



Optional Pre-Proposal Meeting Summary

June 11, 2026
2:00 PM-3:00 PM (Virtual)

North Country Healthcare hosted an optional vendor information session to provide interested firms with an opportunity to ask additional questions and seek clarification following the release of the Strategic Communications RFP and formal Q&A document.

The intent of the meeting was to create a shared forum where questions could be addressed in real time by the NCH team, ensuring that all interested parties have access to consistent information as they prepare their proposals. The meeting was designed to support deeper understanding of the project, the organization, and the communication needs described in the RFP.

This summary is provided for informational purposes only and is intended to reflect the general discussion from the optional vendor information session. It is not a transcript and does not modify, replace, or supersede the RFP, posted Q&A, addenda, scoring criteria, or other official materials available on the RFP webpage. Vendors should continue to rely on the RFP webpage as the source of truth for deadlines, requirements, submission instructions, and evaluation criteria.

Participating Firms

The optional vendor information session included participants representing interested firms in communications, marketing, advertising, public relations, branding, digital strategy, and healthcare communications. Based on the meeting participant list and available registration information, the following firms and attendees were identified:

5by5 Agency

Jenny Dwyer

JUNAPR

Mark Mast

Proto Partners

Brent Collins

AdCo Advertising Agency, Inc.

Julie Russell

Kaplan Communications

Aric Kaplan

Rinck Advertising

Emily Broadbent

Brodeur

Collins Dunn

LLYC

Cassin Duncan
Hanna Burmeister-Tuyls
Bridget Haeg

Sean Tracey Associates

Jennifer McGibbney
Adam Anghilante

EVR Advertising

Michael Kosowicz

Navadise Media

Casey Nava
Ashley Charlton
Nick Vigue

Sullivan Creative

Joanne Brunk
Julia White

Fenton

Aileen Andres

First Tracks Marketing

Matt Nelson

Nance + Thorpe

Michele Joseph

Yes&

Margaret Carlton
Jeff Nowak

Flipbird.co

Jordan Ching

NCH MFFP Committee Attendees

Ren Anderson
Director of Philanthropy & Community Relations

Scarlett Moberly
Grant and Community Benefits Coordinator

Brooksley “Brooke” Belanger
Chief Legal Officer

Jesse Raimer
System Director of Materials Management

**NCH also noted that additional proposal reviewers will include one representative from the Quality Department and two community stakeholders who participate with NCH through board service and community events.*

Questions & Responses (Summary of Discussion)

The session focused on clarifying key elements of scope, expectations, organizational context, evaluation process, and communication priorities. Questions are summarized below by theme, along with responses shared during the meeting.

Project Overview and Organizational Context

NCH provided a brief overview of the system and the purpose of the Strategic Communications RFP. North Country Healthcare serves the northern region of New Hampshire, including Coös County and northern Grafton County. The system includes three Critical Access Hospitals: Androscoggin Valley Hospital, Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital, and Weeks Medical Center, as well as North Country Home Health & Hospice Agency.

NCH shared that each affiliate has its own identity, history, and community connection, while also operating under the larger North Country Healthcare system. The selected partner will need to understand both the system-level brand and the importance of preserving local affiliate voice and identity.

NCH emphasized that it is seeking a strategic partner, not simply a vendor to place advertisements or complete transactional tasks. The ideal partner will bring recommendations, expertise, and guidance to help NCH communicate more effectively with the communities it serves.

NCH is seeking at least a one-year contract and would prefer a two-year relationship with appropriate check-in points and evaluation thresholds.

Past Media Spending and Paid Media History

Michael Kosowicz, EVR Advertising, asked whether NCH could provide historical information about media spending in the market. NCH explained that due to staffing and role changes, prior information is limited.

Interview Process and Stakeholder Participation

Michael Kosowicz, EVR Advertising, asked which stakeholders would be involved in the interview phase. NCH clarified that interviews are anticipated to be conducted virtually. The interview team will include the internal stakeholders present at the meeting, along with two community stakeholders and one representative from the Quality Department.

Audience Priorities and Campaign Focus

Brent Collins, Proto Partners, asked whether NCH is primarily seeking to reach existing communities more deeply or

expand awareness beyond the current service area. NCH clarified that the initial focus is on deepening communication within the communities already served by the system. A major priority is helping residents understand what services are available close to home, including primary care, specialty services, hospital-based care, home health, hospice, and partner-supported services. NCH shared that one of the organization's challenges is that community members may not always know what care and services are available locally. A key communication opportunity is helping people better understand what is available close to home and why they can trust NCH as a local healthcare provider.

Brent Collins also asked whether this theme had been reflected in [NCH's community listening work](#). NCH noted that recent community listening work reflected these themes, including the need for clearer communication about available services and physician recruitment efforts. NCH indicated that a link to the listening session recap would be shared with meeting notes.

Balance of Strategy, Content, Media Relations, and Coordination

Eric Kaplan, Kaplan Communications, asked how respondents should think about the balance among strategy, writing, media relations, project coordination, recurring content generation, and related services. NCH shared that it does not have a fixed ratio in mind. The organization is looking for vendors to recommend an appropriate service mix based on the needs described in the RFP. NCH noted that its community includes an older demographic that remains active on Facebook and still engages with local newspapers. NCH is interested in consistency and authenticity, rather than large, flashy advertising efforts that may not resonate with the region. NCH also shared that its current social media presence is limited. The system currently has Facebook pages across affiliates, an Instagram page for North Country Healthcare, and some LinkedIn presence. These platforms have been underutilized, and NCH sees opportunity for stronger strategy, consistency, and expert guidance.

