



## Request for Quote/Proposal (RFQ/RFP)

Commodity/Service Required	Support Ashe County Schools in the design of a district-wide restorative practice integration plan
Type of Procurement:	Subcontract
Type of Contract:	Firm Fixed Price
Term of Contract:	October 1, 2022-September 31, 2024
Contract Funding:	U.S. Department of Justice STOP Grant
This procurement supports:	Ashe County Schools Restorative Practices Implementation and Design
Submit Proposals to:	amanda.coldiron@ashe.k12.nc.us
Date of Issue of RFP:	March 2, 2023
Date Questions from Providers are Due:	March 8, 2023
Date Proposals are Due:	March 13, 2023

### Method of Submittal:

All offers will be received by email to amanda.coldiron@ashe.k12.nc.us

Respond via e-mail with attached document in MS Word/PDF format. The Bidder/Seller agrees to hold the prices firm in its offer for 180 days from the date specified for receipt of offers, unless another time is specified in the addendum of the RFP/RFQ.

Solicitation Number	BJA20221001_16.839-1
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### Attachment to RFP:

1. Attachment A – Scope of Work
2. Attachment B – Instructions to Bidders/Sellers

All bidders/sellers are responsible for carefully review each attachment and follow any instructions that may be relevant to this procurement.

## **Attachment A: Scope of Work**

**Title:** Restorative Justice in Ashe County Schools

**Period of Performance:** October 1, 2022 – September 31, 2025

**Project Overview:**

The overarching goal of this project is to improve the school climate and begin a cultural shift among teachers toward positive student discipline using evidence-based restorative practices (RP). This goal can be broken down into three project aims:

1. Understand how Restorative Practices (RP) can support ongoing Safety Assessment & Response (SAR) protocol.
2. Pilot RP and identify school champions.
3. Implement a whole-school RP program in all schools and develop a sustainability plan.

The RP activities will build upon the current student supports to ultimately create an infrastructure to respond to student needs to promote community and prevent escalation. Ashe County Schools (ACS) will work with a vendor to design a district-wide RP integration plan.

***Grant Attached***

## **Ashe County Schools**

This proposal includes data that shall not be disclosed outside the Government and shall not be duplicated, used, or disclosed—in whole or in part—for any purpose other than to evaluate this proposal. If, however, a contract is awarded to this offeror as a result of—or in connection with—the submission of these data, the Government shall have the right to duplicate, use, or disclose the data to the extent provided in the resulting contract. This restriction does not limit the Government's right to use information contained in these data if obtained from another source without restriction. The data subject to this restriction are contained in the entire proposal.

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*Use or disclosure of data contained on this sheet is subject to the restriction on the title page of this proposal*

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*Use or disclosure of data contained on this sheet is subject to the restriction on the title page of this proposal.*

Ashe County Schools (ACS), in collaboration with a technical assistance, implementation and evaluation partner, proposes a Restorative Justice in Ashe County Schools (RJACS) project in response to the 2022 BJA STOP School Violence Program grant solicitation. We will work with district and school staff, professional organizations, and school resource officers to develop and pilot restorative justice practices in Ashe County Schools. Implementing evidence-based restorative practices will improve school climate, reduce disciplinary infractions, and increase school safety.

## **1. Description of the Issue**

Ashe County is located in the Blue Ridge Mountains in the rural northwest of North Carolina. The school system serves about 3,000 students in three elementary schools, one middle, and two high schools. Students in Ashe County Schools need structured and standardized programming to increase social-emotional and conflict resolution skills. This proposal builds on recent efforts of ACS to address increasing threats to school safety. Challenges with school safety are reflected in the high numbers of office referrals and student suspensions. In the years preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, over 1 in 10 students received an in-school suspension each year on average. From October through May in the 2021-2022 school year there were 372 office referrals for middle and high school students; 17% of secondary school students had at least one office referral. This included 254 in-school suspensions (308 days) and 53 out-of-school suspensions (148 days).

Student and staff surveys identified major concerns related to school violence, school discipline, and school climate. In the fall of 2021 over one third of students in grades 6-12 reported that harassment, intimidation, and bullying by other students were problems at their

school. One quarter of students agreed or strongly agreed that students fight a lot at their school, and 25% disagreed or strongly disagreed that students at their school respect one another.

