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12:00:42 --> 12:00:49

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Good afternoon, everyone, or it's afternoon where we are at least.

12:00:50 --> 12:00:57

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): I'm working on clearing out the waiting room. It looks like we've had a few extra folks joining us.

12:01:00 --> 12:01:03

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): And then we'll get started once.

12:01:03 --> 12:01:05

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Since everybody's here.

12:01:15 --> 12:01:16

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): All right.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Uh, I am Emma Banks, I am the Coordinator of Learning Through Technology at the Maine Department of Education, um, and joined here with me, um, is Bethany Billinger, our Project Manager, and Sam Jenkins, who is our Data Specialist, um, and they both directly support the evaluation of the program, so, um...

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): I have them here to help answer any questions and to hear questions from all of you. I'm going to start by — I'll share my screen and give just a little bit of an overview of the program, emphasizing the evaluation side of things.

12:01:51 --> 12:02:02

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): And then the majority of this will be for questions that you all have. So I will start by sharing my screen.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Um, and just give a little bit of context about the program, and then, um, we'll go from there. Um, oh, and a couple more people in the waiting room. I'll keep an eye on that.

12:02:24 --> 12:02:41

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): All right. So MLTI is a part of the Learning Through Technology team at the Maine Department of Education. So the team has a wealth of things that we manage, but the biggest of which, of course, is the Maine Learning Technology Initiative.

12:02:41 --> 12:03:00

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Which is a long-standing initiative, goes back to the early 2000s, and really started as just a device provision program, and since then has grown to be so much more. And that's one of the things I wanted to share with you all today is really around how we approach technology, because.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Um, when it comes to evaluating our program, we're really trying to tell the story of what it is that we do, and it's really not, like, providing devices and supporting, um, network infrastructure. Um, we're also part of the...

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Main School Library Network, which provides internet access to schools and libraries across the state. But that's like our baseline, to ensure equity. And so we're really looking at, a holistic approach to technology, emphasizing the importance of computer science as a foundation. And we really emphasize this idea that technology is really just a tool.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): And how it's used and implemented in schools and classrooms is really what is the most important. So really looking at students and student success as the focal point of all that we do. And we do a lot of support with educators through professional learning to help to ensure that students are having the best technologically.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): um, integrated experiences as what they can. So, um, really looking at how does technology improve learning and create opportunities for students to be successful and to be future ready.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Um, our program is kind of structured on four, like, pillars, essentially. One is technology provision, so that's the one-to-one device program, um, and at times, um, we're able to do supplemental technology, so, um, we've had opportunities to provide, um, computer science equipment to schools, we've been able to, um.

12:04:25 --> 12:04:51

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): We ran a grant program a couple of years ago where we were able to allow schools to apply for tech packages, and we had such a wide variety of things that people asked for, from stuff for gamification to higher performance machines to be able to do video editing and photo equipment and all that kind of stuff. So our technology provision is always one-to-one devices, but then also sometimes there's a supplemental aspect to it.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): And that's really our baseline of equity there.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Then we also support the one-to-one through professional learning. So making sure that our educators are equipped to implement those devices in their schools. If there's one thing Maine has learned, it's that just providing the technology is not enough. It really needs to be paired with high quality professional learning.

12:05:13 --> 12:05:40

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): And so more than half of our team exists purely to support professional learning. So we have specialists who work with us and provide professional learning to educators across the State. We do statewide. We also do school based. So there's a ton of professional learning that we offer to make sure that those devices are being used effectively and for the right reasons. It's really we focus a lot on the active creation and.

12:05:40 --> 12:05:51

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): really try to mitigate the passive consumption? Because it's really easy to, you know, toss a student on a device and have them, you know, watch videos, but that's really not what we want to see happening in our classrooms.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Then we also support infrastructure. So through the Maine School Library Network, we provide Internet access, but also we have really dug into cybersecurity. We're a part of several different coalitions across the state to discuss digital citizenship and cybersecurity to make sure that.

