



170 Pine State Street, Lillington, NC 27546
Phone (910) 893-2344
Fax (910) 893-2387
www.harnettsmartstart.org

Request for Proposals (RFPs)

TITLE: The STEP Program

ISSUE: April 13, 2026

ISSUING AGENCY: Harnett County Partnership for Children
170 Pine State Street
Lillington, NC 27546
910-893-2344
910-893-2387 (fax)

Sealed Proposals subject to the conditions made a part hereof will be received **until 4:30 pm, May 8, 2026** for furnishing services described herein. Proposals shall be mailed, to the attention of **Tara Fish, Executive Director**, to 170 Pine State Street, Lillington, NC 27546 or hand delivered to 170 Pine State Street Lillington, NC. Direct all inquiries concerning this RFP to **Tara Fish, Executive Director**, at the telephone number as shown above.

NOTE: All prospective Contractors are encouraged to attend a PREPROPOSAL BIDDER'S CONFERENCE on **April 28, 2026 at 10:00am via zoom** with the Harnett County Partnership for Children. Zoom link will be available on website under RFP. A summary of all questions and answers will be posted on the Internet as an addendum, located under: harnettsmartstart.org > **About HCPC** > **Request for Proposal 2026-2027**.

It is the prospective Contractor's responsibility to assure that all addenda have been reviewed.

INTRODUCTION

The Harnett County Partnership for Children (hereinafter referred to as HCPC) is soliciting proposals to establish a contract through competitive negotiations. The purpose of this Request for Proposals (RFP) is to acquire the services of a qualified Contractor (hereinafter referred to as the "prospective Contractor") to administer and coordinate the STEP program (see **Scope of Work** below).

Contract term is from July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027.

BACKGROUND

HCPC is a public-private non-profit organization that administers Smart Start and NC Pre-K funds in Harnett County, NC. The mission of HCPC is to improve the quality of life for young children and families in Harnett County through community-based programs focusing on health, education, and family support. HCPC funds programs to improve the quality, affordability and availability of child care as well as children's health and family support efforts that address the needs of children birth to age five and their families.

SCOPE OF WORK

STEP will offer licensed child care facilities Support, Technical Assistance (TA), Evaluation Assistance and Professional Development to improve or maintain high quality. Temporary, GS110, and 1-5 star facilities will be eligible to participate. Facilities with high enrollment and low education/program standards points will be targeted. Participants may participate in any or all components of the STEP program, depending on needs. The Support component will offer training/workshops on various topics. Participants of the Technical Assistance component will receive limited TA to assist in the maintenance of quality environments during years which sites are not scheduled

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for reassessment. Facilities who participate in the Evaluation component of STEP will participate in mock assessments to assist in the development and facilitation of an improvement plan. Grants may be awarded to address needs identified in the mock ERS. The professional development component may include facility plans, individual plans and assistance with college course enrollment. Reimbursement grants may be provided to child care facilities or individuals participating in the professional development component for tuition, fees and books. Participants may also be eligible to receive a reimbursement grant to cover the cost of Early Educator Certification (or re-certification) and/or membership in professional associations. Smart Start funds may support up to 6 STEP staff.

QUALIFICATIONS

The prospective Contractor must have demonstrated competency in performing services defined in the Scope of Work Section of this RFP. Specifically, the prospective Contractor must demonstrate a successful history of providing similar services. The prospective Contractor should describe all project experience in North Carolina or other states with similar activity/program operations. The prospective Contractor should provide the name, address, and telephone number for a reference for each project in the last five (5) years.

The prospective Contractor must provide details of any pertinent judgment, criminal conviction, investigation or litigation pending against the prospective Contractor or any of its officers, directors, employees, agents or sub-contractors of which the vendor has knowledge. HCPC reserves the right to reject a proposal based on this information.

NOTE: Please go to HCPC's website (harnettsmartstart.org > **About HCPC** > **Request for Proposal 2026-2027**) to obtain required documents.

The response to this RFP shall consist of the following documents:

- **Proposal Checklist**
- **Activity Proposal (below)**
- **Application for Smart Start Funding**
- **Pre-contracting Information Required for Contract Development**
- **Contract Requirements & Application Agreement**
- **Budget Narrative**

Additional information required:

- **Cover Letter**
- **Financial Statement**

Instructions for Required Documents: Please go to HCPC's website (harnettsmartstart.org > **About HCPC** > **Request for Proposal 2026-2027**) to obtain the following required documents.

