

Grouped Vendor Questions and Responses for Downtown Alliance RFP #354-TM025-33

Several vendors submitted similar questions. To avoid repetition, the questions were grouped by related topic and consolidated responses are offered under “Town Response”.

Topic: Budget and Funding

Vendor Questions:

- What is the budget for this project?
- Can the Town provide a budget range or ceiling for the proposed scope of work?
- Please share the anticipated budget for the requested scope of work.
- Has the Town established a budget for this effort?
- Do you have a budget range for this project?
- Is there a defined budget or “do not exceed” limit for this engagement?
- Has Cary determined if this project will be delivered as firm fixed price or as labor hours?
- Is there a funding source already set up for this Downtown Business Alliance (short- and long-term)?

Town Response:

The Town of Cary has allocated \$75,000 in the FY25-26 Recommended Budget to cover the expenses associated with the potential creation of a Downtown Business Alliance. The project is funded in the short term, with additional funding needs to be assessed based on the consultant’s recommendations and long-term planning. Regarding pricing structure, the consultant may propose either a fixed-price deliverable or hourly rate model. The Town is open to reviewing all proposed rate options.

Topic: Project Timeline and Duration

Vendor Questions:

- What is your timeline for project completion?
- What is the timeline for selecting the consultant(s)?
- Is there an expected start date or time window for project kickoff following contract award?
- What is the expected duration for the engagement (e.g., 3 months, 6 months), or is this left to the proposer to define?
- Can the Town confirm that the anticipated period for completing the scope of work and submitting all deliverables is one year from the date of contract award?
- There does not appear to be a timeline proposed... are there any expectations or flexibility in the anticipated project timeline?
- Is there an overall timeline for the project? When do you hope to have the Downtown Business Alliance in place and active?
- Are there any critical milestones or deadlines we should plan for (e.g., community events, council reviews)?

Town Response:

- **Anticipated Start Date:** Fall 2025
- **Target Completion:** Project report should be completed by Summer 2026.
- **Project Duration:** Flexible – proposers are encouraged to define a timeline that meets project goals; a one-year timeframe from contract award is preferred.
- **Selection Timeline:** Proposals will be reviewed following the submission deadline. Selected consultants may be invited to present, with final selection to follow.
- **Key Milestones:** Please consider community events and the upcoming election when proposing timelines.

Topic: Stakeholder Engagement and Inclusivity

Vendor Questions:

- What is the expectation for how many times the consulting firm should visit in person?
- How many in-person meetings does the Town anticipate or require?

Town Response:

A minimum of quarterly in-person visits is expected.

Vendor Question:

Should the proposal include plans for engagement or interaction with Town leadership beyond the final presentation?

Town Response:

Any deliverables after the final presentation will be determined at a later date.

Vendor Question:

Under “project objective” you reference “other stakeholders” – who are these?

Town Response:

Stakeholders may include Cary residents, Cary Chamber of Commerce, Heart of Cary Association, small businesses, Town leadership, Town Council, and other relevant community members.

Vendor Question:

In the ‘Stakeholder Engagement’ phase, are there particular underrepresented groups the Town would like prioritized?

Town Response:

The consultant is expected to engage a broad range of stakeholders and synthesize input equitably.

Vendor Question:

What is the Town’s expectation for the number of participants in each listening session or workshop?

Town Response:

The Town defers to the consultant's expertise and expects a recommendation on participant numbers and number of sessions. No specific figure has been established.

Vendor Question:

Are there preferred venues or logistical support for workshops?

Town Response:

The Town will assist in selecting venues and provide logistical support based on the consultant's needs.

Vendor Question:

Is the project open to broader surveying efforts beyond listening sessions?

Town Response:

Yes, the Town is open to broader engagement methods, including surveys beyond listening sessions. The methods in which the consultant collects information should be described in the proposal submittal.

Vendor Question:

Does the Town have existing frameworks, metrics, or guiding principles for inclusivity in engagement?

Town Response:

No formal inclusivity frameworks have been provided.

Vendor Question:

Are local businesses to be engaged already identified, or is the consultant responsible for outreach?

Town Response:

The consultant is responsible for outreach, though the Town will provide support for initial contacts. Some lists may be available, such as Chamber of Commerce membership.

Topic: Project Management and Communication

Vendor Questions:

- Can the Town provide additional context regarding staff/team members who will be engaged?
- Will the consultant have a designated point of contact within the Town?

Town Response:

A small working group will be established to help guide the project. Brittany Edwards will serve as the primary point of contact for the consultant.

Vendor Questions:

- What role will Town staff play in logistics, communications, or stakeholder meetings?

- Does the Town of Cary envision having a seat at the table?

Town Response:

Yes, Town staff will participate in logistics and stakeholder engagement. Staff will be present at most, if not all, stakeholder meetings to listen and contribute when appropriate.

Vendor Question:

Who will make the consultant selection decision (staff, council, both)?

Town Response:

Following review of the proposals the staff working group may make a recommendation regarding consultant selection to the executive leadership team.

Vendor Question:

Does the town have a preferred method of documenting consensus among stakeholders?

Town Response:

No, the Town does not have a preferred method and will defer to the consultant's professional judgement on how best to document stakeholder consensus.

Topic: Scope of Work Clarification

Vendor Question:

What are the specific written deliverables envisioned (e.g., one report vs. multiple targeted documents)?

Town Response:

The Town expects one comprehensive report with clearly defined goals, objectives, and outcomes.