Success Factors for the Partnership

Jordan Ching, Flipbird, asked what success would look like for NCH in a vendor partnership. NCH shared that success in the first 90 days would include a partner making a genuine effort to understand the region, the communities served, the organization's needs, and the realities of rural healthcare communication. NCH is looking for dynamic advice, strategic guidance, and a partner who can help determine what will work and why. NCH emphasized the importance of authentic, accurate, and community-centered communication. The selected partner should be able to create messaging that feels specific to NCH, the North Country region, and the communities served, rather than generic or disconnected from local context. NCH identified storytelling as a major priority. This includes telling the story of North Country Healthcare's evolution, the importance of community health, and why residents can trust NCH as a local healthcare provider close to home.

Key Performance Indicators and Reporting

Jeff Nowak, Yes&, asked whether NCH has specific metrics or key performance indicators in mind. NCH shared that current KPIs are broad and have not been consistently defined or reported through a communications dashboard. NCH is interested in working with a partner who can help develop meaningful measures of success and report results in a way that is useful to leadership, cabinet, and governance audiences.

Brand Guide and Brand Voice

Mark Mast, JUNAPR, asked whether NCH currently has a brand guide, brand voice, or related standards. NCH shared that a brand guide was established in 2021 and is still used and followed. However, the organization does not currently have a fully established brand voice.

Emily Broadbent, Rinck Advertising, asked whether NCH would be interested in brand voice development across the system and affiliates. NCH indicated that it recognizes this as a gap and would be open to recommendations from vendors.

Creative Assets and Content Library

Emily Broadbent, Rinck Advertising, asked whether NCH has a desire to build a more robust creative asset library in the

first year, with the potential to repurpose assets in subsequent years. NCH shared that its current asset library is not deep. NCH is open to vendor recommendations regarding the development of a stronger library of photography, video, and other storytelling assets. NCH also emphasized a preference for using real NCH employees, patients, community members, and local environments whenever appropriate. The goal is for people who see NCH communications to feel that the individuals represented could be their neighbors, caregivers, or community members.

Emily Broadbent also asked whether NCH has historically used paid talent. NCH confirmed that paid talent has been used in the past, but the current preference is to prioritize authentic local representation where possible.

Internal Team Structure and Capacity

Jeff Nowak, Yes&, asked how the internal communications and marketing team is organized and how NCH has worked with outside partners in the past. NCH explained that Brooke Belanger, Chief Legal Officer, is currently serving as interim VP of Strategic Communications. Ren Anderson reports to Brooke and serves as Director of Philanthropy & Community Relations. The internal team also includes Scarlett Moberly, who is a strong writer and editor but whose primary responsibility is grants and community benefit work; a community relations staff member focused on community presence, events, and relationship-building; an event coordinator who supports marketing for events; one marketing staff member primarily responsible for graphic design and internal ticket requests; and a project manager who has recently reduced hours and is currently focused on intranet and internal communications work. NCH summarized the department as lean, with team members wearing many hats. Brooke also noted that this is a reality across the system and is not unique to the communications team.

Data Sources and Community Health Materials

Ashley Charlton, Navadise Media, asked whether the data included in the RFP materials, including the Community Health Needs Assessment, heat map, and community needs information, was based on internal patient mix or online, social, and digital data. NCH clarified that the data was based on patient mix and community health needs assessment work. The Community Health Needs Assessment was completed the prior year with support from Ovation Health. NCH noted that Ovation provided demographic data that could be analyzed by county and ZIP code, which was especially useful because NCH serves a multi-county region. NCH also stated that available social media reporting and platform data can be shared with the selected partner, but current reporting is limited.

Budget Expectations

Jordan Ching, Flipbird, asked whether NCH has an optimal budget in mind. NCH reiterated that it is looking for vendor recommendations and a clear explanation of the proposed approach, pricing, and rationale. NCH also reminded vendors that budget scoring information is included in the RFP and posted on the RFP webpage.

Recent External Reports and Communications Context

Brent Collins, Proto Partners, asked whether recent external reporting or public commentary should be understood as part of the messaging need for this RFP. NCH clarified that the Strategic Communications RFP had been in development before that reporting and is not a direct response to it. However, NCH acknowledged that one shared theme is the need for clearer and more effective communication. This RFP is part of a broader organizational effort to prioritize and improve communication. NCH also received feedback that the recent messaging posted on the website was clear and well stated.

Proposal Expectations and Appendices

NCH reminded vendors that proposals are due June 26, 2026, before midnight. NCH will begin reviewing proposals after the deadline. Vendors may include appendices if permitted under the RFP; however, key proposal information should be included within the main proposal response. NCH encouraged vendors to prioritize key messaging, recommendations, and required information in the main proposal rather than relying heavily on appendices.

Timeline and Next Steps

- **Proposals Due:** June 26, 2026, before midnight
- **Proposal Review:** Following the submission deadline
- **Finalist Selection:** Based on scoring, NCH anticipates inviting the top three proposals to move forward to the interview stage
- **Interviews:** Anticipated to be virtual
- **Additional Scheduling:** Around the proposal due date, NCH anticipates sharing possible interview dates so vendors may tentatively hold time. Dates may then be released if a firm is not selected to move forward.
- **Meeting Minutes:** A summary of the optional vendor information session will be posted to the RFP webpage mid-week the week of June 17, 2026.
- **Scoring:** Proposal scoring guidelines are outlined on the RFP webpage.

Closing Notes

NCH thanked all participating vendors for their time, interest, and the effort involved in preparing proposals. NCH acknowledged that this is a competitive RFP and expressed appreciation for the quality of work and thoughtfulness vendors are bringing to the process.

As with prior communications, any new information or clarification will be shared broadly through the RFP webpage to ensure all parties have access to the same information. Vendors should continue to use the RFP webpage and official NCH materials as the source of truth for dates, deadlines, documents, process details, and related information.

Attendance at this meeting was optional and is not required for proposal submission.