portion of a page, the Vendor warrants that it has formed a good faith opinion, having received such necessary or proper review by counsel and other knowledgeable advisors, that the portions determined to be confidential and proprietary and redacted as such, meet the requirements of the Rules and Statutes set forth above. However, under no circumstances shall price information be designated as confidential.

If the Vendor does not provide a redacted version of the proposal with its proposal submission, the Department may release an unredacted version if a record request is received.

Failure to submit a proposal in strict accordance with these instructions shall constitute sufficient cause to reject a Vendor's proposal(s). Vendors are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time to upload proposals.

Critical updated information may be included in Addenda to this RFP. It is important that all Vendors responding to this RFP periodically check the State's eVP website for any Addenda that may be issued prior to the bid opening date. All Vendors shall be deemed to have read and understood all information in this RFP and all Addenda thereto.

2.7 PROPOSAL CONTENTS

Vendors shall populate all attachments of this RFP that require the Vendor to provide information and include an authorized signature where requested. Failure to provide all required items, or Vendor's submission of incomplete items, may result in the State rejecting Vendor's proposal, in the State's sole discretion.

Vendor RFP responses shall include the following items and attachments, which shall be arranged in the following order:

- a) Cover Letter, which must contain the following: (i) a statement that confirms that the proposer has read the RFP in its entirety, including all links, and all Addenda released in conjunction with the RFP, (ii) a statement that the Vendor agrees to perform in accordance with the scope of work, requirements, and specifications contained herein; and (iii) Vendor's agreement to comply with all instructions, terms and conditions, and attachments.
- b) Title Page: Include the company name, address, phone number and authorized representative along with the Proposal Number.
- c) Company description and leadership bios.
- d) Completed and signed version of all EXECUTION PAGES, along with the body of the RFP.
- e) Signed receipt pages of any addenda released in conjunction with this RFP, if required to be returned.
- f) Vendor Response: Section 5.2 Scope of Work & Specifications; 6.1 Contract Manager & Customer Service
- g) Vendor's Proposal addressing all Specifications of this RFP
- h) Completed version of ATTACHMENT A: PRICING
- i) Completed version of ATTACHMENT D: HUB SUPPLEMENTAL VENDOR INFORMATION
- j) Completed version of ATTACHMENT E: CUSTOMER REFERENCE FORM
- k) Completed version of ATTACHMENT F: LOCATION OF WORKERS UTILIZED BY VENDOR
- l) Completed and signed version of ATTACHMENT G: CERTIFICATION OF FINANCIAL CONDITION
- m) Completed and signed version of CERTIFICATION FOR CONTRACTS, GRANTS, LOANS, AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS and OMB STANDARD FORM LLL
- n) Completed 8.0 Appendix: Case Studies questionnaires

2.8 ALTERNATE PROPOSALS

Unless provided otherwise in this RFP, Vendor may submit alternate proposals for comparable Goods, various methods or levels of Service(s), or that propose different options. Alternate proposals must specifically identify the RFP requirements and

advantage(s) addressed by the alternate proposal. Any alternate proposal, in addition to the marking described above, must be clearly marked with the legend: "Alternate Proposal #____ [for 'name of Vendor']". Each proposal must be for a specific set of Goods and Services and must include specific pricing. If a Vendor chooses to respond with various offerings, each must be offered with a separate price and be contained in a separate proposal document. Each proposal must be complete and independent of other proposals offered.

2.9 DEFINITIONS, ACRONYMS, AND ABBREVIATIONS

Relevant definitions for this RFP are provided in 01 NCAC 05A .0112 and in the Instructions to Vendors found below which are incorporated herein by this reference.

The following definitions, acronyms, and abbreviations are also relevant to this RFP:

- 1) Booth Assets – create effective and engaging exhibit booths
- 2) Collateral – collection of media used to support the sale of a product or service. Examples include brochures or sell supports, visual aids, web content, and sales scripts
- 3) SEO – Search Engine Optimization

3.0 METHOD OF AWARD AND PROPOSAL EVALUATION PROCESS

3.1 METHOD OF AWARD

North Carolina G.S. 143-52 provides a general list of criteria the State shall use to award contracts, as supplemented by the additional criteria herein. The Goods or Services being procured shall dictate the application and order of criteria; however, all award decisions shall be in the State's best interest. All qualified proposals will be evaluated, and awards will be made to the Vendor(s) meeting the specific RFP Specifications and achieving the highest and best final evaluation, based on the criteria described below.

