

Request for Proposals

Professional Services to Support Redesign Efforts in Comprehensive, Low-Performing High Schools

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**Connecticut State Department of Education
Turnaround Office**

**Stefan Pryor
Commissioner of Education**

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Low-Performing High Schools**

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Request for Proposals

I. Overview

There are dozens of low-performing high schools in Connecticut, many of which are concentrated in the state's 30 Alliance Districts. With a few exceptions, past efforts to address underperformance in these comprehensive high schools have failed to generate necessary and/or lasting results. Given the urgent need to improve student achievement, the Connecticut State Department of Education ("CSDE") is eager to support district and school teams in their high school redesign efforts. A growing body of research supports converting large, comprehensive high schools into small learning communities (SLCs) or autonomous academies within a larger school campus. To that end, the Turnaround Office seeks a provider(s) willing and able to offer the services described in Section II of this Request for Proposals ("RFP").

II. Outline of Work

A. Purpose:

The purpose of this RFP is to identify a proven provider(s) able to offer the professional services listed below, or some combination thereof, to support district and school teams in transforming comprehensive, low-performing high schools into high-achieving SLCs or autonomous academies. It is expected that these services will lead to significant gains in student achievement.

B. Scope and Activities:

The CSDE Turnaround Office seeks a provider willing and able to:

1. Lead and facilitate school redesign efforts in partnership with school and district administrators;
2. Offer strategies, models, and exemplars for converting large comprehensive high schools into SLCs or autonomous academies;
3. Support school teams in developing actionable school reform plans, including strategies for staffing, leadership, professional development, scheduling, budgeting, partnerships, and academic programming;
4. Provide ongoing advising to school and district leaders as they begin to operationalize school reform plans;
5. Support district teams in identifying partners for thematic SLCs or autonomous academies;
6. Provide and facilitate site visits to high-performing high schools successfully employing the SLC or autonomous academy model;
7. Support family and community engagement efforts around the redesign process and SLC model;
8. Serve as a Lead Partner responsible for managing school operations and implementing SLCs or autonomous academies; and/or
9. Collaborate with the CSDE to establish monitoring tools and processes to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of high school redesign efforts.

C. Deliverables:

1. **Facilitated School Planning:** The provider will facilitate strategic planning sessions with school, district, and state administrators leading high school redesign efforts. The partner will support schools individually and as a cohort as they assess local needs and design comprehensive plans and strategies to actualize the SLC or autonomous academy model.
2. **Best Practice Research and Tools:** The partner will support school redesign conversations by providing access to a suite of tools and resources, and evidence-based best practices, models, and exemplars. The partner must provide tools and strategies in all areas necessary for planning and execution, including but not limited to: staffing; school leadership; professional development; scheduling; budgeting; partnerships; and academic programming. The partner must also facilitate visits to high-performing schools implementing the SLC or autonomous academy model.
3. **Implementation Support:** The partner must support teams as they launch their high school redesign plans. The partner must provide periodic on-site and ongoing remote advising and implementation support. The partner must support school and district leaders in creating project management systems and tools to implement school plans, including the proper sequencing and rollout of elements of the SLC or autonomous academy model. The partner will support the identification of and outreach to potential partners for thematic SLCs or autonomous academies. The partner will support community engagement efforts around the design and rollout of the new school model.

D. Outcomes:

By partnering with a proven provider to offer the professional services described herein, the Turnaround Office aims to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Dramatically increase student achievement in comprehensive, low-performing high schools.
2. Facilitate the school redesign process in chronically underperforming high schools;
3. Build the capacity of school and district staff to implement the SLC or autonomous academy model;
4. Provide evidence-based strategies to successfully replicate and employ the SLC or autonomous academy model; and
5. Support the successful adoption of the SLC or autonomous academy model in up to seven comprehensive high schools across the state, building a community of practice for high school redesign.

E. Timeline:

The anticipated start date of the contract(s) potentially resulting from this RFP is May 1, 2014. The provider(s) would be expected to collaborate with the CSDE and participating districts and schools during spring and summer of 2014 to conduct school needs analyses, develop school plans, and prepare

for full implementation for the start of the 2014-15 school year. From August 2014 to July 2015, the provider(s) would be expected to support the implementation of high school redesign plans, including the successful adoption of the SLC or autonomous academy model.

