



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Executive Search Services for County Manager, FY2019

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Buncombe County North Carolina seeks qualified executive search firms to submit a proposal to conduct a recruitment campaign for the position of Buncombe County Manager. This is an excellent opportunity for an experienced, skilled administrator to oversee the operations of Buncombe County Government and work with the elected board of commissioners for the administration of all departments of county government under the board's general control. The powers and duties of the manager position are as described in N.C. General Statute § 153A-82, shown in Exhibit A.

BACKGROUND

Buncombe County is the largest county in Western North Carolina, and the seventh most populous county in the state with more than 255,000 residents. The County serves as the economic hub of the region. Buncombe County spans 660 square miles, with one city and five towns. The City of Asheville is the largest, and is the county seat. Throughout history Buncombe has been an important crossroads, being approximately 240 miles west of the state capital, Raleigh, North Carolina; 205 miles north of Atlanta, Georgia; and 120 miles east of Knoxville, Tennessee.

The County operates under a commissioner/manager form of government, with a seven-member Board of County Commissioners. The County's workforce consists of over 1,500 regular employees who provide public safety, human services, cultural and recreational, economic and physical development, general government services, and support for public education. These activities are carried out by over 40 departments and agencies, and overseen by more than 20 directors and managers, as shown in the organizational chart in Exhibit B.

The County has a General Fund appropriation of \$318.8 million for fiscal year 2019, and actual expenditures across all governmental funds totaled over \$436 million in the 2017 audit. The total taxable assessment for 2019 is over \$37.3 billion in value. Buncombe County has an excellent credit opinion, with an AAA bond rating from both Moody's Investor Service and Standard and Poor's.

Strong growth continues to support a record economy in Buncombe County, which has maintained its place within North Carolina as the county with the lowest unemployment rate into the current year. The Asheville/Buncombe area continues to be a very desirable place to live and visit, as evidenced by a robust tourism industry and substantial recognition in destination reviews, such as: "#10 Best Place to Live" *Travel & Leisure*, "#1 Best Place to Retire" *Conde Nast Traveler*, "#2 Best Startup City in America" *Popular Mechanics*, "Best US Small Cities for 2018" *National Geographic Traveler*, "18 Best Places to Visit in 2018" *CNN Travel*, and "30 Top USA Cities to Visit in 2018" *TripAdvisor*.

SCOPE OF WORK/EXPECTATIONS

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 County Manager whose start date would be no later than February 28, 2019. A



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Executive Search Services for County Manager, FY2019

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.
2. Develop a recruitment strategy including recommending appropriate advertisement and social media recruiting activities.
3. 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, local media and others as recommended by the firm.
4. Prepare a list of individuals who should be encouraged to apply and actively recruit them.
5. Work in conjunction with County HR staff and the Interim County Manager to carry out the recruitment process.
6. Screen all applications and create a recommended candidate list based on agreed upon criteria.
7. Design the interview process, including preparation of interview questions, scoring sheets, suggested panel make-up, and other associated tasks.
8. Provide comprehensive background information on candidates selected to be interviewed, including any appropriate assurances as to their stated qualifications.
9. 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 City or County Managers 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 August 1, 2018** 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.



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Executive Search Services for County Manager, FY2019

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 1.) What products and/or services are to be supplied by that subcontractor and; 2.) 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.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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?
10. Does the Firm provide any type of guarantees if the recommended candidate does not work out as expected for Buncombe County?
11. 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



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Executive Search Services for County Manager, FY2019

- 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 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.



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Executive Search Services for County Manager, FY2019

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 July 26, 2018 at 5:00 pm. Any addendums will be issued by the Procurement Manager by July 27, 2018. **It is the responsibility of the applicant to assure that their proposal is received. Receipt of proposals can be verified by calling Mr. Venturella.**

Exhibit A: N.C.G.S 153A-82. Powers and duties of manager

N.C. Gen. Stat. § 153A-82. Powers and duties of manager.

The manager is the chief administrator of county government. He is responsible to the board of commissioners for the administration of all departments of county government under the board's general control and has the following powers and duties:

- (1) He shall appoint with the approval of the board of commissioners and suspend or remove all county officers, employees, and agents except those who are elected by the people or whose appointment is otherwise provided for by law. The board may by resolution permit the manager to appoint officers, employees, and agents without first securing the board's approval. The manager shall make his appointments, suspensions, and removals in accordance with any general personnel rules, regulations, policies, or ordinances that the board may adopt. The board may require the manager to report each suspension or removal to the board at the board's first regular meeting following the suspension or removal; and, if the board has permitted the manager to make appointments without board approval, the board may require the manager to report each appointment to the board at the board's first regular meeting following the appointment.
- (2) He shall direct and supervise the administration of all county offices, departments, boards, commissions and agencies under the general control of the board of commissioners, subject to the general direction and control of the board.
- (3) He shall attend all meetings of the board of commissioners and recommend any measures that he considers expedient.
- (4) He shall see that the orders, ordinances, resolutions, and regulations of the board of commissioners are faithfully executed within the county.
- (5) He shall prepare and submit the annual budget and capital program to the board of commissioners.
- (6) He shall annually submit to the board of commissioners and make available to the public a complete report on the finances and administrative activities of the county as of the end of the fiscal year.
- (7) He shall make any other reports that the board of commissioners may require concerning the operations of county offices, departments, boards, commissions, and agencies.
- (8) He shall perform any other duties that may be required or authorized by the board of commissioners. (1927, c. 91, ss. 6, 7; 1973, c. 822, s. 1.)

Exhibit B: Buncombe County Organization Chart



Organizational Chart

- ELECTED
- APPOINTED
- SEPARATE BOARD

