

**State of Nebraska (Nebraska Department of Education)
REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

SOLICITATION NUMBER	RELEASE DATE
NDERFI240119	3/15/2024
OPENING DATE AND TIME	PROCUREMENT CONTACT
4/2/2024 2:00 p.m. Central Time	Jessica Javorsky

**PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!
SCOPE OF SERVICE**

DISCLAIMER: This notice is for informational purposes only. This is not a request for proposal or quote. It does not constitute a solicitation and shall not be construed as a commitment by the State of Nebraska. Responses in any form are not offers and the State of Nebraska is under no obligations to award a contract as a result of this announcement. No funds are available to pay for the preparation of responses to this announcement. Any information submitted by respondents is strictly voluntary.

INTRODUCTION: Responses to the RFI may be used to formulate final requirements and/or to identify qualified vendors capable of meeting those requirements. The description herein outlines preliminary requirements envisioned in developing learning platforms for use in schools to engage students in coursework and careers in science, technology, engineering, entrepreneurship, and mathematics. The information gathered may be used to formulate acquisition strategies for competitive solicitations.

Vendors should electronically submit one (1) original copy of the entire proposal (in PDF format) to nde.procurement@nebraska.gov.
Proposals must be submitted by the proposal due date and time.

BACKGROUND: The Nebraska Department of Education is issuing this Request for Information NDERFI240119 for the purpose of gathering information to understand what technical capabilities exist to implement learning platforms as prescribed in Nebraska Revised Statute 79-1054 Section 4.

ALL INFORMATION PERTINENT TO THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL CAN BE FOUND ON THE INTERNET AT:
<https://das.nebraska.gov/materiel/bidopps.html>.

RESPONDENT MUST COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING

By signing this Request for Information form, the respondent guarantees compliance with the provisions stated in this Request for Information.

FIRM: _____

COMPLETE ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____ FAX NUMBER: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

TYPED NAME & TITLE OF SIGNER: _____

Table of Contents

I.	SCOPE OF THE REQUEST FOR INFORMATION.....	3
A.	SCHEDULE OF EVENTS	3
II.	RFI RESPONSE PROCEDURES.....	4
A.	OFFICE AND CONTACT PERSON	4
B.	GENERAL INFORMATION	4
C.	CONTACT WITH STATE STAFF	4
D.	WRITTEN QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	4
E.	ORAL INTERVIEWS/PRESENTATIONS AND/OR DEMONSTRATIONS	5
F.	SUBMISSION OF RESPONSE	5
G.	PROPRIETARY INFORMATION	5
H.	REQUEST FOR INFORMATION OPENING	6
III.	PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND SCOPE OF WORK.....	6
A.	PROJECT OVERVIEW	6
B.	SCOPE OF WORK.....	6
C.	CONTENT	8
D.	DESIGN	8
E.	REPORTING.....	8
F.	PROJECT MANAGEMENT.....	8
G.	DELIVERABLES	9
	Form A Vendor Contact Sheet.....	10

I. SCOPE OF THE REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

The Nebraska Department of Education is issuing this Request for Information NDERFI240119 for the purpose of gathering information to understand what technical capabilities exist to implement learning platforms as prescribed in Nebraska Revised Statute 79-1054 Section 4. The responses to this RFI should include how a vendor will utilize a science, technology, engineering, entrepreneurship, and mathematics (STEEM) focused 3D game-based learning platform for high school and middle school students specific to chemistry, physical science classes, business, mathematics, and career and technical education (CTE) high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand (H3) careers career pathways. Included in the statewide license, the vendor shall provide:

- The platform framework, including all structure and tools needed to use the platform, including but not limited to student-teacher access, student-teacher resources, materials, lessons, coursework, libraries, and the ability to integrate with other State and LEA platforms.
- Toolkit for LEAs to implement and use the platform.
- Monitoring the platform, including protection of student data, student platform engagement, student mastery of the content standards, and reporting.

A. SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

The Department expects to adhere to the tentative procurement schedule shown below. It should be noted, however, that some dates are approximate and subject to change.

