



ADDENDUM #1

January 5, 2024

TO: ALL POTENTIAL SUBMITTERS

FROM: RON VENTURELLA, BUNCOMBE COUNTY PROCUREMENT MANAGER

SUBJECT: ADDENDUM #1 SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION FEASIBILITY STUDY

The following changes, revisions, additions, and/or clarifications to the plans and/or specifications are hereby made a part of the original documents.

Addendum # 1

A non-mandatory pre-submittal meeting was held on December 13, 2023. A recording of that meeting along with the RFP documents may be found at the link to Buncombe County's Procurement web page [HERE](#).

The following questions were asked by potential bidders (listed in no particular order):

Has HB142 been chaptered? Is it codified?

Yes. North Carolina House Bill 142 was chaptered as Session Law 2023-128 on October 10, 2023.

What facility information available, and what style of data is available? Should a facility condition assessment be included in this scope of work or are we to use historical facility assessment information? If historical, how old is the assessment information?

A facility assessment is not within the scope of this project. The local project team includes facility representatives from both school systems, and they will make facility information available to the awarded vendor. Asheville City Schools has recently begun using the FMX system for maintenance inventory. Buncombe County Schools has the same work order system as Asheville City that holds the majority of their building information, in addition to a property accounting database that holds property and land information. Asheville City Schools is in the process of conducting a facility capacity and enrollment study. Their most recent facility condition assessment was completed 2 years ago, which provided an update to a more in depth study was done about 9 years ago. Buncombe County Schools do not have a comprehensive facility assessment; they maintain facility needs on a Capital Improvement Plan.

Who completed the referenced facilities condition report? *(Per section 1.0)*

The company that completed the study for Asheville City Schools 9 years ago is no longer in business. The study 2 years ago was done by PFA which is now LS3P.

Please provide a copy of the current facilities condition report. *(Per section 5.0)*

Reports and other information will be provided to the selected vendor. The Project Team will be available to respond to requests for data and information as feasible for use in the study (e.g., financial, operational, policy, facility, academic, demographic).

How recent are past consolidation studies?

A local publication recently published an in-depth article about school consolidation, including links to previous studies from the early 1960s to the mid 1990s. See *Asheville, Buncombe schools merger talk, a 6-decade tradition, heats up with step toward legislative mandate* by Andrew R. Jones with Asheville Watchdog: <https://avlwatchdog.org/asheville-buncombe-schools-merger-talk-a-6-decade-tradition-heats-up-with-step-toward-legislative-mandate/>

Please provide copies of previous studies on consolidation feasibility. *(Per section 1.0)*

This article includes links to previous studies: <https://avlwatchdog.org/asheville-buncombe-schools-merger-talk-a-6-decade-tradition-heats-up-with-step-toward-legislative-mandate/>

What is meant in the RFP by “previous and ongoing studies, reports and reviews”?

The intent is that the study is responsive to historical and contextual factors, including studies/reports/reviews that may have been produced in the past or are underway currently. Examples of historical studies are the previous Asheville-Buncombe school consolidation studies that occurred from the 1960s through the 1990s. Another historical factor for consideration is the federal desegregation order applicable to Asheville City Schools. Examples of ongoing studies/reports/reviews include Asheville City Schools recently started facility capacity and enrollment study and the work underway by Buncombe County Schools to respond to the NC General Assembly requirement to establish new electoral districts.

Are there future enrollment projections existing or will that need to be included in the study?

Enrollment trends and projections are an important factor for analysis as part of the study. Some information is pre-existing, including population projections in Buncombe County’s Comprehensive Plan 2043. Additionally, Asheville City Schools has recently begun an enrollment and capacity study.

Is Buncombe County seeking student assignment and boundary scenarios as part of the feasibility study?

The creation of student assignment and boundary scenarios is not directly within the scope of the study. However some analysis of student enrollment and assignment is relevant to establishing feasibility findings and consolidation recommendations.

Are reports (demographics and enrollment) going to be made accessible to potential bidders?

Reports and other information will be provided to the selected vendor. The Project Team will be available to respond to requests for data and information as feasible for use in the study (e.g., financial, operational, policy, facility, academic, demographic).