III. Contractor Qualifications

The CSDE is seeking proposals from providers who:

1. Have the necessary capacity and infrastructure to deliver on elements listed in Sections II.B (“Scope and Activities”) and II.C (“Deliverables”).
2. Have demonstrated an ability to partner with comprehensive, low-performing high schools and can point to growth in student performance resulting from the delivery of professional services similar to those described herein.
3. Are willing to work collaboratively with the CSDE and partner schools and districts by adapting to local context to successfully implement the services outlined herein.
4. Have the ability to offer services beginning in spring 2014.

Proposers must submit references from schools and/or districts in which they have offered similar services in order to prove their qualifications (see Section IV.A.2.). Proposers must also submit sample work products indicative of the deliverables, or some combination thereof, summarized in Section II.C (“Deliverables”).

IV. Proposal Requirements

A. Required Format:

1. Description of Service Model and Approach

In no more than two pages, excluding sample work products: Please describe your organization’s services and approach to high school redesign using the SLC or autonomous academy model. Describe your organization’s vision and beliefs as pertaining to the school model, its core components, and how to successfully employ and replicate the model in a comprehensive, low-performing high school in Connecticut. Describe how your organization would work with a district and school team to design and fully implement robust school plans, leading to the successful adoption of the school model and, ultimately, gains in student achievement. Please include your organization’s strategies to operationalize and support work in each of the areas described in Section II (“Outline of Work”). Provide sample work products indicative of the deliverables, or some combination thereof, summarized in Section II.C (“Deliverables”); such samples may not exceed ten pages.

2. Experience and Track Record

In no more than two pages: Please describe and provide examples of your organization’s experience designing and implementing the SLC or autonomous academy model, and using that approach to significantly improve student achievement and sustain growth and results over time.

Please include: (a) a list of schools and/or districts that you have supported and student achievement data demonstrating the effectiveness of your services; (b) a summary of key goals and how success is measured in similar engagements; and (c) the name and contact information for three references in a school and/or district in which your organization has operated in a similar capacity.

3. Staffing Model

In no more than one page: Please provide an overview of your staffing model and a short narrative detailing the roles of key staff involved in your current engagements. Please outline who would be working with the CSDE, districts, and schools in order to fulfill the responsibilities outlined in Section II, and with what frequency.

4. Cost Information

In no more than one page: Please provide an overview of the costs associated with your organization's model. Include a detailed menu of services, including the intensity of services (e.g., duration and staffing) and associated costs for each service. Acceptable costs could include staffing, programs, supplies, subcontracts with vendors to provide supplemental services, operations, overhead, etc. Identify the cost structure (e.g., per pupil, per school) and whether costs are variable or fixed. If appropriate, please separate costs associated with the planning phase versus full implementation.

B. Minimum Submission Requirements:

The minimum submission requirements for an acceptable proposal are detailed below; any proposal that does not meet these requirements will be deemed unacceptable and ineligible for further review and consideration.

1. Meeting the submission deadline of March 14, 2014.
2. Submitting a complete proposal by following the required format, outlined in Section IV.A.
3. Submitting any required forms and attachments, including the references requested in Section IV.A.2. and sample deliverables requested in Section IV.A.1.

C. Contract Period:

The anticipated start date of the contract(s) potentially resulting from this RFP is May 1, 2014, and the anticipated end date is July 1, 2015. The CSDE reserves the right to extend the contract(s), or parts thereof, for a period up to or exceeding the full original contract(s) term with mutual consent between both parties.

D. Contract Award:

The CSDE reserves the right to award contract(s) in a manner deemed to be in the best interest of the State.

E. Stability of Proposed Prices:

Any price offerings from proposers must be valid for a period of 120 days from the due date of the proposals.

F. Amendment or Cancellation of the RFP:

The CSDE reserves the right to cancel, amend, modify or otherwise change this RFP at any time if it deems it to be in the best interest of the State to do so. The CSDE, at its option, may seek proposer retraction and/or clarification of any discrepancy or contradiction found during its review of proposals.