NOTE: All ShareFile links in the Schedule of Events below, are unique links for each schedule step. Please click the correct link for the upload step you are requesting.

Schedule of Events	
ACTIVITY	DATE/TIME
1. Release RFI	3/15/2024
2. Last day to submit written questions Send questions on: www.nde.procurement@nebraska.gov	3/22/2024
3. State responds to written questions through RFI "Addendum" and/or "Amendment" to be posted to the Internet at: http://das.nebraska.gov/materiel/bidopps.html	3/27/2024
4. RFI Submission Due Date – late proposals will not be accepted and will be returned unopened to Vendor.	4/2/2024 1:59 PM CST
5. RFI Opening – Online Via Zoom: IT IS THE VENDOR'S RESPONSIBILITY TO UPLOAD ELECTRONIC FILES BY OPENING DATE AND TIME. EXCEPTIONS WILL NOT BE MADE FOR TECHNOLOGY ISSUES. www.nde.procurement@nebraska.gov Join Zoom Meeting: https://educationne.zoom.us/j/96907773732	4/2/2024 2:00 PM Central Time
6. Evaluation period	4/3/2024 – 4/16/2024
7. Oral Interviews/Presentations and/or Demonstrations	Not intended

II. RFI RESPONSE PROCEDURES

A. OFFICE AND CONTACT PERSON

Procurement responsibilities related to this Request for Proposal reside with Nebraska Department of Education. The point of contact (POC) for the procurement is as follows:

RFI Number: NDERFI240119
Name: Jessica Javorsky
Agency: Nebraska Department of Education
Address: 500 S. 84th St., 2nd Floor
Lincoln, NE 68510-2611
Telephone: (402) 471-2295
E-Mail: NDE.Procurement@nebraska.gov

B. GENERAL INFORMATION

A subsequent Request for Proposal (RFP) may not be issued as a result of this RFI. There will not be a contract as a result of this RFI and the State is not liable for any cost incurred by vendors in replying to this RFI. If an RFP is issued, the information provided will assist the State of Nebraska in developing the Request for Proposal. This RFI does not obligate the State to reply to the RFI responses, to issue an RFP, or to include any RFI provisions or responses provided by vendors in any RFP.

C. CONTACT WITH STATE STAFF

From the date the Request for Information is issued until the RFI opening (as shown in the Schedule of Events), contact regarding this RFI between potential vendors and individuals employed by the State should be restricted to written communication with the staff designated above as the point of contact for this Request for Information.

The following exceptions to these restrictions are permitted:

1. Written communication with the person(s) designated as the point(s) of contact for this Request for Information;
2. Contacts made pursuant to any pre-existing contracts or obligations; and
3. State-requested presentations, key personnel interviews, clarification sessions, or discussions.

Violations of these conditions may be considered sufficient cause to reject a vendor's response to the RFI. No individual member of the State, employee of the State, or member of the Interview Committee is empowered to make binding statements regarding this RFI. The State of Nebraska will issue any clarifications or opinions regarding this RFI in writing.

D. WRITTEN QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Any explanation desired by a vendor regarding the meaning or interpretation of any Request for Information provision should be submitted in writing to the Nebraska Department of Education—Statewide Assessment and clearly marked “NDERFI240119; Questions”. It is preferred that questions be sent via e-mail to NDE.procurement@nebraska.gov.

It is recommended that respondent submit questions sequentially numbered, include the RFI reference and page number using the following format.

Question Number	RFI Section Reference	RFI Page Number	Question

Written answers will be posted at <https://das.nebraska.gov/materiel/bidopps.html> per the Schedule of Events.

E. ORAL INTERVIEWS/PRESENTATIONS AND/OR DEMONSTRATIONS

The State reserves the right to conduct oral interviews/presentations and/or demonstrations if required at the sole invitation of the State.

Any cost incidental to the oral interviews/presentations and/or demonstrations shall be borne entirely by the vendor and will not be compensated by the State.

F. SUBMISSION OF RESPONSE

The following describes the requirements related to the RFI submission, handling and review by the State.

