



**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)**

**BRAND AUDIT AND MARKET RESEARCH**

**For**

**WAUBONSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**RFP Number:** 12-25-001

**RFP Issued:** Tuesday, December 16, 2025

**Proposals Due:** Friday, January 9, 2026 at 1:00 p.m. Central

**Submit Responses Electronically To:** Waubonsee Community College

***The college will only accept electronically submitted responses. Proposal to be submitted in Adobe PDF format and emailed to [Purchasing@Waubonsee.edu](mailto:Purchasing@Waubonsee.edu). Title the email as follows: Brand Audit and Market Research RFP – INSERT YOUR COMPANY NAME.***

**Questions/Clarifications:** **Direct all questions to the Purchasing Manager.**  
The college respectfully requests that respondents refrain from speaking with anyone at the college regarding this RFP. Direct questions via email to:

**Theresa Larson, Purchasing Manager**  
[tlarson@waubonsee.edu](mailto:tlarson@waubonsee.edu)

*Firms intending to submit a response to this RFP should read this document in its entirety when planning to submit a proposal.*

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) ..... 2**

**INTRODUCTION ..... 3**

**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS ..... 3**

**BACKGROUND..... 3**

**PROJECT PURPOSE..... 5**

**SCOPE OF WORK ..... 5**

**DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINE ..... 6**

**CONSULTANT QUALIFICATIONS ..... 7**

**GENERAL INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS ..... 7**

**PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS AND FORMAT ..... 10**

**AUTHORIZATION FORM ..... 12**

**CERTIFICATIONS ..... 13**

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE AND NON-COLLUSION FORM ..... 14**

**BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM - MINORITIES, FEMALES, PERSONS WITH DISABILITY  
PARTICIPATION AND UTILIZATION PLAN ..... 15**

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Proposals for **Brand Audit and Market Research RFP, Number 12-25-001**, will be received by Waubonsee Community College District 516, at the office of the Purchasing Manager, Dickson Center, Room 228, 4S783 State Route 47, Sugar Grove, IL 60554 until **1:00 p.m. Central, Friday, January 9, 2026**. Proposals will be submitted electronically to Purchasing@Waubonsee.edu.

Any response received after the date and time stated above will be returned unopened. Waubonsee Community College (Waubonsee) shall not be responsible for responses that are not received at the specific office location indicated above by the stated deadline. Failure by a delivery service company or person to meet the deadline will not excuse the Respondent from the deadline requirement. It is solely the Respondent's responsibility to ensure that adequate time is allowed for timely, accurate delivery and that the Proposal is received as required.

No response shall be withdrawn for a period of ninety (90) days after the advertised close date without the consent of the college.

Respondents may download the RFP in addition to any future addenda from the college's Purchasing website at the following URL address: <https://www.waubonsee.edu/local-businesses-employers-and-vendors/bidrfprfi-opportunities>.

Under no circumstances shall failure to obtain clarifications and/or addenda relieve a Respondent from being bound by any additional terms and conditions in the clarifications and/or addenda, or from considering additional information contained therein in preparing a Proposal. Furthermore, failure to obtain any clarification and/or addendum shall not be valid grounds for a protest against award(s) made under this RFP.

The information provided within is intended to assist firms to respond completely to this Request for Proposal. It is not intended to limit a proposal's content or to exclude any relevant or essential data. Firms are encouraged to include additional information that will substantiate their product quality and service capabilities.

## INTRODUCTION

Waubonsee Community College, an institution of higher learning located in Sugar Grove, Illinois, is accepting proposals from qualified firms to provide consulting services for a Brand Audit and Market Research.

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

EVENT	DATE
Release RFP	December 16, 2025
Last Day to Submit Questions	Monday, January 5, 2026
RFP Submittal Deadline	Friday, January 9, 2026
Evaluation and Interviews	January 12 – January 23, 2026
Board Approval	February 18, 2026

*Note: All dates are subject to revision by the college. Nothing herein binds or shall be construed to bind Waubonsee Community College to enter into any agreement with any party, including any Respondent hereto.*

## BACKGROUND

### College Overview

Founded in 1966, Waubonsee Community College is a comprehensive public institution in Illinois serving approximately 7,600 students across four campuses: Sugar Grove, Aurora Downtown, Aurora Fox Valley, and Plano. The College is committed to accessible, high-quality education and is a critical partner in workforce development, transfer pathways, and lifelong learning in the Fox Valley region.

### Campus Locations

#### Main Campus

Waubonsee Community College Sugar Grove Campus, 45783 State Route 47, Sugar Grove, Illinois 60554

#### Extension Campuses

Waubonsee Community College Plano Campus, 100 Waubonsee Drive, Plano, Illinois 60545

Waubonsee Community College Aurora Downtown Campus, 18 South River St. Aurora, Illinois, 60506

Waubonsee Community College Fox Valley Campus, 2060 Ogden Ave, Aurora, Illinois 60504

### Mission Statement

Waubonsee Community College provides exceptional learning through accessible, equitable, and innovative education. We are committed to enriching the lives of our students, employees, and community by working together to create opportunities to discover new passions, share knowledge, and embrace diversity.

### Vision

Waubonsee Community College opens the door of knowledge, sparks imaginations, and enlightens lives through learning. We welcome the diverse abilities, goals, and experiences of individuals standing

on the threshold of discovery. Our success is defined by the dreams we help shape, the opportunities we help design, and the futures we help create.