12:06:09 --> 12:06:25

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): schools are thinking about data privacy. We've had several incidents over the past couple of years where infiltration happened at our schools, and we

were able to respond quickly and make sure that schools had the support that they needed to make sure that their student data is safe and.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): and to help prepare for the next time to try to ensure that that doesn't happen.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): And then the final aspect of our program is really student leadership. So we're really looking at how we empower students. We have two annual conferences. One is an asynchronous conference that has over 5,000 people participate in it, students and teachers every year, and it seems to grow every year. So we've started with 4,000 or so, and now we're up to almost 6,000 who have participated in this last one.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): And that is like a gamified technology learning experience where they learn all kinds of stuff from digital citizenship to computer science to all kinds of different topics in a gamified environment. And then we have an in-person student conference where we bring students to a central location across the state. We have just over a thousand students generally.

12:07:15 --> 12:07:33

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): who come for a day of learning, and that is a really awesome opportunity for us to showcase the student leadership. And then we also have a program, we call it SLAM, it's Student Leadership Ambassadors of Maine, and they run clubs throughout the state helping students to.

12:07:33 --> 12:07:45

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): become really creators and leaders within their own schools, too. They sometimes will create tutorials for other teachers and students. Sometimes there's podcasting, like, what it looks like is a little bit different in each school.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Um, but student leadership is a really important, um, structure for us. So, um, again, all of this is driving at that idea of really wanting students to be ready for the future, um, knowing that technology is changing so fast right now.

12:08:01 --> 12:08:19

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): When we talk about evaluating MLTI, not only is it required for our program to be evaluated, but we're also very committed to the evaluation because we feel that it's really important that the program remain relevant and responsive to the needs of our schools and to students across the state.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): And to make sure that we're not just funneling devices into schools, because that's what we did in 2000 or 2001 when the program started. But really, what's the reason behind it? And how are we making sure that we're continuously improving, making decisions that are informed by data and holding ourselves accountable to the process.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Um, so our evaluation cycle has kind of, um, really focused on looking at the data, analyzing it, learning from it, and making changes. Um, one of the things that.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Since the program was revisioned in about 2020, we were able to really like center the professional learning. And that's 1 of many ways in which we have been able to innovate and rethink the program based on.

12:09:04 --> 12:09:09

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): the needs that we're hearing from folks. So that is.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): kind of an overview of the evaluation of it, and like our like, why, we feel that it's important to evaluate the program. It is not just to check the box to say that we've done it. But it's really for our team to be able to look at the data and make informed decisions.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): that help to improve the program and to keep it relevant, not just now, but 10 years from now, 20 years from now, to make sure that students are really having the best, most innovative opportunities that they can. And another example that I'll use, and then I'll...

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): stop there is when AI kind of came on the scene in education, we were really able to quickly pivot and make change and support the professional learning side of things, support the digital citizenship side of things. And our goal for our evaluation is to really be able to tell that story as we continue to grow and adapt to the program because.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): As many of you likely know, Maine was the first state to have a one-to-one device program. And so it's really important for us to also be able to be the first to continue to innovate as change happens. So we're at a very interesting inflection point right now with technology in general. We're hearing a lot of pushback around.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): in our schools every day.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): And with that, I will stop. I apologize if I went very quickly. I tend to speak a little too quickly, so I'm happy to go back over anything that I covered. And we can start in with any questions that folks have. You can feel free to.

12:10:56 --> 12:11:04

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Um, come off mute, turn your camera on, turn, like, type in the chat, um, whatever method works best for you. We are here to answer your questions.

12:11:11 --> 12:11:13

Shelly Menendez: Can I go first?

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Hi, Talia.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Yes, go for it.

12:11:14 --> 12:11:29

Shelly Menendez: Hi, everyone. I have a question regarding the professional learning. Is that, how does that work? Is that school districts request that? Is that mandatory? Like, can you explain what that process looks like for the professional learning opportunities? How is planned, developed, and implemented?

12:11:29 --> 12:11:52

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Yeah, that's a wonderful question. So it's a combination effect. So we have. Our team is comprised of a core group of long term employees who are specialists in certain areas. So we have a computer science specialist. We have an emerging technology specialist. We have somebody who specializes in digital citizenship,