A district-wide teacher survey in the fall of 2021 showed the need for improved school climate and better conflict resolution practices. One third of teachers did not agree that there was an overall positive feeling in their school. More than one quarter of teachers did not agree with the statement “In this school, we teach students ways to resolve disagreements so that everyone can be satisfied with the outcomes.” About the same proportion of teachers felt that the rules for behavior do not apply equally to all students. This reflects a need for greater structure and standardization in approaches to discipline.

At the same time, almost all teachers surveyed, 90%, agreed or strongly agreed that they like talking with students about ways to understand and control emotions, demonstrating their willingness to engage with students about social and emotional learning (SEL).

Currently, ACS primarily uses the Teen Court provided by the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council to address challenging student behavior. However, Teen Court only accepts referrals for students whose offense rises to the level of crime. Students who go to court tend to have multiple offenses on their records, further restricting limited resources to a small proportion of Ashe County students. During the 2021-2022 school year, only 10 students’ cases were accepted by Teen Court.

ACS received a BJA STOP grant in 2020 to redesign the threat assessment system and evaluate the new Safety Assessment and Response (SAR) protocol. The current proposal will not supplant funds or overlap with the scope of work from that project. The proposed BJA grant activities will align with and support the goals of the ongoing SAR grant by providing teachers and students in the classroom with skills and strategies necessary to reduce the frequency of SAR threat assessments and promote a positive school climate.

Furthermore, Ashe County Schools seeks to prevent the behaviors that lead to serious offenses required for a referral to court. This 3-year grant will provide district leadership a



timely opportunity to provide specialized, intensive training with coaching support.

Consistent trainings and support over time will yield the best outcome for ACS schools.

Restorative Practices (RP) has emerged as an evidence-based approach to improve school climate and reduce out-of-school suspensions. RP evolved from restorative justice, an evidence based practice in the criminal justice system used to repair harm to victims by offenders, but expands upon this to include building healthy relationships and repairing harm instead of relying on punishment and exclusion in schools. In the United States, RP has been implemented in many high schools, with promising results, including declines in out-of-school suspension and some reductions in disproportionality. Studies have shown that RP results in reduced disparities in school discipline rates for African American students.