Have compensation and classification studies been completed recently?

In January 2020, Asheville City Schools received the results from a salary study for custodians, maintenance staff, instructional assistants, technology, child nutrition managers, clerical, and others. The most recent classified compensation and classification study was completed for Buncombe County Schools in May, 2022. Compensation for certified staff is based solely on state salary ranges and local supplement.

In some states, there are entities that oversee the combination efforts for a set of districts. Is there such an entity in the County that would be looking at this as part of a legislative or other process?

The General Assembly has charged the local Boards of Education with responsibility for jointly studying the feasibility of the merger. The findings and recommendations will be reported to the standing committees of the General Assembly hearing election matters. Any implementation will need to comply with regulations from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, the entity charged with implementing the state's public school laws for pre-kindergarten through 12th grade public schools.

Is there a reason that the two districts haven't unified?

Gathering opinions to this question might be an interesting element include in the ongoing community engagement with key stakeholders as part of the study.

The legislation has given deadline of 2/15/25, but do the districts have a different one?

Districts have agreed to a December 2024 deadline for the completion of the study to allow an extra 6 weeks to receive and discuss the findings and recommendations before presenting the information to the General Assembly.

Please identify the 3 governing entities.

Asheville City Schools Board of Education, Buncombe County Schools Board of Education, Buncombe County Board of County Commissioners

We understand the Buncombe County schools will lead this work. What will the expected coordination look like with the Asheville City schools? *(Per Section 1.0)*

The work will be supported by a 20+ member project team from the 3 entities. The role of project team is to provide input and assist with access to data and information for use in the study. The team includes expertise in curricula/instruction, data, communications, equity, facilities, finance/budget, human resources, intergovernmental relations, and operations as well as representation from principals, teachers, parents and students. The vendor will be expected to develop a communication cadence with the County's Strategic Partnerships Director and Project Team.

At the pre-proposal call on 12/13, there was reference to a "core project team" of stakeholders that helped county staff write the RFP. Can you share the list of the team members convened by role and community affiliation, as appropriate (e.g. ACS elementary school principal), and any process points on how members were selected to participate?

The Project Team as referenced in the RFP and in the pre-submittal meeting was appointed by the County Manager and School Superintendents. Current membership includes:

Asheville City Schools	
Dr. Mark Dickerson	Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources
Heidi Kerns	Chief Finance Officer
Ian Nelson	Director of Testing and Accountability
Jeremiah Jones	Student, Asheville High School
Marta Alcalá	Equity Director
Shannon Baggett	Montford North Star Academy, Principal of the Year
Tim Shelton	Director of Operations, Facilities & Maintenance
currently vacant	Teacher, Asheville City Schools
currently vacant	Parent, Asheville City Schools
Buncombe County Schools	
Avery Mays	Student, North Buncombe High School
Chip Cody	Erwin High School Principal, Principal of the Year
Clark Wyatt	Maintenance Director
Dr. Jennifer Reed	Associate Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
Dr. Stacia Harris	Director of Communications
Kristen Keathley	Parent, Glen Arden Elementary School
Maura Brouwer	AC Reynolds High School Teacher, Teacher of the Year
Stephen Earwood	Director of Testing and Accountability
Tina Thorpe	Chief Finance Officer
Buncombe County Government	
Lillian Govus	Communications and Public Engagement Director
Rachael Sawyer Nygaard	Strategic Partnerships Director
Rafael Baptista	Strategy & Innovation Director
Ron Venturella	Procurement Manager
Sam Riddle	Budget Analyst
Tim Love	Intergovernmental Relations Director

What is the expected time commitment from the vendor over the course of April – December 2024?

This is to be determined by the vendor. Bidders should propose a planning and implementation timeline based on estimated time needed for each of the activities in the project plan and price proposals accordingly.

Does Buncombe County anticipate this work to require full-time staff support from award to completion?

This is to be determined by the vendor. Bidders should propose staffing levels based on estimated time needed for each of the activities in the project plan and price proposals accordingly. Buncombe County has not assigned full-time staff to this project. The County's Strategic Partnerships Director will provide project support on a part-time basis, to include coordination and communication with the vendor and project team. Additionally, Buncombe County Communications and Public Engagement will lead the implementation of the communications and engagement plan.

