



## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

### **New Hanover County, NC Recreational Opportunities: Comprehensive Assessment**

**Issue Date:**

July 18, 2025

**Proposal Deadline:**

August 22, 2025

#### **1. Introduction and Background**

The New Hanover Community Endowment (“The Endowment”) exists to address the root challenges facing New Hanover County across four key pillars: Social and Health Equity, Education, Community Safety, and Community Development. Our mission is to support and uplift all members of the community by breaking down barriers, expanding opportunities, solving entrenched problems, and implementing and scaling innovative solutions. We are committed to driving sustainable, transformative change that will benefit every resident of New Hanover County.

Located in southeastern North Carolina, New Hanover County (NHC) is a coastal community known for its vibrant natural assets, including Carolina Beach, Wrightsville Beach, and Kure Beach. Bordered by the Atlantic Ocean and the Cape Fear River, NHC is anchored by Wilmington, one of the largest cities in the state. Although geographically small, the county is densely populated, with a population of just over 240,000 residents.

Following a recent strategic plan refresh, the Endowment identified focus areas to enhance quality of life and promote a vibrant, inclusive economy in NHC. One focus is a commitment to increasing recreational opportunities for all residents, recognizing the importance of equitable access to parks, programs, and public spaces in building a healthy, resilient, and connected community. The Endowment has received inquiries from potential grant applicants in search of funding for various recreational facilities ranging from pools and sports facilities to parks and trails.

## 2. Overview of Services

To inform grantmaking decisions and guide strategic investment in recreational access and equity across New Hanover County, The Endowment seeks a comprehensive analysis of the current ecosystem to identify strengths, surface gaps, and uncover opportunities for targeted, community-informed action that will meaningfully expand access to recreational opportunities for all residents.

Specifically, The Endowment is seeking proposals from qualified consulting firms to complete the following tasks:

### **a) Landscape Assessment**

Conduct a landscape assessment to understand the full scope of existing recreational infrastructure, programs, providers, and policies, including public, nonprofit, and private-sector assets. This will help us grasp the broader context in which recreational services operate and identify overarching trends, barriers, and strengths.

### **b) Network Analysis**

Undertake a network analysis to map the relationships and collaboration patterns among stakeholders such as municipalities, school system, nonprofits, leagues, and community groups which influence recreational access and delivery. Understanding how actors are (or are not) connected will inform opportunities to improve coordination and resource-sharing.

### **c) Needs Assessment**

Complete a needs assessment to gather input directly from residents, particularly those from underserved communities, on what recreational opportunities they want, need, or currently lack. This step ensures the community's voice shapes future investments and programming.

### **d) Asset Mapping**

Develop an asset map to inventory and visualize the location, type, and characteristics of existing recreational facilities and programs, including parks, green spaces, trails, pools, athletic fields, sports complexes, courts, indoor facilities, and organized programs (hereinafter "Recreational Facilities"). This will provide a baseline of what resources exist and where.

### **e) Gap Analysis**

Perform a gap analysis to compare existing assets and community needs, revealing where mismatches exist in access, capacity, or quality, whether by geography, age group, gender, income level, or other key demographics. This will guide data-driven recommendations for where and how to invest in equitable and high-impact ways.

#### **f) Strategic Feasibility Analysis**

Conduct a strategic feasibility analysis to evaluate the local and regional landscape of recreational facilities, identify best practices for development and long-term sustainability, and assess financial feasibility of potential investments. This includes a detailed examination of projected capital and operating costs, funding models, demand, and use scenarios related to the development of a multi-sport and recreation complex, publicly accessible swimming pools, and expanded recreational programming across the county. The analysis should consider current gaps and future opportunities to meet growing and evolving needs.

### **3. Scope of Work**

The selected consultant will be responsible for delivering a comprehensive, data-informed analysis of the current landscape of recreational facilities in New Hanover County. The consultant will also produce a final product that informs The Endowment's grantmaking and partnership strategies and, at The Endowment's discretion, may be shared with external stakeholders and community partners.

While the assessment must address the full range of recreational facilities, The Endowment also seeks more specific analysis and input related to swimming pools and multi-sport complexes, given their strategic relevance and potential for community-wide impact.

The scope of work includes the following elements, approached with attention to equitable access, geographic and demographic disparities, and opportunities for impact:

#### **a) Landscape Assessment**

- i. Conduct a comprehensive inventory of Recreational Facilities and programs across New Hanover County, including public, nonprofit, and private-sector resources.
- ii. Specifically assess:
  - Existing swimming pools and aquatic facilities, including school-based and privately managed assets.
  - Single-use and multi-use sports facilities (fields, courts, gymnasiums, complexes).
- iii. Evaluate accessibility based on geography, membership/fee structures, hours of operation, and transportation availability.
- iv. Identify locations where additional facilities could have the greatest community benefit.

## **b) Network Analysis**

- i. Map key organizations and institutions involved in recreational services and facility development.
- ii. Analyze existing partnerships and coordination mechanisms across sectors (municipalities, school systems, nonprofits, leagues).
- iii. Identify areas where collaboration could be improved or leveraged to fill service gaps.

## **c) Community Needs, Utilization, and Demand Assessment**

- i. Analyze demographic, socioeconomic, transportation, and health indicators to highlight disparities in recreational access, especially for youth and underserved populations.
- ii. Review and analyze current utilization of existing facilities and programs.
- iii. Conduct community engagement (see Community Engagement section below) to provide a clear understanding of resident needs.
- iv. Provide a data-driven summary of unmet demand and recommendations for responsive programming.

## **d) Asset Mapping**

- i. Create a visual and geographic map of all Recreational Facilities, including parks, trails, green spaces, aquatic resources, sports facilities, and related community-based programs.
- ii. Categorize assets by ownership (public, nonprofit, private), facility type, and target population.