## **2. Project Design and Implementation**

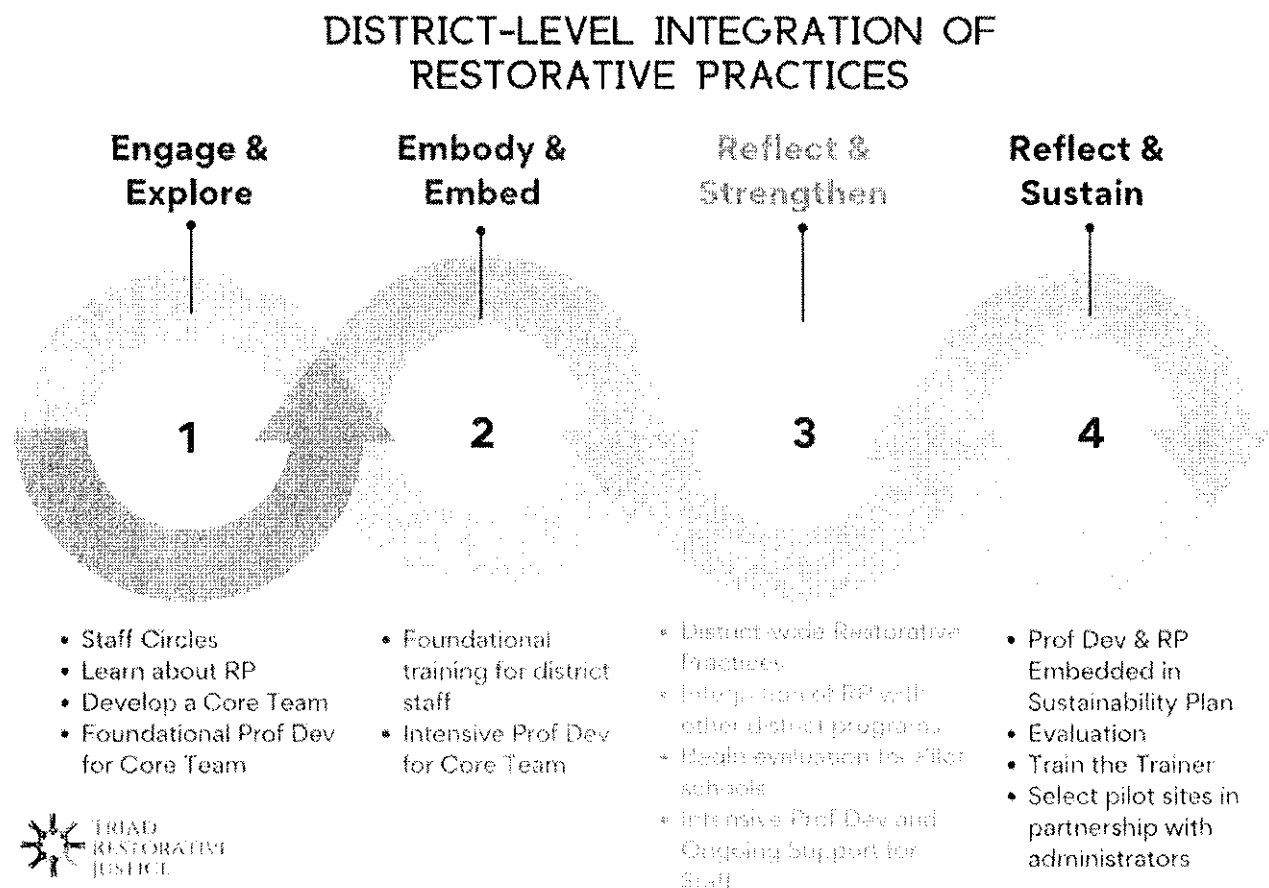
The overarching goal of this project is to improve school climate and begin a cultural shift among teachers toward positive student discipline using evidence-based RP. This goal can be broken down into three project aims:

1. Understand how RP can support ongoing SAR protocol.
2. Pilot RP and identify school champions.
3. Implement a whole-school RP program in all schools and develop a sustainability plan.

The RP activities will build upon the current student supports to ultimately create an infrastructure to respond to student needs to promote community and prevent escalation. ACS will work with Triad Restorative Justice (TRJ), a community-based nonprofit in North Carolina, to design a district-wide RP integration plan. TRJ provides consultation and training through four phases of district-wide integration. *Exhibit 1* shows the evolution of each phase. Year 1 activities

will focus on the first two phases. Year 2 activities will focus on phase 3, and Year 3 activities will focus on phase 4. ACS will also partner with a vendor to provide technical assistance and implementation and outcome evaluations. *Exhibit 2* shows a timeline and activities for each project partner. Details for each aim are provided in the following sections.

**Exhibit 1. Evolution of the Four Phases of District-Wide RP Integration**



**Exhibit 2. Timeline for Each Project Partner**

Project Partner	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
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ACS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select district core team (including lead school resource officer [SRO]).</li> <li>• Select training team members at pilot schools (including school SRO).</li> <li>• Identify staff who want to participate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement RP at pilot schools.</li> <li>• Develop training team and training materials for remaining schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand implementation to elementary schools and early-college high school.</li> </ul>
Project Partner	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
TRJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide foundational training for district.</li> <li>• Provide intensive professional development for district core team.</li> <li>• Train pilot school teams (train-the-trainer).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide foundational training for participating school staff.</li> <li>• Conduct site visits to pilot schools.</li> <li>• Provide professional development as needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct site visits to all schools.</li> <li>• Provide professional development as needed.</li> </ul>
Unnamed Vendor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training and technical assistance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct process evaluation of pilot schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct process and outcome evaluation of all schools.</li> </ul>

## 2.1 Aim 1: Understand how restorative practices can support ongoing Safety Assessment and Response protocol

During Year 1, ACS will work with TRJ to engage and explore RP with district staff and school leadership. ACS will establish a core team of stakeholders to lead integration work. This team will include the Director of Student Services, Jamie Little; the Safety Assessment Coordinator, Cydnee James; the District Mental Health Nurse, Crystal Reeves; and an SRO. One member of the team will take on the role of Restorative Practices Coordinator. This team will provide guidance and input during the initial visioning and development. The core team will receive foundational training and intensive professional development from TRJ. Throughout the year, TRJ will deliver additional trainings and facilitate monthly development meetings with the district design team.

