State Responses to Vendor Questions for
NDERFP231120

Questions	Answer
An interface for new applications to be added and existing ones maintained including assigning or adding new application access roles, as well as setting an annual open/close date for the application and setting what types of users can access the app (I.e. NDE only or everyone	I am not certain what the question is here. If you are asking what kind of users will access this application, there will be users both internal to NDE as well as those outside of the agency. Most users will be from School Districts, but other roles will be needed, depending on the application.
Is the expectation that our software would need to actually control these other apps? Please clarify this requirement to the best of your knowledge.	The application will need to make data available to the applications concerning the user's account and access.
The only question I have so far is to confirm that email submission is the way the state would like to receive submission from vendors?	Yes, please submit the proposal (in a PDF form) for this RFP via an email to NDE.procurement@nebraska.gov .
We had a quick question related to this RFP. Can this work he done remotely?	The successful vendor can be located anywhere within the United States
Regarding the requirement "Solution should avoid or minimize any ongoing per user licensing or other fees.", will NDE be open to cloud SaaS solutions that can be licensed annually?	NDE is looking for a solution that minimizes or eliminates any ongoing subscription or licensing costs.
Regarding the requirement "At the end of the development, the application and source code will be handed over to NDE, and knowledge transfer will be provided to the agency application development staff.", will NDE be open to cloud SaaS solutions that can customized or configured to NDE requirements. In the SaaS tenant subscription model, the application source code will not be handed over to NDE, but the data will be handed over if NDE terminates the contract.	NDE is looking for a solution that minimizes or eliminates any ongoing subscription or licensing costs.
Will the apps connecting to the new web portal require any changes done by the proposed contractor?	Depending on the nature of the solution that the contractor provides, integration it with our legacy systems may require changes done by the contractor
Will there be any migration of existing data?	There may be a minimal amount of data that needs to be migrated from a SQL Server database, but it would not be extensive.
Is this expected to be a fully custom solution?	We prefer a custom solution that meets our needs. An off-the-shelf solution tailored to meet our needs could work as well.
Is it correct to assume the web portal will be hosted by NDE?	Yes, it will be hosted by NDE
What is the preferred database system?	Azure SQL Server
What specific applications are currently envisioned to be a part of the NDE web portal?	Anything ranging from legacy .net framework 1.x, 2.x, 4.x applications to modern .net core applications (.net 3, .net 6, net 7, and etc) along with applications built using Angular Framework

Can you provide more details on the expected user base, including the number of districts, schools, and types of users?	There are currently 400+ districts and 1200+ schools in Nebraska. The current portal system had over 2700+ users utilize the system in 2023. The new system could include more users, depending on what applications utilize the new system.
Could you elaborate on the key goals and expectations regarding accessibility, maintainability, and scalability of the NDE web portal?	We desire features like user interface accessibility, multi-language support, compliance with accessibility standards, performance optimization, scalable infrastructure, modular design, code documentation, automated testing, regular updates and patches. Accessibility goals should meet the WCAG 2.2 guidelines.
Are there any specific audit-related functions or compliance standards that the portal needs to adhere to?	Logging of authentication and authorization events for auditing purposes. Monitoring and alerting for suspicious activities.
Are there any specific benchmarks or performance indicators that the agency considers particularly important?	Authentication sucess rate, User Experience Metrics, security metrics, scalability metrics, compliance metrics and etc
Can you provide more details on the existing technology stack that the agency is using?	We extensively use microsoft .net framework and .net core technology to develop most of our server side logic and a mix of legacy mvc, webforms and Angular to create user interfaces
Are there any specific preferences or constraints regarding the technology or frameworks to be used in the development of the web portal?	We desire that the new NDE portal is developed as a high performaning, scalable software system that follow either a modular monolith or microservice approach depending on the business use cases
Can you elaborate on the role and responsibilities of district administrators and how they will be designated by the NDE service desk?	District Administrators (DA) will be responsible for access to their district's 'data' - each DA can assign or remove access to various applications within the system. The Service Desk will designate 1 DA per 'district' or 'school'. Additional information on existing process can be found here: https://portal.education.ne.gov/site/Help/DistrictAdministratorResponsibilities.pdf
What specific functionalities are expected from the service desk, especially regarding user management and access control?	The Service Desk will be the portal user administrators; assisting with access (addition and removal) as needed
Could you provide more information about the preferred development methodology (e.g., Agile, Waterfall) for this project?	We follow Agile methodology
How will project progress be tracked, and what tools or platforms will be used for project management?	Azure devops will be used
Are there any budgetary constraints or considerations that potential bidders should be aware of?	A specific budget is not being shared for this application. The cost proposed should be commisserate with the work required to create the application.
In reference to regulatory reporting, could you specify if the system must be compatible with particular standards or formats, such as ISO/IEC 17025, beyond CMDP XML files?	The Department of Education does not submit data to the EPA.

