

1. I would love to hop on a call today or tomorrow to chat about your needed services and share more about us. Are you available at all this week? **From the date the Request for Proposal is issued until a determination is announced regarding the selection of the contractor, contact regarding this project between potential contractors and individuals employed by the State is restricted to only *written* communication with the staff designated as the point of contact for this Request for Proposal. See Section II, Item C of the RFP document (page 2).**
2. How many early childhood programs are currently participating in SUTQ? How many programs exist in the state? **There are currently 720 programs participating at various stages in Step Up to Quality. There are 2787 licensed child care and preschool programs in Nebraska and 220 school district operated programs.**
3. Does participation by early childhood programs vary by geographic areas of the state? If so, which areas have lower participation? **Yes. Higher concentrations of early childhood education programs are centered in the more densely populated regions of Nebraska. A [map](#) of participating programs can be found on the Step Up to Quality website.**
4. Does participation by early childhood programs vary by the type of program? If so, which types of programs have lower participation? **Step Up to Quality is voluntary for most child care and early childhood education programs. Programs who receive more than \$250,000 annually in child care subsidy dollars are required to participate.**
5. Are there certain geographic areas of the state where reaching parents is a higher priority than in others? **No, we anticipate the successful candidate will have a statewide focus regarding parent outreach and engagement.**
6. How are you currently measuring campaign effectiveness? **Currently, we receive monthly communications and marketing reports evaluating the effectiveness of all campaigns.**
7. What are the current engagement stats for social media platforms? **The latest engagement stats for a one month period on our social media platforms are:**
 - **Facebook Engagements: 2,340**
 - **Twitter Engagements: 197**
8. What time of year has media typically run? **Media has run throughout the year, with some additional emphasis around special events/milestones (i.e. National Provider Appreciation Day, Step Up to Quality Anniversary dates, etc.).**

9. What are the current internal communication strategies to reach early childhood programs? For example, email, newsletters, etc. **Step Up To Quality staff provide ongoing technical assistance to participating programs through email and phone conversations, as well as in-person and virtual information sessions across the state. Additionally, Step Up To Quality is active on various social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn) and sends a monthly e-newsletter.**
10. What's the reasoning behind splitting the campaign into two phases based on target market vs. targeting both child care providers & parents at the same time? **Increased participation of early childhood programs into Step Up To Quality (Phase 1) will enable parents to have increased choices of potential higher quality programs in which to enroll their children (Phase 2).**
11. Do the budgets need to be split \$150k & \$150k exactly? **Yes.**
 - Is the selected firm required to have an office in Nebraska? **No.**
 - Is there a preference for Nebraska-based firms vs. out of state? **No.**
 - Will in-person meetings be required? What is the frequency? **Yes. The specific frequency will be determined with the successful bidder, however we anticipate approximately 3-4 in-person meetings a year.**
 - Is there an incumbent firm/vendor who will potentially be responding to this RFP as well? **Yes.**
12. Can you clarify the budget available for this scope? **A fixed-price contract will be awarded as a result of this proposal totalling \$300,000. Phase I funds at \$150,000 in the first 12 months and, contingent upon successful completion of Phase I, an additional \$150,000 will be available for Phase II in the second 12 month period.**
13. Who are you currently working with on your outreach and communications efforts? **Emspace + Lovgren.**
14. The RFP requests strategies and recommendations that build upon your current campaign. To build upon what you've done, could you please share the existing/prior plan that outlines all your outreach and communication efforts and any research that was done to lead to these efforts? **Outreach strategies implemented to date are described on Section IV, #3 (p. 22-23) of the RFP.**
15. How do you currently evaluate campaign success? **Currently, we receive monthly communications and marketing reports evaluating the effectiveness of all campaigns.**

16. In regard to Form A, we understand the form is to be signed in ink. May we sign in ink and return electronically or would you prefer a hard copy? **Signing in ink and returning a scanned copy is acceptable.**
17. Who has been doing the marketing for the past three (3) years? **Emspace + Lovgren.**
18. What is the average amount being spent on marketing (including salaries, commissions, media buys) over the last three (3) years? **The last 2 contracts for marketing have totalled \$369,620. These contracts have included media buys and creative services.**
19. What are the main goals for your QRIS over the next two (2) years? **See Section IV, Item B of the RFP document (Project Description and Work Plan, pages 23-24).**
20. Do you have any participation data on child care providers (home and centers)? **The current participation numbers by program type are:**
- **Child Care Center: 246**
 - **Family Child Care Homes: 152**
 - **Head Start Programs: 10**
 - **Preschool Programs: 8**
 - **Public School Programs: 25**
21. Targeting unlicensed child care providers in Nebraska was not mentioned as an objective in section IV.-B. Should this also be incorporated into the firm's communication and public engagement efforts? **Only licensed child care programs are eligible to participate in Step Up To Quality.**
22. For Section IV.-3, is SUTQ currently running media? **Yes**
- a. If so, what months did it run/is it running? **Every month.**
 - b. What tactics are being utilized? **Digital display, Pandora, Pre-Roll, iheart Radio, KMTV Metro Blend, WOWT Mom's Everyday, paid social media posts.**
23. Is the incumbent agency participating in this RFP? **Yes**
- a. How long has the incumbent had this account? **Approximately 5 years.**
 - b. Is there a preference to use the agency that previously worked with SUTQ? **No.**