## **e) Gap Analysis**

- i. Compare existing resources to community needs to identify gaps in:
  - Facility types and availability
  - Geographic coverage
  - Demographic reach
  - Programmatic offerings
- ii. Provide targeted recommendations to close gaps through investment, programming, policy, or partnerships.

#### **f) Impact on Safety Analysis**

- i. Explore how additional swimming pools and structured swim programs can:
  - Improve emergency preparedness and response for water-related incidents
  - Enhance community safety, particularly for children and non-swimmers, mitigating drowning risks
- ii. Explore how access to additional recreational facilities and programs can reduce crime.

#### **g) Impact on Well-Being Analysis**

- i. Summarize research on the role of sports and recreation facilities in promoting:
  - Physical health benefits including fitness and rehabilitation
  - Mental health improvements through exercise and social interaction
  - Population health by increasing accessibility to aquatic and other recreational facilities
- ii. Explore how access to recreational facilities and structured programs can improve well-being.

#### **h) Community Benefit Analysis**

- i. Summarize research on benefits of recreational facilities including:
  - Educational and developmental benefits for youth via structured sports and other programs
  - Role in fostering community engagement and social cohesion
  - Functioning as community hubs for events, learning, and gatherings

#### **i) Market and Economic Impact Analysis**

- i. Analyze potential to attract regional sports events and boost tourism by investing in recreational facilities.
- ii. Assess economic benefits including:
  - Job creation from construction, management, and event operations
  - Increased revenue from tournaments, visitors, hotels, restaurants, and taxes
  - Potential for increased property values and business growth nearby

#### **j) Strategic Feasibility Analysis**

- i. Conduct regional market and best-practice review for recreational infrastructure, especially pools and multi-sport complexes.

ii. Evaluate financial feasibility of investments in:

- Multi-sports and recreation complex
- Publicly accessible swimming pools

#### **k) Implementation**

i. Develop an action plan prioritizing strategies by impact on social, health, safety, community resilience, and economic outcomes.

ii. Prioritize needs related to land acquisition and development of recreational facilities.

iii. Prioritize renovations and enhancements to existing facilities.

iv. Recommend collaborative partnerships to minimize duplication and enhance opportunities.

v. Identify service shortfalls and projected impacts of future trends.

## **4. Community Engagement**

As part of the work, the Consultant will:

- Identify, describe, and implement a comprehensive community involvement strategy, including convenings in partnership with The Endowment staff.
- Review existing engagement documents from park and recreation departments or other partners to compile community needs information and identify data gaps.
- Provide well-organized activities, techniques, and formats to ensure an equitable, inclusive, open, engaging, and proactive public participation process, soliciting input from youth, under-resourced populations, and both anticipated users and non-users of services and facilities.
- Act as professional facilitators to gather detailed information on services, use, preferences, and agency strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- Provide written records and summaries of public processes and communication strategies suitable for public sharing.

## 5. Project Deliverables

- A comprehensive report including data analysis, community input summaries, research summaries, study findings, and recommendations for internal use and, at The Endowment's discretion, for external sharing.
- Interactive maps and data visualizations illustrating existing recreational facilities and service/access gaps.
- Financial models assessing economic feasibility and long-term sustainability of recommended investments.
- Preliminary review of potential funding mechanisms and multi-stakeholder approaches for financing and maintaining investments.
- Presentation to The Endowment staff and board.

## 6. Project Timeline

### RFP and Award Process:

- RFP Release: July 18, 2025
- Questions regarding RFP Due on or before: July 30, 2025, 5:00 pm
- Responses to questions Issued on or before: August 7, 2025
- Proposals due on or before: August 22, 2025, 5:00 pm EST
- Anticipated contract award notice on or before: September 12, 2025

### Consulting Engagement:

- Data Collection/Research/Stakeholder Engagement: September/October – Various dates to be determined collaboratively with the selected consultant)
- Interim Draft Report: By November 17, 2025
- Final Report and Presentation: Week of December 1, 2025

## 7. Proposal Requirements

### a) Cover Letter

Signed by an authorized representative with primary contact information.

**b) Project Narrative**

Describe the approach, data sources, acquisition methods, and methodology including innovative tools.

**c) Community Engagement Strategy**

Brief plan for qualitative data collection with key stakeholders, ensuring outreach and inclusion, particularly for underserved communities.

**d) Work Plan and Timeline**

Description of tasks, milestones, deliverables, and team roles.

**e) Team Bios and Qualifications**

Brief bios and relevant experience for all team members and subcontractors.

**f) Experience and References**

Summary of three related projects completed within the past five years, with links if available. Plus, contact information for three recent clients (name, phone number, email address).

**g) Proposed Fees and Billing Schedule**

Detailed budget by project component and fee schedule with terms.

**NOTE:** Proposals should be as succinct as possible while covering all requested information. Maximum length should not exceed 10 pages.

## 8. Submission Instructions

Questions should be submitted:

- **Contact Email:** [riinquiry@theendowment.org](mailto:riinquiry@theendowment.org)
- **Subject Line:** **Recreational Opportunities RFP Questions**
- **Deadline:** July 30, 2025, 5:00 pm EST

Proposals must be submitted electronically in PDF format to:

- **Contact Email:** [riinquiry@theendowment.org](mailto:riinquiry@theendowment.org)
- **Subject Line:** **Proposal: New Hanover County, NC Recreational Opportunities: Comprehensive Assessment**
- **Deadline:** August 22, 2025, 5:00 pm EST

Late submissions will not be considered. The Endowment reserves the right to award this project to one or more qualified firms in its complete discretion or to make no award at all.