Can you provide an approximate number of Excel worksheets and records for migration, and are there specific data integrity checks you require during the transfer?	Migration of existing data from a SQL Server database is expected to be minimal.
Are there any specific challenges or requirements you've encountered with CMDP submissions that our solution should be tailored to address, such as automated error checking or reporting templates?	The Department of Education does not submit data to the EPA.
Can you specify the formats and standards (e.g., HL7, ASTM) that the subcontract labs use for data, and do you anticipate needing configurable interfaces for multiple lab types?	The Department of Education does not submit data to the EPA.
Are there particular workflows or processes within your current operation that you'd like to see mirrored or enhanced in the new system's interface?	User management from the NDE side would be required (along with any automations/district level processes which are required)
What specific types of data analysis are most valuable to your operations, and are there advanced analytics or reporting capabilities you envision needing?	Fully auditable log tables showing changes to user access
Could you detail any specific security protocols or certifications (e.g., NIST, HIPAA) that the system must adhere to, especially regarding data encryption and user access control?	At the onset, we desire a strong transport layer security such as SSL/TLS. Token management (configurable token lifetime, token revocation mechanism) System should follow the NITC access control guidelines, specifically Chapter 8, article 3 found here: https://nitc.nebraska.gov/standards/index.html
Beyond CMDP compliance, are there other local, state, or federal reporting requirements the system needs to accommodate, and do you require customizable report generation features?	There are no external reporting requirements for this system, but customizable reports that break down user access data may be an option.
Are there additional data formats beyond XML and Excel that you need the system to support for import/export, such as JSON, CSV, or proprietary formats from specific equipment?	The system will not import/export data, except for allowing post-authentication applications to access the necessary information to determine user permissions, preferably via an API.
What are the key performance indicators (KPIs) you'll use to measure the success of the implementation phase, and are there specific post-implementation audit procedures you anticipate?	Authentication sucess rate, User Experience Metrics, security metrics, scalability metrics, compliance metrics and etc
Are there budgetary constraints or specific cost breakdowns you require in the proposal, such as separating software licensing from implementation and training costs?	Costs should be separated for development through go-live as well as training. In addition, any expected cost estimate for annual licensing or subscription costs should be provided.
To what extent do you require mobile access, and are there specific functions you wish to perform via mobile devices, such as remote data entry or real-time alerts?	The applicaton should be responsive to mobile devices. This application will have limited data entry required, mostly limited to the registration of a non-SSO user.
Are there existing hardware infrastructures that the new LIMS must be compatible with, or are you looking for recommendations on hardware upgrades as part of the solution?	We are looking for a cloud-native solution hosted in Azure.
Can you specify the expected data volume and performance requirements for the cloud infrastructure, and are there any preferences or restrictions regarding cloud service providers?	Application will need to be deployed on NDE's Azure subscription. Potentially up to 500 users entering the portal daily during busiest times.