24. In regard to the media component of the communications and public engagement efforts, our normal billing process is to pre-bill our clients monthly so we can pay vendor invoices when they are due. Based on section: HH, would that be allowed if it was acknowledged in the contract? **Payments will not be made until contractual deliverable(s) are received and accepted by the State. Media buys that are part of the approved contract budget can be invoiced at the time of purchase.**
25. In regard to the goals/objectives of the communications and public engagement efforts, is there a numerical or statistical mark that SUTQ would like to reach in regard to impressions, new participation in the program, increases in the child care provider ratings scale among currently rated providers, etc.? **We hope to see increasing numbers of participants as well as increasing step levels achieved for those already participating in Step Up To Quality.**
26. Do you have a preference for media tactics? What has worked in the past for each identified audience? What hasn't? **No preference. Media buys have been successful in the past. Certain types of provider engagement strategies have not been as successful as we would like.**
27. Does SUTQ have an established active e-newsletter or email communication strategy? **Yes.**
28. Does SUTQ have an existing Google Ads account? **No.**
- a. If so, is it specifically for SUTQ or is it shared with the Dept. of Education and/or Office of Early Childhood?
29. What percentage of your audience is aware of Step Up to Quality? **Unsure.**
30. Can you prioritize your audiences?
- a. Any geographical considerations that should be considered here? **No priority.**
31. What is the biggest objection you face from converting child care providers into your program? **Many providers have full enrollment and waiting lists.**
32. What is the biggest objection you face when connecting parents to your program? **Parents aren't finding rated programs that are convenient for them, or which have openings for their children.**
33. Can you share any demographic or psychographic information you have about your audiences? **The child care provider demographic is largely female.**
- a. Alternatively, do you have personas developed for your audiences? **Yes.**

34. Do you expect this campaign to impact whether current Step Up to Quality participants move up in their Step Up to Quality ratings? **Yes, we hope for new participants to join as well as current participants to embrace the philosophy of continuous quality improvement in their programs.**
35. Who are the greatest advocates for Step Up to Quality and how are they activated currently in terms of sharing their support? **State and local early childhood education professional organizations, human service organizations, schools, institutions of higher education, and programs/providers that have gone through the rating process have been champions of our quality improvement practices and philosophies, and have shared their support via personal testimonials in various sources of media, in-person presentations, and shared information and resources, to name some examples.**
36. When a provider achieves a “step” how long is that active?
a. When all five steps are completed how long is that active and do they need to take ongoing steps to keep this distinction? **Step ratings expire on the following schedule: Steps 1 and 2 do not expire. Step 3 – every two years; Step 4 – every two years; Step 5 – every five years.**
37. Providers can complete steps at their own pace, but when providers make this a priority, how long should it take to complete all five steps, or what are typical ranges of time to complete have you seen? **Programs complete the steps at their own pace; the rate by which they complete the steps varies according to the goals they have set for themselves/their program. There are no “deadlines” to achieve specific Step levels.**
38. Can you please clarify how prior partners have supported your request for 10% cash and/or in-kind contribution? **Examples of the “in-kind” contribution can be office space, other printed materials, or other non-cash resources of that nature.**
39. Are you open to non-state contractors bidding on this proposal? **Yes.**
40. Why are you starting the RFP process? What do you hope to improve? **State government requires that existing contracts be opened for competitive bids via the RFP process after 5 years.**
41. Are there any constraints that could impact the success of a targeted communications campaign? **The project is subject to the availability of public funds.**
42. Any milestones, announcements, developments to consider when building out scenarios? **These will be determined during the course of the project.**

43. Are you open to national media covering this story, if relevant to the primary audience? Or would you rather targeted in-state approach for Phase I, then building it out for Phase 2? **We do not anticipate the need for national media coverage for the project; targeted local media for each phase of the project is preferred.**
44. What priority order would you give your following audiences: Family Child Care Home providers, Child Care Centers, Head Starts, and School-based early childhood education programs. **Participation in Step Up to Quality is largely voluntary, so these early childhood education programs all have equal priority.**
45. Is there a call to action already set up to recruit key audiences into the system or are you open to refining that process? **We hope to build upon and refine existing messaging, marketing and advertisement based on successes and new opportunities.**
46. How will “Recruitment of licensed child care home providers, child care centers, Head Starts, and school-based early childhood programs into Step Up to Quality” be defined and quantified in terms of KPIs? **We would expect to see higher enrollment rates and movement of existing providers within the system.**
47. Would we be responsible for both ideation and implementation of social media activities? **Yes to ideation, no to implementation.**
48. Will we be responsible for community management? **No.**
49. Would our agency be responsible for both ideation and implementation of advertising activities? **Yes.**
50. Who would be responsible for tracking call-to-action items such as conversation rates of links that ask key audiences to sign up? **This would be a joint effort between Step Up to Quality staff and the prevailing bidder.**
51. How will you monitor progress and performance on the account? **Through regular marketing and communications reports supplied by the prevailing bidder.**
52. Who are the key stakeholders involved in determining the winning bid and success of this RFP? **The Nebraska Departments of Education and Health and Human Services.**

