



**MECKLENBURG COUNTY
NORTH CAROLINA**

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
RFI # 487-CS-PID00101
ISSUED DATE: MARCH 13, 2023**

Mecklenburg County, located in the State of North Carolina, (known hereafter as “the County”) is seeking information from **communications/marketing agencies with full-service capabilities** to develop and execute a strategic marketing and communications plan to promote American Rescue Act Plan (ARPA) recipients' programs and capital projects.

County is seeking to solely gather information from interested agencies and identify requirements we may include in a subsequent Request for Proposal. We invite interested parties to respond to the questions on the following pages so that the County may have a more thorough understanding of your agency’s capabilities and experience related to this Request for Information (RFI). Submitting a response to this RFI is non-binding and does not constitute a proposal. Note: Submitting a response to this RFI is not required to respond to a subsequent Request for Proposal, should one be issued in the future.

Response to this RFI is due to the Mecklenburg County Procurement Division no later than **Friday, March 31 at 2:00 PM EST**. Please refer to Sections 1-6 of this RFI for guidelines regarding the formatting and submission of your response. Please review these sections carefully.

To facilitate vendor response to the questions presented in Section 2 of this RFI, a copy in Microsoft Word format will be provided upon request via e-mail to meckbids@mecklenburgcountync.gov. Questions should be directed to Charlotte Spence, Mecklenburg County Procurement Division

Mecklenburg County is an equal opportunity purchaser.

Sincerely,

Charlotte Spence, Sr. Procurement Analyst
Finance Department
Mecklenburg County

1.0 About This Request for Information

County seeks a full-service marketing and communications agency with the capabilities to develop and execute a strategic marketing plan to promote American Rescue Act Plan (ARPA) recipient programs and capital projects. The county invites agencies to provide information that will help define the scope, requirements, and funding estimates should we decide to move ahead to request proposals from potential vendors. As a municipal government entity, we are required to encumber funds for major expenditures so cost estimates are important for budgeting, but that should not be interpreted to mean that the lowest cost is the major evaluation criteria. We strive to procure products and services which provide value to our residents and best meet their needs. We also strive to develop mutually beneficial relationships with quality-oriented vendors.

Your response to this RFI is important to us. We have organized it to collect the maximum amount of information without being too complicated or time-consuming to complete.

- In the remainder of Section 1, we provide information about the County and details of the product/service needed. If you feel that there is some other metric or detail that will allow you to provide a better response, please let us know so we can address your request.
- Section 1 also includes instructions for submitting your response, our planned timetable for evaluating responses, and a description of our anticipated next steps.
- In Section 2, we provide Response Sheets for you to use to submit information including:
 - Vendor profile information
 - A general summary of your understanding of our needs
 - General information about the marketplace involved
 - Responses to questions and requirements the County has already identified
 - General information about your organization

Please keep in mind that we ARE NOT seeking proposals at this stage. Our intent is to become an ‘informed shopper’. Please feel free to point out considerations and options we may not be aware of which we should include in our evaluation criteria should we progress to the proposal stage.

2.0 Organization Background

County is in the foothills of the Piedmont area of southern North Carolina. Out of 100 counties in North Carolina, Mecklenburg County is the 2nd largest, with a population of approximately 1,174,237 people.

The most well-known municipality in the County is the City of Charlotte, which is the largest municipality in the State of North Carolina. Charlotte is the center of manufacturing, health care, education, transportation, culture and entertainment, and finance for a metropolitan area of over 2.2 million people. Charlotte is the county seat for Mecklenburg County.

3.0 Project Background and Objectives

The 2021 American Rescue Act Plan (ARPA) provided \$215.6 million to Mecklenburg County to help manage the public health challenges and negative economic impacts caused by COVID-19, as well as lay the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery.

To manage the infusion of funds, County staff developed a [Strategic Recovery Plan](#) and Application Process which permitted both County departments and non-governmental organizations to apply for funding. As part of the process, the County gathered feedback from residents which helped identify funding priorities and create an investment strategy for the ARPA funds.

