



Florida Department of Education
RFI 2014-69
Data Services for Florida's Early Learning Programs

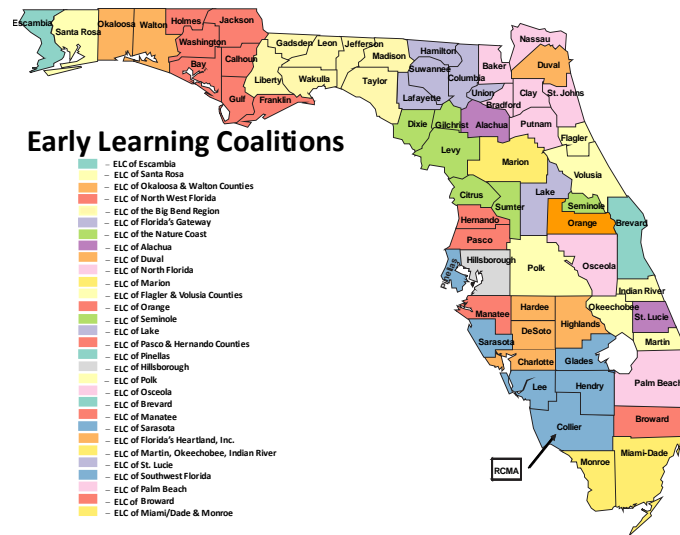
Purpose and Scope

I. INTRODUCTION

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE), Office of Early Learning (the Office) is requesting information from qualified vendors regarding a web software system or data services for Florida's early learning programs. As required by Section 1002.82(2)(n), Florida Statutes (F.S.), the Office is required to, "Establish a single statewide information system that each coalition must use for the purpose of managing the single point of entry, tracking children's progress, coordinating services among stakeholders, determining eligibility of children, tracking child attendance, and streamlining administrative processes for providers and early learning coalitions." This information system is also intended to capture early learning direct service activities such as assessments, progress monitoring and provider payments. The data needs for the program include a comprehensive consolidated data base of participation in the programs by child and family, eligibility with association to provider licensing, payments and performance information as well as program service provider eligibility. This information system will be utilized by Florida's families, early learning coalitions, contractors and child care providers and other partner agencies. This system is expected to create a unified data system for accessing, managing, storing and sharing programmatic, administrative, financial and outcome data related to the \$1.01 billion Child Care Resource and Referral, School Readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten programs.

II. BACKGROUND

The Office provides oversight and administration for early learning programs in Florida. Chapter 1002, F.S., requires the Office to safeguard the effective use of federal, state, local and private resources to achieve the highest possible level of school readiness for the children of this state. These early learning programs include, but are not limited to, the School Readiness Program (child care subsidies), Child Care Resource and Referral Program (CCR&R), Child Care Executive Partnership (CCEP) Program, and the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program. Early learning services are implemented at the local level by 30 early learning coalitions located throughout the state and Redlands Christian Migrant Association (see Diagram 1). The Office serves over 300,000 School Readiness children (age birth to five) and VPK children annually through more than 15,000 providers statewide. The state's network of providers includes child care centers and schools, family child care homes, public schools, non-public schools and informal settings. An estimated 20,000 early learning teachers deliver age-appropriate curriculum-based instruction to School Readiness and VPK children in Florida each year. Additionally, Florida has 45 Head Start and Early Head Start grantees that provide Head Start and Early Head Start services to eligible children.



School Readiness Program

The School Readiness Programs are early childhood education and child care programs which are funded through a combination of federal, state and local matching funds. Unlike the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program which is universally available to every four-year-old child residing in the state, School Readiness Programs are provided for targeted populations of children based on need. These children include those who are economically disadvantaged (i.e., receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or family income does not exceed 150 percent of federal poverty level), who have disabilities, or who are at risk of abuse, neglect, or abandonment. School Readiness Programs are established primarily for children birth to age 5 although Early Learning Coalitions serve school-age children in accordance with eligibility criteria for the program's federal funding sources, specifically the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) block grant.

Voluntary Prekindergarten Education program

The VPK program is the fulfillment of the constitutional amendment that “every four-year-old child in Florida shall be provided by the State a high quality Prekindergarten learning opportunity in the form of an early childhood development and education program which shall be voluntary, high quality, free, and delivered according to professionally accepted standards” The Office administers the operational requirements of the VPK program.

Child Care Resource and Referral

Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) is a service provided by the Office and local Early Learning Coalitions throughout the State of Florida. CCR&R is dedicated to helping families find answers to their questions regarding how to identify quality Early Learning programs and how to locate a provider that meets each family's needs. Trained personnel are available to provide families with referrals to programs that are customized to each family's needs, as well as referrals to other services in the community. CCR&R information and referral services are free to anyone residing in or seeking early learning services in Florida.

