

Smart Start Vetted Vendor Program Overview

IT Managed Services

The North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC) supports a statewide network of 75 Local Partnerships (LPs) that make up the Smart Start Network. These nonprofit organizations rely on secure, reliable, and cost effective technology systems to advance a high quality early childhood system across North Carolina.

To strengthen IT capacity across the Network, NCPC is establishing a ***Vetted Vendor Program*** for Information Technology Managed Service Providers (MSPs).

The Vetted Vendor Program identifies, evaluates, and approves qualified IT MSPs who can deliver high quality, affordable technology services to Local Partnerships. Approved vendors are included in the ***Smart Start Vetted Vendor Directory***—a trusted resource LPs can use when selecting technology partners.

Questions? Contact

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About the Vetted Vendor Program

The Smart Start Vetted Vendor Program establishes a structured and consistent process for identifying trustworthy technology vendors who understand the needs of nonprofit and publicly funded organizations. Participation does not guarantee work; rather, it provides visibility and credibility across 75 Local Partnerships.

Program Goals:

- Reduce the burden on Local Partnerships in finding reliable IT providers
- Improve consistency, quality, and equity of IT services across counties
- Strengthen network-wide cybersecurity and compliance
- Support cost-effective purchasing through transparent pricing models
- Establish a directory of vendors who have demonstrated capacity, integrity, and high-quality service

Vetted MSPs benefit from:

- Increased visibility across the entire Smart Start Network
- Opportunities for direct contracting with Local Partnerships
- Inclusion in a trusted statewide directory
- Potential for long term relationships and recurring service engagements

Vendor Selection and Participation

Selected vendors will be designated as Smart Start Network Vetted Vendors and included in the Smart Start Vetted Vendor Directory. Local Partnerships may independently select and contract with any approved vendor based on their organizational needs. NCPC will publish:

- Vendor profiles
- Service descriptions
- Pricing structures or service packages
- Contract templates or service agreements

Contracting and Procurement

Participation in the Vetted Vendor Program does not establish a contractual relationship between NCPC and participating vendors for the delivery of services. Local Partnerships that choose to utilize a vetted vendor will:

- Enter into contracts directly with the vendor
- Follow Smart Start procurement and contracting requirements as applicable
- Request quotes or proposals from one or more vetted vendors as appropriate

Vendor Performance and Oversight

NCPC reserves the right to remove vendors from the directory if performance concerns arise. Annual reporting may summarize vendor performance and network outcomes. NCPC will maintain a vendor performance monitoring process that may include:

- Feedback from Local Partnerships
- Periodic vendor performance reviews
- Monitoring service quality and responsiveness
- Evaluation of cost savings, service outcomes, and Network impact

Service Coverage

Respondents must demonstrate their ability to provide services to nonprofit organizations located throughout North Carolina. Vendors are not required to provide statewide coverage. Vendors should describe:

- Geographic service coverage
- Remote support capabilities
- On-site support availability
- Service hours and response times

Pricing and Discount Structure

NCPC seeks vendors willing to provide discounted or preferred pricing structures for Local Partnerships within the Smart Start Network. Selected vendors will be expected to honor proposed pricing structures when contracting directly with participating Local Partnerships.

- Managed service pricing models (per user, per device, flat fee, etc.)
- Discounted rates available to Smart Start Local Partnerships
- Optional service packages
- Any nonprofit or network pricing structures

IT Managed Service Needs Across the Smart Start Network

Local Partnerships vary in size and internal capacity, and many rely on external providers for ongoing IT management and strategic support. Common technology needs include:

Core Managed IT Services

- End user helpdesk and technical support
- Remote and on site troubleshooting
- Device setup, updates, and maintenance
- Network monitoring and systems management

Cybersecurity & Risk Management

- Endpoint protection and monitoring
- Multi factor authentication implementation and support
- Backup and disaster recovery solutions
- Threat detection and incident response
- Cybersecurity risk assessments

Infrastructure & Cloud Support

- Microsoft 365 administration
- Email, collaboration, and cloud platform management
- Server and network infrastructure support
- Data backup, storage, and recovery

Technology Strategy & Consulting

- IT planning and assessments
- Budgeting for technology investments
- Lifecycle management (procurement through replacement)
- Staff training and guidance


MSPs are not required to offer every service listed to be included in the Vetted Vendor Directory. In the application, providers should outline their comprehensive managed services, specialized offerings, and/or ad hoc support capabilities.

