



BUNCOMBE COUNTY

Request for Proposal

EXECUTIVE SEARCH FIRM

Date of Issue: March 21, 2023

Proposal Submission Deadline: April 11, 2023

At 2:00pm ET

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Buncombe County North Carolina seeks qualified executive search firms to submit a proposal to conduct a recruitment campaign for the position of Buncombe County Finance Director. This is an excellent opportunity for an experienced, skilled administrator to lead Buncombe County Government's Finance Department.

BACKGROUND

The community boasts unparalleled aesthetic beauty in tandem with established and ever growing cosmopolitan amenities. With a population of nearly 260,000 people and spanning 660 square miles, Buncombe County is the perfect intersection of mountain charm and creature comforts. Asheville is the county seat, and there are five other municipalities as well as a diverse mix of unincorporated areas. Here you'll find a unique mix of urban and rural communities, all a short drive from cities such as Charlotte, Atlanta, Knoxville, and more. Buncombe is known for its natural beauty and is surrounded by multiple national parks and forests. An evening drive on the Blue Ridge Parkway is an unforgettable scenic trip with breathtaking views of our majestic mountains. More than 225 years old, Buncombe County was home to many indigenous towns primarily occupied by the Cherokee People, but was also home to other indigenous cultures like the Catawba People. Buncombe County has compiled an impressive roster of historically notable visitors and residents such as George Vanderbilt, Nina Simone, E.W. Grove, Roberta Flack, Thomas Wolfe, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and others whose imprints are scattered throughout the county. The iconic Biltmore House is the country's largest privately owned residence, still owned by George Vanderbilt's descendants and receives more than one million visitors every year.

Buncombe County is home to two innovative public school systems, charter schools, a community college with diverse offerings, private colleges, and the University of North Carolina at Asheville. Whether it be venerable institutions or up-and-coming businesses, Buncombe County has the infrastructure, outdoor amenities, and quality of life that continues to attract top-notch talent from around the world.

Buncombe County's first local government was formed in 1792 and now operates under a commission-manager form of government. The Board of Commissioners is comprised of chairperson and six commission members, two from each district. The Board of Commissioners approves county ordinances and policy, and the county manager provides general guidance on daily operations and leadership to county employees. With a FY23 budget of more than \$587 million, Buncombe County employs more than 1,800 people, including a Finance Department of 21 staff. In 2023, Moody's Investors Service upgraded the County's Taxable Limited Obligation Bonds Series 2014B to Aa1 from Aa2. They also affirmed the County's AAA issuer rating and Aa1 rating on all other limited obligation bonds. The County also maintains AAA rating from Standard and Poor's.

SCOPE

Buncombe County anticipates the executive search firm would provide the following services. Firms shall outline their proposal for how to address these expectations. The selected Firm will be viewed as an active partner in assuring the County a high-level of satisfaction during the

process, the outcome, and the cost associated with this recruitment. It is expected that the Firm will work with the County to place a Finance Director whose start date would be no later than August 31, 2023. A detailed Scope of Work will be revised and finalized at the time of the contract. The Scope of Work shall include but is not limited to the following:

1. Review and/or suggest updates to the existing job description, and confirm a manager profile.
Develop a recruitment strategy including recommending appropriate advertisement and social media recruiting activities.
2. Circulate the job posting with appropriate agencies, including the National Association of Counties, the International City/County Management Association, the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, the North Carolina League of Municipalities, the UNC School of Government, Government Finance Officers, local media and others as recommended by the firm.
3. Prepare a list of individuals who should be encouraged to apply and actively recruit them.
4. Work in conjunction with County's Recruitment Division and the HR Director to carry out the recruitment process.
5. Screen all applications, share all submittals with the County and create a recommended candidate list based on agreed upon criteria.
6. Design the interview process, including preparation of interview questions, scoring sheets, suggested panel make-up, and other associated tasks.
7. Provide comprehensive background information on candidates selected to be interviewed, including any appropriate assurances as to their stated qualifications.
8. Assist in negotiating a contract with the successful candidate.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

- The minimum acceptable qualifications for an executive search firm include; placement of at least five Finance Directors in jurisdictions over 100,000 population within the past three years.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- There is no guarantee of an award, and terms are subject to change. Submission of a proposal does not represent an award or any legally binding contract.
- Responding firms may be asked for an on-site interview prior to the County making a final decision.
- Services to begin upon award of contract.

PROPOSAL RESPONSES

Proposals must be submitted via email to Ron Venturella, Buncombe County Procurement Manager, no later than 2:00 pm on April 11, 2023 in order to be considered. The email address for submission is ron.venturella@buncombecounty.org. Buncombe County's file size limit for emails is 50MB. The use of file sharing platforms such as Dropbox are acceptable. It is the responsibility of the applicant that their proposal is received. Receipt of proposals can be verified by calling 828-250-4154.