1. **Proposal Checklist**
2. **Application for Smart Start Funding**

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3. Contract Requirements & Application Agreement

4. Pre-contracting Information Required for Contract Development

Submit verification of the prospective Contractor's Federal Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) or Social Security Number, preferably a copy of the IRS letter assigning the federal tax identification number or a letter signed by an official on agency letterhead indicating the federal tax identification number and the prospective Contractor's legal name or Social Security Card.

5. Budget Narrative

Please use the attached **Budget Narrative** template. Refer to the **Guidelines for Completing Budget Narrative** for assistance in completing the projected budget and narrative.

Instructions for Additional Information:

1. Cover Letter

Each proposal must include a cover letter, signed and dated by an individual authorized to legally bind the prospective Contractor. If said individual is not the corporate president, submit evidence showing the individual's authority to bind the prospective Contractor should it be awarded.

The cover letter must contain a statement that the person signing the proposal is a legal representative of the prospective Contractor and is authorized to bind the Contract should it be awarded.

2. Financial Statement

The prospective Contractor's most recent audited financial statement or similar evidence of financial stability shall be provided. **(Only submit with original proposal; copies not required)**



ACTIVITY PROPOSAL

Title: STEP

Activity Summary: STEP will offer licensed child care facilities Support, Technical Assistance (TA), Evaluation Assistance and Professional Development to improve or maintain high quality. Temporary, GS110, and 1-5 star facilities will be eligible to participate. Facilities with high enrollment and low education/program standards points will be targeted. Participants may participate in any or all components of the STEP program, depending on needs. The Support component will offer training/workshops on various topics. Participants of the Technical Assistance component will receive limited TA to assist in the maintenance of quality environments during years which sites are not scheduled for reassessment. Facilities who participate in the Evaluation component of STEP will participate in mock assessments to assist in the development and facilitation of an improvement plan. Grants may be awarded to address needs identified in the mock ERS. The professional development component may include facility plans, individual plans and assistance with college course enrollment. Reimbursement grants may be provided to child care facilities or individuals participating in the professional development component for tuition, fees and books. Participants may also be eligible to receive a reimbursement grant to cover the cost of Early Educator Certification (or re-certification) and/or membership in professional associations. Smart Start funds may support up to 6 STEP staff.

TECHNICAL APPROACH

Activity Description: Please describe the approach that will be used to accomplish the tasks outlined in the Activity Summary. After reading this section, the reader should have knowledge of the activity and how it will operate. Assume the reader has little familiarity with HCPC or the county and answer as completely and in as much detail as possible. Please be sure to address all of the following using either narrative style or specifically answering the questions:

A. Description of Services:

Please address the following in detail:

- the specific service to be offered, including the tasks/goals to be accomplished and when and where this service will operate
- the population to be served, including eligibility criteria for participation
- the staff that will be paid for with Smart Start funds
- the incorporation of effective practices into activity, if applicable



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Grants:

B. Does this activity contain grants of any kind or incentives to participants? Yes No
If you have checked yes, describe in detail.

C. If it is similar to other services in the county please explain how this service will enhance, expand or work with the service currently offered. (Reminder – duplication/supplantation of services is not approvable: i.e. paying for a Medicaid eligible well child visit)

D. Describe which organizations and agencies have collaborated in the development or delivery of this service to make it responsive to community need.



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**PROPOSED OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES
 FY 2026-2027**

| Outputs for FY 2026-2027 | | |
|---|---|--|
| Outputs - answers the question "how many?" | Who will collect this information? | List back-up documentation that will be provided. |
| Example: 100 child care providers will attend workshops and/or trainings. | | |
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| Outcomes for FY 2026-2027 | | |
|---|---|--|
| Outcomes - should include changes the activity expects for participants. | Who will collect this information? | List back-up documentation that will be provided. |
| Example: By June 30, 2027, 90% of parents will experience an increase in their confidence and competence in parenting skills. | | |
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HCPC Quarterly Evaluation Reports will be completed and submitted by:
