

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR SEARCH CONSULTANT SERVICES

I. BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION

The Board of Directors of Highline Public Schools requests proposals for the professional services of an experienced executive search firm to assist the Board in conducting a superintendent search.

HPS is a district of approximately 18,000 students at 33 schools with a combined budget of over \$465 million. The district employs more than 2,000 staff members and offers a wide variety of educational opportunities from early childhood to college preparation. Approximately 60 percent of students are eligible for free and reduced-price meals, 30 percent are English Language Learners, 80 percent are students of color, and there are 99 distinct primary languages spoken.

For the last nine years, Highline Public Schools (HPS) has been led by a nationally recognized superintendent. The School Board is seeking a strategic, experienced leader in its next superintendent to build upon the successes of the district.

Highline Public Schools is deeply engaged in work around equity, race, and identity to better foster and support an environment in which our students, families, and staff grow, thrive, and succeed. The district is guided by a strategic plan that is centered on the promise that, “EVERY STUDENT in Highline Public Schools is known by name, strength and need, and graduates prepared for the future they choose.” As a result, for the last seven years, the graduation rate has steadily increased, with 83.8% of students graduating in four years in 2019-20.

HPS is a community of engaged students, families, educators, staff, and community partners. The Board intends to conduct a superintendent search process that includes authentically engaging with these stakeholders. The Board will design a selection process in consultation with the selected firm, including engaging with the community to develop desired qualifications and characteristics for the role.

The current superintendent’s contract expires at the end of June 2022. The goal is to have a new superintendent selected no later than the end of February 2022, and for that person’s employment to begin no later than July 1, 2022. The district contact for the consultant will be Erinn Bennett, Director of Special Projects, who is managing the search for the district.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) describes the selection process and documentation required for submitting a proposal. Any firm failing to submit their proposal in accordance with the procedures set forth in the RFP may be considered nonresponsive.

II. SCHEDULE

Selection Process	Date
Request for Proposal Published	September 2, 2021
Last Day for Questions from Proposers by 2:00pm	September 9, 2021

Proposal Due by 5:00pm	September 16, 2021
Initial Screening	Sept. 17-21, 2021 (tentative)
Interviews	Sept. 22-28, 2021 (tentative)
Anticipated Board Approval	Oct. 6, 2021
Anticipated Start Date	Oct. 11, 2021

III. SELECTION PROCESS

The district intends to select a firm based on the best interests of the district, all factors considered. Among the factors to be considered are the following:

Evaluation Criteria	Points
Approach	25 (See Section VI, 6)
Qualifications of Team Members	20 (See Section VI, 4)
Firm's Experience with comparable school districts/Capabilities	15 (See Section VI, 3)
Awareness and understanding of Highline Public Schools	15 (See Section VI, 5)
References	10 (See Section VI, 7)
Pricing	15 (See Section VI, 8)

- Only proposals received by the deadline will be considered.
- Proposals will be initially screened resulting in a short-list of one or more qualified firms that will be invited to make an oral presentation/interview on a date to be determined (anticipated mid-Sept to early-Oct 2021).
- The district reserves the right to seek clarifications about the proposals.
- The district may award the contract based solely on the written proposals. However, the district may elect to engage in negotiations with a selected short list of vendors in order to improve the proposals and obtain the best contract for the district.
- The district reserves the right to request post-proposal modifications, including best and final offers and considerations.
- The final selection will be based on the evaluation criteria set forth in Section III. The district reserves the right to negotiate with the successful firm on pricing, scheduling and other factors.
- The district reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, waive minor irregularities and informalities, and make the awards in its best interest.
- The district reserves the right to modify the scope of services as a result of the written submittals and/or interviews.
- All costs incurred in the preparation of the request for the proposal process shall be borne by the proposing firm.
- **Proposals submitted in response to this request for proposal shall become the property of the district and be considered public documents under applicable Washington State laws.**
- The district reserves the right to terminate this contract at any time for any reason.
- All respondents will receive written notification of the decision.

IV. EXPECTATIONS OF CONSULTANT/PROJECT INFORMATION

The consultant shall undertake, at a minimum, the following responsibilities, and any additional responsibilities reasonably necessary to complete this work. The scope of work may include some or all of the following tasks:

- Develop and conduct a thoughtful, timely process for gathering Board, staff, student, family, and community input to establish desired qualifications and characteristics of the new superintendent.
- Actively recruit and conduct a thorough search for qualified applicants and ultimately produce for the Board a diverse “pool” of highly-qualified people who meet the criteria established. Ensure competitive applicants from a diverse background apply.
- Assist in the evaluation of applicants against the desired qualifications and characteristics established by the Board. Information provided should include, but is not limited to, profiles of experience, skills assessment, and reference and background checks.
- Advise the Board on the salary/benefit package to offer.
- To complete other tasks necessary that result in the selection and employment of a superintendent (e.g., organize travel or interview arrangements for finalist candidates as needed).

V. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSAL

The proposing firm should submit one ELECTRONIC copy of their proposal sent via email to erinn.bennett@highlineschools.org. The subject line of the email should be “Superintendent Search Proposal.” **Proposals must be received by 5 p.m. on September 16, 2021.**

Each proposal is to be a maximum of 20 pages (8-1/2”x11”), single sided, not smaller than 12-point type. Submittals exceeding the page limits may be considered non-responsive.

- The cover letter, table of contents, tabs, and resumes do not count toward the page limits.

VI. PROPOSAL SPECIFICATIONS (separate sections)

1. ***Table of Contents*** (maximum one page)
2. ***Executive Summary*** (maximum one page)
 - a. Please provide a summary highlighting the firm’s qualifications and special expertise to provide services requested in the request for proposal.
3. ***Experience & Capabilities of Firm***
 - a. Address, telephone number, email address, date firm was established, and areas of specialization of the firm.
 - b. Total size and breakdown of firm personnel by category.
 - c. Description of other superintendent searches conducted in the past five years for comparable districts, including those of similar or larger size.
 - d. The shortest and longest tenure of superintendents appointed in other searches.
 - e. Please include whether your firm has an equity policy, and attach if so. Please also include a description of any equity work in which your firm has focused, led, participated, or engaged.
4. ***Qualifications of Team Members, including Availability & Capacity***

- a. Describe how you propose to organize your team to accomplish the work. Please identify the primary team member(s) who would lead this project and their qualifications. Please include a resume for each individual, including language skills.
 - b. **PLEASE NOTE: Per Governor Inslee's directive, any consultant who will be participating in person must be fully vaccinated by October 18, 2021.** Proof of vaccination may be required.
 - c. Statement as to whether the proposed team members or firm are currently engaged (or will soon be engaged) in other projects that are coincident with, or might affect, the timeline of this search.
5. ***Awareness and Understanding of Highline Public Schools***
- a. Please include your firm's and team's experience working in the Pacific Northwest, and describe your familiarity with the unique characteristics, culture, and opportunities of Highline Public Schools.
6. ***Project Approach, including:***
- a. Describe how you would approach this project, including:
 - i. Suggested timeline of activities and major events in the search process.
 - ii. Responsibilities to be assumed by the Board of Directors and the Search Consultant(s) during each phase of the process.
 - iii. Recommended process for developing criteria that will be used for selecting the new superintendent.
 - iv. Community Engagement:
 1. Recommended process for obtaining staff input.
 2. Recommended process for obtaining family and community input.
 3. Include examples of different approaches for family and community engagement you have used in other searches, including engagement conducted in multiple languages.
 - b. Description of the process the consultant suggests for advertising and recruitment, including recruiting a diverse pool of competitive applicants.
 - c. Description of your process for screening, reference/background checks, interviews, and final selection.
7. ***References***
- a. Please provide the client name, address, telephone number, and email address of three Board members/client representatives that have recently worked with the proposed consultant(s) for this search. Please also include the firm's three most recent projects (with contact information) that most closely relate to the firm's qualifications for this project.
8. ***Pricing***
- a. Briefly discuss proposed pricing structure for the listed services, listing categories of individuals, hourly rates, type of reimbursement costs, etc. Please separate out anticipated expenses for each element of the search and outlining other anticipated expenses for the district.
 - b. The district anticipates awarding a contract on a time and materials basis, by hourly rate, to a fixed contract amount.

- c. Please include costs for reimbursable and direct expenses, such as supplies, postage, etc. Please include any information about any planned use of technology and/or cost-saving measures (e.g., teleconferencing, virtual meetings).
- d. Please note pricing should be based upon previous experience on projects completed and the services outlined in the RFP.

VII. QUESTIONS AND COMMUNICATION

All communication and/or questions shall be submitted in writing via email by the dates and times indicated above in the Schedule (Section II). The district will consider no telephone or in-person inquiries, except at the interviews for those firms making the short-list.

Answers to questions will be issued in the form of an addendum which will be provided electronically on the Highline Public Schools' Purchasing website at <https://www.highlineschools.org/departments/business-finance/purchasing>.

Email: erinn.bennett@highlineschools.org

Proposals must be submitted electronically by 5pm on September 16, 2021, at the above referenced email with "Superintendent Search Proposal" in the subject heading of the email.

In the event that a firm attempts to contact any official, employee, or representative of Highline Public Schools in any manner contrary to the above requirements, said firm may be disqualified from further consideration.

This prohibition does not apply to:

- Telephone calls to the district to request copies of this RFP, to confirm attendance, or request directions relative to an interview request received from the district
- Discussion in the interview

VIII. CONTRACT AND CONTRACTING PROVISIONS

The district's standard contract for independent contractors is included as an attachment. The proposal should include any comments or requested changes. Please note: The district reserves the right to reject any firm that is not willing to accept the district's terms and conditions as noted in the standard form of contract.

Additional Contract Document Requirements:

- New Vendor Request Form (attached)
- W-9 Form
- Washington State Business License
- Certificate of Insurance, including endorsement pages, with the limits described in the Contract for Independent Contractors

IX. ATTACHMENTS

- Contract for Independent Contractors
- New Vendor Request Form