While the intent of this RFP is to award a Contract(s) to a single Vendor, the State reserves the right to make separate awards to different Vendors for one or more line items, to not award one or more line items or to cancel this RFP in its entirety without awarding a Contract, if it is considered to be most advantageous to the State to do so.

The State reserves the right to waive any minor informality or technicality in proposals received.

3.2 CONFIDENTIALITY AND PROHIBITED COMMUNICATIONS DURING EVALUATION

While this RFP is under evaluation, the responding Vendor, including any subcontractors and suppliers, is prohibited from engaging in conversations intended to influence the outcome of the evaluation. See Paragraph 29 of the Instructions to Vendors entitled COMMUNICATIONS BY VENDORS.

Each Vendor submitting a proposal to this RFP, including its employees, agents, subcontractors, suppliers, subsidiaries and affiliates, is prohibited from having any communications with any person inside or outside the using agency; issuing agency; other government agency office or body (including the purchaser named above, any department secretary, agency head, members of the General Assembly and Governor's office); or private entity, if the communication refers to the content of Vendor's proposal or qualifications, the content of another Vendor's proposal, another Vendor's qualifications or ability to perform a resulting contract, and/or the transmittal of any other communication of information that could be reasonably considered to have the effect of directly or indirectly influencing the evaluation of proposals, the award of a contract, or both.

Any Vendor not in compliance with this provision shall be disqualified from evaluation and award. A Vendor's proposal may be disqualified if its subcontractor and/or supplier engage in any of the foregoing communications during the time that the procurement is active (*i.e.*, the issuance date of the procurement until the date of contract award or cancellation of the procurement). Only those discussions, communications or transmittals of information authorized or initiated by the issuing agency for this RFP or inquiries directed to the purchaser named in this RFP regarding requirements of the RFP (prior to proposal submission) or the status of the award (after submission) are excepted from this provision.

3.3 PROPOSAL EVALUATION PROCESS

Only responsive submissions will be evaluated.

The State will conduct a One-Step evaluation of Proposals:

Proposals will be received according to the method stated in the Proposal Submittal Section above.

All proposals must be received by the issuing agency not later than the date and time specified in the RFP SCHEDULE Section above, unless modified by Addendum. Vendors are cautioned that this is a request for offers, not an offer or request to contract, and the State reserves the unqualified right to reject any and all offers at any time if such rejection is deemed to be in the best interest of the State.

At the date and time provided in the RFP SCHEDULE Section above, unless modified by Addendum, the proposal from each responding Vendor will be opened publicly and all offers (except those that have been previously withdrawn, or voided bids) will be tabulated. The tabulation shall be made public at the time it is created. When negotiations after receipt of bids is authorized pursuant to G.S. 143-49 and 01 NCAC 05B.0503, only the names of offerors and the Goods and Services offered shall be tabulated at the time of opening. If negotiation is anticipated, cost and price shall become available for public inspection at the time of the award. Interested parties are cautioned that these costs and their components are subject to further evaluation of completeness and correctness and therefore may not be an exact indicator of a Vendor's pricing position.

At their option, the evaluators may request oral presentations or discussions with any or all Vendors for clarification or to amplify the materials presented in any part of the proposal. Vendors are cautioned, however, that the evaluators are not required to request presentations or other clarification—and often do not. Therefore, all proposals should be complete and reflect the most favorable terms available from the Vendor.

Upon completion of the evaluation process, the State will make award(s) based on the evaluation and post the award(s) to the State's eVP website under the RFP number for this solicitation. Award of a Contract to one Vendor does not mean that the other proposals lacked merit, but that, all factors considered, the selected proposal was deemed most advantageous and represented the best value to the State.