G. Proposer Presentation of Supporting Evidence:

Proposers may be invited to present to the CSDE, at the CSDE's full discretion, providing additional evidence of experience, performance, ability, and/or financial surety that the CSDE deems to be necessary or appropriate to fully establish the performance capabilities represented in their proposals.

H. Proposer Demonstration of Proposed Services and/or Products:

At the discretion of the CSDE, proposers must be able to confirm their ability to provide all proposed services. Any required confirmation must be provided at a site approved by the CSDE and without cost to the State.

I. Erroneous Awards:

The CSDE reserves the right to correct inaccurate awards. This may include, in extreme circumstances, revoking the awarding of a contract already made to a proposer and subsequently awarding the contract to another proposer. Such action on the part of the CSDE shall not constitute a breach of contract on the part of the CSDE since the contract with the initial proposer is deemed to be void and of no effect as if no contract ever existed between the CSDE and such proposer.

J. Proposal Expenses:

Proposers are responsible for all costs and expenses incurred in the preparation of proposals and for any subsequent work on the proposal that is required by the CSDE.

K. Ownership of Proposals:

All proposals shall become the sole property of the State and will not be returned. All of the information contained in a proposal submitted in response to this RFP is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Section 1-200 et seq. of the Connecticut General Statutes. The FOIA declares that, except as provided by federal law or state statute, records maintained or kept on file by any public agency (as defined in statute) are public records and every person has a right to inspect such records and receive a copy of such records.

L. Ownership of Subsequent Products:

Any product, whether acceptable or unacceptable, developed under a contract awarded as a result of this RFP shall be the sole property of the State unless otherwise stated in the contract.

M. Oral Agreement or Arrangements:

Any alleged oral agreements or arrangements made by proposers with any State agency or employee will be disregarded in any State proposal evaluation or associated award.

N. Subcontractors:

CSDE must approve any and all subcontractors utilized by the successful proposer prior to any such subcontractor commencing any work. Proposers acknowledge by the act of submitting a proposal that any work provided under the contract is work conducted on behalf of the State and that the Commissioner of Education or his/her designee may communicate directly with any subcontractor as the State deems to be necessary or appropriate. It is also understood that the successful proposer shall be responsible for all payment of fees charged by the subcontractor(s). Upon request, a performance evaluation of any subcontractor shall be provided promptly by the proposer to the CSDE. The proposer must provide the majority of services described in the specifications.

V. Selection Criteria

A selection committee will review and score all proposals. The following information, in addition to the requirements, terms and conditions identified throughout this RFP, will be considered as part of the selection process:

- A. Description of Service Model and Approach:** Clarity and strength of the organization’s programs, services, and work process and products, as exemplified by sample deliverables.
- B. Experience and Track Record:** Outcomes and experiences of the organization and its staff in contributing to dramatic school improvement, as measured by gains in student achievement; a proven ability to lead high school redesign processes and meaningfully impact student achievement, as evidenced by letters of reference and outcome data.
- C. Staffing Model:** Coherent staffing model explaining the organization’s leadership structure and proposed plans to staff the engagement with experienced and talented professionals.
- D. Cost Information:** Substantiation and explanation of costs associated with the work being proposed by the proposer.

VI. Instructions to Proposers

A. Proposal Schedule:

CSDE releases the RFP.	February 18, 2014
Proposers submit questions to the CSDE.	February 28, 2014
CSDE responds to proposers' questions and posts answers to questions as an Addendum to the RFP.	March 3, 2014
Proposers submit RFP responses by the deadline.	March 14, 2014

During the period from your organization's receipt of this RFP, and until a contract is awarded, your organization shall not contact any employee of the State of Connecticut for additional information, except in writing, directed to the Procurement Contact listed on the cover page of this document, at Connecticut State Department of Education, Turnaround Office, 165 Capitol Avenue, Room 249, Hartford, CT 06106.

B. Questions:

Questions for the purpose of clarifying this RFP must be submitted in writing and must be received no later than noon on February 28, 2014, in the State of Connecticut. Questions must be emailed to andrew.ferguson@ct.gov. Answers to questions received will be posted as an Addendum to this RFP.