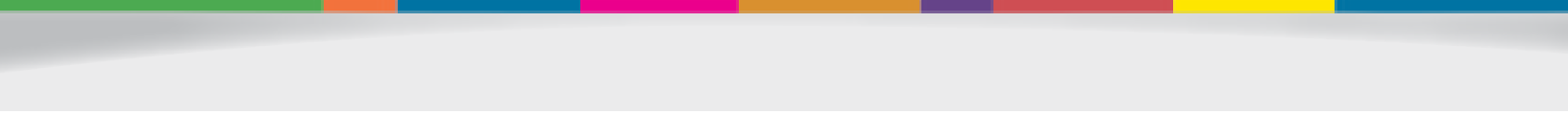
Application & Review Process

The Vetted Vendor Program accepts applications year round. Vendors submit complete applications that include all the components outlined below.

NCPC will then conduct a vetting process, which could take up to 90 days, that includes:

- 1 Application Review**
assessing qualifications, service models, special Smart Start specific pricing and discounts, and alignment with network needs
- 2 Interview**
discussing capabilities, infrastructure, security, and service philosophy
- 3 Reference Checks**
validating performance and reliability
- 4 Approval & Onboarding**
adding the vendor to the Smart Start Vetted Vendor Directory

 *Approved vendors agree to maintain quality standards, respond to LPs professionally, maintain special Smart Start specific pricing and discounts, and uphold cybersecurity best practices. NCPC monitors vendor performance and may remove vendors if concerns arise.*



Application Requirements

Organizational Overview

Vendors should provide a brief description of the organization, including:

- Year established
- Organizational structure and ownership
- Primary service offerings
- Number of employees and locations
- Geographic areas served
- Experience providing managed IT services to nonprofit organizations, government agencies, or similar clients
- Experience working with small to mid-sized organizations with limited internal IT capacity

Service Approach and Capabilities

Describe the services your organization offers that are relevant to this posting including:

- Overview of managed IT service offerings
- Helpdesk support structure and service hours
- Remote and on-site support capabilities
- Network monitoring and management services
- Cybersecurity services and tools
- Backup and disaster recovery solutions
- Cloud and Microsoft 365 administration services
- Strategic IT planning or advisory services
- Approach to maintaining high service quality and responsiveness

Staffing and Expertise

Describe the staff who would support Smart Start Local Partnerships, including:

- Key roles and responsibilities
- Relevant certifications or qualifications
- Experience supporting nonprofit or government clients
- Helpdesk staffing model and escalation process

Service Coverage and Availability

Vendors should describe:

- Geographic service coverage within North Carolina
- Ability to provide remote services statewide
- Availability of on-site services if required
- Standard response times and service-level expectations
- Emergency or after-hours support availability

Pricing Structure

Provide a clear description of pricing models and any discounted rates offered to Smart Start Local Partnerships. Please include:

- Per-user or per-device pricing
- Monthly managed service packages
- Hourly service rates
- Optional service tiers or bundles
- Any nonprofit pricing structures or network discounts

Compliance and Security Practices

Describe the organization's policies and practices related to:

- Cybersecurity and data protection
- Backup and disaster recovery procedures
- Data privacy and confidentiality
- Security monitoring and incident response
- Compliance with applicable technology and data security standards
- Relevant certifications, such as cybersecurity or IT service management certifications.

Optional Information

Vendors may include any additional information they believe is relevant to their proposal, including:

- Case studies or examples of similar work
- Sample service agreements or contracts
- Optional service packages or pricing tiers
- Tools or platforms used to manage client IT environments
- References from current or recent clients for whom similar services have been provided. Reference information should include organization, contact information, description of services, and length of client relationship.

Questions? Contact

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Click here to fill out the
***IT Managed Services Vetted Vendor
Program Application***