## Core Values

### Quality:

We constantly redefine what it means to be “the best,” seeking to improve in every area and exceed the expectations of those we serve.

### Value:

We focus every resource directly on the search for learning, creating tangible benefits in everything we do.

### Innovation:

We are actively engaged on the frontiers of education, continuously improving the learning environment for our students and communities.

### Service:

We view the world from the perspective of those we serve, anticipating needs and striving to exceed expectations while demonstrating a caring, knowledgeable, consistent connection with each individual every time they meet us.

### Accessibility:

We remove barriers to learning formed by time, geography, education, culture, experience or beliefs to provide a full range of quality educational opportunities for all who can benefit.

## Strategic Context: RISE 2030

The RISE 2030 Strategic Plan sets a bold vision for the institution’s next five years, emphasizing:

- **Community Engagement:** Expanding Waubonsee’s role as a hub for workforce, cultural, and lifelong learning opportunities.
- **Academic Innovation:** Elevating teaching, learning, and new program development while leveraging the new Technical Education Center (opening Fall 2025).
- **Student Experience:** Enhancing student belonging, support services, and pathways to success.
- **Employee Experience:** Fostering an inclusive, supportive environment for faculty and staff.

Recent milestones include:

- Opening of the new Technical Education Center (TEC). The TEC, now the largest building on Waubonsee’s Sugar Grove Campus, is equipped with cutting-edge equipment and advanced, industry-standard learning for Automotive Collision and Refinishing Technology, Automotive Service Technology, and Welding Technology. With this expansion, Waubonsee is better able

to meet regional workforce demand in fast-growing fields such as diesel technology, electric vehicles, welding fabrication, and robotic welding.

- 15% enrollment growth in Spring 2025.
- National membership in [Achieving the Dream](#) to strengthen equity-centered student success.
- Recent selection as part of the expanded Unlocking Opportunity network. Developed with the Community College Research Center (CCRC), the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program is engaged in a first-of-its-kind initiative that reflects the next wave of community college student success reforms: a focus on post-completion outcomes. Colleges selected for the network work closely with Aspen, expert coaches, and field experts over multiple years on comprehensive reforms with one overarching goal: substantially increasing the number of community college students entering and completing programs that lead directly to good jobs or to completion of a bachelor's degree.
- Expansion of partnerships with local schools, employers, and community leaders.

To advance these goals, Waubonsee seeks a consulting partner to:

- Conduct a comprehensive **brand audit** and **market/community scan**.
- Provide evidence-based insights into brand perception, awareness, and competitive positioning.
- Recommend strategies to strengthen Waubonsee's value proposition, attract diverse learners, and align communications with institutional priorities.

## PROJECT PURPOSE

**Purpose** - The project aims to evaluate Waubonsee's current brand perception, including levels of awareness, resonance, and preference, while delivering actionable insights to refine Waubonsee's value proposition and brand voice, while also helping guide future strategic and programmatic decisions.

## SCOPE OF WORK

### Brand Audit

- Assess clarity, relevance, and differentiation of Waubonsee's current brand identity, narrative, and visual assets.
- Evaluate alignment between internal (faculty, staff, students) and external (alumni, employers, community) perceptions of the brand.
- Benchmark against peer and aspirant community colleges in Illinois and the Midwest
- Defining the brand voice and updating institutional brand guidelines

### Community Scan / Market Research

- Use a mixed-method approach: surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews.

- Include diverse perspectives: current students, alumni, parents, high school educators, adult learners, employers, and community leaders.
- Assess awareness, preference, and decision-making factors influencing enrollment and partnerships.
- Provide a comparative landscape analysis (including trends in higher education marketing, demographics, and workforce needs).

## Final Report & Recommendations

- Deliver findings and actionable insights to the Executive Leadership team as well as the Marketing and Communications team.
- Deliver comprehensive findings report with data visualization, key insights, and prioritized recommendations.
- Based on data collected via this project and existing institutional data, create realistic, data-driven marketing personas that detail audience’s goals/motivations, decision-making factors, pain points, media preferences, etc.
- Recommend actionable strategies for brand positioning, market differentiation, and messaging refinement.
- Provide an implementation roadmap, including phasing, KPIs, and resource considerations.
- Identify key differentiators between Waubonsee and our competitors

## DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINE

### Phase 1: Discovery and Strategy (January –February 2026)

- Kickoff meeting and project charter.
- Stakeholder mapping and engagement plan.
- Development of brand audit and research framework.

### Phase 2: Research and Analysis (February-March 2026)

- Execution of surveys, focus groups, and interviews.
- Data collection and comparative analysis.

### Phase 3: Synthesis and Reporting (March-April 2026)

- Preliminary findings and leadership briefing.
- Draft brand performance and perception report.

### Phase 4: Recommendations and Presentation (May 2026)

- Final report and strategic roadmap.
- Presentation to Executive Leadership, Marketing & Communications, and key stakeholders.