The State reserves the right to negotiate with one or more vendors, or to reject all original offers and negotiate with one or more sources of supply that may be capable of satisfying the requirement, and in either case to require Vendor to submit a Best and Final Offer (BAFO) based on discussions and negotiations with the State.

3.4 EVALUATION CRITERIA

In addition to the general criteria in G.S. 143-52 which may or may not be relevant to this RFP, all qualified proposals will be evaluated, and award made based on considering the following criteria, to result in an award most advantageous to the State:

BEST VALUE: "Best Value" procurement methods are authorized by N.C.G.S. §§143-135.9 and 143B-1350(h). The award decision is made based on multiple factors, including: total cost of ownership, meaning the cost of acquiring, operating, maintaining, and supporting a product or service over its projected lifetime; the evaluated technical merit of the Vendor's offer; the Vendor's past performance; and the evaluated probability of performing the specifications stated in the solicitation on time, with high quality, and in a manner that accomplishes the stated business objectives and maintains industry standards compliance. The intent of "Best Value" procurement is to enable Vendors to offer and the Agency to select the most appropriate solution to meet the business objectives defined in the solicitation and to keep all parties focused on the desired outcome of a procurement.

A ranking method of source selection will be utilized in this procurement using evaluation criteria listed in order of importance in the Evaluation Criteria section below to allow the State to award this RFP to the Vendor(s) providing the Best Value and recognizing that Best Value may result in award other than the lowest price or highest technically qualified offer. By using this method, the overall ranking may be adjusted up or down when considered with, or traded-off against, other non-price factors.

EVALUATION METHOD: Narrative and by consensus of the evaluating committee, explaining the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal and why the recommended awardee(s) provide the best value to the State.

All qualified proposals will be evaluated, and the award made based on considering the following criteria listed in descending order of importance, to result in an award most advantageous to the State:

Evaluation Criteria	
1.	Technical Approach - Section 5.5 – Detailed plan to complete the project within the established timeline.
2.	Project Organization – Section 5.2 - Detailed plan to complete the project within the established timeline.
3.	Vendor Qualifications & Experience and Financial Stability - Sections 4.3, 4.5, 4.6 Provide qualifications and experience for primary staff assigned to this project. Provide 3 references of marketing projects in similar scope completed within the last 12 months. Provide contact name, phone number, and email address. Describe your experience working with community colleges independently and collaboratively.
4.	Cost Proposal - Section 4.1, 7.0 – Provide the best cost for this project as requested in Attachment A: Pricing.

3.5 PERFORMANCE OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES

Vendor shall complete ATTACHMENT F: LOCATION OF WORKERS UTILIZED BY VENDOR. In addition to any other evaluation criteria identified in this RFP, the State may also consider, for purposes of evaluating proposed or actual contract performance outside of the United States, how that performance may affect the following factors to ensure that any award will be in the best interest of the State:

- a) Total cost to the State
- b) Level of quality provided by the Vendor
- c) Process and performance capability across multiple jurisdictions
- d) Protection of the State's information and intellectual property
- e) Availability of pertinent skills
- f) Ability to understand the State's business requirements and internal operational culture
- g) Particular risk factors such as the security of the State's information technology
- h) Relations with citizens and employees
- i) Contract enforcement jurisdictional issues

3.6 INTERPRETATION OF TERMS AND PHRASES

This RFP serves two functions: (1) to advise potential Vendors of the parameters of the solution being sought by the State; and (2) to provide (together with other specified documents) the terms of the Contract resulting from this procurement. The use of phrases such as "shall," "must," and "requirements" are intended to create enforceable contract conditions. In determining whether proposals should be evaluated or rejected, the State will take into consideration the degree to which Vendors have proposed or failed to propose solutions that will satisfy the State's needs as described in the RFP. Except as specifically stated in the RFP, no one requirement shall automatically disqualify a Vendor from consideration. However, failure to comply with any single requirement may result in the State exercising its discretion to reject a proposal in its entirety.

4.0 REQUIREMENTS

This Section lists the requirements related to this RFP. By submitting a proposal, the Vendor agrees to meet all stated requirements in this Section as well as any other specifications, requirements, and terms and conditions stated in this RFP. If a Vendor is unclear about a requirement or specification or believes a change to a requirement would allow for the State to receive a better proposal, the Vendor is urged to submit these items in the form of a question during the question and answer period in accordance with the Proposal Questions Section above.

