

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES COMMISSION OF NEW JERSEY
FUTURE READY SCHOOLS SERVICES, SOLUTIONS AND SOFTWARE
RESPONSE DATE: 2/1/19 – 11:00 A.M.
RFP #ESCNJ 18/19-44

RFP EVALUATION

The Educational Services Commission of New Jersey (ESCNJ), serving as lead agency by the authority of the State of New Jersey through its approved status as Co-op #65MCESCCPS, conducted a Request for Proposals (RFP) for services, solutions and software related to Future Ready Schools. The ESCNJ received 10 responses to this RFP, all of which were deemed responsive.

The ESCNJ evaluated the responses for legal and technical compliance using its staff and the services of Dellicker Strategies. To determine the winning proposals, the ESCNJ used a point system in accordance with the Evaluation Criteria detailed in the RFP. To assist with this evaluation, Dellicker provided a technical analysis and pricing comparison to the ESCNJ. Dellicker also worked with providers to clarify any questions raised during the evaluation process.

Respondents were asked to propose services, solutions and software in five areas of emphasis:

1. Change Management (CM). This is broadly defined as helping school leaders conceive, implement and cultivate programming that is different and better than current models.
2. Grant Writing (GW). A highly technical skill, this involves helping districts secure the supplemental financing to sustain FRS-NJ programming and related components.
3. Public Relations (PR). This includes all aspects related to crafting and communicating effective school messaging, including branding, public affairs, and marketing.
4. Professional Development (PD). This includes all aspects of delivering and managing training for teachers, staff and administrators in a live, virtual or on-demand environment.
5. Curriculum and Instruction (CI). This includes selection, incorporation and management of digital resources into classroom instruction, plus the content, apps and tools themselves.

Within each area of emphasis, respondents were required to describe and price their proposed offerings for each major component, subcomponent, category and indicator in the RFP. If there was overlap among proposed offerings by different providers, the ESCNJ used the Evaluation Criteria to score the proposals and make an exclusive decision.

While most of the proposed offerings are specific to K-12 schools, the various proposals also may have applicability to municipalities and other ESCNJ members, especially the areas of Change Management, Grant Writing and Public Relations.

The following is a summary of the responses and the evaluation Committee's recommendations.

1. **Apex Learning, Inc.:** **Composite Score: 94**
1215 4th Avenue, Suite 1500
Seattle, WA 98161

Apex is a Seattle-based company that proposes a set of services, solutions and software related to Education and Classroom Practice Assistance. The company offers Professional Development for teachers with three options: onsite, online or on-demand. It offers access to courses with online instruction provided by subject-certified, highly qualified teachers through the Apex Learning Virtual School. And, it provides software and resources to support its instructional offerings.

Apex has no material flaws in its response and demonstrates the technical ability to provide the requested services with adequate service support. The financial proposal is straightforward, and products and services are reasonably priced. The company is one of the leading providers of online courses and instructional content nationwide. Apex is already a NJDRLAP co-op vendor in good standing, so updating its agreement with the ESCNJ would be a simple process.

2. **Fuerza Strategy Group:** **Composite Score: 92**
2 Kiel Avenue, Unit 195
Kinnelon, NJ 07405

Fuerza describes itself as a “boutique consulting firm located in New Jersey” with “ten talented, young millennials who are committed to enacting positive change in government and society.” Despite the company’s small size and youthful makeup, its proposal is thoughtful and professional. Fuerza provides messaging, presentation and video production services in the Change Management area of emphasis, especially related to school certification assistance and community partnerships.

Fuerza has no material flaws in its response and demonstrates the technical ability to provide the requested services with adequate service support. The financial proposal delivers reasonably-priced hourly rates with estimated costs to complete certain projects. The company has several strong local references, although it does not identify an extensive list of K-12 clients. The company discloses that its founder is a member of a regional school board. Its services are applicable to K-12 schools and the municipal marketplace.

3. **Istation:** **Composite Score: 81**
8150 N. Central Expressway
Dallas, TX 75206

Istation (aka Imagination Station) is a Texas-based company that focuses on blended learning solutions in reading, math and Spanish for Pre-K through 8th grade students with related Professional Development for teachers using its programming. It uses proprietary instructional content combined with its online platform *Istation’s Indicators of Progress* (ISIP) to assess and track student achievement through adaptive learning. IStation’s offerings are limited to Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment services, solutions and software.

