



Introduction

The Richland County First Steps Partnership Board is requesting proposals for legal support services located in Columbia, South Carolina for fiscal year ending June 30, 2026, with possible annual renewal for 2027, 2028, 2029 and 2030.

A pre-proposal conference will be held at noon on December 15th, at the Richland County First Steps office located at 1800 St Julian Place, Suite 406, Columbia SC. Representatives of Richland County First Steps will meet with prospective proposers to review the RFP and answer questions. Please bring a copy of the RFP with you as no additional copies will be available at the proposer's conference.

Questions concerning this request for proposal should be directed to:

Elizabeth Kabalka
Richland County First Steps
Executive Director
1800 St. Julian Place, Suite 406
Columbia, SC 29204
(803) 553.1748 Office
ekabalka@richlandfirststeps.org

SCOPE OF WORK/SPECIFICATIONS

A. Background

Richland County First Steps to School Readiness is an early childhood initiative that leverages public and private resources to improve the readiness of young children to succeed in school and life.

Organization

Richland County First Steps is a state-funded nonprofit organization whose mission is to ensure all children are healthy and ready to succeed by the start of school. Richland County First Steps has a governing board and employs staff as determined by its governing board. Richland County is one of the 46 Local Partnerships that are located in each county of the state.

B. Scope

The successful applicant will serve as legal advisor for Richland County First Steps on employment related matters. Other services may be identified during the term of this engagement.

1. Services

Provide legal advice related to human resources, employment terminations, policies, and other administrative needs as required when issues arise.

2. Local Partnerships

The Legal Consultant supports Richland County First Steps Executive Director in the management of all human resource issues. The successful applicant may also train and equip leadership team staff with appropriate knowledge relating to best practices in Human Resources.

3. Legal Consultant Tasks

The Legal Consultant provides legal advice for Richland County First Steps. This may include:

Ongoing

- Provide advice when employment problems arise.
- Provide trainings on best practices with regards to employment law as it evolves.
- Conduct face-to-face meetings with staff and board members (as requested)
- Routine reports to Richland County Executive Director and staff members
- Respond to requests by other legal counsel as required.
- Maintain all necessary documentation according to federal and state regulations.

4. Payment

Payments will be made to the successful offeror on a monthly basis based on invoices to the Richland County First steps that document time worked per the contract.

Other Information:

1. Legislative Goals

Per statute Section 59-152-30, the goals for South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness are

to:

- *“Provide parents with access to the support they might seek and want to strengthen their families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children;*
- *increase comprehensive services so children have reduced risk for major physical, developmental, and learning problems;*
- *promote high-quality preschool programs that provide a healthy environment that will promote normal growth and development;*
- *provide services so all children receive the protection, nutrition, and health care needed to thrive in the early years of life so they arrive at school ready to succeed; and*
- *mobilize communities to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to succeed.”*

Time Requirements

Proposal Calendar

Request for proposal issued
Pre-proposal conference
Due date for proposals
Selected firm notified

DATE: 12/5/25
DATE: 12/15/25
DATE: 1/30/26
DATE: 2/15/26

INFORMATION FOR OFFERORS TO SUBMIT

A. Company Qualifications, Capabilities and Experience:

- Provide an overview of your organization including:
 - Number of years in business
 - Number of employees
 - Number of offices
 - Other lines of related business
- The successful offeror must identify issues of concern as early as possible, please provide examples of your experience in this regard.
- Discuss your ability to support Richland County First Steps on all the previously mentioned tasks.
- Describe your ability to support Richland County First Steps, the executive director, and programs.
- Describe your expertise in employment law, non-profits and the unique issues they face.

B. Personnel Assigned (Experience and Education)

Provide the following information:

- Names and resumes of key staff offerors will be assigned to any contract resulting from this solicitation. Key staff resumes shall include education and relevant experience.
- Name of the lead project manager to which all project employees will report.

C. Overall Price

What is the total proposed cost to provide the legal services outlined? Price may be set as a retainer or as a fixed hourly rate. If an hourly rate is set, please provide an estimate of time required to deal with typical problems you have experienced with other non-profit clients.

D. Approach and Methodology of Accomplishing Work

Offerors shall describe their approach and methodology to the work described in the “Scope Of Work and Local Partnerships Legal Service Requirements” section. This part of the proposals should be organized in the order specified in this RFP.

E. Additional Data

Provide additional information considered essential to your proposal.

F. Mandatory Criteria

Compliance with S.C. State Ethics Act.

Offerors are required to comply with applicable provisions of the South Carolina State Ethics Act.

Subcontractors.

The offeror must fully disclose any proposed subcontracting of any of the required services.

Requirements to which all offerors must agree.

- All Offerors must state in their Proposal that they agree to the following:
- That any contract resulting from this RFP will be subject to South Carolina law.
- The State will not agree to any type of binding arbitration.
- Richland County First Steps are not permitted under South Carolina law to indemnify, defend, or pay attorneys’ fees on behalf of any party with which the State of South Carolina contracts.
- Offeror does not discriminate in employment of persons upon the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, sex, age, or physical handicap.
- Offeror certifies that it will provide a drug-free workplace during the term of this contract in accordance with the South Carolina Drug-Free Workplace Act, SC Code 44-107-10 et seq., and that Offeror will comply with the Act as applicable.

Proposal Submission

Firms interested in responding to this RFP should submit a proposal electronically (in PDF format) no later than 5:00 PM on January 30th to ekabalka@Richlandfirststeps.org. Late proposals will be rejected as not meet the mandatory RFP requirements. Proposals must strictly comply with the format and content stated in this RFP.

Proposal Evaluation

Proposals should demonstrate the technical qualification, competence, and capacity of the firm seeking

to undertake the services required in this RFP. Evaluators will determine the winning proposal based on the qualifications of the proposer, the approach, and methodology of accomplishing the work, and the cost. Proposals that do not include the minimum requested information, including affirmation of mandatory criteria, will automatically be rejected as not being responsive.

Richland County First Steps reserves the right to request additional information or clarifications from the proposed firms during the evaluation process where it serves Richland County First Steps best interest. Technical corrections or omissions may be allowed at the discretion of Richland County First Steps.

Richland County First Steps reserves the right to reject any proposals submitted.

Richland County First Steps reserves the right to negotiate with the highest-rated proposer on final contract terms.

The following factors will be considered during our evaluation.

Technical Factors

1. Responsiveness of the proposal in clearly stating the successor's understanding of the work to be performed. Evaluators will consider:
 - Appropriateness and adequacy of proposed procedures.
 - Necessity of procedures.
 - Appropriateness of assigned staff levels.
2. Technical experience.
3. Qualifications of staff.
4. Prior experience.

Cost Factor

Proposed costs are a consideration but are not the dominant factor. Cost will be given more importance when all other evaluation criteria are relatively equal. Proposals believed to be unreasonably low will be rejected.

Contractual Arrangements

Billings and Payment

Richland County First Steps will issue a contract to the successful proposer stating the maximum fee to be paid for each engagement. Richland County First Steps is the responsible party and will pay engagement fees. Services that may increase the fee above the maximum must have prior written approval of RCFS.

Rights to Cancel

The proposal must include a statement that the RCFS or the successful proposer can cancel this agreement without cause by written notice. The notice must specify the part of the contract (or all) terminated and when the termination becomes effective with reasonable notice of termination.