

Addendum to RFP Number 14SDE0015RFP¹

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

March 3, 2014

1. How many districts have been identified/selected by the State to participate in this work?

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has not yet identified schools and districts to participate in the high school redesign process. For more information on possible participants, please reference the CSDE's list of low-performing Turnaround, Focus, and Review schools found [here](#).

2. How many schools have been identified/selected by the State to participate? How many are elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools?

Please note that this RFP is for a high school redesign partner. Elementary and middle schools will not be involved in this work. Please reference the response to question #1 regarding school participation.

3. Can the State share its estimates for how many coaches are needed per school? Can coaches work at more than one school? If so, how many schools?

The RFP does not make an explicit reference to "coaches". Please provide detailed information on your staffing model and the types/level of staffing necessary to support high school redesign through the successful execution of your proposal.

4. Is it expected that the coach position will be full-time (i.e., at the school each day)? If not, can the State share the estimated number of days coached are expected to work in the schools?

The RFP does not make an explicit reference to "coaches". Please provide detailed information on your staffing model and the types/level of staffing necessary to support high school redesign through the successful execution of your proposal.

5. Do coaches have to be licensed teachers? If so, must they be licensed in Connecticut?

The RFP does not make an explicit reference to "coaches". Please provide detailed information on your staffing model and the types/level of staffing necessary to support high school redesign through the successful execution of your proposal.

6. What is the budget for this program?

Please include a detailed cost summary, outlining costs necessary to successfully deliver the staffing, services, and/or products described in your proposal.

7. The page restrictions for each section of the proposal are noted. If additional detail is deemed necessary to adequately respond to the specifications, may this information be included in an appendix?

¹ Please note that duplicative questions submitted by multiple respondents are listed once.

The CSDE will consider required sections and appendices when evaluating responses. This does not preclude an organization from submitting additional materials; however, these will not be considered in the formal review and scoring of applications.

8. Does the CSDE prefer vendors that bring comprehensive models for redesign that the CSDE can essentially replicate, or is it interested in engaging vendors who have experience providing technical assistance related to best practices for schools in transformation/turnaround/redesign?

Vendors should describe their evidence-based approach to supporting and advising schools and districts around high school redesign. The CSDE will not prescribe what this should consist of or look like. Please note that the CSDE is committed to locally-driven reform processes that are replicable, yet responsive to local context and need.

9. Will the CSDE engage multiple vendors?

The CSDE may make multiple awards.

10. Does the CSDE have preference for a local vendor?

No. Please reference the application scoring rubric.

11. Can out-of-state vendors be awarded a contract?

Yes. Out-of-state vendors are in no way precluded from responding to this RFP.

12. What vendors has the CSDE previously engaged in this work?

In recent years, the CSDE has not engaged a vendor(s) explicitly for this type of partnership and work.

13. Will the schools that are chosen for this transformation be part of the Commissioner's Network? If so, will the provider have the ability to implement changes to the hours and schedules of teachers and administrators at the school, the length and schedule of the school day, the length and calendar of the school year, the amount of time teachers shall be present in the school beyond the regular school day, and the hiring or reassignment of teachers and administrators at the school?

The CSDE has yet to identify specific schools. It is possible that some schools may be a part of the Commissioner's Network. Any proposed school-level changes must be based on student needs and developed in collaboration with all stakeholders.

14. What district and school supports will be given to providers? Will there be staff directly accountable for this work at the district level and/or school level?

The CSDE will work with the provider and school and district leaders to ensure successful partnerships. Participating schools and districts will be asked to identify a primary liaison to lead communication and collaboration with the provider. The provider is expected to work collaboratively with school and district leaders to establish productive working relationships.

15. May proposers list conditions needed for success at the district and school level?

Yes. Terms and conditions will be negotiated in more detail with the selected provider(s).

16. What steps will be taken if during the diagnostic audit the successful proposer determines that the school leader is not capable of implementing the proposed transformation?

The CSDE and provider would need to have conversations with district leadership outlining these concerns and proposing a specific course of action for the district/school. In most circumstances, school leadership decisions are local decisions.

17. May the proposers specify their proposed number of schools and geographic preferences?

Yes.

18. What resources will the CSDE make available to winning proposers to help identify local community partners in each district in which a school is awarded?

The CSDE will work with partners to help identify local community partners. The provider would also be expected to forge these relationships.

19. Will successful proposers have the ability to modify their models and plans based on specific diagnostic data related to each assigned school?

Yes. The CSDE expects plans to be responsive to local context and need; therefore, data-informed midcourse corrections and modifications are encouraged.

20. Is there a vision for how often the cohort of identified high schools should be brought together to collaborate (monthly, quarterly, up to the provider)?

Cohort activities are up to the provider. These can happen frequently or not at all, so long as the provider outlines a compelling plan to achieve the goals outlined in the RFP.

