



NECC26-MKT01 Digital Advertising

Bid Questions and Answers

Question 1

How does NECC determine qualified traffic?

The RFP doc mentions that one objective may be to drive qualified traffic to a designated landing page or web property. It's important to know how you will determine that. Is it time on site, an action taken, or something else?

Answer:

NECC defines qualified traffic as website visitors who demonstrate meaningful engagement with recruitment-focused content and actions. Key indicators may include landing page engagement, clicks to program pages, inquiry form submissions, information requests, event registrations, clicks to our online application (with the intent to eventually have more tracking around our application in the near future), and other conversion-related actions that can be tracked at the agency's recommendation. We evaluate both engagement metrics and enrollment funnel activity when assessing traffic quality.

Question 2

How will NECC determine an increase in awareness? Would a brand lift study be needed, or will this be based on site traffic metrics?

Answer:

NECC measures awareness through a combination of reach, impressions, website traffic, branded search activity, video engagement, and growth in overall audience engagement. While we are open to discussing brand lift studies as part of a proposed strategy, awareness has historically been measured through media performance metrics and increases in website activity attributable to campaign efforts.

Question 3

Can you confirm that NECC is open to other paid social channels beyond Meta/Facebook?

The RFP notes that campaigns must be incorporated into NECC's existing accounts for tracking purposes, but only Meta/Facebook and Google are specified.

Answer:

Yes. NECC is open to recommendations for additional paid social platforms if they align with campaign objectives and target audiences. Agency recommendations should provide strategic rationale and expected outcomes for any recommended channels. NECC currently maintains active advertising accounts on Google and Meta.

Question 4

Will we be able to pixel all parts of the "funnel?" Additionally, are final conversion actions occurring behind a "walled garden," (like a login)?

Answer:

Most marketing and recruitment funnel activities can be tracked through Google Tag Manager, Google Analytics, and platform-specific pixels. Certain enrollment-related actions occur within third-party systems that may have tracking limitations.

Question 5

What are the primary campaign goals (what hard #)?

Answer:

NECC's primary campaign goals are to increase inquiries, applications, and event registrations from prospective students. Success will be measured by the ability to drive qualified prospects to take these actions and move through the enrollment funnel. Secondary goals include increasing awareness and consideration of NECC among key audiences through metrics such as reach, impressions, engagement, and website traffic.

Question 6

What channels has NECC run in the past that worked or didn't work?

Answer:

NECC has successfully utilized Google Search, Performance Max, Display, YouTube, Meta (Facebook and Instagram), geofencing, IP targeting, retargeting, and email marketing campaigns. Performance varies by audience and objective; however, Search, YouTube, Meta lead generation campaigns, and targeted display campaigns have consistently contributed to awareness and conversion goals. NECC welcomes recommendations for testing and evaluating additional channels.

Question 7

How does NECC define success at the campaign level versus the contract level?

Answer:

Campaign-level success is measured against the specific objectives of each initiative, such as awareness, lead generation, event registrations, inquiries, or applications. Contract-level success is evaluated holistically based on overall contribution to NECC's recruitment and enrollment goals, efficient budget utilization, continuous optimization, strategic insights, and year-over-year improvements in key performance indicators.

Question 8

Confirming that there are existing NECC ad accounts already for Meta, Google. Any other platforms?

Answer:

NECC currently maintains advertising accounts on Google and Meta. Additional platform access, if applicable, will be discussed during onboarding and transition planning.

Question 9

Does NECC have any current DSP relationships or preferences?

Answer:

NECC does not currently use a specific DSP in-house. Proposers may recommend platforms and technologies that support campaign objectives, optimization, audience targeting needs, transparency, and reporting requirements.

Question 10

We've reviewed the existing NECC brand guidelines. Will there be creative refreshes throughout the campaign flights?

Answer:

Yes. NECC anticipates periodic creative refreshes throughout campaigns to maintain audience engagement, address campaign performance trends, support seasonal initiatives, and align with evolving enrollment priorities.

Question 11

Given the 49% Latino population and NECC's status as a federally designated Hispanic-serving institution (HSI), is there an existing Spanish-language audience strategy?

Answer:

NECC has historically incorporated culturally relevant messaging and targeted outreach to Hispanic and Latino audiences. Spanish-language creative and audience strategies may be utilized when appropriate. NECC welcomes recommendations for audience segmentation, messaging, creative development, and media placement strategies that effectively engage these populations.

Question 12

You called out "transfer opportunities" in comments re: targeting. Can you elaborate on this segment's attributes or geos?