Vendor Question:

Could you clarify the expected level of detail for the 'Roadmap for Implementation'?

Town Response:

The implementation roadmap should be a structured, phased plan outlining how the consultant will guide the Town through the development and launch of a potential functional, sustainable Downtown Business Alliance. It should include clear milestones, timelines, deliverables, stakeholder involvement, and key decision points.

Vendor Questions:

- What current data does the Town have regarding the downtown business ecosystem? What data is lacking?
- What are the most relevant approved plans or studies related to smart growth and economic development?
- Is the downtown's smart growth vision documented?
- Are there specific data sources or reports the Town recommends for review?

Town Response:

Consultants should review the [Cary 2040 Community Plan](#), which outlines the Town’s long-term vision, policies, and strategic actions. Additionally, Cary’s [Annual and Quarterly Reports](#) provide operational updates, information on Town events, and other relevant activities.

Vendor Questions:

- Is there a list of existing resources (initiatives, partnerships, organizations) that the Town can share?
- Are there any current or past efforts to unify downtown businesses that should be incorporated?

Town Response:

There are several organizations in Cary; however, the Heart of Cary Association is the only one specifically focused on downtown. More information can be found on their website.

Vendor Question:

Are there key development or financing tools the DBA should use or manage?

Town Response:

No specific tools have been identified.

Vendor Question:

Does the DBA have ideas about collaboration with Wake County or other municipalities?

Town Response:

We are seeking a consultant to help explore and recommend potential opportunities for collaboration with Wake County or nearby municipalities as part of the research and planning process for a downtown business alliance.

Vendor Question:

For stakeholder outreach, does the Town have a master list of downtown businesses?

Town Response:

No, the Town does not maintain a master list of downtown businesses.

Vendor Question:

Would the Chamber be willing to share its membership list?

Town Response:

Yes, the membership list is publicly available on the Cary Chamber of Commerce website.

Topic: RFP and Evaluation Criteria

Vendor Question:

Can the Town provide additional detail on how “Project Understanding and Approach” will be evaluated?

Town Response:

We are looking for a detailed outline of the proposed project scope and implementation approach. Additional guidance can be found in the Request for Proposal (RFP) on page 2.

Vendor Question:

Will the Town publish grading criteria with specific values for each Evaluation Criteria?

Town Response:

No, grading criteria will not be published for this proposal review.

Vendor Question:

Will any credit be granted to firms certified in socioeconomic categories (e.g., Minority-, Woman-, Veteran-owned)?

Town Response:

Please refer to page 11, item 7 of the RFP.

Vendor Question:

Are non-North Carolina-based firms eligible for contract award?

Town Response:

Yes, firms located outside North Carolina are eligible for contract award.

Vendor Question:

Is there a preference for a local or North Carolina firm?

Town Response:

No, there is no preference for local or in-state firms.

Topic: Strategic Intent and Purpose

Vendor Question:

Why is now the right time to create a Downtown Business Alliance?

Town Response:

We encourage you to review the Cary 2040 Community Plan, particularly the chapter on Downtown. Downtown Cary has been a key focus area for investment and has experienced significant growth. Given this momentum, a Downtown Business Alliance could amplify the voice of local businesses, strengthen downtown's identity and sense of community, and promote long-term sustainability through coordinated action.

Vendor Question:

How do you see the DBA as distinct from entities like the Chamber of Commerce or Cary Economic Development?

Town Response:

This distinction will be determined through the course of the project.

Vendor Question:

What is meant by “co-creation” in the RFP title?

Town Response:

“Co-creation” refers to a collaborative process involving the Town, community members, and the consultant working together to shape the alliance.

Vendor Question:

Is the goal to provide advocacy and support to small/local businesses beyond traditional economic development?

Town Response:

Yes, while specific strategies are to be determined, the goal is to go beyond traditional economic development to support small and local businesses more directly.

Vendor Question:

How do you envision the consultant being involved post-pilot for feedback and improvement?

Town Response:

If needed, the consultant’s involvement post-pilot will be determined at a later stage.

Topic: Geographic Scope

Vendor Question:

Is the geographic area the DBA would operate in already defined, or will defining boundaries be part of the scope?

Town Response:

Yes, the geographic area is already defined. The Downtown Business Alliance will operate within Cary’s Downtown Business Improvement District (BID). A map of the BID is available on the Town’s [website](#).

Vendor Question:

How does the envisioned DBA area align with or differ from the current BID or Cary Special Planning Area?

Town Response:

The Downtown Business Alliance is intended to align with the current Business Improvement District.

Topic: Presentation and Deliverables Format

Vendor Question:

Does the town envision one final presentation or multiple briefings?

Town Response:

The consultant should plan for multiple briefings to Town staff and one final presentation to a larger stakeholder group.

Vendor Question:

Would the Town prefer a virtual or in-person final presentation, and is there a specific format or platform we should adhere to?

Town Response:

The final presentation should be in-person. There is no required format or platform for presentations.

Topic: Benchmarking and Best Practices

Vendor Question:

Are there examples of Downtown Business Alliances from similar-sized communities the Town finds inspiring?

Town Response:

While most communities have varying values and needs for a downtown business alliance it is difficult to narrow down "inspiring" examples specifically. However, here are some successful downtown business alliances that we have based some of our knowledge.

- Downtown Raleigh Alliance
- Downtown Business Alliance of Wilmington
- Birmingham Business Alliance