etc. And so those folks are doing like our strategic planning of like, what professional learning.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): would be most useful and relevant right now. Then we have right now, it's like eight who we call them distinguished educators. They are. They are educators from the field who contract with us for two years and basically are able to give us the voice of what they're seeing in their own schools, what they're seeing in schools around them, to make sure that again, we're making sure that we're being relevant in the professional learning that we offer.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): So then, implementation wise, we offer statewide professional learning. So we have our own learning management system at DOE called Engine, and we offer courses in there. We also offer synchronous like virtual offerings that are statewide. Then we also take requests.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): from schools for school-based PD. Sometimes that's at the district level, sometimes that's at the school level. Sometimes it's a single teacher who's reaching out and looking for support, and we do our best to accommodate all of the requests that we get. Sometimes, you know, we're not able to, but for the majority, we can really kind of.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): tailor and adapt to what people are asking. Um, we also put out documentation guidance, so, um, that's kind of... it's more technical assistance than professional learning, but I think, um, we often pair our technical assistance with professional learning, so I think it's worth mentioning. Um, and so it's kind of a top-down, bottom-up, at-the-same-time approach.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Every teacher must engage in at least one MLTI-offered professional learning. And so that's in their opt-in agreement. So when a superintendent signs that, they're agreeing that their educators will do that. Right now, we don't have a mechanism for how we're tracking that. That's another piece that we would like to grow in. But that's as close to required as what we have. And so a lot of it is really interest-based and kind of like my school is prioritizing this, and so we want to do PD on that.

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Shelly Menendez: Thank you.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Yeah.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Go ahead, Matt.

12:14:01 --> 12:14:07

Matt Pines: Hi, good — well, good afternoon. Thank you for doing this.

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Matt Pines: I don't know whether you knew that the chat was disabled, so we can't actually put questions in there.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Oh, no! No, I did not know that. Our IT department does that by default, so let me see if I can change that.

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Matt Pines: Yep.

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Matt Pines: Okay. Will we get the transcript of this? Will that be made available? Okay.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Yes, we are recording the actual video, and then we will also have a transcript. And we are also collecting all of the questions and answers in a separate format as well. So you get the questions and the answers as well.

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Matt Pines: Okay.

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Matt Pines: I do have 2 questions.

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Matt Pines: I know that in the Rfp. In the the scope of services to be provided. It talks about the timeline running through 2032. Is that the.

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Matt Pines: Is that the scope of the evaluation RFPs through 2032, or is this just a one-year?

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Matt Pines: Evaluate it.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Um, so the scope of the eval... we evaluate in one-year periods, generally, because that's our opt-in. Um, however, I believe we set the scope based on renewals, so we would have to go back out to bid in 2032, so this would be... the awarded bidder would be eligible to work with us through 2032.

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Matt Pines: Okay.

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Matt Pines: Okay, cool. And then my last question, I won't hog the the the chat. But my last question. So.

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Matt Pines: the evaluation is strictly around the, uh, PD, device access, and, um, and I'm forgetting the third, so we're not touching.

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Matt Pines: the other part that's actually in the statute, um, in Title 20, about...

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Matt Pines: what is it? Um, assess the effect of laptop program on student performance in achieving content standards and performance indicators established by the statewide system of learning results. So we're not actually.

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Matt Pines: We're not actually touching...

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Matt Pines: student achievement or student academic outcomes. We're only looking at those 3 things. Is that.

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Matt Pines: Correct.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Yeah, that's a really great question and a great point of clarification. So our end goal is to know what the impact of the program is on student achievement and student outcomes. However, in Maine, we are a local control state where data collection is.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): what's mandated to collect versus what we want to collect, so we struggle with getting to that level of granularity that we would need to be able to. In our office, we're located within the Office of Teaching and Learning. We're really examining this as an office right now, because, as you may know, assessment scores in Maine right now are.

12:16:42 --> 12:17:01

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): not wonderful. Um, and so we're really trying to be able to make the correlation between the impact of the PD that we offer on increased student outcomes, um, and that has been a feat, um, to say less. Um, but it's certainly a goal of ours. I think that, like, what's in statute, um.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): is almost aspirational just because of the actual ability to do that work. But that is what we would like to reach eventually. And I think we've made some good

progress in the past year or two. But it is a struggle for us to get to that level of granularity of like the.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): impact on student outcome.

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Matt Pines: Okay, so that's not within the scope of this RFP or evaluation, though, at this time.

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Matt Pines: Okay.

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Matt Pines: Yep.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): It's like a growth edge, I guess, would be what I would suggest.

