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## RFI Number 3885 Memorandum

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**To:** Vendors Interested in Responding to Request for Information (RFI) Number 3885 for the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE)

**From:** Craig P. Orgeron, Ph.D.

**CC:** ITS Project Number 42486

**Date:** April 12, 2016

**Subject:** Request for Information for a Special Education Data Management System (SEDM)

**Contact Name:** Patti Irgens

**Contact Phone Number:** 601-432-8223

**Contact E-mail Address:** [Patti.Irgens@its.ms.gov](mailto:Patti.Irgens@its.ms.gov)

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The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) is soliciting information from potential Vendors related to the provision of a Special Education Data Management System (SEDM) that will collect special education data for all students with special needs. MDE desires solutions from Vendors that have implemented or are in the process of implementing for customers similar to MDE.

MDE is seeking an organization with knowledge and experience in development and implementation of Commercial Off-the-Shelf (COTS) solutions, of customized COTS solutions, or of fully custom solutions, meeting requirements similar to those described herein. In addition to its technical expertise, the successful offeror shall have excellent skills in collaborating and coordinating such projects across a range of stakeholders.

MDE is amenable to various approaches and functionalities related to the Vendor's proposed solution for the provision of services requested, should MDE decide to procure a SEDM.

The main objectives of this RFI are to:

- Provide information MDE may use to create a conceptual design of a potential SEDM Request for Proposal (RFP); and
- Provide MDE the opportunity to gain insight into the implementation and ongoing maintenance costs associated with a SEDM.

It is important potential Vendors understand MDE is seeking information from entities having direct experience with other states or counties having similar systems in order to maximize the value and relevance of the information provided.

The Special Education Data Management System will assist in the documentation and reporting of special education student information. The system will manage student and staff information, provide direct data entry and reporting for discipline events, streamline the process of referring students for educational evaluations, document decisions made during the Teacher Support Team (TST) meetings leading to referrals for special education eligibility, develop and maintain individualized education

programs (IEPs) and additional documentation for students receiving special education and/or related services, simply the process of reviewing and submitting eligible Medicaid services for reimbursement, and allow for a well-defined, efficient method of exchange of data between the application and state and federal entities.

The current process used to document and report special education student information consists of multiple software- and paper-based systems, often redundant, that require an excessive number of steps and are not accessible to the Mississippi Department of Education. Besides being time-consuming, these systems could cause inconsistent and inaccurate data.

The design of the system must allow for the confidential flow of student data between local programs in addition to the flow of data throughout MDE. The system shall allow local and MDE personnel to perform and document quality assessment on the completeness and correctness of discipline data as well as IEP and IEP-related information. The system shall manage the workflow for IEPs so that teachers know when to review, complete, and report IEP and IEP-related information. Authorized teachers and administrators shall have the ability to access the information from a web-based application through any internet-enabled computer. From their computers, teachers and administrators must have the ability to print, download, report, or transfer records.

MDE desires services to assist MDE in implementing the proposed solution using either MDE's or the contractor's hosting infrastructure. Each offeror is to include evaluation of MDE's relevant hardware and software infrastructure (database and operating platforms, etc.) and provide recommendations for any required and optional hardware and software infrastructure.

To help meet its goals, MDE has identified a need for an SEDM that will assist in the documentation and reporting of special education student information. The system will manage student and staff information, provide direct data entry and reporting for discipline events, streamline the process of referring students for educational evaluations, summarize prior decisions made during the Teacher Support Team (TST) meetings leading to referrals for special education eligibility, develop and maintain individualized education programs (IEPs) and additional documentation for students receiving special education and/or related services, and allow for a well-defined, efficient method of exchange of data between the application and state and federal entities.