## Progress Reporting

The consultant will provide:

- Bi-monthly check-in calls with Waubonsee’s project leads
- Monthly written progress updates summarizing key activities, challenges, and next steps

## CONSULTANT QUALIFICATIONS

Proposals should demonstrate:

- **Higher Education Experience:** Track record of brand and market research in higher education (community college experience preferred).
- **Stakeholder Engagement Expertise:** Inclusive methods for engaging diverse audiences.
- **Regional Knowledge:** Familiarity with Illinois/Midwest educational and workforce landscapes.
- **Methodological Rigor:** Ability to design and implement robust, evidence-based research.
- **Strategic Alignment:** Capacity to connect findings with Waubonsee's mission and RISE 2030 plan.
- **Equity Commitment:** Approaches that advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

## GENERAL INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS

- 1.1 **Security** - The college may require the selected vendor to pass security requirements prior to award if the need applies. Selected Vendor will be required to provide the following documents as part of the procurement process and final review prior to award. You will be asked to provide required applicable PCI-DSS and or PA-DSS validation information, and relevant Cloud Vendor(s) SOC I and or SOC II compliance information.
- 1.2 **Independent Contractor** - The Vendor shall be an independent Vendor and in providing services hereunder shall not be deemed to be the agent of the college. All persons performing work hereunder for the Vendor shall be employees of the Vendor, and not the college. Installation, operations, maintenance, removal, and replacement of vending machines provided hereunder shall be the sole responsibility of the Vendor and shall be performed by the Vendor under the exclusive direction, supervision, and control of the Vendor. The Vendor shall be fully responsible to the College for the acts and omissions of persons directly and/or indirectly employed by the Vendor.
- 1.3 **Materials** - The Vendor is responsible for all materials, storage, and installation. The college will not be liable for any damage, pilferage, act of violence, fire or theft of the supplies and equipment. The college shall be notified in writing of any damage or thefts connected with the vending program except for minor problems. The college will assist in identifying offender(s) if damage, violence, or thefts occur.
- 1.4 **Insurance** - The Respondent shall not commence work under this contract until all insurance required herein is obtained and approved by the college. Nor shall the Respondent allow any subcontractor to commence work until all similar insurance required of the subcontractor has been so obtained. The Respondent shall furnish Waubonsee with a Certificate of Insurance, with Waubonsee Community College, its trustees, officers, agents, employees, and any other parties designated by Waubonsee named as an additional insured for Commercial General and Automobile Liability. Insurance companies must have a Best Rating of at least A VI and otherwise be acceptable to the college. Worker's compensation insurance shall include a waiver of subrogation in favor of Waubonsee Community College. The college will also be shown as the certificate holder.
- 1.5 **RFP is not binding on Waubonsee** - This RFP is not a binding offer by WCC and acceptance of the

terms of this RFP by any Respondent shall not create a binding contract with WCC. WCC reserves the right to negotiate the terms and conditions of any agreement that may result from this Request for Proposal process, including the terms set forth herein and in any proposal. Any future contract that may be awarded must comply with college procurement requirements.

- 1.6 **Proposals Shall Constitute an Offer.** A proposal submitted in response to this RFP shall constitute an offer of the Respondent. The signature of a person who is legally authorized to execute contractual obligations on behalf of the Respondent shall indicate acknowledgment of this condition. A submission in response to this RFP acknowledges acceptance by the Respondent of all terms and conditions as set forth herein, unless the response specifically indicates otherwise. A Respondent shall identify clearly and thoroughly any variations between its proposal and the RFP in the cover letter. Failure to do so shall be deemed a waiver of any rights to subsequently modify the terms of any contract that may result from this RFP, except as outlined or specified in the RFP.
- 1.7 Proposals may be withdrawn by written request from Respondent prior to the date and time established for the opening.
- 1.8 All proposals must be signed by a duly authorized representative of the firm; all unsigned proposals will be rejected.
- 1.9 All proposal prices must be good for a period of ninety (90) days from the date of opening.
- 1.10 **Blackout Period** - Respondents may not contact any college employee directly to discuss this RFP. All correspondence or questions concerning the RFP should be addressed by email to **Theresa Larson, Purchasing Manager, [purchasing@waubonsee.edu](mailto:purchasing@waubonsee.edu)**. All questions will be responded to by addendum and the addendum will be posted to the college's Bid / RFP webpage.
- 1.11 **Award** - The college reserves the right to reject or accept any or all responses, to extend the due date, to waive technicalities in the documents or repost prior to award of the Contract. Late proposals will be rejected.
- 1.12 The college will conduct contract negotiations with the firm or firms whose proposal is deemed most responsive to the college's needs. Until the college acts formally to approve a contract, and until such contract is signed by both parties, the college is legally obligated in no respect. By this Request for Proposal, the college has not committed itself to undertake the work set forth.
- 1.13 The price proposed is the full purchase price, including all materials and labor, service costs, delivery to destination, rigging expenses, balancing provisions no matter what the cause for imbalance, and includes all transportation and handling charges, premiums on bonds, patent royalties and all other overhead charges of every kind and nature. Unless otherwise specified, prices shall remain firm for the contract period. List all costs individually on a separate sheet.
- 1.14 There is no express or implied obligation for the college to reimburse firms for any expenses incurred in preparing proposals in response to this request.
- 1.15 The college may issue a purchase order upon award by the college's Board of Trustees and/or after a fully negotiated and executed contract is signed.
- 1.16 Invoices are paid monthly for work completed or as negotiated in the executed contract.
- 1.17 The college's payment terms are net 30 days.
- 1.18 **Business Enterprise Program (BEP): Business Enterprise Program Participation and Utilization Plan .**