The State is only accepting electronic responses submitted in accordance with this RFI. The State will not accept responses by mail, email, voice, or telephone, unless otherwise explicitly stated in writing by the State. It is the responsibility of the vendor to check the website for all information relevant to this RFI to include addenda and/or amendments issue prior to the opening date. The website can be found here: <https://das.nebraska.gov/materiel/bidopps.html>.

RFI responses must be submitted by the RFI due date and time. Vendors should electronically submit one (1) original copy of the entire proposal (in PDF format) to nde.procurement@nebraska.gov.

WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN YOUR RESPONSE:

1. Do submit succinct, thoughtful responses to the requirements/questions listed in this RFI.
2. Do submit comments that address the State’s requirements, assumptions, conditions, or contemplated approaches to this requirement.
3. Do submit information and suggestions that may encourage new, different, or innovative approaches that would result in products, solutions, and direct savings to the State of Nebraska.

A separate sheet must be provided that clearly states which sections have been submitted as proprietary or have copyrighted materials. RFI responses should reference the request for information number and be sent to the specified email address. The Request for Information number must be included in all correspondence.

G. PROPRIETARY INFORMATION

Data contained in the response and all documentation provided therein, become the property of the State of Nebraska and the data become public information upon opening the response. If the vendor wishes to have any information withheld from the public, such information must fall within the definition of proprietary information contained within Nebraska’s public record statutes. All proprietary information the vendor wishes the state to withhold must be submitted in a sealed package, which is separate from the remainder of the response. The separate package must be clearly marked PROPRIETARY on the outside of the package. Vendor may not mark their entire Request for Information as proprietary. Failure of the vendor to follow the instructions for submitting proprietary and copyrighted information may result in the information being viewed by other vendors and the public. Proprietary information is defined as trade secrets, academic and scientific research work which is in progress and unpublished, and other biNDERFI240119 information which if released would give advantage to business competitors and serve no public purpose (see Neb. Rev. Stat. § 84-712.05(3)). In accordance with Attorney General Opinions 92068 and 97033, vendors submitting information as proprietary may be required to prove specific, named competitor(s) who would be advantaged by release of the information and the specific advantage the

competitor(s) would receive. Although every effort will be made to withhold information that is properly submitted as proprietary and meets the State's definition of proprietary information, the State is under no obligation to maintain the confidentiality of proprietary information and accepts no liability for the release of such information.

H. REQUEST FOR INFORMATION OPENING

The sealed responses will be publicly opened and the responding entities announced on the date, time, and location shown in the Schedule of Events.

III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND SCOPE OF WORK

The Nebraska Department of Education is issuing this Request for Information NDERFI240119 for the purpose of gathering information to understand what technical capabilities exist to implement learning platforms as prescribed in Nebraska Revised Statute 79-1054 Section 4.

A. PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) is issuing this Request for Information (RFI) for the purpose of gathering information and understanding what technical capabilities exist to implement learning platform(s) that can be used in schools to engage students in coursework and careers in science, technology, engineering, entrepreneurship, and mathematics. Learning platform is defined in Nebraska Revised Statute 79-1054 as a three-dimensional (3-D), game-based learning platform for use by middle school and high school students. The learning platform must:

- a. Be designed to teach information related to chemistry and physical science, business, or mathematics;
- b. Align with the College and Career Readiness Content Standards and Career and Technical Education Content Standards established by the state board relating to chemistry and physical science, business, or mathematics;
- c. Connect content area standards with real-world technologies and applications;
- d. Highlights science, technology, engineering, entrepreneurship, and mathematics career pathways in Nebraska; and
- e. Meets any additional requirements set out by the State Board of Education, including unlimited 24/7 access to and use of the learning platform to all Nebraska school districts.

The respondent will describe how the three-dimensional game based learning platform will complement Nebraska's existing content standards and learning platforms – specific services and supports. Describe any factors or anticipated barriers that may directly or indirectly influence successful completion of the project and offer potential resolutions.

B. SCOPE OF WORK

Vendor needs to provide three-dimensional game-based learning platform that meets the below criteria. The platform shall have a variety of interactive 3D simulations and games that allow students to explore science, technology, engineering, entrepreneurship, and mathematics and careers in these content areas in a hands-on way targeted for use by middle school and high school students. The Vendor should explain in detail the evidence-based strategies used in the design and delivery of content.