Istation has no material flaws in its response and demonstrates the technical ability to provide the requested services with adequate service support, however the company did not do a good job of following the prescribed RFP format. As a result, the evaluators assigned the offerings to the appropriate categories, instead of the respondent doing it for them. Pricing is based on the number of students for each program with reasonably-priced rates for professional development. The company has national references no New Jersey references.

Istation failed to provide required documents, so no award can be made.

4. **LearnPlatform, Inc.:**
517 W. North Street
Raleigh, NC 27603

Composite Score: 67

LearnPlatform is a small North Carolina-based company that helps schools manage their educational technology programming through analytics. Its core offering is called “District Professional” which allows administrators to organize their library of edtech tools, keep track of contracts and understand which applications are being utilized. Additional modules track workflow, provide teacher feedback, deliver school-level reporting, evaluate instructional programming and manage providers. Their offering is most applicable to Change Management, with some applicability to the Grant Writing and Curriculum and Instruction areas of emphasis.

LearnPlatform has no material flaws in its response. It is a highly technical and specialized offering that requires a significant commitment of time and resources to implement. Pricing requires an annual subscription that includes a base fee plus an additional cost based on the number of students. Additional modules cost extra, as does on-site implementation and training on the platform. The company has one New Jersey reference.

5. **LearningMate Solutions, Inc.:**
880 Third Avenue, Fl. 18
New York, NY 10022

Composite Score: 64

LearningMate is a New York City-based company with offices worldwide that delivers products to help schools manage standards alignment and digital assessment. They focus on the Curriculum and Instruction area of emphasis with their Academic Competencies Management Tool (ACMT) and Question Authoring and Delivery Platform (QuAD). ACMT helps teachers and administrators ensure that locally produced online content is aligned with appropriate standards. The QuAD platform is a related cloud-based system for creating and delivering online assessments. It comes with an 80K+ test bank aligned with New Jersey standards. Training on the various programs is recommended and content authoring is available too.

LearningMate has no material flaws in its response. It is a highly technical and specialized offering that requires a significant commitment of time and resources to implement. Pricing includes a one-time implementation fee plus licensing based on the size of the district. Training is extra, as is content authoring, if required. Pricing for ACMT and QuAD requires a three-year commitment payable at the start of each year. The proposal includes national references.

6. **Metiri Group, LLC:**
4140 Glencoe Avenue, #505
Marina Del Rey, CA 90292

Composite Score: 91

Metiri Group is a small, California-based company that focuses on Change Management, Professional Development and Curriculum and Instruction. The company uses proprietary models combined with targeted consulting and specialized training to help schools deliver programmatic improvements in targeted areas. Metiri also has a Digital Citizenship course and 21st Century Skills course that it offers online.

Metiri Group has no material flaws in its response and demonstrates the technical ability to provide the requested services with adequate service support. The financial proposal delivers reasonably-priced hourly rates and/or piecemeal rates for named deliverables. Some of the products and services are priced based on the size of the engagement with variable rates based on the length of the commitment. Since Metiri delivered the NJTRAx project for the state of New Jersey, it can provide certain tools that are integrated with that system.

7. **Odysseyware:**

Composite Score: 93

300 North McKemy Avenue
Chandler, AZ 85226

Odysseyware (incorporated as Glynlyon, Inc.) is an Arizona-based provider of online courses, focusing on K-12 core, elective, career technology and social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum. It is strong in credit recovery. Schools can purchase the full curriculum, supplemental content, diagnostic learning programs, prescriptive pathways or specific learning tools. Its products are aligned to the Curriculum and Instruction area of focus in the RFP, although Odysseyware also delivers training and specialty software to support its offerings.

Odysseyware has no material flaws in its response and demonstrates the technical ability to provide the requested services with adequate service support. The financial proposal includes pricing for non-supported courses, teacher-supported courses, supplemental content, training and SEL programming. The company offers local and national references.

8. **Public Consulting Group, Inc. (PCG):**

Composite Score: 63

148 State Street, 10th Fl.
Boston, MA 02109

Public Consulting Group (PCG) is a large Boston-based company with offices in Princeton that delivers consulting services and various software platforms. For this RFP, PCG proposes hourly consulting service in support of Change Management, Curriculum and Instruction, and Professional Development. Their training platforms include their Playbook offering and their Online Professional Learning Platform (PLP). They also offer an EDPLan Student Success Platform and customized tutoring program.