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Matt Pines: Okay, cool. Thank you.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Yeah, of course.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Um, and I believe I fixed the chat. Zoom has changed a lot since last time I was on it. We operate in Microsoft Teams, so it took me a couple minutes to figure out where the button is now, but I believe I fixed the chat, so hopefully you should be able to, um, drop things in there now as well. Um, alright, it looks like Jackie is up next.

12:18:08 --> 12:18:30

Jackie DeLisi: Yeah. Hi, everybody. I just wanted to say, first of all, I appreciate your commitment to having a useful evaluation that can inform main schools and work with teachers and students. I'm curious if you've had a prior or recent evaluation, and if so, if there are.

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Jackie DeLisi: Results from that that might be able to be shared.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Yeah, that's a great question. We received that in our kind of initial question packet. We're working to make that available on our website. We have been working with an evaluator for, I think, about 3, 5 years now. I'm losing track of time. I think it's almost 5, and so I can make those available on our website. They're not there today. I'm working with our web coordinator to get them up there, but we'll make that available to everyone, because that is something that.

12:18:58 --> 12:19:09

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Um, we have access to. So, um, yes, we have it, and we will post it on our website, and I can drop the link, um, to our page in, and I, um, my goal is to have it up there by tomorrow.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Go ahead, Maureen.

12:19:18 --> 12:19:36

Maureen Hawes: Hi, everyone. Thanks for the opportunity to ask questions and learn a little bit more about the program today. I guess one of my questions is around in the timeline, it says that device allocation for eligible students and staff in designated grades.

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Maureen Hawes: Can you talk a little bit more about what, um...

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Maureen Hawes: eligible... what's the criteria for eligible students, and then are we looking at a specific grade span? Are we looking across, you know, Pre-K through 12? Can you give us a little more information on that?

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Yeah, absolutely. So we recently expanded to allow SAUs to choose which grade level they put their devices in. So every SAU who's opted in is allowed to pick a grade level to fill with devices each year, and that's grades 1 through 12, and it would be PK-12. But the data that we use to.

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Maureen Hawes: Thank you.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): predict our allocations does not go into pre-K, so we have to use K from the year before to predict for grade 1. So the lowest we could go is grade 1. I would also argue that pre-K and K probably don't really need one-to-one devices in their classrooms, but that's another conversation. So we do grades 1 through 12, and so it.

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Maureen Hawes: Okay. And is there any special criteria for... it says eligible students, so I... my understanding was that...

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Maureen Hawes: If the school or district decides.

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Maureen Hawes: That you would be paying.

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Maureen Hawes: Okay.

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Maureen Hawes: Okay.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): And we support professional learning across the entire SAU once they're opted in. So it's not specific to the grade level. I think that's probably important to mention as well.

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Maureen Hawes: Great. Thank you.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Yeah, of course.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Go ahead, Steve.

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Steve Meyer: Hi there. Yeah, thanks for meeting with us to discuss these questions. I'm just wondering, I think this is a newly competitive bid process, like it hasn't been in place before, and it's helpful to get a sense of your overarching priorities for the evaluation.

12:21:56 --> 12:22:02

Steve Meyer: Wondering if you're looking for, like, a change in approach, or if there's anything sort of particularly...

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Steve Meyer: Anything that you... that might inform, um, your priorities around the decision to kind of make this a competitive process this time.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Awesome. Yeah. So we did go out to competitive bid once. It was in 2021, if I'm correct. It was right around that period of time. So this is the second time we've gone out to competitive bid for it. However, I would say, like, our priorities are different now than when we began. So in 2021, the program was fresh off of a revision from.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): um, quote-unquote, just being a device program to really now being a robust professional learning program supported by equitable access to technology. Um, and so our priority really right now is to be able to tell that story around the professional learning and the impact that that has, um, to Matt's question on student.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): impact on student outcomes if possible. Right? So we're still exploring what that means for us. But.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): like when the program was 1st revisioned. It was okay. We like, we need to evaluate it. That had been done kind of in house prior to that, in a very kind of disjointed way. So in 2021, when we went out to competitive bid, that was our 1st attempt at really being thoughtful about the evaluation.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): And when that happened, we were like, we're not really sure what we're evaluating, but we're going to start. And since then, in those years that has passed now, we're really like, okay, we want to evaluate the professional learning and the impact that that has. Sure, the devices and the connection are important, and they really provide that baseline. I'm sure many of you know, Maine is a very rural state, and there is a lot of socioeconomic disparity. And so making sure that the devices and the connection.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): we're still a focal point of the program is very important to us. But it's no longer like the flashy thing like it's like, yeah, everybody has devices now, and most people are connected. So that's awesome. And we want to continue that. But now we really want to like flip the coin and say, the professional learning, the student leadership opportunities.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): are really what's going to drive us into the future. Um, and so, as far as priority shifting, that's really where our priority has shifted to as far as evaluating the program.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): That's a great question.

