



DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL SERVICES

DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES

STATE OF MAINE

PROCUREMENT JUSTIFICATION FORM (PJF)

This form must accompany all contract requests and sole source requisitions (RQS) over \$5,000 submitted to the Division of Procurement Services.

INSTRUCTIONS: Please provide the requested information in the white spaces below. All responses (except signatures) must be typed; no hand-written forms will be accepted. See the guidance document posted with this form on the Division of Procurement Services intranet site (Forms page) for additional instructions.

PART I: OVERVIEW			
Department Office/Division/Program:		Department of Education/Office of Innovation/Early Learning Team	
Department Contract Administrator or Grant Coordinator:		Lee Anne Larsen, Director of Early Learning	
(If applicable) Department Reference #:			
Amount: (Contract/Amendment/Grant)		\$ 250,000.00	Advantage CT / RQS #: 20240123*2021
CONTRACT	Proposed Start Date:	2/1/2024	Proposed End Date: 12/31/2025
AMENDMENT	Original Start Date:		Effective Date:
	Previous End Date:		New End Date:
GRANT	Project Start Date:		Grant Start Date:
	Project End Date:		Grant End Date:
Vendor/Provider/Grantee Name, City, State:		The Academy in Manayunk AIM Institute for Learning & Research® 1200 River Road Conshohocken, PA 19428	
Brief Description of Goods/Services/Grant:		Access to professional learning modules related to research-based pedagogy for literacy for K-3 general and special educators.	

PART II: JUSTIFICATION FOR VENDOR SELECTION

Check the box below for the justification(s) that applies to this request. (Check all that apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	A. Competitive Process	<input type="checkbox"/>	G. Grant
<input type="checkbox"/>	B. Amendment	<input type="checkbox"/>	H. State Statute/Agency Directed
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	C. Single Source/Unique Vendor	<input type="checkbox"/>	I. Federal Agency Directed
<input type="checkbox"/>	D. Proprietary/Copyright/Patents	<input type="checkbox"/>	J. Willing and Qualified
<input type="checkbox"/>	E. Emergency	<input type="checkbox"/>	K. Client Choice

<input type="checkbox"/>	F. University Cooperative Project	<input type="checkbox"/>	L. Other Authorization
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Please respond to ALL of the questions in the following sections.

PART III: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

1. Provide a more detailed description and explain the need for the goods, services or grant to supplement the response in Part I.

In 2020, LD 138 directed the Maine Department of Education to conduct a study of beginning reading instruction in Maine and to provide two reports for the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. The first report was a summary of the state of beginning reading/literacy education for schools in kindergarten through grade 3. The second report was a series of recommendations based on the statewide findings. As a result of the study, it was determined that there is a significant and immediate need for professional learning in K-3 literacy pedagogy that is grounded in science.

During the development of the reports, several advisory groups were convened to seek input from the field. Feedback was gathered from the State Dyslexia Advisory Group, the State Literacy Team, the Maine Association for Improving Literacy, and Higher Education faculty. These groups identified a series of critical literacy components to be addressed through professional learning needs as well as the best form and functionality of the professional learning to meet the needs of Maine educators and students.

Maine's identification rate for students with disabilities is increasing due to the pandemic. Maine continues to be one of the states with the highest identification rates for reading SLD. Improving the quality of Tier I instruction during the early elementary years through high-quality professional learning is a proactive measure to help reduce the identification rate.

As a result of the multiple needs identified the Office of Teaching and Learning has connected with the Office of Special Services and Inclusive Education to make literacy professional development modules available at no cost to Maine educators.

2. Provide a brief justification for the selected vendor to supplement the response in Part II. Reference the RFP number, if applicable.

As noted above, the Maine DOE has engaged in a process of identifying the critical content, format, and functional design features for the needed professional learning. Convenings of both internal and external advisory groups, including Maine DOE staff, the Maine DOE's State Literacy Team, an Educator Advisory Panel, the Higher Education Faculty Group, the State Dyslexia Advisory Team, and the Maine Association for Improving Literacy, have all provided input on the needed content and design/functional features.

The identified content for the modules includes:

- Early Literacy Instruction
- Multi-Lingual Learners
- Dyslexia
- Research Based Reading Instruction
- Neuroscience of the Reading Brain
- Inclusion
- Phonological Awareness & Phonics

PART III: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

- Spelling & Decoding
- Vocabulary
- Language Comprehension
- Written Expression

The format and functionality features identified by the advisory groups include:

- Manageable length of module content (4-8 hours per module) to prevent user fatigue.
- Asynchronous design for on-demand access and which can be paused and resumed.
- Multi-modal design of modules (e.g., combining audio, video, text reading, student work samples, etc.)
- Opportunity to earn contact hours and/or attain credentials/badges

Using this guidance, the Maine DOE examined a number of professional learning options and has determined that the modules produced by AIM Institute for Research's professional learning is the only available product that meets the specifications identified as essential with no need for costly customization. When examining options available through other vendors, the Maine DOE considered a number of factors such as the length of the modules, the content included in the modules, whether the DOE could approve participants ahead of them have access to the modules, the ability of the system to track completion and award credit, the availability of technical support, the cost per module, etc. The following Vendors were reviewed to determine if they could fit the DOE's needs:

