

SEALED BID REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Agency of Education Statewide Student Information System

ISSUE DATE: April 14, 2020

QUESTIONS DUE BY: April 23, 2020, 4:30 pm

RFI DUE DATE: May 11, 2020, 4:30 pm

RFI MUST BE RECEIVED VIA EMAIL: Stephen.Fazekas@vermont.gov

SECURITY PROCEDURES: Please be advised extra time will be needed when visiting and/or delivery information to 109 State Street. All individuals must present a valid government issued photo ID when entering the facility.

All bidders are hereby notified that sealed bids must be received, and time stamped by the Office of Purchasing & Contracting located at **109 State Street - Montpelier, VT 05609-3001** - by the time of the bid opening. Bids not in possession of the Office of Purchasing & Contracting at the time of the bid opening will be returned to the vendor and will not be considered. **Any delay deemed caused by Security Procedures will be at the bidder's own risk.**

RFI OPENING AND LOCATION: May 11, 2020, Virtual Opening

PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT ALL NOTIFICATIONS, RELEASES, AND AMENDMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS RFI WILL BE POSTED AT:

<http://bgs.vermont.gov/purchasing/bids>

THE STATE WILL MAKE NO ATTEMPT TO CONTACT VENDORS WITH UPDATED INFORMATION. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EACH VENDOR TO PERIODICALLY CHECK <http://bgs.vermont.gov/purchasing/bids> FOR ANY AND ALL NOTIFICATIONS, RELEASES AND AMENDMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE RFI.

PURCHASING AGENT: Stephen Fazekas
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1 PURPOSE

This Request for Information (RFI) is issued for the Agency of Education (AOE) to gather input and obtain information and cost estimates in proceeding with proposals to implement a Statewide Student Information System (SSIS) to be utilized by Local Education Agency's (LEA's) across the state with the purpose to:

- Collect and manage data in one system, for Local Education Agencies to share with the AOE core requirements for Federal and State mandated reports using the CEDS standard.
- Facilitate consistent LEA record-keeping in a manner that reduces the operational burden to LEAs and increases the accuracy of data that the Agency reports to various stakeholders.

The Agency of Education intends to evaluate the submissions by respondents to explore how they would meet their needs and understand the cost associated with proposed solutions. The Agency of Education shall not be held liable for any costs incurred by the vendors in the preparation of their submission, or for any work performed prior to contract issuance.

1.1 LIABILITY

THIS IS A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI) ONLY. This RFI is issued solely for information and planning purposes – it does not constitute a Request for Proposal (RFP) or a promise to issue an RFP in the future. This request for information does not commit the State to contract for any materials or service whatsoever. Further, the State is not at this time seeking proposals and will not accept unsolicited proposals. Respondents are advised that the State will not pay for any information or administrative costs incurred in response to this RFI; all costs associated with responding to this RFI will be solely at the interested party's expense. Not responding to this RFI does not preclude participation in any future RFP, if any is issued. If an RFP is released, it will be posted on the BGS bid opportunities web site: <http://www.bgs.state.vt.us/pca/bids/bids.php>. It is the responsibility of the potential offerors to monitor this site for additional information.

1.2 CONFIDENTIALITY

The Agency of Education retains the right to promote transparency and to place this RFI into the public domain, and to make a copy of the RFI available as a provision of the Vermont access to public records laws. Please do not include any information in your RFI response that is confidential or proprietary, as the Agency of Education assumes no responsibility for excluding information in response to records requests. Any request for information made by a third party will be examined in light of the exemptions provided in the Vermont access to public records laws.

The solicitation of this RFI does not commit the Agency of Education or the State of Vermont to award a contract. This RFI is for information gathering purposes only and no vendor will be selected, pre-qualified, or exempted based upon their RFI participation.