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Steve Meyer: Great, thank you.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): All right, well, um... oh!

12:24:21 --> 12:24:22

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Hi, Evan.

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Eben Witherspoon: Figure out... hi. I couldn't figure out how to, uh, raise my hand, but, um, I was wondering if you could just talk a little bit more. I know in the center of your diagram you had shared that it talks about student success. I was wondering if you could just talk a little bit more about what student success.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Oh, your audio cut out.

12:24:41 --> 12:24:43

Eben Witherspoon: And in the woods in Vermont, so...

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Oh, there you are. You said talk a little bit more about what student success and then you cut out.

12:24:53 --> 12:24:55

Eben Witherspoon: Can you hear me better now?

12:24:54 --> 12:24:55

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Yes.

12:24:55 --> 12:25:14

Eben Witherspoon: OK. So yeah, I'm just in the center of that diagram that you had shared. There's student success is like at the center of all this. And so I just wanted you to talk a little bit more if you could about what student success looks like for your team, for the state of Maine, like what you're looking for there. I know you talked about student achievement, but are there other ways that you're thinking about?

12:25:14 --> 12:25:21

Eben Witherspoon: Student success as impacted by the the things that you all are doing.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Yeah, that's a great question. So I think in this day and age where technology is accelerating in pace again, I think this is not the first time that technology has accelerated. But we're in another period of time. I keep finding myself likening it to the early days of the internet, when the internet and computers started becoming smaller and smaller and smaller, and internet became faster and faster and faster.

12:25:44 --> 12:26:06

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): We had this acceleration of change that happened. And I think MLTI did a really great job of preparing students for the future in that way by getting the devices in front of them and getting the connection in front of them. And now we are headed into AI and quantum computing and immersible technology and all of these very heavy technological concepts.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): And the thing that our team talks a lot about is it's really not about mastering those. It's about having a foundational understanding of how technology works, what technology is, and how it is both beneficial and detrimental to us as humans, but also to the planet. Like, we've been talking a lot about AI and the energy consumption there and also, you know, the mental health aspects of social media and AI. And so, like.

12:26:30 --> 12:27:00

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): when we think about a student being successful in technology, it's really about understanding the whole picture. It's not about like, oh, I know how to. I mean, it used to be right. I know how to type in a word document like that's that was the baseline back then. Now it's like, do I understand how AI works and how it is going to just tell me what I want to hear. And do I know that? And do I know how computer science is a foundational principle to all technology use in general, and that if I don't understand those core principles, I will not be successful.

12:27:00 --> 12:27:24

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): in learning more technology as I go forward? Do they know that creating in technology is really the critical thing to know, and that consuming is only as good as consuming is right? Like there's a lot of research that's starting to come out around. Is there actually a detriment to doing certain things on technology and helping our students to understand that is just as important to us as helping them understand.

12:27:24 --> 12:27:39

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): how technology will change and grow and how it will benefit their lives. We talk a lot about the social media aspect and how these companies are run by giant conglomerate people who do not have human best interest at heart. They have money at heart.

12:27:39 --> 12:28:02

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): And so helping our students to understand that and the complexities that go along with it. So when I think about a technologically successful student, it's really that holistic understanding of both the good and the bad of technology

and making sure that they feel confident to jump in and explore any new technology as it comes around.

12:28:02 --> 12:28:08

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): And that they can understand it. 'Cause I think once quantum computing enters, like.

12:28:08 --> 12:28:27

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): commonplace, that's really going to change, um, a lot, and our students need to understand what that means. Um, and AI is just kind of, like, dipping the toe into the water of what's coming, um, and so that's kind of... I feel like it's long-winded, because I've... it's like a passion area of mine, if you can't tell, to make sure that our students are prepared and understand that. That's what success means to me.