21. Is there state funding currently allocated to support the work outlined in the high school redesign?

The CSDE will invest in a high school redesign partner(s), as solicited through this RFP. The CSDE has a number of school-level grant opportunities that districts can pursue in support of school-level reform. For more information, please visit the CSDE's Alliance District [webpage](#).

22. Are there existing partners involved in supporting these schools? If so, is it anticipated that these partnerships will remain in place?

It is likely that some schools already have partnerships in place. The high school redesign partner will be expected to work collaboratively with all partners engaged at the school. The provider and school and district leaders may ultimately decide to increase or decrease the number of partnerships at the school as part of the redesign process.

23. Are we correct to assume that the seven high schools have been identified and made aware of this work?

The CSDE has not yet identified high schools for possible partnerships.

24. Will schools and districts have the option of working with the provider(s) or will their participation be mandated by the CSDE?

The CSDE anticipates and strongly prefers collaborative relationships with all stakeholders.

25. Is the state looking to create career-themed academies and/or career pathways?

The CSDE is not advocating for a particular approach.

26. Is the state expecting articulations with post-secondary institutions?

The CSDE is not advocating for particular partnerships.

27. Will there be a single contractor chosen, or will qualified contractors be part of a list of approved providers?

The CSDE anticipates awarding a contract(s) as a result of this RFP process.

28. Do we need to respond to all 9 elements within the Statement of Work?

No. Respondents should describe their ability to deliver on the services requested as part of the RFP. Please reference the RFP rubric for specific evaluation criteria.

29. Given the expressed goal of increasing student performance, do you anticipate extending the contract beyond one year?

As stated in the RFP in Section IV, Part C, the CSDE and provider may extend the contract contingent on results.

30. Will partner responses be accepted, meaning can two or more parties submit a response (prime, subcontractor)?

Yes. Please explain this relationship and the services to be provided in your RFP response.

31. What is the approximate value of the contract, and will the state be purchasing the services or individual districts?

Please include a detailed cost summary, outlining costs necessary to successfully deliver the staffing, services, and/or products described in your proposal. The partnership expected to result from this RFP process will be between the CSDE and the provider.

32. Approximately how many schools may need support from the external vendor and do they represent various levels of instruction or are they clustered around elementary or secondary needs?

The RFP indicates up to seven schools in Section II, Part D. The CSDE has not yet identified these schools.

33. The limited number of allowable pages will make it challenging to articulate our offerings/models and related expected outcomes. Will there be another opportunity later in the process for us to expand in written format and/or provide an oral presentation?

As stated in Section IV, Part G, the CSDE reserves the right to request additional information and/or in-person presentations.

34. What are the expected number of on-site consultation days per month anticipated for the External Provider's Project Leaders relative to their work with the CSDE's Turnaround Office and related state-level personnel? To provide school-based implementation Experts relative to their work with each individual low-performing high school assigned by the CSDE?

This will depend on the partner’s service delivery model. Please describe your evidence-based model in your proposal.

35. Will meetings of school personnel from different high schools in the same geographic area of the state be acceptable for some of the training, supervision, and coaching required in the RFP?

Yes.

36. Will CSDE personnel also be assigned to the low-performing high schools who will also work in collaboration with the External Provider? Specifically, will each low-performing school have someone from the CSDE assigned to it from the Turnaround Office?

Many of the schools likely to participate in this work fall within Alliance Districts. The Turnaround Office has designated staff members serving as liaisons to these districts. Some schools participating in special turnaround programs have school-specific Turnaround Office designees.

37. Has the CSDE already identified the “pool” of different “theme-oriented SLCs or academies” that a low-performing high school can or must select from relative to converting its comprehensive program into smaller SLCs or academies?

No. The CSDE will not advocate for a particular model or theme.

38. Where can we access the specifics of the CSDE’s current high school redesign model, and all existing monitoring tools and evaluation processes?

The CSDE does not have a prescriptive model for high school redesign. For more information on school improvement planning, please reference school-level planning templates available on the CSDE’s Alliance District [webpage](#).

39. Given that the number of leader and teachers populations requiring training have not been identified, when supplying pricing, should we just identify prices per cohort or per person?

Please consider including a detailed cost breakdown that addresses these variable costs (e.g., costs based on the size of the schools, personnel counts, etc.).

40. Have any of the seven schools already begun to do any planning for redesign? If so, what types of activities have already taken place? And are some schools more “ready to launch” than others (hence needing different types of support)?

It is possible that schools have already initiated planning conversations at the local level. However, the CSDE cannot comment on the specific status of schools’ planning efforts because the CSDE has yet to identify schools.

41. P. 4, Section B, Item 8: What is meant by “managing school operations”? To what extent would the service provider be responsible for this?