Answer:

The transfer opportunities audience consists of prospective students seeking affordable pathways to bachelor's degree completion. They can save money by starting and earning credits or their associates degree at NECC and finishing their bachelor's degree at a four-year university. We have transfer agreements with many of these four-year colleges and universities.

Transfer-focused campaigns may also target students previously enrolled at other colleges or universities, who have earned some college credits but have not completed a degree.

Question 13

Does this project's scope of work include driving digital sales for the NECC online bookstore?

Answer:

No. We don't require any promotions on behalf of the NECC bookstore, which is a separate entity and would not fit in with our overall digital advertising strategy of promoting the college to prospective students.

Question 14

Does this project's scope of work include recruitment of college staff for academic, administrative, or facilities roles?

Answer:

No. Employee recruitment is not currently included in the scope of this RFP.

Question 15

How many hard copies of our proposal would you like sent?

Answer:

One original and one copy.

Question 16

Since the selected agency will be running ads through the College's own ad accounts, will ad spend on platforms like Google Ads and Facebook Ads be billed directly to the College instead of through the agency?

Answer:

No, we prefer billing to go through the agency with the ad spend and management fees clearly defined in separate line items on the invoice. This is required.

Question 17

Is there an incumbent agency for this RFP?

Answer:

Yes, however due to the competitive bidding process we are not able to disclose who the agency is.

Question 18

You mention a preference for expertise in SEO/AEO. Are you looking for these services to be included in proposals? Would SEO/AEO services be funded by a separate budget, or would these service fees need to be subtraced from the \$130-140K advertising budget?

Answer:

It would be helpful to understand capabilities around SEO/AEO, but these services do not need to be a part of this proposal from a pricing standpoint.

Question 19

The RFP states that submissions must be physically delivered in a sealed envelope and cannot be submitted electronically. Could you please specify the exact number of hard copies (plus any required USB/digital media drives) that should be included in the submission envelope?

Answer:

One original and one copy.

Question 20

While the project scope focuses heavily on digital channels, does NECC currently utilize offline/traditional media (OOH, linear broadcast, print, etc.) via an internal team or another agency? If so, is there an expectation for the selected digital partner to collaborate or align digital flights with those offline efforts?

Answer:

No not currently. This RFP is for paid media spend only, not traditional advertising.

Question 21

What is your current Student Acquisition Cost?

Answer:

Not shareable at this time.

Question 22

The RFP mentions seasonal enrollment campaigns (fall, winter, spring, summer) and event-specific marketing. Roughly how many distinct programmatic setups or specific academic programs/degrees require dedicated, standalone campaign budgets versus evergreen brand-awareness and general enrollment push?

Answer:

The majority of NECC's advertising efforts support institution-wide enrollment goals through seasonal enrollment campaigns, evergreen brand awareness, and general recruitment messaging. While specific academic programs, workforce training initiatives, or strategic priorities may receive dedicated campaign support when warranted, NECC does not currently anticipate a large number of standalone program-specific budgets. Agencies should propose a flexible campaign structure that balances broad enrollment objectives with the ability to support priority programs, events, or initiatives as enrollment needs evolve throughout the year.

Question 23

Are campaigns a general brand/enrollment messaging or are there specific degrees promoted?

Answer:

At this time we only require specific degrees to be promoted on an as-needed basis.

Question 24

You noted a credit enrollment baseline of over 5,000 students. Do you have a specific percentage increase or net-new student enrollment target for the 2026–2027 academic year that this digital strategy is expected to drive?

Answer:

NECC's enrollment goal for FY2026–2027 is to reach a total credit enrollment of 6,000 students.

Question 25

Regionally, who does NECC consider its primary competitors (e.g., neighboring community colleges, online institutions, or trade schools)?

Answer:

NECC serves a designated service area within Massachusetts and does not generally view neighboring Massachusetts community colleges as direct competitors. Competitive pressure is more likely to come from institutions that offer similar value propositions to prospective students, including online colleges and universities, four-year institutions promoting lower-cost pathways, and career-focused or trade-based educational providers. That said, we also feel that the competition to community college can be no college for some prospects.

Question 26

What do you view as NECC's primary differentiator in the Merrimack Valley market?

Answer:

NECC offers a combination of affordability, accessibility, workforce relevance, and student support that is unique in the region. Through MassEducate and MassReconnect, many Massachusetts residents can attend tuition- and fee-free. NECC also provides flexible online, hybrid, and evening options, strong transfer pathways to four-year institutions, workforce-aligned programs, and comprehensive support services designed to help students succeed.

Question 27

Are there any specific barriers to enrollment that you are able to share such as financial aid delays, application abandonment, placement testing, etc?