4.1 PRICING

Proposal price shall constitute the total cost to the State for complete performance in accordance with the requirements and specifications herein, including all applicable charges for handling, transportation, administrative and other similar fees. Complete ATTACHMENT A: PRICING FORM and include in Vendor's proposal. The pricing provided in ATTACHMENT A, or resulting from any negotiations, is incorporated herein and shall become part of any resulting Contract.

4.2 INVOICES

Vendor shall invoice the Purchasing Agency. The standard format for invoicing shall be Single Invoices meaning that the Vendor shall provide the Purchasing Agency with an invoice for completed milestone. Invoices shall include detailed information to allow the Purchasing Agency to verify pricing at point of receipt matches the correct price from the original date of order. The following fields shall be included on all invoices, as relevant:

Vendor's Billing Address, Customer Account Number, NC Contract Number, Order Date, Buyer's Order Number, Item Descriptions, Price, Quantity, and Unit of Measure.

The vendor must submit one quarterly invoice within fifteen (15) calendar days following the end of the quarter in which work was performed.

Invoices should be submitted to the following address:

Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College
Attn: Business Office/Purchasing Department
340 Victoria Road
Asheville, NC 28801
purchasing@abtech.edu
828-398-7151

The vendor will be paid net thirty (30) calendar days after the Vendor's invoice is approved by the College.

INVOICES MAY NOT BE PAID UNTIL AN INSPECTION HAS OCCURRED AND THE GOODS OR SERVICES ACCEPTED.

4.3 FINANCIAL STABILITY

As a condition of contract award, the Vendor must certify that it has the financial capacity to perform and to continue to perform its obligations under the Contract; that Vendor has no constructive or actual knowledge of an actual or potential legal proceeding being brought against Vendor that could materially adversely affect performance of this Contract; and that entering into this Contract is not prohibited by any contract, or order by any court of competent jurisdiction.

Each Vendor shall certify it is financially stable by completing ATTACHMENT G: CERTIFICATION OF FINANCIAL CONDITION. The State is requiring this certification to minimize potential issues from contracting with a Vendor that is financially unstable. From the date of the Certification to the expiration of the Contract, the Vendor shall notify the State within thirty (30) days of any occurrence or condition that materially alters the truth of any statement made in this Certification. The Contract Manager may require annual recertification of the Vendor's financial stability.

4.4 HUB PARTICIPATION

Pursuant to North Carolina General Statute G.S. 143-48, it is State policy to encourage and promote the use of small, minority, physically handicapped, and women contractors in purchasing Goods and Services. As such, this RFP will serve to identify those Vendors that are minority owned or have a strategic plan to support the State's Historically Underutilized Business program by meeting or exceeding the goal of 10% utilization of diverse firms as 1st or 2nd tier subcontractors. The vendor shall complete ATTACHMENT D: HUB SUPPLEMENTAL VENDOR INFORMATION.

4.5 VENDOR EXPERIENCE

In its Proposal, Vendor shall demonstrate experience with public and/or private sector clients with similar or greater size and complexity to Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College. The vendor shall provide information as to the qualifications and

experience of all executive, managerial, legal, and professional personnel to be assigned to this project, including resumes citing experience with similar projects and the responsibilities to be assigned to each person.

Each vendor shall submit evidence of company profile including history of company, year founded, philosophy or mission statement, description of types and number of accounts served, number of employees, ownership of company and business classification (corporation, partnership, LLC, sole proprietorship).

Each vendor shall submit evidence of qualifications, which would influence the ability to perform satisfactorily the marketing services defined elsewhere in this document. Vendor must have continuously and regularly been in the business of providing the services outlined in this document for a minimum of five (5) years.

Vendor must submit, along with contact name and phone number, at least three (3) accounts serviced by the vendor that are similar in size, type, and quality to this proposal. Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College reserves the right to contact these businesses, institutions, etc. and requests that contact information be included for each account. Failure to comply will result in rejection of proposal.