12:28:28 --> 12:28:30

Eben Witherspoon: Okay, thank you.

12:28:29 --> 12:28:31

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Yeah.

12:28:31 --> 12:28:32

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Great question.

12:28:32 --> 12:28:34

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Go ahead, Buzzy.

12:28:34 --> 12:28:50

Leslie Goodyear: Thanks, Emma. I love all that passion around all of that. And also, really appreciate — I think someone else mentioned this too — about how you're thinking about evaluation as a way to improve and grow and think about how to make the program even better than it is.

12:28:50 --> 12:29:07

Leslie Goodyear: Two quick questions. I'm going to add on to one that Annabeth put in the chat. I'd love to know if you have a budget for the initial period. That's like a quick question. But then the other question I have is I'm really curious how you're thinking about equitable access. That was a major part of the RFP.

12:29:07 --> 12:29:15

Leslie Goodyear: And something that came up for us is really interesting and exciting. But of course, wanting to know how you're thinking about it in a state like Maine.

12:29:15 --> 12:29:35

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Yeah, that's a great question. And I will come to the questions in the chat in a moment, too. We can totally share the budget for the initial period of performance. Bethany, if you could work on digging that up, that would be wonderful. If we can't find it in the time that we're here together, we can make sure that that's shared in the Q&A that we'll be sharing with everyone. It's just in our documentation somewhere.

12:29:36 --> 12:29:51

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): So equitable access in today's day and age means a lot of things, right? Back when the program started, it was about devices, and then it was about Internet. It was like Internet wasn't even really a conversation when we, when MLTI started, it was really about the device.

12:29:51 --> 12:30:11

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Then it was like, well, without access to the Internet, the device is only worth so much, right? And now we have essentially equitable access to devices and

Internet. And so what does equity look like now really ends up centering around both software is a big conversation right now because schools who can afford more have more.

12:30:11 --> 12:30:29

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): And so how are we thinking about software in a way that is equitable, especially where everything now is licensed by seat, by month, by year. So you never, you don't own software anymore. Like, I am old enough to remember when it was on a CD and you installed it and you had it forever, right? And that's we don't have that anymore.

12:30:29 --> 12:30:47

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): And so making sure that we're thinking about equity through the lens of of tools that they have access to is a big piece of it. We also look at equitable access to information. So professional learning, we really try to make sure that it's not just the people who are asking for it that are getting the professional learning, but that we're really reaching out.

12:30:47 --> 12:31:07

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Our team talks a lot about. We call it engaging the disengaged like who is not taking us up on our Pd. And why are they not taking us up on our Pd. And how do we get in front of them? How do we get more access to them? We also try to empower our schools and our school leaders to work with their school boards, because one of the things that we have found in our work is that.

12:31:07 --> 12:31:28

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): when a school board is bought into the technology education, the doors just open and budget all of a sudden is no longer a problem. I have seen many school districts where they have a great relationship with their school board, and therefore they anytime they ask for funding for technology education, they will end up getting some kind of funding for it, because.

12:31:28 --> 12:31:34

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): They've shown what the impact can be. One of the grant programs that we ran a couple of years ago was called Teachwood Tech.

12:31:34 --> 12:31:50

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): And one of the requirements that we had, we had a list of requirements they could choose from, and one of them was presenting to their school board. And those who did like one at first they were like, oh, I don't want to do this. And then after they did it, they were like, that was the best thing I could have done. Now they're so excited and enthused about it.

12:31:50 --> 12:32:03

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): And so, I think making that community connection is also a piece of that equity, because when you have a community who is very, like, no, we don't want tech in our schools, we don't want cell phones, it's ruining our kids, like, when we can help to.

12:32:03 --> 12:32:18

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): like, I want to say, change minds, but it's really inform them of how technology can be both bad and good, like, what is the good side of it? And how are we leaning into that and trying to minimize the negative impacts? That's really where we start to get more equity as well. So.

12:32:18 --> 12:32:43

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): it's kind of like addressing socioeconomic disparities through software and other opportunities, you know, like some schools have a 3D printer in every closet in their building, and others are like they get a 3D printer, and they're like, Oh, my God, this is the coolest thing we've ever had. And so trying to address that. That's 1 of the things that our teach with Tech Grant tried to do as well. We really looked at like, if they were a more socioeconomically disadvantaged district, they got more opportunity.