53. Does the \$150,000 per phase (\$300,000) include out of pocket expenses? If so, what allocation do you see between fees and out-of-pocket expenses? **The projected budget should encompass all costs anticipated to complete the phases of the project. Expenses are to be invoiced to the Step Up To Quality program when incurred.**
54. Are social media marketing costs included in the \$150,000 for Phase I? **Yes.**
55. What do you see as the KPIs defining a successful completion of Phase I? **Increased Step Up To Quality participation rates would be one example of success.**
56. Who provided the existing services described in this RFP - messaging, social media channels, website? **See above.**
57. Do you have a relationship with an existing advertising agency? **See above.**
58. Will you select a Nebraska-based agency or are you open to agencies from other states? **See above.**
59. Has any research been conducted in regard to the target audiences and/or the effectiveness of current initiatives? If so, will that research be shared with the agency? If not, are you open to research being a part of the proposal? **Yes, all previous research may be shared with the prevailing bidder.**
60. It appears that you are asking for a full, detailed media and project plan as a part of the proposal, is that correct? **We are asking for a work plan that articulates proposed strategies for each phase of this project, as described in the RFP document (pages 23-24).**
61. Does a signature on the Request for Proposal for Contractual Service serve as acceptance of the terms and conditions? If not, can we assume the initialed pages of terms and conditions do not count towards the proposal page limit? **Only the selected entity would complete the sections containing the spaces for the initials. The mandatory components of the proposal submission are noted on pages 4-5 of the RFP document.**
62. Are the plans which utilize existing communication methods allowed to include some of the same materials/channels if we have new information to cover? **Yes.**

63. Will any of the “outreach and communication activities to date” listed in IV.A.3 be continued into the first year phase? For example, if we wanted to continue messaging on Pandora, do we need to work a Pandora media buy into the \$150k for that year's media plan or might there be existing contracts that are rolling over into our campaign's timeline? **The selected entity will be responsible for procuring any media buys during the course of this contract.**
64. Question regarding Certificate of Insurance Coverage: for the mandatory requirement of Insurance Coverage, does the insurance need to be purchased by the date that the proposal is submitted? Or, upon Intent to Contract, with insurance obtained before work commences? **The successful candidate may not commence work under this contract until s/he has obtained all the insurance required (See Section III Item F of the RFP document).**
65. From the RFP on page 9, it looks like the insurance must already be purchased before even submitting the proposal? If the insurance purchase is in process, but is not complete, can that be submitted? **No. The candidate should furnish the State, with their proposal response, a certificate of insurance coverage complying with the requirements noted in the RFP document.**
66. What are the intended outcomes of the two-year process? e.g., 20% increase in enrollment by child care providers; 10% enrollment by parents in phase 1? Intended State goals? Intended Department of Education Goals? **We hope to see increasing numbers of participants as well as increasing step levels achieved for those already participating in Step Up To Quality. Additionally, we hope to see a greater public awareness statewide about the program, and increasing parental and family use of Step Up To Quality as a tool when searching for quality care and education programs for their children.**
67. Is the State/Department of Education required to report certain metrics related to the PDG grant awarded to Nebraska? If so, how frequently? What are those metrics and who has the ultimate accountability for reporting those? **This RFP is not associated with PDG grant funding itself; only the future revisions to aspects of the Step Up To Quality program requirements recommended through a portion of the PDG grant.**
68. What metrics, goals will be used to assess the success of phase 1 and phase 2 for the contractor (i.e. A total of \$300,000 with Phase I funds at \$150,000 in the first 12 months and, contingent upon successful completion of Phase I, an additional \$150,000 will be available for Phase II in the second 12 month period. **A mix of analytics and results.**

69. Does the \$300k include media buys, travel expense, and other general expenses. In other words, does the total budget include expense? or is all inclusive of contractor fees, expenses (ie. paper copies, media buys, etc.) **The total includes anticipated expenses. Incurred expenses are to be invoiced to the Step Up To Quality program.**
70. Is the expectation a 10-page comprehensive multi-media communication plan or a sampling of goals and tactics per audience - Family Child Care Home providers, Child Care Centers, Head Starts, and School-based early childhood education programs. **See Section IV, Item B of the RFP document (pages 23-24).**
71. What agency/contractor worked with the Department of Education in the first 5 years? What is the reasoning behind the RFP process now — Due to the PDG grant or other reasons? **See above.**
72. Does the state/Department of Education have to go to bid every 5 years? (Is this truly an open bid or is there a current vendor that by state law or guidelines had to put up for renewal) **See above.**