1. Technical Requests

Vendor should describe their ability to develop a learning platform with the following specifications.

1. Cloud based learning platform.
2. Any developer shall provide unlimited 24/7 access to and use of its learning platform to all Nebraska school districts with unlimited accounts. Vendor should explain how students and schools have to register for the learning platform.

3. Learning platform(s) will need to be operable on school equipment and without requiring additional devices such as head sets, joy sticks, etc. Any vendor should explain additional costs anticipated for school district and student use.
4. Ensure that final product conforms to NDE, ADA accessibility requirements.
5. Ensure design will include blueprints and/or storyboards to specify effective learning strategies.
6. Ensure alpha and beta versions for review and input by NDE staff and stakeholders.
7. Ensure a master template will be consistently used across all versions.
8. Ensure learning platform will utilize current College and Career Readiness Content Standards and Career and Technical Education Content Standards.
9. Ensure that the learning platform's end product explicitly reflects principles of pedagogy and Universal Design for Learning.
10. Ensure that the learning platform includes appropriate branding and color schemes to reflect the Nebraska Department of Education.
11. List and describe each proposed topic and identify the audience. Include references/citations for any evidence-based or evidence-informed content or practices that are included.
12. Proposed methods for promoting/marketing the learning platform to schools and their community partners.
13. Proposed measurement tools and processes that may be used to evaluate learner usage, engagement, satisfaction, and effectiveness of the modules once they are implemented.
14. Proposed recommendations for regular content updates and deliver all source files for these future edits and improvements.
15. Ensure to produce the final version of the learning platform in the desired format for dissemination.
16. English and Spanish capabilities

2. Security and Compliance

Vendor should explain:

1. Technology standards used in the development and implementation of the learning platform(s),
2. How student privacy will be protected,
3. Where the data will be housed,
4. Who owns the data,
5. How the data will be used,
6. Who in addition to NDE will have access to the data (example: do districts have the ability to view and analyze their own student information?),
7. How the developer plans to use the data from Nebraska's students,
8. How the learning platform will integrate into district tech policies,
9. Alignment with FERPA,
10. Any planned or unplanned direct contact between businesses and students.

3. Training

Vendor should describe:

1. Ability to implement training,
2. Availability of web-based, on-demand training, and
3. Train the trainer style training to ensure sustainability and implementation across the state.

4. Reporting and Forms

NDE will own the data and have access to all reporting. The Vendor should explain in detail the reporting functions of the system to include:

1. Data on usage
2. Data on outcomes, including demonstration of student's pre- and post-use mastery of grade level College and Career Readiness Content Standards and Career and Technical Education Content Standards,
3. Best practices for data use in guiding educators and administrators, and
4. Capability to report on individual students and statewide success of the learning platform on demand.

5. Support for existing structures:

The respondent shall propose how they may support existing structures that support Nebraska educators and students in both mastery of content standards and high-skill, high-wage, high-demand (H3) career exploration, this includes alignment with current College and Career Readiness Content Standards, Career and Technical Education Content Standards, State Board of Education priority measures, and NDE initiatives.

6. Time schedule

The respondent shall also describe the set of major activities and the time schedule. Submit a work plan that includes a timeline and benchmarks for scope of work activities and deliverables to be completed across all months of the estimated project period. Include objectives, major tasks/action steps, estimated timelines.

C. CONTENT

The respondent shall propose the content and skills to be addressed in the learning platform and how they are organized. The relationship of the proposed content and skills to College and Career Readiness Content Standards and Career and Technical Education Content Standards.

Respondents shall explain how their proposed learning platform is appropriate for Nebraska students, reflecting the state's geographic, racial/ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity. Respondents shall include not only current evidence but also the process by which future content will be developed and reviewed to ensure continued appropriateness for Nebraska. Respondents shall include a discussion of supporting student learning of science, technology, engineering, entrepreneurship, and mathematics and specifically how the learning platform will enhance students' mastery of College and Career Readiness Content Standards and Career and Technical Education Content Standards.