- 95% Group
- Amplify
- COX Campus
- Hand2Mind
- HILL for Literacy
- Institute of Educational Science (IES)
- IRIS – Vanderbilt
- Keys to Literacy
- Landmark School
- Lexia
- NCIL – National Center on Improving Literacy
- Neuhaus Education Center
- Panorama
- Reading Science Academy
- Really Great Reading
- Renaissance Learning
- Sadlier
- Savvas
- Student Achievement Partners
- The Reading League
- Think CERCA
- Tools 4 Reading
- University of Florida – UFLI

PART III: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

The content of the AIM Institute for Research's Steps to Literacy modules matches that which was identified by Maine's advisory groups. Additionally, AIM Institute for Research's modules are program agnostic which means that the professional learning content presented in them can be used in conjunction with any core or intervention program that an educator is using in their school. The research-based content included in the modules developed by AIM can be delivered in the desired format and with the necessary functionality without the need for any additional modifications that would come with extra costs.

Although there is a recommended sequence, AIM's learning modules can be accessed in any order, enabling educators to differentiate their experience by individual needs. Additionally, the modules do not require an extensive time commitment. The modules can be completed in an average of 4-6 hours compared to other platforms and courses which require more than 30 hours. The AIM modules satisfy the desire to provide a multi-modal approach. The asynchronous modules include a variety of short readings, videos, student learning samples, practical application, and realistic educational practice activities.

Additionally, the AIM Institute offers an external platform and certification process that does not require maintenance, staffing, and/or capacity within the Maine Department of Education. The current lack of a statewide learning management system makes it necessary to depend on the capacity of the external vendor for management of the learning system.

The AIM Institute for Research provides contact hour certificates for users as they complete each Step to Literacy module. Additionally, registrants have the option of bundling multiple modules to earn micro-credentials from Credentials Unlimited or they may opt for graduate credit from Arcadia University for an additional fee. These incentivizing options are managed by AIM and do not require additional oversight from the Maine DOE.

The AIM Institute offers an additional unique feature-- a vetting system that allows the internal Maine DOE team the ability to verify users to ensure that the access is allowed only by Maine educators and those who complete one module at a time. This unique vetting system will track users, school participation and support design for schools to follow up with learning and coaching that brings learning to scale from a common source of content.

Although other literacy educational learning technology vendors are available, the AIM Institute is unique in the capacity to meet all the components identified by planning and development with no need for additional changes associated with additional costs or lengthy development time. The complete compilation of AIM offerings include:

1. Externally maintained platform
2. Certificate award system
3. Micro-credential or credit option for users
4. Vetting system
5. User data reporting
6. Individualized user access
7. Complete access to identified topics with no need to customize
8. Concise and manageable module completion time.
9. Module purchase adjustments based on user interest and need

PART III: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

3. Explain how the negotiated costs or rates are fair and reasonable; or how the funding was allocated to grantee.

The costs associated with the AIM modules include a \$2,000 fee for set-up and \$248,000 for access by 2,500 educators to a variety of modules. The average access cost per educator module is \$98 per participant. Other vendors' costs range between \$155 and \$625 per participant for access per module. The modules that are more inexpensive than AIM modules do not include a vetting process nor a learning platform and management capacity, therefore they are not a comparable price point. To match the content and form that our partner organizations identified would result in customized work for additional costs.

4. Describe the plan for future competition for the goods or services.

If the Department has the opportunity to provide this type of professional learning in the future, lessons learned from use of these modules will help inform design of an RFP.

PART IV: AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) / MAINE JOBS & RECOVERY PLAN (MJRP)

Does this request utilize ARPA/MJRP funds?


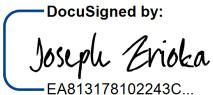
Yes, MJRP funds (023) – If Yes, please attach the approved Business Case(s).

Yes, ARPA funds (025) – If Yes, please be aware of the requirements from awarding federal agencies.

No – If No, proceed to Part V.

PART V: APPROVALS

The signatures below indicate approval of this procurement request.

Signature of requesting Department's Commissioner (or designee):			
Typed Name:	Daniel A. Chuhta, Deputy Commissioner	Date:	1/25/2024
Signature of DAFS Procurement Official:	 <small>EA813178102243C...</small>		
Typed Name:	Joseph Zrioka Director of IT Procurement	Date:	1/25/2024

Certificate Of Completion

Envelope Id: FED7F188FCD0498692892A217241DE26	Status: Completed
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Certificate Pages: 5	Initials: 0
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Time Zone: (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)	joseph.a.zrioka@maine.gov
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Director of IT Procurement
State of Maine - Office of Information Technology
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Education Data Manager- MDOE
Maine Department of Education
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DOE Procurement Director
Carahsoft OBO Maine Department of Education
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