2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As the primary data ingestion tool that will be replaced through this effort, our current Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) requires the export and upload of data from various district level Student Information Systems (SIS) into the state SLDS tool. Implementation of a single system for district level and state level use would reduce the latency of data from collection to utilization as well as variability in data standards and practices across LEAs. In addition to the replacement of SLDS reporting AOE is looking to incorporate other parallel data collection efforts into the scope of statewide SIS as appropriate,

Streamlining the method and means for executing on data verification, quality, and feedback support would allow the organization to shift resources to data analysis and downstream value-added processes. The following is an excerpt from our [SLDS Project Lessons Learned Whitepaper](#) published January 16th, 2020. “The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) believes that data help us understand the world around us and the work we do to ensure the success of Vermont learners. By using data well, we can properly and transparently guide our leadership, support and oversight of Vermont’s education system. Therefore, it is an institutional and statewide strategic priority to collect, steward and leverage data in modern, responsible, secure and scientifically sound ways.

The AOE began to engage with this priority after receiving a federal grant via the FY12 State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) program.

That grant project was structured with a 3-year timeline to implement a centralized tool that brought previously separate datasets together to give educational stakeholders a unified collection point and reporting platform. However, the project met various challenges, including delays in procurement, staffing and resource constraints (technical and human), challenges with the vendors, the addition of competing largescale data/IT projects during the SLDS project lifecycle and difficulties in executing a robust stakeholder engagement effort. These challenges prevented the project from fully reaching the federal grant program’s goals or meeting the state’s needs to modernize and leverage data well.

Coupled with these hurdles, the technical debt that exists at the state level is often mirrored or more severe at the local district (SU/SD) level.”

Many districts do not have staff with the time nor the skills to work with the technical nature of our current SLDS. Due to this disconnect our internal SEA staff are forced to monitor and engage in laborious data quality work on LEA data submissions due to errors. Ideally, AOE would obtain the data directly from the LEA’s Student Information System. This would alleviate the workload on the LEA’s as they would only need to enter data into one system. They would correct any data errors in their local system, versus fixing them on the submission system, avoiding the same error being re-submitted at a future date. The State understands LEA’s currently use Student Information Systems to manage student data and as tools for communicating information to staff, students and parents. We understand the LEA’s will have needs from the system not required by the State. We will need the RFI to show the modularity of the solution and a demonstration of possible pricing structures in which the State can negotiate a base and allow the LEA’s to purchase add-ons at their own cost.

The Numbers

- **Approximately 80,000 K-12 Students living in VT**
- **292 Schools**
- **52 Supervisory Unions/Districts (LEA’s)**

3 RFI DESCRIPTION

The State is seeking information to determine options, approximate effort, and cost to streamline the data collection and reporting via the use of a single Statewide Student Information System. It is key to our initiative that the new solution service the needs of our LEA’s and resolve the State’s data collection and reporting pain points.

The RFI has 5 key objectives:

- Gather input and obtain information and cost estimates in proceeding with proposals to implement a Statewide Student Information system (SSIS).
 - We are seeking proposals including phased in functionality by module approach and pricing estimates for both a staggered onboarding of LEA's vs a Big Bang roll out and the pros and cons of each approach.
 - To better understand pricing structures that would start with Student and Staff master files, Transcript/Course taking and or scheduling (including teacher assignment), and Attendance Data , Behavior/Discipline modules, then phase in modules for , Special Education, English Language Learners, Career Technical Education, and Migrant in a staggered approach.
- Demonstrate a Proof of Concept for a Statewide Student Information System feeding data directly to our Enterprise Data Environment (EDE) to be consumed by the Federal Generate tool to automate Federal & State reporting utilizing the CEDS data model
 - Vendor to provide successful use cases of States utilizing a Statewide Student Information System to automate data quality processes as well as State and Federal reporting.
- Obtain information to assist the State in determining if identified requirements can be met by available software/hardware COTS (Commercial off the Shelf) alternatives.
- Plans and estimates for training both state and LEA staff on the Statewide SIS
- Provide information and options on data migration efforts for LEA's with existing SIS systems to move to a Statewide SIS.

