



DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL SERVICES
OFFICE OF STATE PROCUREMENT SERVICES
STATE OF MAINE

PROCUREMENT JUSTIFICATION FORM (PJF)

This form must accompany all contract requests and sole source requisitions (RQS) over \$10,000 submitted to the Office of State 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 Procurement Services intranet site (Forms page) for additional instructions.

PART I: OVERVIEW			
Department Office/Division/Program:		Education: Office of Innovation/Innovative Research & Design	
Department Contract Administrator or Grant Coordinator:		Page Nichols/Elaine Bartley	
(If applicable) Department Reference #:		N/A	
Agency Department Code:	05A	Advantage CT / RQS #:	20210603000000003566
Amount: (Contract/Amendment/Grant)		\$250,000.00	
CONTRACT	Proposed/Original Start Date:	7/1/2021	Proposed/Most Recent End Date: 6/30/2026
AMENDMENT	New Effective Date:	7/1/2026	New End Date (if Applicable): 6/30/2027
GRANT	Project Start Date:		Grant Start Date:
	Project End Date:		Grant End Date:
Vendor/Provider/Grantee Name, City, State:		CATES LLC New York, NY	
Brief Description of Goods/Services/Grant:		One year extension of the current EnGiNE platform development contract. This extension would allow for the final-stage development/updating of the current product while we complete the RFP process that will serve the developed EnGiNE platform moving forward.	

PART II: JUSTIFICATION FOR VENDOR SELECTION			
Check the box below for the justification(s) that applies to this request. (Check all that apply.)			
☐	A. Competitive Process	☐	G. Grant
☒	B. Amendment	☐	H. State Statute/Agency Directed
☒	C. Single Source/Unique Vendor	☐	I. Federal Agency Directed
☐	D. Proprietary/Copyright/Patents	☐	J. Willing and Qualified

☐	E. Emergency	☐	K. Client Choice
☐	F. Higher Education Cooperative Project	☐	L. Other Authorization

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.

Since its inception, EnGiNE has been developed as a statewide online community of practice to support collaboration and professional learning for Maine's educators. Built on open-source tools, the platform has evolved to meet the changing needs of educators and continues to serve as an innovative professional learning resource. This amendment extends the current contract for an additional year.

Development has been managed through CATES, LLC, which secured two subcontracted development firms over the life of the project. While the use of multiple subcontractors was not originally intended, the transition between developers resulted in significant time loss due to onboarding and knowledge transfer. To avoid further delays and disruption, a single-source continuation with the current subcontractors is necessary.

At this stage, EnGiNE is close to achieving a stable operational state. Maintaining the current development team will allow the project to reach that state efficiently and on schedule. Achieving stability will also enable the Maine DOE to develop a more informed and competitive RFP for future platform support and enhancements.

EnGiNE fulfills a need not addressed by any existing or planned Maine DOE contracts. EnGiNE provides capabilities beyond those of LUMEN, including a professional learning course catalog, course content creation, and an outward-facing platform accessible to Maine's educators statewide.

An additional year under the current contract is required to complete remaining development and operate EnGiNE for a full school year in a stable, "as-is" state. This period will allow the Maine DOE to accurately assess ongoing technical support and operational needs under real-world conditions. The resulting data will ensure that future procurement reflects actual platform requirements and represents responsible stewardship of public funds.

Stable state refers to a fully functional platform operating without concurrent development, with Maine DOE staff able to manage routine updates to messaging, branding, and communications without reliance on external technical support.

2. Provide a brief justification for the selected vendor to supplement the response in Part II. Reference the solicitation (RFP/RFA/RFQ) number if applicable.

The development of EnGiNE represented a forward-looking and innovative concept at the time of its inception. The creation of a collaborative, statewide digital resource designed to serve the entire educational workforce as a unified system had not previously existed. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed the need for large-scale, coordinated outreach and engagement across the education community; however, that effort was constrained by fragmented, proprietary, and locally managed platforms that lacked technical interoperability.

PART III: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

EnGiNE was designed to address this challenge by providing a single platform-agnostic point of entry for Maine's educational workforce—independent of device type, operating system, or vendor-specific tools. This centralized access model enables educators to select the collaboration and professional learning tools that best meet their needs, while maintaining a consistent and secure statewide entry point.

The vision and goals for EnGiNE were formalized in [RFP #202010148](#). Following a competitive procurement process, **CATES LLC** was awarded the contract effective July 1, 2021. CATES successfully translated the Department's vision, functional goals, and user requirements into a viable and scalable platform architecture and design model and subcontracted with two development firms to support implementation.