Are there particular sample types or testing protocols that present unique challenges for logging and scheduling, and do you require customizable fields or workflows for these processes?	The Department of Education does not submit data to the EPA.
Do you foresee a need for predictive analytics or trend analysis within the LIMS, and are there specific regulatory trends or changes that we should anticipate in the system's design?	We do not see a need for these features in this application.
In addition to standard security measures, are there specific incident response protocols or data breach notification procedures that the LIMS should support?	No.
How detailed do you require the audit trails to be, and are there specific reporting or record-keeping requirements for internal audits or external inspections?	Things like event logging, Timestamps, user identification, event details, critical events, data rentention and storage, access control and integrity, monitoring and review and etc
Question: Beyond the immediate regulatory reporting, are there other legal compliance factors (e.g., data retention laws, audit trails) that the LIMS should be prepared to handle?	Data in the portal would be subject to the state's record rentention laws. https://sos.nebraska.gov/sites/sos.nebraska.gov/files/doc/records-management/Schedule-39Education.pdf
What is the primary IDP (Identity Provider)? On-prem Active Directory, Azure Entra, AWS IAM, etc.	The Nebraska Clould system handles hosting on-prem Active Directory, Azure, and Google for SSO logins.
On the ask to support form-based authentication for an existing legacy ASP.NET application: Will there need to be some mechanism to tie auth tickets to users to bypass the form-based login, or will there simply be a redirect to that existing application requiring the user to authenticate again?	We expect that a user, once authenticated to the portal, can be assigned access to appropriate applications by their district administrator or assigned proxy. This access level will need to be communicated to the application interacting with the portal.
Is modification of the legacy application(s) desired? (Possibly to achieve the above?)	For existing data collection applications, we would like one POC to provide information on the work necessary for NDE developers to integrate legacy applications into this new portal in the future.
Will the POC for updating authentication for the legacy app serve as an example for the "Migration Strategy" or should there be two deliverables here?	The POC is the example.
In regard to RBAC: Can we know the current solution for authorization? They mention a legacy application, does it have a database of users or do they use an IDP?	The current system utilizes a database of users and user access.
Will the application be handling the RBAC management or is this served by an IDP?	Application will be handling RBAC.
Will stored credentials need to be reversed for any reason or is a one way hash an acceptable approach for this sensitive data?	Randomly salted hash of a sufficiently complex password should be acceptable.
As for logging, is there a cloud logging provider? Or, writing to a flat file or database previously established by NDE? Pushing logs into a cloud for storage and analysis?	There is not a cloud logging provider available. Logs can be written either to a flat file or a DB.

If the above is a flat file or database, what means of alerting should be utilized? (Email, SMS, etc.)	Email
If no IDP is in place, is there desired/recommended practice for token revocation?	None currently defined
"Ability to create logins for non-SSO users" : Is this a function of the application or a function of existing SSO provider? Possibly through an API?	Users who are not accessing the system via the Nebraska Cloud SSO would be handled by this solution. This means a user could register for an account and be given access to appropriate applications.
Will the portal have its own RBAC data store, or will a separate IDP be provisioned to handle that?	Portal will need its own RBAC data store.
What does "Access granted through the interface" refer to here? Is this just saying the portal should allow manipulation of an SSO provider and an RBAC store?	The access levels described here are what systems within the portal the user can access, after they had already authenticated.
What constitutes a "valid" email address? Is it just the form "sometext@some.org" or does it need to exist in some auth system somewhere before hand?	Users logging in with the Nebraska Cloud SSO can only access with their local district authentication information. Users who create an account in the application should have the email address validated via an email to the user where they then validate the email address.
For all of the TLS, CSRF, and MITM protections, will there be a front-end load balancer at play here or does the new application/system itself need to handle this?	The application will need to handle this if needed.
There is a section stating that compatibility with .NET Core, .NET Framework, and Azure cloud but the application should be run as a service in the cloud… Could this be rephrased? E.g., should it be a .NET Core codebase that can run as an app service in the cloud or a .NET Framework Windows service that runs in a VM hosted in the cloud?	.NET Core codebase that can run as an app service in the cloud.
As for scalability, how will this be hosted? On-prem, hybrid, cloud-native, etc.	We are looking for a cloud-native solution hosted in Azure.
For portal uptime monitoring, can an off the shelf solution be utilized? (e.g. Azure App Insights and Atlassian Status Page)	If the solution can be integrated with this application at no to low cost to the agency, a off the shelf solution would be considered. The expeced annual cost of the solution should be included in the proposal.
Is there an incumbent bidder on this project?	Not applicable
Is there a preference for local vendors?	Not applicable
Do you have a set budget or budget range in mind for this project?	A specific budget is not being shared for this application. The cost proposed should be commisserate with the work required to create the application.