The State is seeking feedback on the information in this RFI and will consider any information, including partial responses, received in response to this RFI. If the State moves forward in the development of an RFP, the RFP process will be open to all respondents regardless of their decision to participate in this RFI.

The State envisions that the solution will support the following high-level goals:

- To facilitate consistent LEA record-keeping in a manner that reduces the operational burden to LEAs and increases the accuracy of data that the Agency reports to various stakeholders.
- Collect and manage data in one system, for Local Education Agencies to share with the AOE core requirements for Federal and State mandated reports.
- All K-12 Schools sharing a consistent implementation of core data modules (e.g. student and staff master files, attendance, course taking/transcripts (including teacher assignment), behavior/discipline data management, etc.) to facilitate scaling of processes, training, and opportunities for LEAs to share resources, learn from one another, and for AOE to deploy global fixes to the entire state in a uniform, seamless fashion
- Ability to automate data quality processes for faster data amendment processes between LEAs and the AOE.
- Ability to add to the platform in a modular fashion (e.g. additional modules can be phased in over time).
- A solution capable of integrating with data tools such as EdFi and the CEDS data model to move and structure data for both upstream (EdFi) and downstream (CEDS model) work.
- All submitted data will meet Federal reporting data standards
- SEA level reporting modules or API capability that can support auto refresh of VT AOE Data Analysis tools and platforms

4 CURRENT STATE

The current state of data quality and efficiency in management practices is largely variable among LEAs. Individual relationships between LEAs and SIS providers have resulted in a lack of standard system setup, challenges in staffing and a complex line of communication to address changes in reporting needs.

The current state data architecture reflects a siloed program structure for which data is collected for particular programs. The application architecture is designed in largely one-way transition of data from LEA to SEA. For the primary collections, LEA's must submit data via our SLDS platform or by submitting flat files. The number one complaint about the EdFusion platform is that it is not intuitive. The supporting documentation provided to LEA's was technical in nature and many LEA's without data expertise find the system a burden. The system also lacks all business rules to ensure clean data. It can take hours for LEA's to submit data. State staff must then review submissions for errors and work with the LEA's to fix the errors. An example is students submitted twice by conflicting LEA's. Ideally that would be caught via rules in the SSIS at the time of entry for the LEA's allowing them to resolve the issue prior to submission. The state relies on LEA's to submit data in a timely fashion and due to the system complexity, this does not happen, and our staff is burdened with chasing down submissions. The new solution would streamline and automate these efforts to avoid multiple touch points in the reporting processes with one source of truth being the SSIS.

Additionally, because the solution would be an everyday tool used operationally on the ground in LEAs across the state, the burden of collecting data at given times during the year would be reduced, as LEAs would be doing so as part of their core functions in running their education system on a daily basis.

Given the current design of the statewide system of people and technology, data reporting for the LEAs is an additional activity that is required but provides little value to the LEAs. At the same time, disparate SIS systems at the LEA level creates an inability for the SEA to provide direction, support or guidance at the everyday administration of data. This has resulted in limiting the SEA to focus on specifications, transmission and validation of data in the official submission process.

5 STATEMENT OF WORK

5.1 ANTICIPATED REQUIREMENTS

The purpose of this RFI is to determine if there are solutions capable of meeting the State's anticipated requirements and to determine alternatives for meeting those requirements that are consistent with the overall vision for the Agency of Education and the State.