Redlands Christian Migration Association (RCMA)

RCMA provides school readiness services to eligible children and families of the seasonal and migrant farm worker and rural poor community as defined in Rule 6M-4.204, Florida Administrative Code, as well as administrative and non-direct services necessary to develop and maintain a safe, cost effective, family friendly system that protects at-risk children; assistance for families to become or remain economically self-sufficient; and to prepare children to enter school ready to learn.

Early Learning Coalitions

Early learning coalitions are established through Section 1002.83, F.S., Early learning coalition stakeholders include, but are not limited to:

- Executive leadership,
- Coalition board members,
- Financial services personnel,
- Systems support personnel,

- Provider support personnel, and
- Parent Advocacy Groups.

Early Learning Providers

The provider stakeholders for the early learning programs fall into categories including, but not limited to:

- Licensed and registered child-care centers and family child-care homes,
- Religious-exempt providers,
- Public and private school-based providers, and
- Informal providers.

Program roles for the provider stakeholders include, but are not limited to:

- Administering programs;
- Providing instruction;
- Tracking attendance;
- Updating classroom calendars and scheduling updates;
- Tracking performance and reporting;
- Ensuring child safety; and
- Maintaining family privacy and secure information.

Florida Citizens

The family stakeholders for the early learning programs include:

- Children, including special needs children and
- Parents and guardians

Program roles for family stakeholders include, but are not limited to:

- Requesting resource and referral information;
- Requesting provider profiles;
- Submitting applications for early learning programs; and
- Participating in early learning programs.

Some of the functions of our current system are:

- Child Care Resource and Referral.
- Single Point of Entry and the Unified Wait List
- Eligibility & Placement (Family & Child)
- Eligibility Periods (history)
- Multiple Programs
- Provider Data Base (Multiple Types)
- Child Enrollment & Participation/Attendance
- Parent Fee Payments
- Local Match Requirements
- Provider Payments Based on Program/Hour/Day/Care Level (multiple care levels)
- Provider Accreditation Payment Differential Based on Accreditation
- Multiple funding sources
- User name and password authentication.
- Federal Data Reporting

III. PROJECT GOALS

- A centralized database and a data warehouse that accurately and consistently maintains current and historical Early Learning program information;
- An enhanced information system, including the ability to track child eligibility participation, attendance and payment processing for Early Learning Coalitions and child care providers;
- A system that records the results of developmental screenings and child assessments administered to children participating in early learning programs;
- A system that collects child, staff and financial data to support the analyses of a child's short-term and long-term developmental, academic growth and the return on investment for early learning programs;
- A system that measures the educational impact and overall quality of early learning programs and makes the information accessible through the internet for parents;

- A system that uses the most current and effective safeguards to ensure the security and confidentiality of a child's personal information and detects and prevents fraud and improper payments;
- An enhanced information and referral system, including the ability to record and maintain family and provider information, generate referrals to early learning programs and/or resources and provide complete local/state/Federal reporting capabilities; and
- An accessible and robust reporting system that allows early learning administrators, managers and staff to track and report process and performance status and outcomes in real time.

IV. OBJECTIVE

The current decentralized legacy information system is antiquated and lacks sufficient capability to adequately support these programs. The Office is seeking a new web-based centralized information system to better support the administration of the state's early learning programs. This system will create a unified, cohesive data system that ensures all children are emotionally, physically, socially and intellectually ready to enter school and ready to learn.

The system will enhance the implementation of early learning programs by

- Establishing a centralized and consolidated information system that provides consistent, uniform information across the entire state that each coalition will use to manage its programs.
- Automating cumbersome manual or paper processes to ensure that critical information needed to effectively manage the programs is readily accessible to state and local administrators and policy makers.
- Optimizing the use of funds and services provided to Florida's children by facilitating fiscal management and providing timely data for utilization forecasting.
- Creating important data security and user safeguards against fraudulent actions.
- Interfacing with the existing systems and sub-systems within the office.

V. PURPOSE OF THE REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

It shall be understood that a vendor's response to this RFI shall not include or divulge any pricing or cost information at this time. Pursuant to Rule 60A-1.042, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), an agency may request information from the business community by issuing a written Request for Information (RFI). Agencies may use RFIs in circumstances including, but not limited to, determining what solicitation process to use for a particular need, or researching general, special and/or technical specifications for the issuance of a solicitation. A vendor's answer to an RFI is NOT an offer and shall not be used to justify a contract with that vendor without otherwise complying with Chapter 287, F.S., and Chapter 60A-1, F.A.C. Vendors submitting answers to an agency's RFI are not prohibited from responding to any related subsequent solicitation. The Office reserves the right to use or reject any information supplied in response to this RFI.