## **1. RFI SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS**

- 1.1. MDE is interested in receiving informational responses from Vendors which have successfully built and implemented a special education data management system for another state.
- 1.2. Vendors are required to provide a response to each requirement listed below or in Attachment A: Requirements and Questions. Vendor may use any format they choose to illustrate their expertise in the data management for education.
- 1.3. Vendors should state their estimated costs to implement the proposed solution. The cost should be separated into the following categories:
  - 1.3.1. Professional Services
  - 1.3.2. Application License
  - 1.3.3. SIF Agent License
  - 1.3.4. SIFWorks Enterprise ZIS20 License.

- 1.3.5. Initial Product
- 1.3.6. Data Conversion
- 1.3.7. Installation
- 1.3.8. Annual Maintenance and Support
- 1.3.9. Other Optional Features
- 1.4. Vendors should explain their preferable cost method and demonstrate how MDE will compensate the Vendor for its proposed solution. (e.g., based upon deliverables, full or one (1) lump sum payment, upon acceptance, etc.).
- 1.5. Information received during this RFI process is solely for informational purposes and will not be evaluated or disseminated to any agency other than MDE or Mississippi Department of Information Technology Services (ITS).
- 1.6. Vendors must submit (4) four hard copies of their responses, as well as a softcopy of the response on CD/DVD or USB flash drive. Responses must be hand-delivered or mailed and will be accepted at any time prior to Tuesday, May 10, 2016, at 3:00 p.m. (Central Time) to Patti Irgens at the Mississippi Department of Information Technology Services, 3771 Eastwood Drive, Jackson, Mississippi 39211.
  - 1.6.1. MDE will accept any additional materials the Vendor would like to attach to highlight its products and services or product offerings, such as, but not limited to:
    - 1.6.1.1. Marketing brochures and materials;
    - 1.6.1.2. Videos;
    - 1.6.1.3. Website links;
    - 1.6.1.4. Webinars; and /or
    - 1.6.1.5. Time limited access privileges to content or systems
- 1.7. Vendor responses should be sealed and labeled as follows:

**SUBMITTED IN RESPONSE TO  
RFI NO. 3885 - 42486  
Accepted until May 10, 2016 @ 3:00 p.m.,  
ATTENTION: Patti Irgens**

If you have any questions concerning the information above or if we can be of further assistance, please contact Patti Irgens at 601-432-8223 or via email at Patti.Irgens@its.ms.gov.

Attachment A: Requirements and Questions

cc: ITS Project File Number 42486

## **REQUIREMENTS**

### **1. Solution Requirements**

- 1.1 The data management system must simplify paperwork and reduce the amount of time and effort expended in meeting the complex demands associated with the special education paperwork process.
- 1.2 The system shall support the management of caseloads and completion of documents in a manner that is time efficient.
- 1.3 The system shall have management tools available to schools, districts, and the Mississippi Department of Education programs.
- 1.4 The data management system must increase the ease and accuracy of input, while providing and maintaining a significant number of generated reports that will be available. Users shall be able to aggregate and disaggregate data at the school, district, and state levels. Additionally, the system shall have the capacity to develop custom queries based on data that is annually gathered beyond the reports originally defined.
- 1.5 The data management system must increase the clarity and accuracy of all student data submitted to the State. The system shall incorporate relevant validation procedures for discipline data as well for the IEP process and incorporate ease of use at the local level.
- 1.6 The data management system shall allow special education records and all associated records in the system to be transferred, in a secure manner, from school to school and district to district/school/facility school or district/facility school to the Department. Authorized teachers and administrators shall have the ability to access the information from any Internet-enabled computer. User access shall be audited and role based.
- 1.7 The data management system shall have the capacity to track costs and services associated with high cost students.
- 1.8 The data management system shall generate forms in, at a minimum, English and Spanish.
- 1.9 The data management system shall use web services or another similar technology to pull data from other sources.
- 1.10 The data management system shall provide document upload and export functionality.
- 1.11 The data management system shall have the capability to allow admin users to modify drop-down options as well as create workflows based on drop-down options without having to modify code. For example: Determination of Eligibility – There

are several options that determine eligibility and these may change. An admin user must be able to "de-activate" an option while adding others. Based on certain options, workflow processes may change and an admin user must be able to set up some basic workflow.