Experience in a community college environment is considered an asset.

Experience in working with a coalition of institutions rather than just a single institution is considered an asset.

4.6 REFERENCES

Vendor shall provide at least three (3) references, using ATTACHMENT E: CUSTOMER REFERENCE FORM, for which it has provided Services of similar size and scope to those proposed herein. The State may contact these users to determine whether the Services provided are substantially similar in scope to those proposed herein and whether Vendor's performance has been satisfactory. The information obtained may be considered in the evaluation of the Proposal.

4.7 BACKGROUND CHECKS

Any personnel or agent of Vendor performing Services under any Contract arising from this RFP may be required to undergo a background check at the expense of the Vendor, if so requested by the State.

4.8 PERSONNEL

Vendor warrants that qualified personnel shall provide Services under this Contract in a professional manner. "Professional manner" means that the personnel performing the Services will possess the skill and competence consistent with the prevailing business standards in the industry. Vendor will serve as the prime contractor under this Contract and shall be responsible for the performance and payment of all subcontractor(s) that may be approved by the State. Names of any third-party Vendors or subcontractors of Vendor may appear for purposes of convenience in Contract documents; and shall not limit Vendor's obligations hereunder. Vendor will retain executive representation for functional and technical expertise as needed in order to incorporate any work by third party subcontractor(s).

Should the Vendor's proposal result in an award, the Vendor shall be required to agree that it will not substitute key personnel assigned to the performance of the Contract without prior written approval by the Contract Lead. Vendor shall further agree that it will notify the Contract Lead of any desired substitution, including the name(s) and references of Vendor's recommended substitute personnel. The State will approve or disapprove the requested substitution in a timely manner. The State may, in its sole discretion, terminate the Services of any person providing Services under this Contract. Upon such termination, the State may request acceptable substitute personnel or terminate the contract Services provided by such personnel.

4.9 VENDOR'S REPRESENTATIONS

If Vendor's Proposal results in an award, Vendor agrees that it will not enter any agreement with a third party that may abridge any rights of the State under the Contract. If any Services, deliverables, functions, or responsibilities not specifically described in this solicitation are required for Vendor's proper performance, provision and delivery of the Service and deliverables under a resulting Contract, or are an inherent part of or necessary sub-task included within such Service, they will be deemed to be implied by and included within the scope of the Contract to the same extent and in the same manner as if specifically described in the Contract. Unless otherwise expressly provided herein, Vendor will furnish all of its own necessary management, supervision, labor, facilities, furniture, computer and telecommunications equipment, software, supplies and materials necessary for the Vendor to provide and deliver the Services and/or other Deliverables.

4.10 AGENCY INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS MODIFICATION

A. Default Insurance Coverage from the General Terms and Conditions applicable to this Solicitation:

- ☐ Small Purchases
- ☒ Contract value in excess of the Small Purchase threshold, but up to \$1,000,000.00
- ☐ Contract value in excess of \$1,000,000.00

4.11 LOBBYING ACTIVITY CERTIFICATION FOR FEDERAL GRANTS

Federal law prohibits recipients of federal funds, whether through grants, contracts, or cooperative agreements, from using those funds to influence or attempt to influence (lobby) a federal official in connection with obtaining, extending, or modifying any federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement. Further, federal law requires that applicants for federal funds certify:

- that they abide by the above restriction;
- that they disclose any permissible (non-federal) paid lobbying on the Federal Awards being applied for; and
- that such certification requirements will also be included in any subawards meeting the applicable thresholds.

Vendors must complete and submit the ATTACHMENT H: CERTIFICATION FOR CONTRACTS, GRANTS, LOANS, AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS and the OMB STANDARD FORM LLL when responding to this solicitation.

5.0 SPECIFICATIONS AND SCOPE OF WORK

5.1 GENERAL

Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College (A-B Tech) in collaboration with Forsyth Technical Community College, and Stanley Community College is seeking proposals from qualified vendors to provide various marketing and public relations services to promote the Behavioral Healthcare Workforce Development Grant project. Services include but may not be limited to Research and Message Development, developing collateral and booth assets and assisting in the development of marketing strategy ad campaign utilizing social media assets. Develop cohesive messaging around the story of the grant-funded projects and the role of Social & Human Services Departments in the NCCCS system.