12:32:43 --> 12:32:59

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): because we knew that they would need that. So we had like a modified formula that we used to do that. So I think equity today looks very different than it did when the program started, and we're constantly trying to evolve and adapt it to make sure that we're being responsive to that as well.

12:32:59 --> 12:33:02

Leslie Goodyear: Thanks so much, Emma. That was really great.

12:33:02 --> 12:33:04

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): I was like, yeah, no problem.

12:33:05 --> 12:33:07

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Go ahead, Matt.

12:33:12 --> 12:33:16

Matt Pines: Sorry about that. Slow on the unmute button.

12:33:15 --> 12:33:17

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): No worries.

12:33:16 --> 12:33:18

Matt Pines: OK, so what if?

12:33:18 --> 12:33:20

Matt Pines: Um... no.

12:33:20 --> 12:33:30

Matt Pines: What if some of that equity looks like because I'm aware of like private schools and some of the more affluent districts are actually moving.

12:33:31 --> 12:33:35

Matt Pines: Further away from screen time in classrooms. What if.

12:33:35 --> 12:33:45

Matt Pines: what if that's what that equitable access piece starts to look like? Um, I'm... I'm in Maine, I'm here in Maine, and one of the things I worry about is, um.

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Matt Pines: that we have fairly significant disparities between some of our.

12:33:51 --> 12:34:02

Matt Pines: coastal communities that have quite high property tax valuations, and then, um, I'm in Oxford County right now, and some of our Oxford County school districts are really, um.

12:34:02 --> 12:34:08

Matt Pines: And so, I guess my point is, what if it looks like...

12:34:08 --> 12:34:19

Matt Pines: That is, is that within the scope of of this evaluation to be able to do that comparison between districts and say.

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Matt Pines: Actually, there are districts that are —.

12:34:22 --> 12:34:39

Matt Pines: you know, that are pushing for less screen time and more one to one or something like that. And then I don't know how you evaluate it. But when you're talking about AI like, what if there is that emergent research that's showing.

12:34:39 --> 12:34:49

Matt Pines: You know, that cognitive offloading is leading to cognitive debt, and that kids who, you know, there's negative transference from one task to another.

12:34:49 --> 12:34:58

Matt Pines: if that's out there in the academic literature, but it's not really... I don't know how you bring that.

12:34:58 --> 12:35:07

Matt Pines: down to the local level and and put it in here. But is that sort of? Is that what this is looking for is recommendations.

12:35:07 --> 12:35:15

Matt Pines: about what the future of AI should be by grade level in Maine? Or am I reading too much into your comments there?

12:35:15 --> 12:35:33

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): No, I think the two examples they've illuminated are exactly what we're looking at. So we talk a lot about opportunities that are more affluent school districts have. And I used to live in Oxford County, so I'm very familiar with that area as well.

12:35:33 --> 12:35:48

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): the difference when you walk into, like, MDI, for example, and then you walk into a rural elementary school in Oxford County, is, like, it's... there is no comparison, right? And so we often try to paint the picture of, like.

12:35:48 --> 12:36:07

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): if a recommendation is that when a school has ABC, they're able to do this other thing, and so our recommendation would be... and, um, this is one of the other things, is we're able to recommend things to the legislature at times as well, and so we try to prepare ourselves to where if they asked us, how do we solve this problem, that we're prepared with an answer.

12:36:07 --> 12:36:23

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): And so our evaluation can absolutely do that, and at its best will. And I think your example about AI is actually very poignant, because one thing that I see all the time, and that I'm very cautious of, and I'm constantly talking with my team about is.

12:36:23 --> 12:36:46

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Just because it's the new flashy thing does not mean it is good, and we should be pushing it into schools. In fact, schools are often the last place that new technology should arrive because we need to protect our children. And so I'm constantly explaining that and talking with, like, any audience that will listen that, like, just because it's the new flashy thing doesn't mean that it belongs in education.

12:36:46 --> 12:37:05

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): And nationally, that's a really hard conversation to have because many people just want to push, push, push for this technology to end up, where where they want it. And so, when we can have research based informed things that are not biased, because I think that's one of the other things that we see a lot of is like.

12:37:05 --> 12:37:06

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Um...