- 1.18.1 The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) Act for Minorities, Females and Persons with Disabilities (30 ILCS 575) establishes a goal for community colleges to contract with businesses that have been certified as owned and controlled by persons who are minorities, female, or persons with disabilities. Only certifications through the State of Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion (CEI) will be recognized.
- 1.18.2 Contract goal to be achieved by Vendor: **This solicitation includes a specific BEP participation goal of 30% based on the availability of BEP certified vendors to perform or provide the anticipated services and/or supplies required by this solicitation.**
- 1.18.3 **The BEP participation goal is applicable to all bids or offers.** In addition to the other award criteria established for this solicitation, the Community College will award this contract to a Vendor that meets the goal or makes reasonably good faith efforts to meet the goal. ***Failure to include the Business Enterprise Program Participation and Utilization Forms provided in this RFP will disqualify the Vendor's proposal from consideration.***
- 1.18.4 **Good Faith Effort Procedures:** Vendor must submit a Utilization Plan and Letters of Intent that meet or exceed the published goal. If Vendor cannot meet the stated goal, Vendor must document and explain within the Utilization Plan the good faith efforts it undertook to meet the goal. Utilization Plans are due at the time of bid or offer submission.
- 1.18.5 If the Vendor is BEP certified, the entire goal is met and no subcontracting with a BEP certified vendor is required. However, Vendor must submit a Utilization Plan indicating that the goal will be met by self-performance.
- 1.18.6 For more information on the State of Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion (CEI) BEP Program, please visit: <https://cei.illinois.gov/business-enterprise-program.html>

## 1.19 Evaluation Process

- 1.19.1 The college reserves the right to Accept or reject any or all proposals.
- 1.19.2 The college will select the proposal most responsive to the college's needs and award the contract to the firm who will best serve the interests of the college at the college's sole discretion.
- 1.19.3 Require a firm to submit any evidence of its qualifications as the college may deem necessary. Proposals will be evaluated on the following weighted criteria:
- Relevant Higher Education Experience – 30%
  - Methodology & Research Design – 30%
  - Alignment with RISE 2030 Goals – 20%
  - Cost & Value – 15%
  - Cultural Fit / Commitment to Equity – 5%

## 1.20 Confidentiality & Proposal Ownership

- 1.20.1 All proposals to the RFP will become the property of Waubonsee Community College and will not be returned.
- 1.20.2 Public Records Act: all materials received or created by the college are considered public records and subject to disclosure to third parties in accordance with the Freedom of

Information Act (FOIA). These records include but are not limited to bid or proposal submittals, agreement documents, contract work product, or other information submitted by a vendor to the college.

1.20.3 If the Respondent requests that the college withhold their trade secrets, commercial information, or financial information from disclosure to a third party in response to a FOIA request, the Respondent must include in its submittal:

- A written notification specifically outlining and identifying such information.
- A statement that disclosure of such information will cause competitive harm to the Respondent.

1.20.4 Any content not so marked by the Respondent at the time of submittal will be presumed to be open to public inspection.

## PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS AND FORMAT

Proposals should include:

- Company overview, team bios, and roles.
  - Company name with address and telephone. Name of the principal(s) of the firm.
  - Name and contact information of person authorized to discuss this Request for Proposal submittal.
  - All locations if more than one location. Identify the office which will fulfill this agreement.
  - Number of employees of the firm.
  - Date founded and number of years in business under current name and any past corporate names or affiliations.
  - Has the firm experienced a significant change in organizational structure, ownership, or management during the past three years and, if so, please describe.
  - Statement of whether there are any ongoing, pending, or potential legal actions against the firm.
  - Key management and personnel that would be assigned to this account. Indicate which principals and associates from your firm would be involved in providing services to the college. Provide appropriate background information for each such person and identify his or her responsibilities.
- Relevant case studies (preferably in higher education/community colleges).
- Detailed research methodology and tools (survey instruments, focus group protocols).
- Proposed timeline with milestones.
- Itemized budget with cost justification.
- At least three client references.
- Disclosure of any potential conflicts of interest.
- Waubonsee's Forms for Submission
  - Submit Authorization form.

- Submit Certification form.
- Submit Conflict of Interest and Non-collusion form.
- Submit State of Illinois Business Enterprise Participation and Utilization form.

**Format:** Single PDF, maximum 25 pages (excluding appendices), 12-point font, 1-inch margins.



## CERTIFICATIONS

*All Respondents are required to complete and sign this form.* Completed form must be returned with RFP no later than the advertised deadline. Failure to return this completed form may result in disqualification.

Respondents are cautioned to carefully read these certifications prior to signing below. Signing this page shall constitute a warranty by the undersigned that all statements, certifications and information set forth within these certifications are true, complete and correct as of the date signed. The undersigned is notified that if the college learns that any of the following certifications were falsely made, any contract entered with the undersigned shall be subject to termination.