Do you have a set yearly maintenance and hosting budget or budget range?	A yearly cost budget has not been identified but should be minimized wherever possible.
What qualities have worked well or made a project successful with past vendor partners?	Improving stakeholder experience by periodically collaborating, managing scope, schedule, cost & risk associated with project deliverables
Has any discovery work or user experience work been done for this project prior to the release of the RFP?	No documented discovery or user experience work has been done with schools or other external user prior to the release of the RFP.
How many existing/legacy applications are required to be accessed by this new portal?	There are between 50 and 100 applications that will access this application.
What level of rearchitecting or refactoring of legacy applications is expected?	The rearchitecture of legacy applications needed to authenticate to the new system should be kept to a minimum, as these applications are being modernized as resources are available.
Are there any specific frameworks that need to be used or avoided for the front end development?	None required, but NDE has experience with anything ranging from legacy .net framework 1.x, 2.x, 4.x applications to modern .net core applications (.net 3, .net 6, net 7, and etc) along with applications built using Angular Framework
Should the front-end be designed to be responsive and accessed by various devices and screen sizes?	Yes, the front end should be responsive to various screen sizes and devices/browsers.
Are there scenarios where certain API access should be authorized/restricted based on roles?	This is a likely scenario, such as when an application accesses the API we may wish for it to only access user data related to itself and not other applications.
How many different role types are expected related to RBAC?	The number of roles will vary by application. Currently most applications are limited to 2-4 roles, but one application has approximately 10 roles.
In what format are automated reports expected to be generated and what are expected delivery methods?	NDE is moving to Microsoft Power BI, and this reporting would be preferred. However. other reporting methods would be considered if cost and maintainability was appropriate.
Related to Documentation and Training section, are developers expected to be trained as part of this proposal or is comprehensive documentation sufficient? If training is expected, what is the size of the audience?	We require comprehensive documentation of the applicatoin, as well as knowledge-transfer sessions during the development process. There is also the possibiity including NDE staff in the development process, where appropriate.
What degree of end user change management and communication is expected to be performed by the bidder?	None directly, although some of the knowledge transfer documentation may also be partially made available to end users.
What level of logging and auditing is required?	We would like fully auditable logs of all access changes across the portal roles themselves and the application access levels set within the portal.
Should the login security process also include captcha or other bot verification mechanism to prevent automated attacks?	Where non-SSO users are accessing the system, appropriate mechanisms should be provided to prevent these attacks. System should follow the NITC access control guidelines, specifically Chapter

	8, article 3 found here: https://nitc.nebraska.gov/standards/index.html
Are there specific data retention policy that the platform should follow?	The portal should be compatible with state record retention laws. https://sos.nebraska.gov/sites/sos.nebraska.gov/files/doc/records-management/Schedule-39Education.pdf
Are there existing databases and third party services that needs to be integrated with?	Some data will need a one-time move from the legacy SQL Server database.
Are go-live expectations to release access functionality to all applications in a big-bang approach or can the new portal's functionality increase over time and releases (agile development)?	Current expectations is for a turn-over approach, where the existing system is taken offline and the new system is brought up during a relatively short period of time. However, other approaches will be considered.
What are the expectations for post go-live support?	Expectation is that support would be included for 4-6 weeks following a go-live date of early August, 2024.
What are the data storage requirements? Is there a need to aggregate/combine information from different sources?	Most likely an Azure SQL Server database would be the recommended storage for everything.
Besides automated reports, are there ad-hoc reporting requirements or other potential analytics use cases for data gathered through the portal?	Not at this time.
What accessibility tools and/or resources can the State provide or is the vendor expected to provide resources and tools to support accessibility?	NDE does not provide a tool, but the application should support accessibility. It should meet the WCAG 2.2 guidelines.
Is this project already budgeted for or will budget be allocated based on submissions?	A specific budget is not being shared for this application. The cost proposed should be commisserate with the work required to create the application.
What budget or budget range is allocated to this project?	A specific budget is not being shared for this application. The cost proposed should be commisserate with the work required to create the application.
Can you provide the full list of vendors/solutions this portal will need to integrate with (I.e. Canvas, SSO, Azure)?	The Nebraska Clould system handles hosting on-prem Active Directory, Azure, and Google for SSO logins. We currently do not have a certain list of post-authentication vendors. However, the application should provide a common API method that could be utilzed by any application given the required access.
Is a 'fixed fee' bid requested (as opposed to Time & Materials or another fee structure)?	Yes, we are looking for a fixed fee cost that will allow us to acertain the cost prior to the work beginning.
What NDE team members/resources are planned to be fully or partially dedicated to this effort?	Team members from the Information, Data, & Technology group will be available to meet with the vendor on an ongoing basis. Specific team members have not yet been identified.
What tools/services will be provided and are expected to be used for design, testing and development by the	NDE currently utilizes DevOps for soruce control, deployment and project management, other tools could be used as needed.

vendor or are expected to be provided by the vendor (I.e. Azure, GitHub, Figma)?	