Interested parties are requested to respond to questions/statements contained in Section IV of the RFI. Additionally, interested parties shall provide details of enhancements, other applications and systems that may apply to the system or technology described within the RFI. 11-DC-8335-RFI 2

VI. PROCESS

FDOE management will review and analyze information received in response to the RFI to determine the feasibility of issuing a competitive solicitation for these services. Any cost information received will be used solely to gain a perspective of the potential budgetary magnitude.

Responses to this request will be reviewed for informational purposes only and will not result in the award of a contract. Vendors submitting a response to this RFI are not prohibited from responding to any related subsequent solicitation.

VII. RESPONSE FORMAT

Potential vendors are asked to address all of the following requirements in their response:

1. Company literature, such as corporate overview and company structure, financial soundness and stability, and services currently offered;
2. Point of contact information, including representative name and alternative, if available, telephone number(s), and email address(es);
3. A statement of interest in providing the services outlined in the RFI, including an outline of a specific concept, technology, or approach that would meet the objectives described in this RFI;
4. A description of the respondent's business and its experience as it relates to the services outlined in this RFI.

5. A description of how the respondent's approach will offer advantages or improvements over existing processes. The description should also identify known or potential concerns with the approach; and
6. A description of the staffing level the respondent anticipates will be needed in order to carry out its proposed approach. The description should include, at a minimum, the estimated number/type/level of expertise of staff that the respondent would assign to an initiative such as the one described in this RFI.

VIII. Questions/Statements and Responses

1. Does the system deliver a web-based early learning client or similar payment system?
2. Is the system capable of on line attendance tracking?
3. Is the system capable of establishing and maintaining a provider profile?
4. Is the system capable of establishing or interfacing with child assessment tools?
5. Is the system capable of handling digital images of required eligible documentation?
6. Can the system provide user id authentication?
7. Can the system deliver pre & post assessments?
8. Can the system provide multi access (ex. levels/families/providers/oversight administrative authorities)?
9. Can the system generate letters/notices?
10. Can the system associate curriculum to provider/program?
11. Can the system track provider capacity?
12. Can the system manage data at multiple levels county/coalition/state (consolidated/historical)? (scale-able)
13. Can the system interface with partner data bases DOE/DCF/DOH?
14. Does the system establish security protocols to protect data?
15. Can the system generate standard reports, and file extractions for analysis?
16. Can the system perform utilization analysis based on current participation/trend?
17. Does the system use a streamlined approach in delivering information to the user that minimizes bandwidth over the network? Describe your approach.
18. How would you describe the workload required to maintain, upgrade and keep the system operational?
19. Are storage needs for the system easy to calculate? Describe this process.
20. Does the system provide a history of activity that can be used for audits of the records created?
21. How many concurrent users can access the system?
22. How big of an agency is your system designed to support?
23. How much data can your system handle?
24. What other information can you provide about your system that is not covered in the questions above?
25. Does your system provide options for interfaces to external accounting systems (ex. Florida Accounting Information Resource - FLAIR)

IX. BUREAU OF EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATION AND STUDENT SERVICES WEBSITE

Additional information about the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services can be found at:
<http://www.fldoe.org/ese/>

X. SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Time Schedule

The following timetable shows the approximate dates for this Request for Information. All times indicated are Eastern Standard Time (EST).

Request for Information Issued	12/23/2013
Questions due no later than	01/06/2014 02:00 EST
Answers to Vendors on or before	01/10/2014
Receipt of emailed RFI responses	01/22/2014 02:00 EST

PLEASE PROVIDE RESPONSES VIA EMAIL

Questions and Restrictions

The FDOE may be contacted via email or fax regarding submission of questions concerning this RFI. Any respondent's questions must be submitted in writing and received by the Department on or before the specified due date at the following email address or fax:

Please deliver questions to:
Florida Department of Education
Attn: Christina Davis
325 W. Gaines Street, Suite 332
Tallahassee, Florida 32399
Fax Number: 850-245-0718
Telephone number: 850-245-9191
Email: Christina.Davis@fldoe.org

The Department will provide written answers to all questions that respondents submit by the specified due date. Questions and Answers and notice of changes (addenda) will be posted on the Florida Vendor Bid System (VBS) at www.myflorida.com (click on Business & Industry, under Doing Business with the State of Florida, click on State Purchasing, click on Everything for Vendors and Customers, the Vendor Bid System and Search Advertisement, select the Department of Education in the Agency window and initiate search), under this RFI number. It is the responsibility of all respondents to monitor this site for any changing information prior to submitting a response.