Because the development of a custom statewide platform was new for the **Maine Department of Education**, the project encountered a number of challenges associated with scope, complexity, and technical integration. Early in the development process, it became clear that the original subcontractor was unable to fully meet the functional and architectural requirements of the platform. Approximately two and a half to three years into the project, the Department made the necessary decision to transition to CATES' alternate subcontractor.

Although the foundational design and architectural framework for EnGiNE were in place at the time of this transition, multiple components did not sufficiently support the Department's operational and administrative requirements. The subcontractor transition required several months to complete contract closeout, onboarding, and technical knowledge transfer, resulting in a temporary loss of development momentum. During this process, the Department also identified legacy code that was overly complex and unnecessarily proprietary. These constraints limited the Department's ability to independently manage routine platform operations and introduced long-term sustainability and vendor-dependence risks.

A substantial portion of development funding in large-scale software initiatives is allocated to project management, research, discovery, architecture, and validation prior to full implementation. At this advanced stage of development, initiating a transition to a new vendor would be fiscally imprudent and operationally disruptive. For this reason, the Department is requesting a one-year contract extension.

The Department's current implementation plan is to complete core development during the first quarter of the extension year and transition into a structured product-use and operational phase during the 2026–2027 school year. The existing contract and subcontractors are uniquely positioned to complete this work efficiently, as demonstrated by the nearly one-year delay caused by the previous subcontractor transition.

As the platform expanded and educator participation increased, additional functional and operational requirements emerged. These evolving needs require additional discovery, analysis, and remediation of existing components, reducing the efficiency of new feature development. Over time, accumulated legacy constraints increasingly hindered progress and made it clear that continued development without first addressing underlying technical debt was not sustainable.

PART III: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

As a result, the Department temporarily paused new feature development to conduct a comprehensive review of existing platform components. This evaluation focused on security, sustainability, and maintainability, and the Department's ability to independently manage routine administrative and operational functions.

Through this five-year development process, the Department has gained significant institutional experience in platform governance, technical oversight, and resource management. An additional one-year extension will allow EnGiNE to reach a stable and supportable operational state, while preserving the flexibility to plan, fund, and implement future enhancements in a more strategic and controlled manner.

During this extension period, the project will also take advantage of major improvements in its open-source foundations, including Drupal and Moodle. Legacy code remediation will prioritize modern, community-supported architectures and development practices, reducing reliance on proprietary or highly specialized implementations and strengthening long-term security, maintainability, and workforce sustainability.

The Department plans to initiate new procurement in the second quarter of the next fiscal year. This new RFP will focus primarily on technical support, maintenance, and operational sustainability of the EnGiNE platform rather than on large-scale feature development. While future enhancements will remain within scope, they will no longer represent the primary focus of the contract, as they did under the original development-centered RFP.

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

Based on current hosting expenses and projected technical support requirements, the Maine Department of Education estimates that approximately \$150,000 per year will be required to operate and maintain EnGiNE as a stable, secure, and continuously available platform.

If future enhancements to the stabilized platform are pursued, an additional \$100,000 per year is projected to provide flexibility for limited and targeted product improvements, based on currently available cost information.

Operating EnGiNE in a fully supported, production environment during the extension year will also enable the Department to validate these cost assumptions under real-world operational conditions and make any necessary adjustments to inform future procurement strategies and long-term budgeting decisions.

These proposed costs are reasonable and appropriate when compared to the Department's current expenditures for non-development services supporting the platform. They are also consistent with industry-standard estimates for platform hosting, technical support, and modest ongoing enhancement capacity. In addition to local conversations with people who are familiar with this area, we've also consulted online sources to help us propose our budget. [Artezio](#) helps break down anticipated components quite well. While service levels, support needs, and vendor pricing are subject to change, the Department conducted due diligence in developing these cost projections and in preparing the associated budget request.

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

PART III: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

During the extension year, the Department will conduct a full and competitive RFP process to secure a new vendor for ongoing hosting, technical support, and optional modest enhancements, with the intent of executing a new contract effective July 1, 2027.

By September 2026, EnGiNE will reach a Maine DOE-independent, stable version and will be implemented statewide for the 2026–2027 school year. This period will represent the Department's first opportunity to operate the platform without concurrent development activity, allowing for an accurate assessment of real-world hosting, maintenance, and technical support needs. The extension year will also support limited discovery work to identify feasible future enhancements. Any enhancements that can be fully scoped and completed by June 30, 2027 will be addressed during this period.