The State's discovery efforts to date have resulted in a desire to obtain access to solutions with the following attributes:

5.1.1 Business/Functional Requirements

SEE ATTACHED Statewide Student Information System Backlog.xlsx

5.1.2 Non-Functional/Technical Requirements

ID#	REQUIREMENT	YES/NO	VENDOR COMMENTS
1. Non-Functional/Technical Requirements			
1.1	Any technical solution must be hosted in a data center and must provide for back-up and disaster recovery models and plans as needed for the solution		
1.2	Any solutions vendor must provide for application management and design standard of all technology platforms and environments for the application solution (Development, Staging, Productions, DR, etc.)		
1.3	The State owns any data they enter, migrate, or transmit into the solution and the vendor shall allow the State to pull or copy this data at any time free of charge.		
1.4	As a contract deliverable, the vendor shall supply an up-to-date data dictionary that represents all data respective of the solution it will provide		
1.5	<p>As a solution vendor, you must have documented and implemented security practices for the following and have a process to audit/monitor for adherence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input validation • Output encoding • Authentication and password management • Session management • Access control • Cryptographic practices • error handling and logging • Data protection (from unauthorized use, modification, disclosure or destruction) • Communication security • Database security • File management • Memory management • Fraud Detection 		

1.6	Vendor will adhere to Risk Assessment Practices including but not limited to vulnerability assessment and pen testing		
1.7	Product data model needs to be CEDS compliant		
1.8	System should function in SOA (Service Oriented Architecture) environment to provide flexibility for future 3 rd party integrations.		
1.9	Provide information on preferred operational data store/API platforms such as but not limited to SIF or Ed-Fi for moving transactional data to reporting and long-term storage on the CEDS platform.		

5.1.3 On-Going Maintenance/Service Level Requirements

ID#	REQUIREMENT	VENDOR COMMENTS
2. On-Going Maintenance/Service Level Requirements		
2.1	Any solutions vendor must engage the State of Vermont using Service Level Agreements for system and application performance, incident reporting and maintenance. Please describe the maintenance and service plans that you provide for your solution.	
2.2	Please describe the plans for training and supporting new users. (Both at initial implementation and for users onboarding after the initial implementation.)	

6 REQUESTED INFORMATION

Each submission prepared in response to this RFI must include the elements listed below, in the order indicated.

The vendor, when presenting the response, must use the following outline:

- Cover Page
- Vendor Information
- Cost Estimates
- Business and Technical Requirements

6.1 COVER PAGE

The first page of the vendor's RFI Response must be a cover page displaying at least the following:

- Response of RFI Title
- Vendor's Name
- Contact Person
- Telephone Number
- Address
- Fax Number
- Email Address

All subsequent pages of the RFI Response must be numbered.

6.2 VENDOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Please provide your answers to the stated questions related to the project. Additional information may supplement your answers and must be attached to the RFI response.

6.3 CONTACT INFORMATION

All communications concerning this Request for Information (RFI) are to be addressed in writing to the attention of: Stephen Fazekas, State of Vermont, Office of Purchasing & Contracting, **109 State Street - Montpelier, VT 05609-3001**. Stephen Fazekas is the sole contact for this RFI Response. Attempts by RFI Responders to contact any other party could result in the rejection of their RFI Response.

6.4 RFI RESPONSE SUBMISSION

CLOSING DATE: The closing date for the receipt of RFI Responses is 4:30 PM May 11, 2020. **Responses** must be delivered to: Stephen Fazekas, State of Vermont, Office of Purchasing & Contracting, **via email:** Stephen.Fazekas@vermont.gov, prior to that time. RFI Responses or unsolicited amendments submitted after that time will not be accepted and will be returned to the vendor.

The responses will be received by purchasing **via email** and will be passed on to Agency of Education for review.

RFI responses must be electronic. The electronic response made to the narrative portion of this RFI must be in Microsoft Word version 2007 compatible format. At least one copy of the Cost Table and Business and Technical Requirements must be made in Microsoft Excel Version 2007 or higher.

6.5 EXPLANATION OF EVENTS

1. Issuance of RFI

This RFI is being issued by the Office of Purchasing & Contracting, Department of Buildings and General Services Department. Additional copies of the RFI can be obtained from the State Purchasing Division web site <http://bgs.vermont.gov/purchasing> or directly from the State Purchasing Agent.