New 100% online programs developed under the Social and Human Services umbrella will provide multiple pathways to enter the mental health field. Identified programs include:

- Child Advocacy Studies: 12-hour certificate in continuing education beginning Fall 2025; AAS degree program in curriculum beginning Fall 2026
- Direct Service Professional Advance Training: 12-hour certificate in continuing education and curriculum
- Disaster Recovery Mental Health: 3-hour course
- Mental Health and Substance Use courses for public safety professionals
- Qualified Professional Pathway

5.2 SCOPE OF WORK & SPECIFICATIONS

The specific items and any specifications that A-B Tech is seeking are listed below.

Phase 1: Research and Message Development

Vendors will include in their proposal:

- SEO and Keyword Research
- Message Development

Colleges responsible for providing the vendor(s) with qualitative and quantitative research from focus groups, interviews, and any other relevant data

Phase 2: Develop Collateral and Booth Assets and landing page development Booth Display

Vendors will include in their proposal:

- Booth Display (specify proposed dimensions)
- Pop-up Banners (floor and table-top)
- Print Collateral: Brochures, stickers, etc.
- promotional items

Colleges are responsible for providing photos and branding for banners and brochures.

Phase 3: Develop marketing strategy, ad campaign, social assets

(Fall 2025 launch for two continuing education programs; Fall 2026 launch for AAS degree program)

Vendors will include in their proposal:

- Marketing Strategy
 - Digital Strategy (SEM, Google Display, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, other platforms TBD)
 - Lead Generation Campaigns linked to landing pages on the three college websites (Colleges can develop landing pages with forms to capture contact info)
 - Geotagged marketing in three distinct markets (Targeted service areas to be defined)
- Social media posts featuring programs and success stories for each college
 - Graphics, photos and videos (Colleges can provide photos and video)
- Success Stories from students, alumni to foster community connection: use for PR and advertising
- Broadcast: TV and Radio ads (If budget allows; also could be part of college ad campaigns)
- Reports and analytics (Colleges may assist with website, SEM, advertising analytics)

Colleges will identify success stories featuring alumni to foster community connection

VENDOR'S RESPONSE

<i>Item #</i>	<i>Specifications</i>	<i>Product/Service Offered Meets Specification</i>
Phase 1:	Research and Message Development	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

Phase 2:	Develop Collateral and Booth Assets	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Phase 3:	Develop marketing strategy, ad campaign, social assets (Fall 2025 launch for two continuing education programs; Fall 2026 launch for AAS degree program)	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

5.3 TASKS & TARGET COMPLETION DATES

Phase 1	Target Completion Date	Services Offered Meets Target Completion Date	IF No, List Completion Date
Research and Message Development	6/30/2025	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
Phase 2	Target Completion Date	Services Offered Meets Target Completion Date	IF No, List Completion Date
Developing Collateral and Booth Assets	4/15/2026	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
Phase 3	Target Completion Date	Services Offered Meets Target Completion Date	IF No, List Completion Date
Developing marketing strategy, ad campaign, and social assets	6/15/2026	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	

5.4 PROJECT ORGANIZATION

Vendor shall describe the organizational and operational structure it proposes to utilize for the work described in this RFP and identify the responsibilities to be assigned to each person Vendor proposes to staff the work.

5.5 TECHNICAL APPROACH

Vendor's proposal shall include, in narrative, outline, and/or graph form the Vendor's approach to accomplishing the tasks outlined in the Scope of Work section of this RFP. A description of each task and deliverable and the schedule for accomplishing each shall be included.

6.0 CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION

All Contract Administration requirements are conditioned on an award resulting from this solicitation. This information is provided for the Vendor's planning purposes.

Contract Manager: Porscha Rae Orndorf, porscharorndorf@abtech.edu 828-398-7389

Purchasing Agent: Carmalita Fortenberry, carmalitafortenberry@abtech.edu 828-398-7151

6.1 CONTRACT MANAGER AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

The Vendor shall be required to designate and make available to the State a contract manager. The contract manager shall be the State's point of contact for Contract related issues and issues concerning performance, progress review, scheduling, and service.