Will the Communications office serve as the primary point of contact for all components of the scope, or only for stakeholder engagement? (Per Section 5.0)

The County's Strategic Partnerships Director will serve as the primary point of contact. The role of Buncombe County Communications and Public Engagement (CAPE) is to lead the implementation of the communications and engagement plan.

Who is funding the study effort?

When Buncombe County Commissioners voted to accept the role of lead entity for the study, we accepted responsibility for identifying a funding source. When county staff present a recommended vendor for approval by the Board of Commissioners in March 2024, it will include a request for budget allocation of county general funds unless an external source has been identified by that time.

What is the budget that has been allocated to this project?

No budget has been set for the project at this time. The budget will be determined based on a negotiated agreement with the selected vendor.

When submitting a project cost to be responsive to Section 2.7, is there an estimated or target budget for the requested work?

No budget has been set for the project at this time. The budget will be determined based on a negotiated agreement with the selected vendor.

What is the anticipated budget allocated for this scope of work? *(Per Section 4.2)*

No budget has been set for the project at this time. The budget will be determined based on a negotiated agreement with the selected vendor.

Is there a budget range within which price proposals should fall?

No budget has been set for the project at this time. The budget will be determined based on a negotiated agreement with the selected vendor.

How are evaluation criteria weighted relative to one another?

The project team is currently working to establish a scoring tool using the evaluation criteria stated in the RFP. We have not yet assigned order of importance or weighting to the criteria.

Specifically, what is the methodology used for assigning scores to pricing?

Reviewers will be looking for clear, detailed and reasonable project costs.

Are there specific goals around equity as part of this process?

Buncombe County's 2025 Strategic Plan includes equity as both an organizational value and a foundational focus area. Specific to an Educated & Capable Community, the plan calls for reducing racial disparities in student achievement. Racial equity is a priority as a result of pronounced disparities that currently exist specific to education, and we are also looking for the selected vendor to consider equity in relation to other attributes such as ethnicity, economic disadvantage, language, and disability. In terms of our goals around equity, we are in tune to the following:

- increasing proficiency in reading and math in all subgroups at the school and district level
- ensuring that we meet or exceed growth consistently in all subgroups at the school and district level
- ensuring equity of course offerings across our middle and high schools
- ensuring equity of access to high quality staff across all schools
- equity in regards to facilities, and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act
- working with community partners such as United Way to provide a full range of wraparound support, especially at schools with populations of students who have the highest socioeconomic need

Additionally, it is important that marginalized voices not just be included in the conversation, but that their input is given a great deal of weight in the decision-making process. Historical actions have had

disproportionate impacts, such as significant harms experienced by the Black community as a result of desegregation (e.g. loss of Black educators). An equitable approach includes anticipating and attempting to mitigate potential unintended consequences. Therefore, it is necessary to consider which populations would be the most impacted by a merger decision and work to center them in the process.

Do you intend to award the project to one vendor or multiple vendors?

We anticipate making one award. Due to the extensive scope of this RFP, firms may subcontract or partner as a joint venture with additional entities or individuals to provide a comprehensive response to the solicitation.

Does the County expect vendor teams to perform this work on-site?

This is to be determined by the vendor and included in the negotiated contract. Bidders should propose the amount of on-site work needed to effectively carry out the project plan and price proposals accordingly.

I am assuming that it would not be acceptable to include an appendix in our response to the RFP? It would be convenient to include the brief bios of key researchers and references to their relevant work in an appendix. Some guidance would be appreciated.

We have requested that proposals not exceed twenty-five (25) total pages.

Will you accept proposals from firms who subcontract work to out-of-state minority and women's businesses? For instance, subcontracted firms who are certified by Women's Business Enterprise National Council or MidStates, etc who are not based in the County or State of NC?

Yes. Firms including subcontractors do not need to be based in North Carolina.

If a vendor was unable to attend the pre-proposal meeting, but viewed it on youtube, can they still be included in the pre-proposal meeting attendance list?

This is not necessary. Attendance at the pre-submittal meeting was non-mandatory.

END OF ADDENDUM #1

SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION FEASIBILITY STUDY RFP