1. Prevailing Wage Act. To the extent required by law, Contractor shall not pay less than the prevailing wage as established pursuant to an Act Regulating the Wages of Laborers, Mechanics, and Other Workman employed under Contract for Public Workers 820 ILCS 130/1 et seq. Our company certifies that it is eligible for bidding on public contracts and has complied with section 11a of the Prevailing Wage Act, 820 ILCS 130.01-12.
2. Human Rights Act. To the extent required by law, Contractor shall abide by the Illinois Human Rights Act, 775 ILCS 10/0.01 et seq.
3. Drug Free Workplace. To the extent required by law, Contractor shall abide with the requirements of the Drug Free Workplace Act 30 ILCS 580.1 et seq.
4. Sexual Harassment Policy. Contractor represents by the signing of this agreement that it has a written sexual harassment policy that is in accordance with 775 ILCS 5/2-105 (A) (4).
5. Non-debarment. By executing this agreement Contractor certifies that it has not been debarred from public contracts in the State of Illinois for violating either 33E-3 or 33E-4 of the Public Contracts Act, 720 ILCS 5/33E-1 et seq.
6. Fair Employment Practice: Company follows all State and Federal laws regarding Fair Employment Practice as well as all rules and regulations.
7. Our company has an Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Program which complies with Executive Order 11246, the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
8. Our company certifies that it is eligible for bidding on public contracts and is not in violation of either paragraph 33E-3 or 33-E-4 of Public Act 86-150, 720ICLS 5 with regards to bid rigging/bid rotating.
9. When required by law, the bidder and all bidder's subcontractors must participate in applicable apprenticeship and training programs approved by and registered with the United States Department of Labor's Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training as required by Illinois Public Act 093-0642.

*Authorized Signatory:* \_\_\_\_\_ *Date:* \_\_\_\_\_

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE AND NON-COLLUSION FORM

*All Respondents are required to complete and sign this form.* Completed form must be returned with Proposal no later than the advertised deadline Failure to return this completed form may result in disqualification.

### Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Waubonsee Community College is requiring that all relationships with the college, its administrators, trustees, committee member, or any other employee of the college be disclosed in writing as a part of any proposal submitted. Contact regarding this Proposal with any employee of Waubonsee Community College during the pre-award period, except as noted in the solicitation, is strictly forbidden, and is considered sufficient grounds for dismissal from the RFP process.

Define the relationship with any Waubonsee Community College administrator, trustee, committee members, or their immediate family member, with which your company or any of its owners, officers, trustees, employees do business with, or for which there is an opportunity to influence a related college decision.

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Respondent certifies that there is no known conflict of interest with any WCC administrator, trustee, committee member or employee of the college.

### Non-Collusion Statement

The undersigned affirms that he/she is duly authorized to execute this contract and that this company, corporation, firm, partnership or individual has not prepared this Proposal in collusion with any other Company, and that the contents of this Proposal as to prices, terms or conditions of said RFP have not been communicated by the undersigned, nor by any employee or agent to any other person engaged in this type of business prior to the official opening of this Proposal.

The undersigned further affirms that this Proposal was prepared independently for this project and that it contains no fees or amounts other than for legitimate execution of this work as specified and that it includes no understandings or agreements in restraint of trade.

Firm Name: \_\_\_\_\_

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Authorized Signatory)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

## BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM - MINORITIES, FEMALES, PERSONS WITH DISABILITY PARTICIPATION AND UTILIZATION PLAN

The Business Enterprise Program Act for Minorities, Females and Persons with Disabilities (BEP) establishes a goal for contracting with businesses that have been certified as owned and controlled by persons who are minorities (MBE), female (FBE, also referred to as WBE), or persons with disabilities (DBE) (collectively, BEP certified vendor(s)). 30 ILCS 575.

**Contract Goal to be Achieved by Vendor:** This solicitation includes a specific **BEP** participation goal of 30% of the total dollar amount awarded to MBEs and FBEs, based on the availability of BEP certified vendors to perform or provide the anticipated services and/or supplies required by this solicitation. At least 50% of that total dollar amount should be awarded to WBEs.

**The BEP participation goal is applicable to all bids or offers.** In addition to the other award criteria established for this solicitation, Waubonsee Community College (College) will award this contract to a Vendor that meets the goal or demonstrates good faith efforts to meet the goal. This goal is also applicable to change orders and allowances within the scope of work provided by the BEP certified vendor. If Vendor is a BEP certified vendor, the entire goal is met and no subcontracting with a BEP certified vendor is required; however, **Vendor must submit a Utilization Plan indicating that the goal will be met by self-performance.**

Following are guidelines for Vendor's completion of the Utilization Plan. **Please read the guidelines carefully.** A format for the Utilization Plan is included in this section. Vendor should include any additional information that will add clarity to Vendor's proposed utilization of certified BEP vendors to meet the targeted goal. The Utilization Plan must demonstrate that Vendor has either: (1) met the entire contract goal; or (2) made good faith efforts towards meeting the entire goal. Any submission of good faith efforts by Vendor shall be considered as a request for a full or partial waiver. At the time of bid or offer, Vendor, or Vendor's proposed Subcontractor, must be certified with CMS as a BEP certified vendor.

**Failure to complete a Utilization Plan or provide good faith effort documentation shall render the bid or offer non-responsive or not responsible, and subject to rejection and/or disqualification in the College's sole discretion.**

1. If applicable where there is more than one prime vendor, the Utilization Plan should include an executed Joint Venture Agreement specifying the terms and conditions of the relationship between the parties and their relationship and responsibilities to the contract. The Joint Venture Agreement must clearly evidence that the BEP certified vendor will be responsible for a clearly defined portion of the work and that its responsibilities, risks, profits and contributions of capital, and personnel are proportionate to its ownership percentage. It must include specific details related to the parties' contributions of capital, personnel, and equipment and share of the costs of insurance and other items; the scopes to be performed by the BEP certified vendor under its supervision; and the commitment of management, supervisory personnel, and operative personnel employed by the BEP certified vendor to be dedicated to the performance of the contract. Established Joint Venture Agreements will only be credited toward BEP goal achievements for specific work performed by the BEP certified vendor. Each party to the Joint Venture Agreement must execute the bid or offer prior to submission of the bid or offer to the College.