ACS will work with TRJ to align RP integration with trauma-informed work that is currently being done via the SAR protocol. The process may include staff focus groups, consultation with experts in restorative justice, and integration with SROs. They will take special care to discuss and evaluate the changes that have occurred in students' safety needs since the COVID pandemic and lessons learned during the first full in-person school year. The team will work with TRJ develop a whole-school integration plan to use at pilot schools.

ACS will pilot the program first in the middle and high schools with teachers who volunteer to participate. To prepare for the pilot, ACS will develop an incentive plan to recruit and retain teachers in RP. Incentives may include providing financial compensation for training attendance, continuing education credits, and/or other professional acknowledgements.

## **2.2 Aim 2: Pilot restorative practices and identify champions**

Once the district and design teams have been trained and an integration plan has been developed, ACS and TRJ will pilot implementation in the middle school and one high school. In Year 2, ACS will focus on deepening understanding with a cohort of restorative leaders within the district while focusing on classroom implementation in pilot school sites, which will be the middle school and one high school. Although elementary schools are also in need of school climate and student behavior supports, they will be starting a science and literacy program mandated by the state. The pilot year will give elementary school staff time to focus first on the mandated program, and then turn to RP the following year. Implementation at the pilot schools will reach about 40% of the ACS student population.

ACS will identify staff at pilot schools who are interested in being early implementers of RP. TRJ will provide training and facilitate monthly site visits and meetings with those staff at the pilot schools. ACS will also identify school staff who are interested in becoming champions for

RP using innovative incentives (see Aim 1). Champions will likely include pilot staff. TRJ will provide more intensive coaching and professional development to a designated leadership team of teachers and support staff to grow capacity within the district to provide support to schools. ACS plans to expand to the remaining four schools after the pilot program using a train-the-trainer model and lessons learned from the pilot evaluation. TRJ will work with pilot staff and champions to develop circle discussions for non-pilot staff as part of early design, training, and coaching activities. Some of these activities will be ongoing in Year 2 so that champions are prepared to train non-pilot staff in Year 3 and beyond.

TRJ will also facilitate circle discussions with district and school staff to help explore staff readiness of implementation and explore RP principles with more depth. Vendor will conduct a process evaluation during Year 2 and develop lessons learned. Using feedback from TRJ's circles and from vendor's evaluation, the leadership team will develop a whole-school integration plan in conjunction with TRJ.

### **2.3 Goal 3: Implement a whole-school restorative practices program in all schools and develop a sustainability plan**

In Year 3, RP will be implemented in all schools using the whole-school integration plan developed in Year 2. To link support after the 3-year grant period, the Restorative Practices Coordinator, Safety Assessment Coordinator, and the Director of Student Services will maintain communication and contact with the schools. These staff will also provide professional development to support annual support planning and status meetings. The core district team will establish a sustainability plan that summarizes how RP activities ultimately fit with other districtwide student support services and identifies funding sources for continuing RP.

### **3. Capabilities and Competencies**

ACS, though limited by resources, has developed a strong infrastructure for student support. District and school leaders meet regularly to discuss school safety and student needs. This project will be led and directed by Jamie Little, the ACS Director of Student Services. Mrs. Little is an experienced teacher and K–6 curriculum director with a master’s degree in elementary education and is a National Board Certified Teacher in Early Childhood with 20 years of service. Currently, she oversees safety assessment, counseling, and school-based services at ACS.

Crystal Reeves who would be the District Mental Health Nurse, has worked within the nursing field specifically in the mental health field for the past 12 years. She has worked within a variety of organizations such as non-profits for in-patient behavioral health facilities, large teaching hospitals for children and adolescents, and as a care coordinator for mental health for all ages. As for her most recent role, she has been working with Ashe County Schools for almost a year as the Lead Covid Nurse and is currently completing her Master’s degree in Nursing.

