

Request for Proposals: Strategic Planning Services

Summary: The Western North Carolina Early Childhood Coalition (WNC ECC) is seeking a consultant to facilitate the process of developing a 3-year strategic plan to guide our work. The consultant will support the coalition in a process to create a strategic plan that sets a bold vision for improving access to and quality of early childhood care and education programming in WNC. Working with a Strategic Planning Team, the consultant will craft and implement the strategic planning process, gather data and input from key stakeholders and informants, and provide support and facilitation to shape the strategic plan. The plan will be finalized by October 2024.

Background: WNC ECC is a coalition of early childhood-focused organizations collaborating to advance local and state policies to improve access to and quality of early childhood care and education programming in WNC. The coalition has been operating as a program of Children First/Communities In Schools (CF/CIS) for more than five years with CF/CIS staff providing support and coordination. With a footprint of 18 western NC counties, the coalition has provided a space for early childhood advocates and providers to learn together—ensuring that advocacy efforts are grounded in the experience and expertise of local providers and that local providers, parents and caregivers are given information, tools, and access to advocacy opportunities to influence regional and statewide policy discussions.

In late 2023, the WNC ECC moved from being a program of CF/CIS into a fiscal sponsorship relationship with CF/CIS that allows for shared governance and identity independence. WNC ECC has received multi-year grant funding—providing the financial resources to pursue expanded autonomy in the coalition's governance and operations.

Project Description/Scope of Work:

As WNC ECC moves into this new phase of its work, the coalition is seeking a consultant to help engage in a process to develop a 3-year strategic plan, as well as organizational tools, to guide the coalition's work in the coming years. The consultant will help assemble a 3-4 person planning team that provides guidance and input into the planning process.

During the process of developing a new strategic plan, the consultant will:

- Lead a data gathering process to evaluate the state and needs of the field and identify challenges/opportunities/major changes that will impact the strategic plan. This may include key informant interviews, review of internal materials, research into regional coalition models with success in influencing state policy.
- Along with the Planning Team, develop a theory of change and accompanying strategic priorities for a 3-year period, including metrics for how success will be measured.

- Create a plan for sustainability that includes internal and external goals for operations and capacity moving forward.

Timeline: This project is dependent on funding availability. WNC ECC has applied for planning funds that should be known in April. With that in mind, WNC ECC hopes to begin this project in early May 2024 and will end no later than October 30, 2024 or at a time mutually agreed to by both parties.

Qualifications: We are seeking a consultant with experience working in the nonprofit policy advocacy field. The consultant should have knowledge of early childhood policies issues, preferably in North Carolina, as well as expertise in community-based engagement/facilitation and strategic planning for nonprofits and policy advocacy groups.

Proposal Submission: Please submit proposals to gregb@wncearlychildhood.org by April 15, 2024. Proposals should be no more than 2 pages in length and should include your experiences and strategic planning philosophy and approach, qualifications, relevant examples of past work, and a quote for services.