2. An agreement between a vendor and a BEP certified vendor in which a BEP certified vendor promises not to provide subcontracting or pricing quotations to other vendors is prohibited. The College may request additional information to demonstrate compliance. Vendor agrees to cooperate promptly with the College in submitting to interviews, allowing entry to place of business, providing further documentation, and to soliciting the cooperation of a proposed BEP certified vendor. Failure to cooperate by Vendor and BEP certified vendor may render the bidder or offeror non-responsive or not responsible. **The contract will not be finally awarded to Vendor unless Vendor's BEP Utilization Plan is approved by the College.**
  
3. **BEP Certified Vendor Locator References:** Vendors may consult CMS' BEP Vendor Directory at [www.sell2.illinois.gov/cms/business](http://www.sell2.illinois.gov/cms/business), as well as the directories of other certifying agencies, but firms **must be certified with CMS as BEP certified vendors at the time of bid or offer.**
  
4. **Vendor Assurance:** Vendor shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sexual orientation or sex in the performance of this contract. Failure by Vendor to carry out these requirements is a material breach of this contract, which may result in the termination of this contract or such other remedy, as the College deems appropriate. This assurance must be included in each subcontract that Vendor signs with a subcontractor or supplier.
  
5. **Calculating BEP Certified Vendor Participation:** The Utilization Plan documents work anticipated to be performed, or goods/equipment provided by all BEP certified vendors and paid for upon satisfactory completion/delivery. Only the value of payments made for the work actually performed by BEP certified vendors is counted toward the contract goal. Applicable guidelines for counting payments attributable to contract goals are summarized below:
  - 5.1. The value of the work performed, or goods/equipment provided by the BEP certified vendor shall be counted towards the goal. The entire amount of that portion of the contract that is performed by the BEP certified vendor, including supplies purchased or equipment leased by the BEP certified vendor shall be counted, except supplies purchased and equipment rented from the Prime Vendor submitting this bid or offer.
  
  - 5.2. A vendor shall count the portion of the total dollar value of the BEP contract equal to the distinct, clearly defined portion of the work of the contract that the BEP certified vendor performs toward the goal. A vendor shall also count the dollar value of work subcontracted to other BEP certified vendor. Work performed by the non- BEP certified party shall not be counted toward the goal. Work that a BEP certified vendor subcontracts to a non-BEP certified vendor will not count towards the goal.
  
  - 5.3. A Vendor shall count toward the goal 100% of its expenditures for materials and supplies required under the contract and obtained from a BEP certified vendor manufacturer, regular dealer, or supplier. A Vendor shall count toward the goal the following expenditures to BEP certified vendors that are not manufacturers, regular dealers, or suppliers:
    - 5.3.1. The fees or commissions charged for providing a bona fide service, such as professional, technical, consultant or managerial services and assistance in the procurement of essential personnel, facilities, equipment, materials or supplies required for performance of the contract, provided that the fee or commission is determined by the College to be reasonable and not excessive as compared with fees customarily allowed for similar services.

- 5.3.2. The fees charged for delivery of materials and supplies required by the contract (but not the cost of the materials and supplies themselves) when the hauler, trucker, or delivery service is not also the manufacturer or a supplier of the materials and supplies being procured, provided that the fee is determined by the College to be reasonable and not excessive as compared with fees customarily allowed for similar services. The BEP certified vendor's trucking firm must be responsible for the management and supervision of the entire trucking operation for which it is responsible on the contract and must itself own and operate at least one fully licensed, insured and operational truck used on the contract.
- 5.3.3. The fees or commissions charged for providing any bonds or insurance specifically required for the performance of the contract, provided that the fee or commission is determined by the College to be reasonable and not excessive as compared with fees customarily allowed for similar services.
- 5.4. BEP certified vendors who are performing on contract as second tier subcontractors may be counted in meeting the established BEP goal for this contract as long as the Prime Vendor can provide documentation indicating the utilization of these vendors.
- 5.5. A Vendor shall count towards the goal only expenditures to firms that perform a commercially useful function in the work of the contract.
  - 5.5.1. A firm is considered to perform a commercially useful function when it is responsible for execution of a distinct element of the work of a contract and carries out its responsibilities by actually performing, managing, and supervising the work involved. The BEP certified vendor must also be responsible, with respect to materials or supplies used on the contract, for negotiating price, determining quality and quantity, ordering the materials or supplies, and installing the materials (where applicable) and paying for the material or supplies. To determine whether a firm is performing a commercially useful function, the College shall evaluate the amount of work subcontracted, whether the amount the firm is to be paid under the contract is commensurate with the work it is actually performing and the credit claimed for its performance of the work, industry practices, and other relevant factors.
  - 5.5.2. A BEP certified vendor does not perform a commercially useful function if its role is limited to that of an extra participant in a transaction or contract through which funds are passed through in order to obtain BEP certified vendor participation. In determining whether a BEP certified vendor is such an extra participant, the College shall examine similar transactions, particularly those in which BEP certified vendors do not participate, and industry practices.
- 5.6. A Vendor shall not count towards the goal expenditures that are not direct, necessary, and related to the work of the contract. Only the number of services or goods that are directly attributable to the performance of the contract shall be counted. Ineligible expenditures include general office overhead or other Vendor support activities.
- 6. **Good Faith Effort Procedures:** Vendor must submit a Utilization Plans, subcontract documents, and/or Letters of Intent that meet or exceed the published goal. If Vendor cannot meet the stated

goal, Vendor must document and explain within the Utilization Plan the good faith efforts it undertook to meet the goal. Utilization Plans are due at the time of and must be enclosed and sealed with the bid or offer submission. Copies of subcontract documents and/or Letters of Intent shall be de upon request.