To date, through two rounds of ARPA fund disbursements, Mecklenburg County has invested in projects and programs that:

- Align to the County's COVID-19 Strategic Recovery Plan and its priorities
- Support equitable outcomes for most impacted populations
- Leverage and align with other governmental funding sources
- Make the best use of this one-time infusion of resources
- Meet a minimum threshold of \$250K
- Have a lasting impact

Mecklenburg County's Public Information Department has been tasked with the development and implementation of a strategic marketing campaign designed to promote and highlight Round I and Round II ARPA fund recipients to be fully transparent to the federal government and county residents, and to showcase the wonderful programs and organizations that are making a positive impact in our area.

NOTE: Recipients have until Dec. 31, 2024, to spend the funds, therefore this campaign will run congruently with that timeline.

4.0 How the County is Currently Meeting This Need

Mecklenburg County has a robust Public Information Department that is comprised of Public Information Officers, a video production team, webmasters, and social media and community relations managers. The Public Information Department also has a Brand Coordinator and Marketing Coordinator.

Many creative tasks and marketing campaigns can be conducted utilizing our in-house team, but considering this campaign's scope of work, the skills and manpower offered by an outside agency is necessary.

5.0 Instructions for Responding to This Request for Information

5.1 Submission of Questions and Response

Requests for information or clarification of this RFI must be made in writing, via email, to the individual listed below. Questions should reference the RFI page and topic number.

RFI #: 487-CS-PID00101

Charlotte Spence, Sr. Procurement Analyst
meckbids@mecklenburgcountync.gov

Please submit your questions between March 14 and March 24, 2023 (by 2:00pm). Any written responses issued by the County to questions and requests for information will be posted to the

Internet in the form of written addenda, which will be available at www.meckprocure.com and <https://www.ips.state.nc> by searching for RFI # 487-CS-00101 and shall become part of this RFI.

5.2 Expense of Submittal Preparation

The County accepts no liability for the costs and expenses incurred by the vendor in responding to this RFI, or in preparing responses for clarification. Each vendor that prepares a response shall do so at its own expense and with the express understanding that it cannot make any claims whatsoever for reimbursement from the County for the costs and expenses associated with the response.

5.3 Trade Secrets/Confidentiality

An RFI response is considered a public record except for material that qualifies as "Trade Secret" information under N.C. Gen. Stat. 66-152 et. Seq. Your response will be reviewed by County Procurement Division staff, department evaluators, and members of the public who submit public records requests. To properly designate material as a trade secret under these circumstances, each vendor must take the following precautions: (a) any trade secrets submitted by a vendor should be submitted in a separate, sealed envelope marked "Trade Secret—Confidential and Proprietary Information—Do Not Disclose Except for the Purpose of Evaluating this Response," and (b) the same trade secret/confidentiality designation should be stamped on each page of the trade secret materials contained in the envelope.

In submitting a response, each vendor agrees that the County may reveal any trade secret materials contained in such response to all County staff and officials involved in the selection process, and to any outside consultant or other third parties who serve on an Evaluation Committee or who are hired by the County to assist in the development of specifications. Furthermore, the vendor agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the County and each of its officers, employees, and agents from all costs, damages, and expenses incurred in connection with refusing to disclose any material, that the vendor has designated as a trade secret.

Please do not mark your entire response as a trade secret.

5.4 Equal Opportunity

The County has an equal opportunity purchasing policy. The County seeks to ensure that all segments of the business community have access to supplying the products and services needed by County departments and programs. The County affirmatively works to encourage the utilization of small and minority business enterprises in our procurement activities. The County provides equal opportunity for all businesses and does not discriminate against vendors regardless of race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, or disability.

5.5 Additional Evidence of Qualification

Vendors should be prepared to present additional evidence of experience, qualifications, abilities, equipment, facilities, and financial standing to either register as a vendor (See 5.5 above) or have their proposal response evaluated should a Request for Proposal be issued. The County reserves the right to request such information at any time during the Proposal evaluation period.