Answer:

Like many institutions, NECC experiences common enrollment barriers including competing life and work responsibilities, financial concerns, uncertainty about the college process, and application abandonment. We will also have persona information to share once engagement begins.

Question 28

Which CRM and application management systems does NECC currently use (e.g., Slate, Salesforce/TargetX, Banner)? Will the selected agency be granted API or webhook access to pass lead attribution data directly into the CRM to track downstream enrollment conversions?

Answer:

NECC is currently implementing Slate, with full implementation expected during Summer/Fall 2026. The college expects to have access to lead, applicant, and enrollment activity data within Slate and is interested in exploring attribution and conversion tracking opportunities. Specific API, webhook, and integration access will be determined during implementation and vendor onboarding.

Question 29

To measure true campaign impact, has NECC previously utilized Media Mix Modeling (MMM), Multi-Touch Attribution (MTA), or conversion lift/incrementality studies? If so, what were the key takeaways regarding your most impactful channels?

Answer:

No formal Media Mix Modeling, Multi-Touch Attribution, or incrementality studies have been conducted. Campaign performance has historically been evaluated through platform reporting, website analytics, inquiry generation, application activity, and enrollment outcomes. We welcome recommendations from agencies regarding advanced attribution methodologies.

Question 30

With the introduction of state initiatives like MassReconnect and MassEducate, what percentage of your current student body utilizes these free-tuition programs? Should these programs serve as the primary hook for our adult learner and traditional-age campaign messaging?

Answer:

A significant portion of eligible Massachusetts students benefit from MassEducate and MassReconnect. These programs represent an important value proposition and should be incorporated into campaign messaging where appropriate. However, messaging should also emphasize academic quality, career outcomes, flexibility, transfer opportunities, and student support services.

Question 31

Given that NECC is a commuter-and-online-only institution with no residential housing, what is the current percentage breakdown of students taking purely online courses versus those attending physical classes at the Haverhill or Lawrence campuses?

Answer:

The college offers a mix of online, hybrid, and in-person learning options, and many students take courses in multiple formats during their academic journey. Agencies should assume that prospective students are interested in a range of delivery formats and recommend audience segmentation and messaging strategies that align with degree requirements, student needs, and enrollment goals.

Question 32

The RFP notes that campaigns must be integrated into NECC's existing Google Analytics, AdWords, and Meta accounts. Will the agency be granted Google Tag Manager (GTM) container access to implement custom conversion tracking, custom events, and pixel optimizations, or must all tag deployments go through NECC's internal IT department?

Answer:

NECC currently manages its own Google Tag Manager environment. The selected agency will work collaboratively with the college to implement tracking requirements. Appropriate access levels will be determined during onboarding and may include direct GTM access or a collaborative implementation process.

Question 33

Exhibit A outlines a strict geographic service territory, including 20 Core MA zip codes, 7 Non-Core MA zip codes, and 16 Core NH zip codes. Because MassEducate and MassReconnect free-tuition benefits apply only to Massachusetts residents, does NECC expect separate campaign structures and creative messaging for the New Hampshire zip codes to account for the difference in tuition incentives?

Answer:

We do not currently break-out separate messaging. We instead use language that emphasizes overall eligibility of these programs.

Question 34

The RFP notes a significant Latino student presence (approx. 49%) and mentions that experience marketing to diverse, multilingual populations is a plus. Does NECC currently run campaigns translated into Spanish, and should a portion of the \$130k–\$140k budget be explicitly carved out for Spanish-language media buying?

Answer:

The agency will not be expected to develop a dedicated Spanish-language media plan or reserve a specific portion of the budget for Spanish-language advertising. The college is focused on reaching priority prospective student audiences—including traditional-age students, adult learners, career changers, and transfer students—across a wide array of demographic groups within our designated service territory.

Question 35

Of the platforms listed in the scope (Paid Social, SEM, Programmatic Display, Connected TV, Audio), which channels have historically yielded the highest volume of verified student applications for NECC?

Answer:

Paid search has been among the strongest drivers of inquiries and applications due to its ability to capture high-intent audiences. Meta platforms have also been effective for generating awareness, engagement, and lead activity. We are interested in agency recommendations regarding channel mix optimization based on current market conditions.

Question 36

Is the \$130,000–\$140,000 Year 1 budget inclusive of both paid media spend and agency management fees, or is the management fee additive?

Answer:

This amount includes both paid media spend and the agency management fees and should be broken out in the RFP response. This is a requirement.

Question 37

Is there a historical or preferred split between media spend and management fees that proposals should align to?

Answer:

Agencies should recommend an appropriate balance between media investment and management fees that maximizes campaign performance and achievement of stated objectives.