D. DESIGN

The respondent shall describe how learning/instruction may be informed by the learning platforms. The NDE encourages innovative proposals. The learning platforms should provide appropriate accommodations suitable to supporting the inclusion of all students. The NDE prefers a computer-adaptive design that will provide reliable estimates of student ability across the ability continuum. The respondent should discuss the rationale for the design and assumptions that underlie significant options that the respondent thinks the NDE should consider.

E. REPORTING

The respondent shall propose what reports will be provided and how they are intended to be used. The respondent shall provide sample reports. If the respondent proposes customizing reports to Nebraska users, the respondent shall propose a process for finalizing report design in partnership with the NDE and its constituents. The respondent shall propose supporting materials to help guide appropriate and effective use of the report information and to help avoid misinterpretation or misuse.

If electronic and/or online reporting functions are proposed, the respondent shall provide information on the functionality - including security - as well as the requirements.

F. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

1. EXPERIENCE

Provide compelling evidence showing proficiency in successfully leading and executing complex statewide assessment systems.

Present a comprehensive discussion on the implemented approaches to project management used in developing and fully implementing a state-wide assessment system that incorporates both interim and summative assessments.

Show detailed documentation of strategic planning, meticulous scheduling, effective resource allocation, stakeholder engagement, risk mitigation, and successful coordination of diverse teams.

2. STAFFING AND KEY CONTACTS

The project management team should possess expertise in project management, educational assessments, data analysis, technology integration, and effective stakeholder communication. Clear roles and responsibilities are crucial, avoiding confusion and enhancing accountability through designated individuals for tasks involved within the project. Describe the specific responsibilities of the key staff and roles within the project management team.

3. COMMUNICATION

NDE seeks transparent and effective communication systems that ensure information is disseminated promptly. Explain the strategies employed to ensure effective communication within the contractor team, NDE, districts, schools, parents, and students.

Provide examples of what structures, processes, and mechanisms are in place for regular updates and feedback through reports, annual project plans, timelines, meetings, and video calls.

Considering the project's extensive scale and complexity, ample resources are required to guarantee that stakeholder collaboration and communication reach the highest standards. Explain the commitment to ensuring effective collaboration, communication, and problem-solving systems with the NDE involving the respondent and its subcontractors.

4. PROJECT PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION, AND EVALUATION

Describe strategies you will employ to ensure collaboration with the NDE in all phases of project planning, implementation, and quality management.

Outline a list of proposed meetings, their format, attendees, frequency, purpose, and anticipated goals.

Provide examples of timelines for planning, implementation, and evaluation of a statewide assessment system for this scale. The NDE anticipates consistent interaction between the contractor and Nebraska stakeholders throughout the project, involving in-person annual planning meetings, biannual presentations and engagement with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), quarterly submission of project reports, and as needed communication through email, phone, web-conferencing, and other relevant means.

5. COST PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

In the Cost Proposal, clearly describe all costs inclusive of other hires, licence fees, and type of subscriptions, etc.

G. DELIVERABLES

The respondent shall describe deliverables to be expected from the learning platforms, including outcomes for students, teachers, and administrators related to College and Career Readiness Content Standards and Career and Technical Education Content Standards, State Board of Education priority measures, and NDE initiatives.

Form A

Vendor Contact Sheet

Request for Information Number NDERFP240119

Form A should be completed and submitted with each response to this solicitation document. This is intended to provide the State with information on the vendor's name and address, and the specific person(s) who are responsible for preparation of the vendor's response.

Preparation of Response Contact Information	
Vendor Name:	
Vendor Address:	
Contact Person & Title:	
E-mail Address:	
Telephone Number (Office):	
Telephone Number (Cellular):	
Fax Number:	

Each vendor should also designate a specific contact person who will be responsible for responding to the State if any clarifications of the vendor's response should become necessary. This will also be the person who the State contacts to set up a presentation/demonstration, if required.

Communication with the State Contact Information	
Vendor Name:	
Vendor Address:	
Contact Person & Title:	
E-mail Address:	
Telephone Number (Office):	
Telephone Number (Cellular):	
Fax Number:	