Cydnee James has been working in the restorative justice for the past 3 years with at-risk juveniles before joining Ashe County Schools in 2021 as the Safety Assessment and Response Coordinator. She is currently completing her Masters in Child and Adolescent developmental psychology.

### **4. Performance Measures**

ACS will partner with the local evaluator to engage in an evaluation of RP across the 3 years of requested funding. Vendor will work closely with ACS to provide technical assistance and elicit information from staff about school needs and gaps in student social-emotional support and conflict resolution. During Years 2 and 3 ACS will work with vendor to evaluate implementation

of the pilot program and outcome evaluation after program expansion. The evaluation will address the following questions:

- How do RP align with ongoing social-emotional, mental health, and student behavior supports?
- Do staff adhere to the whole-school integration model of RP developed by TRJ and ACS? What adaptations are needed?
- How do RP affect perceptions of positive school climate for school staff and students, and student disciplinary outcomes?

Vendor will also work closely with ACS throughout program implementation to monitor and collect key performance measures. The evaluation will measure outputs and outcomes of the RP that are consistent with BJA's recommended performance measures, such as counts of staff trained in the RP, number of circles conducted in schools, and student and staff perceptions of school climate. *Exhibit 3* shows performance measures and outcomes for each project aim.

**Exhibit 3. Performance Measures and Outcomes, by Project Aim**

Aims	Performance Measures	Outcomes
1. Understand how restorative practices can support ongoing Safety Assessment and Response protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of core district team</li> <li>• Number of district staff who received foundational training (<i>number of sessions and hours, training provider, method of delivery</i>)</li> <li>• Number of district staff who received intensive training (<i>number of sessions and hours, training provider, method of delivery</i>)</li> <li>• Completion of plan to integrate restorative practices with other district programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased district understanding of restorative practices (<i>district survey</i>)</li> </ul>

2. Pilot restorative practices and identify champions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and type of school staff trained to use restorative practices (<i>number of sessions and hours, training provider, method of delivery</i>)</li> <li>• Count and frequency of circles done in pilot schools (<i>ACS tracking</i>)</li> <li>• Percent of staff in pilot schools conducting proactive circles at least twice monthly (<i>ACS tracking</i>)</li> <li>• Number of student conflict circles conducted weekly (<i>ACS tracking</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased district understanding of restorative practices acceptability and adoption in ACS</li> <li>• Increased pilot staff understanding of restorative practices (<i>district survey</i>)</li> </ul>
3. Implement wholeschool restorative practices program in all schools and develop sustainability plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and type of school staff trained to use restorative practices (<i>number of sessions and hours, training provider, method of delivery</i>)</li> <li>• Count and frequency of circles done all schools (<i>ACS tracking</i>)</li> <li>• Percent of staff conducting proactive circles at least twice monthly (<i>ACS tracking</i>)</li> <li>• Number of student conflict circles conducted weekly (<i>ACS tracking</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement in student and staff school climate and safety-related survey items</li> <li>• Reduction in serious behavioral infractions (<i>administrative data</i>)</li> <li>• Reductions in number/rate of student suspensions (<i>administrative data</i>)</li> <li>• Reduced number of Safety Assessments</li> </ul>

## 5. Sustainability Plan

ACS plans to sustain RP following the grant period. The train-the-trainer model and integration with ongoing student support structures in ACS will allow the program to continue following the award. The average rate of school staff retention in ACS over the last 5 years is 93%, therefore school staff are an excellent resource for sustainability of RP programming. Established relationships with community agencies will continue with ACS, to include teams to address safety. In past years, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction has provided funding to local education agencies to support School Safety following appropriation of funds by the state legislature. These funds could be available to continue to support these positions. We will also seek funding from local foundations and private grant opportunities. School safety and positive school climate continues to be a priority for the Ashe County Commissioners Board, which has provided funding to ACS in the past.