Question 38

Does the budget need to cover all four seasonal enrollment pushes (fall, winter, spring, summer) plus event-specific campaigns, or are event campaigns funded separately?

Answer:

The annual budget should support year-round enrollment marketing efforts, including major seasonal enrollment periods and event-specific promotional enrollment campaigns. Event campaigns are generally not funded separately.

Question 39

Is there a current agency of record for digital advertising? Is that agency part of this process and being considered again?

Answer:

NECC currently works with an external digital advertising partner. Consistent with college procurement policies, all qualified vendors are welcome to participate in the RFP process.

Question 40

What is the current state of conversion tracking in Google Analytics, Google Ads, and Meta? Are pixels, conversion actions, and custom audiences already configured, or will the selected agency be setting these up?

Answer:

NECC currently utilizes Google Analytics, Google Ads, Meta tracking, and Google Tag Manager. Conversion tracking is established for key activities; however, we anticipate continued enhancements as Slate is implemented and additional attribution capabilities become available.

Question 41

Can you share historical performance benchmarks — cost per inquiry, cost per application, conversion rates, or channel mix — to inform forecasted KPIs in our response?

Answer:

Historical campaign performance data, including inquiries, applications, website traffic, engagement metrics, and channel-level results, will be shared with the selected agency during onboarding. Agencies should outline their recommended KPI framework and performance expectations based on higher education industry benchmarks.

Question 42

Are there specific Year 1 numerical targets (inquiry volume, application volume, enrollment growth percentages, or cost-per-acquisition goals) that proposals should plan against?

Answer:

The primary objective is to increase inquiries, applications, and enrollment activity while maintaining cost efficiency. Exact annual targets may vary by enrollment cycle and institutional priorities. Agencies should propose realistic performance goals and measurement frameworks aligned with these objectives.

Question 43

Are there priority academic programs (high-enrollment, high-revenue, or workforce-aligned) that should receive a disproportionate share of media spend?

Answer:

Campaigns should primarily support institution-wide enrollment goals. However, workforce-aligned programs, career and specific education offerings, transfer pathways, and adult learner initiatives are often strategic priorities and may receive additional emphasis based on enrollment needs.

Question 44

How is success weighted across the three stated objectives (inquiries/applications, qualified traffic, brand awareness)? Is one a clear primary KPI?

Answer:

The primary objective is generating inquiries, applications, and other measurable enrollment-related actions. Driving qualified website traffic is a secondary objective, while brand awareness serves as a supporting objective that helps sustain long-term enrollment growth.

Question 45

With the student body being approximately 49% Latino, will NECC provide Spanish-language ad creative, or is the selected agency expected to coordinate translation? Are Spanish-language landing pages already in place?

Answer:

NECC's in-house marketing team develops most advertising creative and can provide or collaborate on Spanish-language assets as needed. NECC does have an established relationship with a translation service. The college has also previously run Spanish-language campaigns and maintains its own landing pages in-house.

Question 46

The RFP notes that creative services are generally handled in-house. Does this include ad copy variants for A/B testing, or only visual creative? What is the typical turnaround time for new creative requests from the in-house team?

Answer:

NECC's in-house marketing team develops visual creative. In the past the agency has provided written ad copy. NECC's marketing team then reviews and provides feedback, including copy variations and provides that to the agency for testing and optimization. Turnaround times vary based on project scope and campaign priorities, but NECC works collaboratively with its agency partners to support campaign needs and optimize performance in a timely manner.

Question 47

For list-based retargeting, will NECC provide CRM lists (prospects, lapsed inquiries, current students, alumni), and through which platform or CDP?

Answer:

Yes, NECC can provide specific audience lists where appropriate and compliant with institutional policies and platform requirements. These lists historically have been provided in an excel or csv file formats.

Question 48

Are there any channels NECC has tested previously that did not perform well and should be deprioritized in proposals?

Answer:

NECC is open to agency analysis and recommendations. Rather than excluding channels outright, proposals should identify how channels would be evaluated, tested, optimized, or deprioritized based on performance data and campaign objectives.

Question 49

SEO/AEO is noted as "a plus." Should proposals include pricing for these services as a separate add-on line item, or keep the focus strictly on paid media?

Answer:

It would be helpful to understand capabilities around SEO/AEO, but these services do not need to be a part of this proposal from a pricing standpoint.

Question 50

Is there interest in testing emerging channels such as Connected TV, streaming audio, or programmatic audio within Year 1, or should these be reserved for renewal years?

Answer:

Yes. NECC is open to innovative and emerging channels when supported by a clear strategic rationale, audience fit, measurable outcomes, and budget considerations. Agencies are encouraged to recommend testing opportunities where appropriate.