Contract Manager Point of Contact	
Name:	
Office Phone #:	
Mobile Phone #:	
Email:	

The Vendor shall be required to designate and make available to the State for customer service. The customer service point of contact shall be the State's point of contact for customer service-related issues (define roles and responsibilities).

Customer Service Point of Contact	
Name:	
Office Phone #:	
Mobile Phone #:	
Email:	

6.2 POST AWARD PROJECT REVIEW MEETINGS

The Vendor, at the request of the State, may be required to meet periodically monthly with the State for Project Review meetings. The purpose of these meetings will be to review project progress reports, discuss Vendor and State performance, address outstanding issues, review problem resolution, provide direction, evaluate continuous improvement and cost saving ideas, and discuss any other pertinent topics.

6.3 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The State encourages the Vendor to identify opportunities to reduce the total cost the State. A continuous improvement effort consists of various ways to enhance business efficiencies as performance progresses.

6.4 PERIODIC STATUS REPORTS

The Vendor shall be required to provide performance reports, to the designated Contract Lead, per the schedule shown in the chart below. This report shall include, at a minimum, information. These reports shall be well organized and easy to read. The Vendor shall submit these reports electronically using the format required by the Purchasing Agency. The Vendor shall submit the reports in a timely manner and on a regular schedule as agreed by the parties.

Within five (5) business days of the award of the Contract the Vendor shall submit a final work plan and a sample report, both to the designated Contract Lead for approval.

Phase	Performance Report Description	Performance Report Due Date
1	SEO and Keyword Research, Marketing Plan and Strategy	6/30/2025
2	Ad spend, Booth and Collateral development (3 rd Quarter 2025 ending 9/30/2025)	10/15/2025
	Ad spend, Booth and Collateral development (4 th Quarter 2025 ending 12/31/2025)	1/15/2026
	Ad spend, Booth and Collateral development (1 st Quarter 2026 ending 3/31/2026)	4/15/2026
3	Developing marketing strategy, ad campaign, and social assets	6/15/2026

6.5 ACCEPTANCE OF WORK

Performance of the work and/or delivery of Goods shall be conducted and completed at least in accordance with the Contract requirements and recognized and customarily accepted industry practices. Performance shall be considered complete when the Services or Goods are approved as acceptable by the Contract Administrator.

Acceptance of Vendor's work product and payment shall be based on the following criteria:

Payment schedule to be negotiated at the project kick-off meeting.

	Description of Service	Project Completion	Payment Schedule
Phase 1	Research and Message Development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEO and Keyword Research Message Development 	10%	6/30/2025
Phase 2	Developing Collateral and Booth Assets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Booth Display (specify proposed dimensions) Pop-up Banners (floor and table0top) Print Collateral: Brochures, stickers, etc. Promotional items 	50%	10/15/2025 1/15/2026 4/15/2026
Phase 3	Developing marketing strategy, ad campaign, and social assets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reference Section 5.0 	40%	6/15/2026

The State shall have the obligation to notify Vendor, in writing ten (10) calendar days following completion of such work or delivery of a deliverable described in the Contract that it is not acceptable. The notice shall specify in reasonable detail the reason(s) it is unacceptable. Acceptance by the State shall not be unreasonably withheld; but may be conditioned or delayed as required for reasonable review, evaluation, installation, or testing, as applicable to the work or deliverable. Final acceptance is expressly conditioned upon completion of all applicable assessment procedures. Should the work or deliverables fail to meet any specifications, acceptance criteria or otherwise fail to conform to the Contract, the State may exercise any and all rights hereunder, including, for Goods deliverables, such rights provided by the Uniform Commercial Code, as adopted in North Carolina.

6.6 DISPUTE RESOLUTION

During the performance of the Contract, the parties agree that it is in their mutual interest to resolve disputes informally. Any claims by the Vendor shall be submitted in writing to the State's Contract Manager for resolution. Any claims by the State shall be submitted in writing to the Vendor's Project Manager for resolution. The Parties shall agree to negotiate in good faith and use all reasonable efforts to resolve such dispute(s).