## **Attachment B: Instructions to Bidders/Sellers**

1. **Procurement Narrative Description:** The Buyer, Ashe County Schools (ACS), intends to purchase commodities and/or services identified in Attachment A. The Buyer intends to purchase quantities (for commodities) and/or services (based on deliverables identified in a Statement of Work). The term of the Ordering Agreement shall be from Award Date to the Delivery date of the Offeror unless extended by mutual agreement of the parties. The Buyer intends to award a single “approved” supplier based on conformance to the listed specifications, the ability to service the contract, and the selling price. We reserve the right to award to more than one bidder. If an Ordering Agreement is established as a result of this RFQ/RFP, the supplier understands that quantities indicated in specifications (Attachment A) are an estimate only and ACS does not guarantee the purchased quantity of any listed item.
2. **Procuring Activity:** The procurement will be made by Ashe County Schools located at 320 South Street, Jefferson, NC 28640 which has a purchase requirement in support of project funded by the U.S. Department of Justice. ACS shall award the initial quantities and/or services and any option quantities/services (if exercised by ACS) to Seller by a properly executed purchase order and/or contract.
3. **Proposal Requirements:** All Sellers will submit a quote/proposal which contains offers for all items and/or services and options included in this RFQ/RFP. All information presented in the Seller’s quote/proposal will be considered during ACS’s evaluation. Failure to submit the information required in this RFQ/RFP may result in the Seller’s offer being deemed non-responsive. Sellers are responsible for submitting offers, and any modifications, revisions, or withdrawals, so as to reach ACS’s office designated in the RFQ/RFP by the time and date specified in the RFQ/RFP. Any offer, modification, revision, or withdrawal of an offer received at the ACS office designated in the RFQ/RFP after the exact time specified for receipt of offers is “late” and may not be considered at the discretion of the ACS Procurement Officer. The Seller’s proposal shall include the following:
  - (a) The solicitation number:
  - (b) The date and time submitted:
  - (c) The name, address, and telephone number of the seller (bidder) and authorized signature of same:
  - (d) Validity period of Quote:
  - (e) A technical description of the items/services being offered in sufficient detail to evaluate compliance with the requirements in the solicitation. This may include product literature, or other documents, if necessary.
  - (f) Lead Time Availability of the Commodity/Service.
  - (g) Terms of warranty describing what and how the warranties will be serviced.
  - (h) Special pricing instructions: Price and any discount terms or special requirements or terms (special note: pricing must include guaranteed firm fixed prices for items requested).
  - (i) Payment address or instructions (if different from mailing address)

- (j) Acknowledgment of solicitation amendments (if any)
- (k) Past performance information, when included as an evaluation factor, to include recent and relevant contracts for the same or similar items/services and other references (including points of contact with telephone numbers, and other relevant information)
- (l) Special Note: The Seller, by his response to this RFQ/RFP and accompanying signatures, confirms that the terms and conditions associated with this RFQ/RFP document have been agreed to and all of its attachments have been carefully read and understood, and all related questions answered.

**4. Questions Concerning the Procurement:** All questions in regard to this RFQ/RFP can be directed to Amanda Coldiron at [amanda.coldiron@ashe.k12.nc.us](mailto:amanda.coldiron@ashe.k12.nc.us). The cut-off date for questions is March 8, 2023.

**5. Documentation.** The following documents will be required for payment for each item:

- a) A detailed invoice with a complete description of items and/or services and dates items and/or services were provided.
- b) All relevant product/service documentation

**6. Payment Terms:** All invoices received by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month will be processed by the end of the month unless any discrepancies arise.

**7. Availability of Funds:** The payment of the sums specified in future contracts is dependent and contingent upon and subject to the appropriations, allocation, and availability of funds.

**8. Evaluation and Award Process:** The ACS procurement office will award an agreement contract resulting from this solicitation to the responsible seller (bidder) whose offer conforms to the RFQ/RFP and will be most advantageous to ACS, price, and other factors considered. The award will be made to the Seller representing the best value to the project and to ACS. ACS reserves the right to make multiple awards. ACS intends to evaluate offers and award an Agreement without discussions with Sellers. Therefore, Seller's initial offer should contain the Seller's best terms from a price and technical standpoint.

**9. Award Notice:** A written notice of award or acceptance of an offer, mailed or otherwise furnished to the successful supplier within the time acceptance specified in the offer.

#### **Acceptance:**

Seller agrees, as evidenced by the signature below, that the seller's completed and signed solicitation and seller's proposal include all required submissions.

By: *(Seller Company Name)*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Title:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_