PCG has no material flaws in its response and demonstrates the technical ability to provide the requested services with adequate service support. Their proposal was a bit puzzling in that it identified hundreds of local schools using their products but failed to provide any local references. Consulting pricing was presented as hourly rates without estimating how much time would be involved. Other offerings were not adequately described in the proposal.

9. **Renaissance Learning, Inc.:**

Composite Score: 94

2911 Peach Street
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494

Renaissance is a Wisconsin-based company that provides online solutions for early literacy, reading and math. The company has been in business for more than 30 years and serves thousands of schools, including many in New Jersey. Renaissance proposes its Star 360 assessment suite along with its myON Reader and myOn News cloud-based literacy platforms to deliver solutions in the Curriculum and Instruction area of focus. Renaissance also provides Professional Development and technical to support its proprietary software programming.

Renaissance has no material flaws in its response and demonstrates the technical ability to provide the requested services with adequate service support. The financial proposal includes pricing for its web-based software, optional add-on reading content, additional technical services as required and optional professional development. The company offers several local references in addition to its considerable national portfolio of clients.

10. Small Factory Innovations, Inc. (SiLAS)

Composite Score: 89

6 Tocci Avenue
Monmouth Beach, NJ 07750

SiLAS is a New Jersey based company with one full-time employee and 20 school district customers. It focuses on using gaming technology to provide a unique approach to social-emotional learning (SEL). While the company addresses many of the areas of focus including Grant Writing assistance, mostly it develops and delivers customized web-based software that uses avatars and video games to engage students and help them learn.

SiLAS has no material flaws in its response. The concept is interesting and based on research but is yet unproven, however the company did receive a grant from the National Science Foundation and is working with several local schools. Most of the early implementers are in New Jersey. The financial proposal includes pricing for its programming, related equipment and other related services like grant assistance. The company offers several local references.

Discussion:

Among the five areas of emphasis, the RFP established 47 separate subcategories for respondents to consider. Moreover, respondents could offer services, solutions or software for each of those subcategories. That brings the total number of distinct opportunities to 141. Finally, within these 141 components, respondents had the opportunity to further refine their offerings for different student demographics, subjects or disciplines. The result is the possibility of multiple awards to various providers without overlap or redundancy even within the same program area.

Conclusion:

Nine out of the ten respondents are determined to have the ability to provide various levels of service as outlined in their responses and are deemed responsive and compliant. The final recommendations are based what we believe provides the highest level of service at the best possible price.

Recommendations:

Based on review of the 10 respondents to this RFP, a recommendation is made to award this RFP to the following vendors for a three year period from 5/3/19 through 5/2/22, with extensions as permitted by NJ law.

1. Apex Learning is awarded components related to Education and Classroom Practice-Assistance. This includes all offerings in the RFP response with special emphasis on instructor-led coursework.
2. Fuerza Strategy Group is awarded components related to Certification, Grant Writing and Indicators, as proposed. In addition, Fuerza is awarded the Community Partnerships components as proposed in the RFP, including all related Public Relations areas of emphasis.
3. LearningPlatform, Inc. is awarded those components related to Grant Writing and Change Management as proposed, plus its specific offering for Digital Learning Tools and Content.
4. LearningMate Solutions, Inc. is awarded the specific components related to Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment as proposed.
5. Metiri Group, LLC is awarded all services as proposed, including its Change Management and Curriculum and Instruction related offerings.

6. Odysseyware is awarded its Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment offerings as proposed, with special emphasis on its stand-alone instructional content for credit recovery. Odysseyware is also awarded related Professional Development and Change Management offerings as proposed.
7. Public Consulting Group, Inc. (PCG) is awarded its Change Management, Public Relations and Curriculum and Instruction related offerings as proposed, along with its professional development offerings per the RFP.
8. Renaissance Learning, Inc. is awarded all components of its specific instructional offerings as proposed.
9. Small Factory Innovations, Inc. (SiLAS) is awarded all components of its specific related to gaming and SEL curriculum offering, as proposed.

All providers must collect and remit the ESCNJ administrative fee as required.