2. Deadline for Written Questions

Potential respondents may submit questions regarding this RFI. Questions must be submitted in writing, by e-mail, to the Purchasing Agent Stephen Fazekas at Stephen.Fazekas@vermont.gov and must be received by 4:30 PM Eastern Time on April 23, 2020.

3. Response to Written Questions

Any vendor requiring clarification of any section of this proposal or wishing to comment or take exception to any requirements or other portion of the RFI must submit specific questions in writing no later than April 23, 2020, at 4:30PM. Questions may be e-mailed to stephen.fazekas@vermont.gov. Any objection to the RFI or to any provision of the RFI, that is not raised in writing on or before the last day of the question period is waived. At the close of the question period a copy of all questions or comments and the State's responses will be posted on the State's web site <http://bgs.vermont.gov/purchasing/bids>. Every effort will be made to have these available as soon after the question period ends, contingent on the number and complexity of the questions.

4. Submission of Responses

Electronic submission should be delivered to the Purchasing Agent no later than 3:00 PM Eastern Time on May 11, 2020. Responses received after the due date and time may not be considered.

Responses should be labeled, "Response to RFIAOE Statewide Student Information System".

5. Review and Evaluation of Responses

The review and evaluation of responses to the RFI will be performed by Agency of Education and their designees. The evaluation process will take place the week following the response due date. During this time, the RFI Manager or other Agency of Education representatives may, at their option, initiate discussion with respondents for the purpose of clarifying aspects of their responses.

6. Vendor Demonstration of Their Product

Vendors chosen from the review process may be called on to demonstrate their products and/or service offering. These select vendors will make arrangements with Agency of Education to demonstrate their products and/or service offering. The Agency of Education shall not be liable for any costs incurred by the vendor in preparation of its demonstration. All costs occurred are the vendor's sole responsibility. All demonstrations are for planning purposes only and do not constitute a legal bid.

7. Vendor Product Test Trial

Certain Vendor products and/or service offering may be selected after review process to be trialed by Agency of Education, if this is an option allowable by the vendor. The test trial can last up to 90 days. Up to 2 vendors products selected will be involved with the test trial. The Agency of Education staff will provide feedback to the RFI Manager. **The selection of vendor products for a test trial does not commit the Agency of Education or the State of Vermont to award a contract. This test trial is for information gathering purposes only and no vendor will be selected, pre-qualified, or exempted based upon their RFI / test trial participation. All costs occurred are the vendor's sole responsibility. All product test trials are for planning purposes only and do not constitute a legal bid.**

7 VENDOR QUESTIONNAIRE

We are asking for a total cost estimate (low and high estimates) comprised of software, hardware, and necessary implementation services including data migration. We understand that the cost figures provided are for planning purposes only and will not be binding in any way.

8 APPENDIX A: COST ESTIMATE WORKSHEET

8.1: COST ESTIMATE TABLE

Item	General Requirements Description	Cost
1	Student Demographic, Enrollment/Registration, Attendance, Staffing/Personnel, Transcripts/course work (including teacher assignment), Behavior/Discipline Module	
2	Data Migration (for item #1 above)	
3	Implementation Training and Onboarding user (internal and external) (for item #1 above)	
4	PLP/Proficiency Module (including data migration, training and onboarding)	
5	Special Education (SPED) Module (including data migration, training and onboarding)	
6	Career Tech Ed (CTE) Module (including data migration, training and onboarding)	
7	English Language Learner (ELL) Module (including data migration, training and onboarding)	
8	Migrant/Homeless Module (including data migration, training and onboarding)	
9	Food Service Module (including data migration, training and onboarding)	
10	Assessment Module (including data migration, training and onboarding)	

8.2 ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

Please provide any other materials, suggestions, cost, and discussion you deem appropriate.