During the time the Parties are attempting to resolve any dispute, each shall proceed diligently to perform their respective duties and responsibilities under this Contract. The Parties will agree on a reasonable amount of time to resolve a dispute. If a dispute cannot be resolved between the Parties within the agreed upon period, either Party may elect to exercise any other remedies available under the Contract, or at law. This provision, when agreed in the Contract, shall not constitute an agreement by either party to mediate or arbitrate any dispute.

6.7 CONTRACT CHANGES

Contract changes, if any, over the life of the Contract shall be implemented by contract amendments agreed to in writing by the State and Vendor. Amendments to the contract can only be through the contract administrator.

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7.0 ATTACHMENTS

****IMPORTANT NOTICE****

RETURN THE REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS WITH YOUR RESPONSE
FOLLOW THE LINKS TO ACCESS EACH ATTACHMENT

ATTACHMENT A: PRICING

Complete and return the Pricing associated with this RFP, in the table below:

	Description of Service	Percentage of Total Cost	Cost
Phase 1	Research and Message Development	10%	\$
Phase 2	Developing Collateral and Booth Assets	50%	\$
Phase 3	Developing marketing strategy, ad campaign, and social assets	40%	\$
	Total Project Cost	100%	\$

Cost inclusive of travel and other operating costs.

Are you willing to consider an agreed upon percentage based on the completion of the phases listed above?

☐ YES ☐ NO

If yes, how much? _____

ATTACHMENT B: INSTRUCTIONS TO VENDORS

The Instructions to Vendors, which are incorporated herein by this reference, may be found here:

<https://ncadmin.nc.gov/formnorth-carolina-instructions-vendors032023/download?attachment>

ATTACHMENT C: NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL TERMS & CONDITIONS

The North Carolina General Terms and Conditions, which are incorporated herein by this reference, may be found here:

<https://www.doa.nc.gov/form-north-carolina-general-terms-and-conditions-11-2023/open>

ATTACHMENT D: HUB SUPPLEMENTAL VENDOR INFORMATION

Complete and return the Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUB) Vendor Information form, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.doa.nc.gov/pandc/onlineforms/form-hub-supplemental-vendor-information-9-2021/download>

ATTACHMENT E: CUSTOMER REFERENCE FORM

Complete and return the Customer Reference Form, which can be found at the following link:

<https://ncadmin.nc.gov/media/15503/open>

ATTACHMENT F: LOCATION OF WORKERS UTILIZED BY VENDOR

Complete and return the Location of Workers Utilized by Vendor, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.doa.nc.gov/pandc/onlineforms/form-location-workers-09-2021/download>

ATTACHMENT G: CERTIFICATION OF FINANCIAL CONDITION

Complete, sign, and return the Certification of Financial Condition, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.doa.nc.gov/pandc/onlineforms/form-certification-financial-condition-09-2021/download>

LOBBYING ACTIVITY CERTIFICATION FOR FEDERAL GRANTS

The Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements and the OMB Standard Form LLL are separate documents that can be found at the following link: <https://ncadmin.nc.gov/documents/vendor-forms>

8.0 APPENDIX

****IMPORTANT NOTICE****

RETURN THE REQUIRED WORK SAMPLES WITH YOUR RESPONSE

APPENDIX 8.1: Case Study 1

Explain the similarities between the work sample you are sharing and the work required in this RFP.

Work sample may be submitted via email submission.

SMART Analysis - How did you measure the success of the marketing campaign? Provide performance data.

APPENDIX 8.2: Case Study 2

Explain the similarities between the work sample you are sharing and the work required in this RFP.

Work sample may be submitted via email submission.

SMART Analysis - How did you measure the success of the marketing campaign? Provide performance data.

APPENDIX 8.3: Case Study 3

Explain the similarities between the work sample you are sharing and the work required in this RFP.

Work sample may be submitted via email submission.

SMART Analysis - How did you measure the success of the marketing campaign? Provide performance data.

***** Failure to Return the Required Attachments May Eliminate
Your Response from Further Consideration *****