7. **Contract Compliance:** Compliance with this section is an essential part of the contract. The following administrative procedures and remedies govern Vendor's compliance with the contractual obligations established by the Utilization Plan. **After approval of the Plan and award of the contract, the Utilization Plan becomes part of the contract.** If Vendor did not succeed in obtaining BEP certified vendor participation to achieve the goal and the Utilization Plan was approved and contract awarded based upon a determination of good faith, the total dollar value of BEP certified vendor work calculated in the approved Utilization Plan as a percentage of the awarded contract value shall become the contract goal.
  - 7.1. The Utilization Plan may not be amended after contract execution without the College's prior written approval.
  - 7.2. **Vendor may not make changes to its contractual BEP certified vendor commitments or substitute BEP certified vendors without the prior written approval of the College.** Unauthorized changes or substitutions, including performing the work designated for a BEP certified vendor with Vendor's own forces, shall be a violation of the utilization plan and a breach of the contract, and shall be caused to terminate the contract, and/or seek other contract remedies or sanctions.
  - 7.3. If it becomes necessary to substitute a BEP certified vendor or otherwise change the Utilization Plan, Vendor must notify the College in writing of the request to substitute a BEP certified vendor or otherwise change the Utilization Plan. The request must state specific reasons for the substitution or change. The College will approve or deny a request for substitution or other change in the Utilization Plan within five business days of receipt of the request.
  - 7.4. Where Vendor has established the basis for the substitution to the College's satisfaction, it must make good faith efforts to meet the contract goal by substituting a BEP certified vendor. Documentation of a replacement BEP certified vendor, or of good faith efforts to replace the BEP certified vendor, must meet the requirements of the initial Utilization Plan. If the goal cannot be reached and good faith efforts have been made, Vendor may substitute with a non- BEP certified vendor or Vendor may perform the work.
  - 7.5. If a Vendor plans to hire a subcontractor for any scope of work that was not previously disclosed in the Utilization Plan, Vendor must obtain the approval of the College to modify the Utilization Plan and must make good faith efforts to ensure that BEP certified vendors have a fair opportunity to submit a bid or offer on the new scope of work.
  - 7.6. A new BEP certified vendor agreement must be executed and submitted to the College within five business days of Vendor's receipt of the College's approval for the substitution or other change.
  - 7.7. Vendor shall maintain a record of all relevant data with respect to the utilization of BEP

certified vendors, including but without limitation, payroll records, invoices, canceled checks and books of account for a period of at least three years after the completion of the contract. Full access to these records shall be granted by Vendor upon 48 hours written demand by the College to any duly authorized representative thereof, or to any municipal, state or federal authorities. The College shall have the right to obtain from Vendor any additional data reasonably related or necessary to verify any representations by Vendor. After the performance of the final item of work or delivery of material by the BEP certified vendor and final payment to the BEP certified vendor by Vendor, but not later than 30 calendar days after such payment, Vendor shall submit a statement confirming the final payment and the total payments made to the BEP certified vendor under the contract.

- 7.8.** The College will periodically review Vendor's compliance with these provisions and the terms of its contract. Without limitation, Vendor's failure to comply with these provisions or its contractual commitments as contained in the Utilization Plan, failure to cooperate in providing information regarding its compliance with these provisions or its Utilization Plan, or provision of false or misleading information or statements concerning compliance, certification status or eligibility of the BEP certified vendor, good faith efforts or any other material fact or representation shall constitute a material breach of this contract and entitle the College to declare a default, terminate the contract, or exercise those remedies provided for in the contract or at law or in equity.
- 7.9.** The College reserves the right to withhold payment to Vendor to enforce these provisions and Vendor's contractual commitments. Final payment shall not be made pursuant to the contract until Vendor submits sufficient documentation demonstrating compliance with its Utilization Plan.

## UTILIZATION PLAN PART 1: COMMITMENT AND SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_ (Vendor) submits the following Utilization Plan as part of our bid or offer in accordance with the requirements of the BEP Program Status and Participation section of the solicitation for Waubonsee Community College's \_\_\_\_\_ (Project Name).

We understand that all subcontractors must be certified with the CMS BEP Program at the time of submission of all bids and offers. **We understand that compliance with this section is an essential part of this contract and that the Utilization Plan will become a part of the contract, if awarded.**

Vendor submits the following statement:

- Vendor is a BEP certified firm and plans to fully meet the goal through self-performance.
- Vendor has identified BEP certified subcontractor(s) to fully meet the established goal and submits the attached executed Letter(s) of Intent; or
- Vendor has made good faith efforts towards meeting the entire goal, or a portion of the goal, and hereby requests a waiver (complete Demonstration of Good Faith Efforts checklist below).