Proposals must contain all of the following information:

1. Provide the name and address of your firm. Describe what type of a business entity your firm is (corporation, general partnership, Limited Liability Company, etc.). Indicate in what state and year your business entity was incorporated or formed.
2. Provide a brief history of your business, including years of operation, general business description, number of clients serviced, types of services generally offered, size of firm, and statement of philosophy of customer service levels provided to clients.
3. Describe the background, experience, and capabilities of your firm as it relates to the Scope of Work outlined above. Highlight any successful placements in other large local governments and/or local governments during the last three years. Include a list of recent recruitments listing the name of the organization, the location, and the time to complete the recruitment. Of particular interest would be any placements for North Carolina jurisdictions.
4. Identify the key personnel of the Firm who will be assigned to perform services for Buncombe County, and who will provide continuing support throughout the term of the contract. Provide resumes stating qualifications for key personnel and provide a statement as to the availability, continuity, and accessibility of the individuals who would be assigned to manage Buncombe County's account. List the successful placements that they have been a part of in the last three years. Please note that stipulations in the contract between Buncombe County and the selected firm will include a provision that the assigned personnel as noted in your response cannot be changed without the approval of Buncombe County.
5. Identify all subcontractors you intend to use for the proposed scope of work. For each subcontractor listed, proposers shall indicate
 - a. What products and/or services are to be supplied by that subcontractor and;
 - b. What percentage of the overall scope of work that subcontractor will perform.
6. List at least ten (10) clients (municipal/county government) for whom you have provided executive search firm services in the past three years. Provide telephone numbers and contact names for references. Provide specific costs for services, fee payment schedule, and cost guarantees, if available, for the services listed above. Include an hourly rate and description of services performed beyond the normal scope of services that would be included in a contract. Specify any additional expenses such as travel and lodging. These should include the number of firm personnel that would be needed on each trip.
7. Provide any assurances as to timely and successful completion of the recruitment. Provide a timeline with a detailed description of each component of the firm's proposed search process.
8. Provide your response to whether the client or firm can terminate the services without obligation at any time under the contract. If not, what are the proposed separation terms?
9. Does the Firm provide any type of guarantees if the recommended candidate does not work out as expected for Buncombe County?
10. Provide the Firm's standard contract template as an addendum to the submittal.

SELECTION PROCESS

The selection process will include the following criteria in the evaluation of proposals for development of a shortlist to be considered for potential interviews and subsequent negotiations. These criteria are not necessarily listed in order of importance.

- Firm's qualifications and experience in conducting similar searches, including location of offices and related staffing
- Firm's understanding of the project objectives
- Previous work experience on similar searches and demonstrated experience in successful recruitments
- Experience and qualifications of the personnel actually conducting the search, including any sub-contractors
- Financial stability of the firm
- Firm's proposed methodology and schedule for conducting the search process
- Overall cost, including fees, and other expenses.
- The ability of the consultant to begin work immediately and complete the search within the County's stated deadline
- Evaluation of references from previous clients.
- Reasonableness of proposed contractual terms.

Following the deadline for submittal of qualifications, a selection committee will review the submitted qualifications. The selection committee will review, analyze, and rank all submittals based on their response to the information requested. The selection shall be made in order of preference based on criteria established herein.

The Board of Commissioners will short list the number of qualified firms, following a recommendation from the selection committee. The County reserves the discretion to determine the number of firms that will be on the short list. The County may engage in individual discussions with two or more firms deemed fully qualified, responsible, and suitable on the basis of initial responses and with emphasis on professional competence to provide the required services. The selection committee will schedule firm interviews as required in the selection process. Such firms shall be encouraged to elaborate on their qualifications and performance data or staff expertise pertinent to the proposed project, as well as alternative concepts.

The selection committee may conduct discussions with the firm(s) submitting responses regarding the contract and shall select from among the firm(s) deemed most qualified to provide the required services. At the discretion of the County, the discussions with the firm(s) may consist of written questions and responses, and/or personal interviews with members of the firm(s). If personal interviews are required by the County, the persons proposed to be responsible for performing the work required herein shall attend the interview. If requested, firms should be prepared to submit financial status information, which shall be held in confidence.

The County will negotiate with the most qualified firm at a compensation which is considered to be fair and reasonable to the County. In the event a satisfactory contract with the firm considered to be most qualified cannot be reached, negotiations with that firm shall be formally terminated. Negotiations will then proceed with the remaining ranked firms in the same manner until an agreement is reached, unless it is determined by the committee that it is in the best interest of the County that the process be terminated or modified.

Buncombe County reserves the right to reject any and/or all submittals, and to waive defects, technicalities and/or irregularities in any submittal. The County reserves the right to finalize a

contract with one firm based on all factors involved in the written qualification submittal without further discussion or interviews.

RFP SCHEDULE

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

Event	Responsibility	Date and Time
Issue RFP	County	3/21/2023
Submit Written Questions	Vendor	3/27/2023 5:00pm ET
Provide Response to Questions	County	4/03/2023
Submit Proposals	Vendor	4/11/2023 2:00pm ET

CONTACT

For more information, contact Ron Venturella, Buncombe County Procurement Manager, at ron.venturella@buncombecounty.org, telephone (828) 250-4154. The deadline for submitting questions regarding this RFP is March 27, 2023 at 5:00 pm. Any addendums will be issued by the Procurement Manager by April 3, 2023. It is the responsibility of the applicant to assure that their proposal is received. Receipt of proposals can be verified by calling Mr. Venturella.