5.7 Schedule of Events

The following chart shows the schedule of events associated with this Request for Information:

DATE	EVENT
March 13, 2023	<i>Issuance of RFI.</i> The date County issues this RFI.
March 14 – March 24, 2023	<i>Submission of Questions/Clarifications</i> Vendors are permitted to submit questions for purposes of clarifying this RFI. Refer to Section 1- 5.1 for the submission process. Answers to questions will be posted as an Addenda on www.MECKProcure.com . Questions are due no later than 2:00 p.m. EST on the last day of the question period. No additional questions or clarification will be received by the County beyond this date or prior to response submission.
March 14 – March 31, 2023	<i>Response Submission.</i> Responses are due no later than 2:00 p.m. EST on this date, at the address indicated in Section 1- 5.1.
April 10 – April 12, 2023	<i>Meeting Scheduling.</i> The County will contact selected vendors to schedule follow-up meetings.
Week of April 17, 2023	<i>Meeting/Demonstration Activities.</i> Selected vendors will be given the opportunity to discuss their responses and present their capabilities to the County. Demonstrations may require on-site or virtual (Teams) meetings with Mecklenburg County staff. The purpose of these meetings is to share information and answer questions. Solutions will NOT be selected based on these activities.
Week of April 24, 2023	<i>RFI Findings Summary Prepared and Presented</i> The RFI Review Team will submit a summary report to the County Manager's Office Executive Team.

Section 2

Vendor Response

1.0 Vendor Profile

Please complete the following profile information about your organization.

1.1 Vendor Name
1.2 Main Office / Primary Business Locations
1.3 Detail your agency's history / Years in business / Years serving the Charlotte (Mecklenburg County) market
1.4 Total number of clients / Number of clients in the Charlotte (Mecklenburg County) market / Do you have any clients that pose a conflict of interest?
1.5 Do you have a previous relationship serving Mecklenburg County? If yes, please explain.
1.6 Total number of employees / Of the total number, indicate the number that are contractors/freelancers
1.7 Annual Sales
1.8 Main point of contact information / POC's experience with similar campaigns
1.9 Other important facts agency would like to share with the County

2.0 General Summary of Agency's Understanding of County Needs

Section 2

Vendor Response

Based on the information provided about the County in Section 1, what guidance can you share about our needs?

2.1 What should the County consider to be the main benefit(s) of working with your agency?
2.2 What internal support should the County be prepared to allocate to make this relationship and campaign successful?
2.3 Explain if you are, or if you partner with, minority and women-owned firms. Please explain in detail.

3.0 General Summary of Agency's Understanding of the Marketing World

3.1 How have your agency's strategies and campaigns helped a client (or clients) achieve a "win"?

Section 2

Vendor Response

4.0 Mecklenburg County Questions and General Requirements

The County has identified a few general requirements and general questions. Please respond to each of our items based on solutions your organization has provided in similar situations.

4.1 List agency values, mission statement, and culture.
4.2 What are your agency's in-house capabilities? What, if anything, do you outsource?
4.3 Detail the process your agency uses i.e. strategy, measurement, key tools, reports, etc.
4.4 Outline 3 examples of creative work done with clients which showcase what your agency did for them and what the outcome was.
4.5 Provide 3 client references that may be contacted by the County review team.
4.6 The County has indicated that this campaign could potentially be quite lengthy because it is to follow the same timeline that ARPA fund recipients are expected to follow (all funds are to be spent by 12/31/24). Can you identify any roadblocks or challenges that would hinder your agency from mimicking that timeline? If so, please detail those challenges below.

5.0 Vendor Opportunity to Share Product/Service Information

What products and/or services would you recommend the County know more about? Please complete the summary sections. Please insert new table lines if necessary and attach PDF examples of campaigns, portfolios, etc.

Section 2

Vendor Response

6.0 What Didn't We Consider?

We understand that assembling a Request for Information can be a formidable process. There are always items we failed to consider. This is where we ask for your help and guidance.

6.1 Are there any other points the County did not include in this RFI that you would have expected to see?
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