Vendor's person responsible for compliance with this BEP goal (*please print clearly*):

Name:

Title:

Telephone:

Email:

*Note: Letters of Intent template may be found on the State of Illinois website, <https://www2.illinois.gov/cpo/general/Documents/Letter%20of%20Intent%20Template%20v.14.1.pdf#search=letter%20of%20intent>*

TO BE RETURNED WITH PROPOSAL

## UTILIZATION PLAN PART II: PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT

Instructions: The Prime Vendor is required to submit a separate, signed and **fully completed Participation Agreement** from each Business Enterprise Program (BEP) minority-owned, woman-owned or disadvantaged certified vendor. **Once signed and submitted with the bid/offer, this Participation Agreement, along with the other Parts of this Utilization Plan, will become a mandated part of the contract, if awarded.** The Prime Vendor shall not prohibit or otherwise limit the BEP/VSB certified vendor(s) from providing subcontractor quotes to other potential bidders/offerors.

**Project Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Project/Solicitation Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Prime Vendor:** \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State and Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Vendor's Contact responsible for compliance with this Participation Agreement: \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of BEP Certified Vendor:** \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Certified Vendor: \_\_\_\_\_  MBE \_\_\_\_\_  WBE \_\_\_\_\_  DBE

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State and Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

BEP Vendor's Contact responsible for compliance with this Participation Agreement:  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Type of Agreement:** \_\_\_\_\_  Services \_\_\_\_\_  Supplies \_\_\_\_\_  Both Services and Supplies

(a) Proposed % of Contract to be performed by the BEP/VSB Certified Vendor \_\_\_\_\_%

NOTE: The Prime Vendor must indicate the percentage of the estimated contract award that will be subcontracted to the certified BEP/VSB Vendor.

(b) Anticipated start date of the Certified BEP Vendor: \_\_\_\_\_.

(c) This participation agreement shall have a term of \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_, with a total period of \_\_\_\_\_ years and \_\_\_\_\_ months, including renewals, change orders or extensions to the underlying contract.

(d) Description of work to be performed or goods/equipment to be provided by the BEP certified vendor. All Participation Agreements shall be subject to college's approval. Any changes involving or affecting the identified BEP certified vendor, scope(s) of work will not be permitted without notification to the college and

BEP Compliance, in writing, and approval of the college. *(If more space is needed to fully describe BEP certified firm's proposed scope of work and/or payment schedule, attach additional sheets.)*

**THE UNDERSIGNED PARTIES FURTHER AGREE** that once signed and submitted with the bid/offer, this Participation Agreement, along with the other Parts of this Utilization Plan, will become a material part of the contract, and the BEP certified vendor will perform the scope of work for the percentage as indicated above. The Undersigned Parties do also certify that they did not affix their signatures to this document until all areas under Description of Service/ Supply and Fee/Cost were completed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Vendor (Company Name and d/b/a):

\_\_\_\_\_  
Certified BEP (Company Name and d/b/a):

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Signature)                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Signature)                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

## DEMONSTRATION OF GOOD FAITH EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE GOAL AND REQUEST FOR WAIVER

If the BEP participation goal was not achieved, Vendor must provide document evidence of good faith efforts to achieve the goal.

Below is a checklist of actions that will be used to evaluate a Vendor's Demonstration of Good Faith Efforts and Request for Waiver. **Please check the actions which you completed.** If any other efforts were made to obtain BEP participation in addition to the items listed below, attach a detailed description of such efforts. The College reserves the right to review and audit the results of the Vendor's efforts as described below.

- Utilize the Sell2Illinois website: [www2.illinois.gov/cms/business](http://www2.illinois.gov/cms/business) to identify BEP certified vendors within the respective commodity/service codes denoted above and at a minimum email all listed vendors and solicit quotes from all vendors who express an interest via follow-up emails or telephone calls.
- Solicit through all reasonable and available means (e.g., attendance at a vendor conference, advertising and/or written notices) the interest of BEP certified vendors that have the capability to perform the work of the contract. Vendor must solicit this interest within sufficient time to allow the BEP certified vendors to respond to the solicitation. Vendor must determine with certainty if the BEP certified vendors are interested by taking appropriate steps to follow up initial solicitations and encourage them to submit a bid or proposal. Vendor must provide interested BEP certified vendors with adequate information about the plans, specifications, and requirements of the contract in a timely manner to assist them in responding promptly to the solicitation.
- Select portions of the work to be performed by BEP certified vendors in order to increase the likelihood that the goal will be achieved. This includes, where appropriate, breaking out contract work items into economically feasible units to facilitate BEP certified vendor participation, even when Vendor might otherwise prefer to perform these work items with its own forces.
- Make a portion of the work available to BEP certified vendors and selecting those portions of the work or material needs consistent with their availability, so as to facilitate BEP certified vendor participation.
- Negotiate in good faith with interested BEP certified vendors. Evidence of such negotiation must include the names, addresses, email addresses, and telephone numbers of BEP certified vendors that were considered; and an explanation as to why an agreement(s) could not be reached.
- Thoroughly investigate the capabilities of BEP certified vendors and not reject them as unqualified without documented reasons. The BEP certified vendor's memberships in specific groups, organizations, or associations and political or social affiliations are not legitimate causes for the rejection or non-solicitation of bids and proposals in Vendor's efforts to meet the goal.
- Make efforts to assist interested BEP certified vendors in obtaining lines of credit or insurance as required by the College.
- Make efforts to assist interested BEP certified vendors in obtaining necessary equipment, supplies, materials, or related assistance or services.