C. Proposals:

All responses to this solicitation must be submitted as follows:

Proposal must include 5 complete copies and must be stamped in as received, by 4:00 p.m. eastern time on Friday, March 14, 2014, at:

The Connecticut State Department of Education
Turnaround Office, Room 249
c/o Lisa Carta-Corriveau
165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106

**Expedited services (Fed Ex, USPS, UPS) are acceptable providing a signed receipt identifies the delivery time prior to the above stated time.

VII. Submittal Requirements

Request for Proposal Responses (Page Limit: 6 pages)

Description of Service Model and Approach	(2 pages)
Experience and Track Record	(2 pages)
Staffing Model	(1 page)
Cost Information	(1 page)

Required Attachments

- 3 professional references
- Sample deliverables/work products (up to 10 pages)

VIII. Contract

This RFP is not a contract and, alone, shall not be interpreted as such. Rather, this RFP only serves as the instrument through which proposals are solicited. The CSDE will pursue negotiations with the first selected proposer(s). If, for some reason, the CSDE and the first selected proposer(s) fail to agree to a contract, then the CSDE may commence contract negotiations with other proposers. The CSDE may decide, at any time, to start the RFP process again.

IX. Appendix A: RFP Rubric

Proposer:	Total Score:
	_____/100

Section	1 - Below	2 - Partially Meets	3 - Meets	4 - Exceeds
Description of Service Model and Approach	Offers insufficient information regarding the organization's model and approach to delivering the programs and services solicited through the RFP.	Offers a somewhat clear explanation of the organization's programs and services that could be strengthened by greater detail and specificity.	Offers a comprehensive and well-written explanation of the organization's programs and services solicited through the RFP.	Offers an exceptionally clear, comprehensive, and compelling description of the organization's programs and services solicited through the RFP.
Experience and Track Record	Provides insufficient evidence of the organization's track record, success, and experiences driving results with schools and/or districts.	Provides some evidence to suggest the organization's efficacy driving results with schools and/or districts; evidence suggests moderate or inconsistent impact.	Provides sufficient evidence to validate the organization's track record, success, and experiences driving results with schools and/or districts.	Provides ample evidence of the organization's effectiveness in the field; demonstrates strong results and the ability to replicate that success.
Staffing Model	Provides insufficient information regarding the organization's leadership structure and staffing model for the engagement outlined in the RFP.	Begins to describe the organization's leadership structure and staffing model; however, there are outstanding questions regarding capacity for the partnership.	Articulates the organization's leadership structure and proposed plans to staff the engagement with experienced and talented professionals.	Fully describes the organization's leadership structure and proposed staffing model, inspiring confidence in the organization's capacity to impact achievement.
Cost Information	Fails to provide cost information and/or cost information is unclear and lacks alignment with the organization's proposed services and staffing model.	Provides some cost information; however, the presentation may be disorganized or lack detail and alignment to the services requested through the RFP.	Provides adequate cost information, including a breakdown of the proposed services and staffing structure aligned to the RFP.	Provides clear and sufficient cost information aligned to the proposed services and staffing structure, showing justifications for all costs.
References	Fail to inspire confidence in the organization's programs, services, and track record with schools and/or districts.	Provide testimonials that may be inconsistent with one another and/or do not sufficiently describe the partner's past work and impact on achievement.	Offer strong testimonials speaking to the organization's effectiveness and impact; may lack specificity around the partnership.	Offer consistent and powerful endorsements validating the partner's organizational effectiveness and impact on student achievement.
Sample Deliverables	Provide lackluster sample tools and work products that raise serious questions about the organization's approach and/or capacity.	Provide sample work products that are of fair or inconsistent quality, and/or fail to align to the needs outlined in the RFP.	Provide strong sample tools and work products that fully align to the needs identified throughout the RFP.	Provide exemplary and actionable sample work products that align to the RFP and are likely to benefit students and educators in the State.

Section	Score	Weighting	Total Points
Description of Service Model and Approach		x 6	_____/24
Experience and Track Record		x 6	_____/24
Staffing Model		x 3	_____/12
Cost Information		x 2	_____/8
References		x 2	_____/8
Sample Deliverables		x 6	_____/24
Total Score:			_____/100