Based on data collected during this stable implementation year, the Department will issue a clearly defined RFP by October 30, 2026. This RFP will reflect validated operational requirements and encourage open competition among qualified vendors by clearly separating ongoing support needs from optional enhancement services.

This approach ensures continuity of service in the short term while positioning the Department to pursue a transparent, competitive procurement process that maximizes value and long-term sustainability.

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) or (026) – If Yes, please be aware of the requirements from awarding federal agencies.

☒ No – If No, proceed to Part V.

PART V: CONFLICTS OF INTEREST (COI); CONTRACT WITH THE STATE

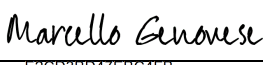
Maine law contains Conflict of Interest statutes directed to State Departments, State Officers, and Employees Generally under MRS [Title 5, §18](#) and [§18-A](#), in harmony with MRS [Title 17, §3104](#).

☒ The requesting department's signatory affirms, understands, and acknowledges Maine's Conflict of Interest statutes and, in accordance with those statutes and to the best of their knowledge, has determined that no conflict of interest exists at the time of this contract, renewal, or amendment.

PART VI: APPROVALS

Governor/Department Commissioner or Designee			
1. The signature below indicates approval of this procurement request.			
Signature of requesting Department's Commissioner (or designee):			
Typed Name:	Daniel A. Chuhta, Deputy Commissioner	Date:	5/15/2026
2. Additional signature required ONLY if box E (Emergency) is selected in PART II. The signature below indicates approval by the Department's Commissioner, or the <u>designee specifically authorized to approve emergency procurement requests.</u>			
Signature of requesting Department's Commissioner (or designee):			
Typed Name:		Date:	

****OSPS Section Only****

Signature of DAFS Procurement Official:	Signed by:  E2CD3BD47EBC4FB...		
Typed Name:	Marcello Genovese	Date:	6/4/2026



Certificate Of Completion

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Subject: Complete with Docusign: ITP-266341 EnGiNE-CATES_IT Contract Amendment_022026 (1).docx

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Initials: 0

Daniel A. Chuhta

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Daniel.Chuhta@maine.gov

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Daniel.Chuhta@maine.gov

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Elaine Bartley

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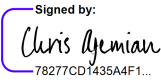
Chris Ajemian

Signature

Timestamp

chris@catestutoring.com

Signed by:



78277CD1435A4F1...

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(Optional), Logged in

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Intermediary Delivery Events	Status	Timestamp
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Certified Delivery Events	Status	Timestamp
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Carbon Copy Events	Status	Timestamp
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Jason Smith

jsmith@catestutoring.com

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Olivia Schafer

olivia.schafer@maine.gov

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To let us know of a change in your email address where we should send notices and disclosures electronically to you, you must send an email message to us at jennifer.l.tarr@maine.gov and in the body of such request you must state: your previous email address, your new email address. We do not require any other information from you to change your email address.

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- ii. send us an email to jennifer.l.tarr@maine.gov and in the body of such request you must state your email, full name, mailing address, and telephone number. We do not need any other information from you to withdraw consent.. The consequences of your withdrawing consent for online documents will be that transactions may take a longer time to process..

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The minimum system requirements for using the DocuSign system may change over time. The current system requirements are found here: <https://support.docusign.com/guides/signer-guide-signing-system-requirements>.

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To confirm to us that you can access this information electronically, which will be similar to other electronic notices and disclosures that we will provide to you, please confirm that you have read this ERSD, and (i) that you are able to print on paper or electronically save this ERSD for your future reference and access; or (ii) that you are able to email this ERSD to an email address where you will be able to print on paper or save it for your future reference and access. Further, if you consent to receiving notices and disclosures exclusively in electronic format as described herein, then select the check-box next to 'I agree to use electronic records and signatures' before clicking 'CONTINUE' within the DocuSign system.

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- Until or unless you notify Carahsoft OBO Maine Department of Education as described above, you consent to receive exclusively through electronic means all notices, disclosures, authorizations, acknowledgements, and other documents that are required to be provided or made available to you by Carahsoft OBO Maine Department of Education during the course of your relationship with Carahsoft OBO Maine Department of Education.

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marcello.genovese@maine.gov
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marcello.genovese@maine.gov
Pool: StateLocal

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Nancy Tan
Nancy.Tan@maine.gov
Deputy Director of IT Procurement
DAFS Procurement Services
Security Level: Email, Account Authentication (None)

Signature
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Marcello Genovese
marcello.genovese@maine.gov
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Olivia Schafer
Olivia.Schafer@maine.gov
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To contact us by email send messages to: kendra.l.coates@maine.gov

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