- 1.12 While the system is primarily targeted for public school districts, the solution shall provide functionality to support individual Services Plans that describe the services to students with disabilities in private schools at the parent's choice (i.e., Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) is not at issue).
- 1.13 The system shall support the lifecycle of the IEP program which only starts when a disability is suspected and is followed by written consent provided by a parent or guardian. The system need not provide any functionality for any activities or events that are Response to Intervention (RTI) in nature for students who are not suspected of having a disability. Once a student is removed from the IEP, the system needs to retain information for future linkage with post-secondary, workforce, or other state agency data analysis functions.
- 1.14 MDE must report timely and accurate data to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and to the Education Data Exchange Network (EDEN) / EdFacts within the U.S. Department of Education (ED). IDEA 2004 mandated that each state create a State Performance Plan (SPP) specific to twenty performance and compliance data indicators. Annually, the state must create an Annual Performance Report (APR) that provides data on state outcomes in each of the twenty SPP data indicators. Additionally, the state must provide a report card of these outcomes allowing local programs to compare their outcomes with those achieved statewide. MDE is requesting responders to provide information that will define how the following data collection and reporting processes will be achieved. Thus, the SEDM will be required to exchange information with the ADE and district student information systems to reduce/eliminate dual entry of data, including:
  - 1.14.1 Assessment
  - 1.14.2 Child Count
  - 1.14.3 Discipline
  - 1.14.4 Disproportionality
  - 1.14.5 Exiters
  - 1.14.6 Exiting
  - 1.14.7 Environmental Settings
  - 1.14.8 File Review
  - 1.14.9 Secondary Transition
- 1.15 IDEA 2004 set forth specific compliance requirements that must be followed by the Mississippi Department of Education, AUs, SOPs, and facility schools. All such

activities require monitoring processes to be automated to the fullest capacity to reduce the amount of manual file reviews. The online data management system must include validation features that allow local and state agencies to ensure that all components of the special education process are being addressed and discipline data are reported accurately. The online data management system must also include the capacity for the Mississippi Department of Education, AUs, SOPs, and facility schools to do electronic file reviews without having to go onsite to each individual school/district. Therefore, the integration of data from those AUs not using the system for IEP documentation purposes must include the import of PDF files of completed IEPs from AUs. In addition to the reports that are indicated in the report section of this RFP, local and state agencies require the ability to generate other monitoring reports.

- 1.16 Mississippi Department of Education is interested in a statewide system capable of supporting at least 9,000 users. Mississippi currently has 4 State Operated Programs (SOP) and 144 school districts. There are over 900 schools in Mississippi, with over 61,000 special education children reported for the 2015-16 End of Year collection, indicating the number of children who were active for some period of time during the reporting period. During high volume peaks (fall and spring and during quarterly progress reporting periods), an anticipated 5,000 concurrent users will use the system. The users consist of personnel from MDE and school districts.
- 1.17 The Department prefers a web-based application that is hosted at the Department of Education, but will consider any web-based solution that utilizes an open architecture, whether it's a State- or a reliable contractor-hosted solution (if it meets all required business needs and security requirements). Significant consideration will be given to the ease with which a solution can be supported and maintained if components are distributed across the state. Enterprise level integration is an absolute must. The new Data Management system must allow for the ultimate level of integration by providing the MDE staff access to the same development tools used by the contractor to extend and enhance the student information system over time, thus realizing the true value of an extensible, open and modern enterprise level solution.
- 1.18 Vendors that do not offer a hosted solution, provide a response as to how the proposed solution fits within each requirement listed in 1.1 through 1.15. Provide specific recommendations on hardware and architecture required to meet capacity requirements, include diagrams if you have them.