If a particular respondent has a track record of success in serving as a Lead Partner responsible for managing school operations, the respondent may express an interest in being considered for such a role.

42. P. 5, Section C, Item 3: Is there an expectation regarding the number of on-site visits that must be provided? What is meant by “project management systems”?

No. High school redesign is complex work. Respondents must provide evidence that they are able to support schools and districts in planning for and executing the redesign process.

43. P. 5, Section E: Will school personnel be available in the summer for planning and/or training?

This is possible.

44. P. 7, Item 3: Is the CSDE looking for staff to be named by name or is the person's title (with explanation of role) sufficient? How much detail is expected regarding frequency?

Please provide the level of detail that you believe qualifies as a strong response according to the evaluation rubric.

45. Does the CSDE have a preference regarding font size/type and line spacing?

No, but the font may not be smaller than size 10.

46. If the high schools that will undergo redesign have not yet been selected, how will they be selected? In particular, will high school voluntarily apply to participate or be expected to apply? For example, is the CSDE targeting a subset of Alliance Districts? Will the schools be selected from among the Commissioner's Network or Turnaround high schools?

The CSDE anticipates identifying schools based on student need and local interest.

47. What other reform initiatives might the redesign schools be engaged in or have commitment to that will require coordination with or incorporation into their SLC/academy redesign plans (e.g., SIG)?

The schools may also be participating in the Commissioner's Network, School Improvement Grant program, 1003(a) school improvement process, high school redesign bond competition, or other state and local reform efforts.

48. Will the contractor for this new effort be asked to coordinate with other organizations that have existing relationships with the redesign schools (e.g., Connecticut Council for Education Reform, LEAD Connecticut, Mass Insight Education)?

Respondents should be prepared to work collaboratively with all stakeholders contributing to school improvement at a state and local level.

49. Does the SEA expect all grade levels in participating high schools to be included in the redesign, or might they focus on Grade 9 or some other subset of grades?

To achieve optimal results, yes, the CSDE expects that all students ultimately benefit from this work.

50. What is the scope of the site visits – within Connecticut, within the area? Does staff time and travel need to be included in the budget for the site visits?

The provider may recommend site visits based on their experience, expertise, and knowledge. The CSDE will not necessarily impose geographic limits. Yes, the response should include all costs for service delivery.

51. Is there a competitive advantage to partnering with other provider organization(s) when submitting a proposal?

No.

52. What is the approval process/timeline?

Please reference the timelines provided in Sections II and IV of the RFP.

53. What amount of funding will be available per school to do this work and what is the source of this funding?

The CSDE has created a number of competitive school-level grants that districts can pursue to support this work. Additionally, many of these districts also qualify for Alliance and Priority School District funding that can support this work. For sustainability purposes, districts are also encouraged to use local funding in support of high school reform efforts.

54. Is the intent of this RFP to help the high schools plan and select a new model, with the understanding that the actual implementation of the model [will] take place after July 1, 2015?

The CSDE is not prescribing an exact timeline for schools. Specific timelines will be established in collaboration with schools, districts, partners, and the CSDE.

55. What is the role of the provider who wins the proposal? Is it to coordinate all services and/or provide technical assistance?

Please review the RFP Section II, Part B: Scope and Activities.

56. P. 4: The item indicates that the CSDE is seeking a provider that is willing and able to serve as a Lead Partner responsible for managing school operations and implementing SLCs or autonomous academies? Is this management/operations role a mandatory requirement?

No.

57. P. 4, 7: What is meant by the term “autonomous academies”? What are the characteristics of autonomous academies in terms of staffing?

Loosely defined, autonomous academies operate independently on a single high school campus. Autonomous academies have autonomy around staffing, scheduling, budgeting, and programming.

58. P. 5: Is it the case that there will be up to 7 schools involved in the entire initiative OR is it that each provider selected could work with up to 7 schools? Will administrators from the 7 schools mentioned be part of the process that determines which provide is selected?

The CSDE anticipates up to seven schools total. The CSDE will select a provider(s), given that schools have yet to be identified.

59. P. 5: What is the approximate number of students enrolled at each of the high schools to be served? Also, what specific grade levels will be served at each school?

For the purposes of competitive grants, the CSDE has defined “comprehensive high schools” as those serving more than 750 students. In order to meaningfully impact student achievement at scale, the CSDE expects redesign efforts to positively impact all students served by the high schools.

60. P. 6: What are the organizational differences between SLCs and autonomous academies?

In general terms, autonomous academies signify a greater level of autonomy and independence. The CSDE does not have precise definitions for these similar, yet unique reform methodologies.

61. P. 7: This item asks for a summary of key goals. Please clarify what key goals are being sought.

Please reference Section II, Part D of the RFP.

62. P. 7: Please confirm that all that is required for the three references mentioned are names and contact information and not a letter of reference.

Correct; contact information is sufficient.