12:37:06 --> 12:37:23

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): what's his name? Jared Horvath, like there's a lot of research around that. And when you dig into some of the conversation around it, there's a lot of conflating like the statistics are manipulated in ways that are not necessarily like academic to your point. And so when we do have things that are like.

12:37:23 --> 12:37:45

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): undeniably true. We need to be able to look at those and make informed decisions that are protecting our students and are preparing Maine to stay ahead of both the good and the bad of technology. So I think those are 2 really great examples of exactly what our evaluation would do is provide us with recommendations that one we can inform how we move our programming right? Because.

12:37:45 --> 12:38:01

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): If we start to find that there are cognitive deficits happening through the use of AI, which I think we are slowly finding, then we also need to be able to share that with our schools and to be able to include that in our professional learning to say that like, yes, it's important that you know about AI and it's important that.

12:38:01 --> 12:38:16

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): teachers use it, and that students are thinking about it. But it's also really critical that you know these other pieces of it as well, that, like you shouldn't just toss a student on it. We talk about the AI companions a lot right now, because it's like no one under 18 should be touching an AI companion.

12:38:16 --> 12:38:35

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): at all, like, just shouldn't be. And so in RPD, we talk about that a lot of, like, it seems like, like, oh, it's your best friend, right? But no, that is not the case.

These are unvetted areas of technology that should not be exposed to children. So, um, we very much see our part of our role being protecting our students in that way as well.

12:38:35 --> 12:38:38

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): So I think those are two really good examples.

12:38:37 --> 12:38:39

Matt Pines: Yeah, thank you.

12:38:39 --> 12:38:40

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Yep.

12:38:43 --> 12:39:06

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Okay, I'm going to go into the chat for just a second because I know folks have asked questions in there and I appreciate the patience. I was coming to people who've raised their hands. The budget for the initial period of performance, the initial period of performance is two years and the budget at this moment is \$500,000 for that two year period. So it'd be 250 per year.

12:39:07 --> 12:39:21

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Um, the start date of 7-1-27 is, um, is accurate in the sense that, obviously, we can negotiate with the selected vendor if 7-1 would not work, but that is the goal that we're aiming for at this point.

12:39:24 --> 12:39:38

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Um, are there any criteria defining an eligible organization in addition to what is noted in the RFP? Um, eligible organizations are just our school... our SAUs, the school administrative units, or districts, um, who serve publicly funded students.

12:39:44 --> 12:39:49

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Are tribal schools included in the program and the evaluation?
Yes.

12:39:52 --> 12:40:09

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Can you tell us more about data collection activities that are part of the current evaluation? For instance, are surveys administered to schools, educators, students, and families? Great question. So we definitely administer surveys to school leaders, schools, educators, students.

12:40:09 --> 12:40:29

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Um, we haven't gone into families because the permissions, um, gets, even students is a little bit tricky with permissions, um, but we do do some of that. Um, we've done focus group interviews, um, we also look at our, um, we collect feedback on our professional learning and the events that we do, so we use all of that feedback as part of the evaluation as well.

12:40:29 --> 12:40:39

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Um, so it's a combination of data collection that our team already does to inform our programming, um, and then, uh, surveys and interviews on top of that as well.

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Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Um, we also use, like, uh, national, like, academic research as well when, when relevant.

12:40:50 --> 12:41:01

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): The RFP emphasized that data collection processes must minimize the burden and disruption to educators and students. With that in mind, are there any expectations for in-person versus virtual versus hybrid data collection activities?

12:41:45 --> 12:41:49

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): that we would continue with that model for the most part.

12:41:53 --> 12:42:01

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Appendix C defines an education policy research institute as an organization that conducts evidence-based research to inform education decision-making.

12:42:01 --> 12:42:20

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Could the department clarify the criteria used to determine whether a bidder meets this definition to help ensure compliance with eligibility requirements? That is an excellent question. And we had to run that through our legal and procurement team. And so I am not going to be able to answer that question on the spot.

12:42:20 --> 12:42:35

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Um, because it will have to be run by them to help clarify the criteria. They gave us that language, um, and so I will take that question and make sure that it makes it into our Q&A document that will be shared back with everyone, um, and make sure that you get an answer to that question.

12:42:37 --> 12:42:48

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): That was a very big conversation. Like, what is an education policy research institute? And I believe it's in statute. So I think there's only just so much flexibility that we have over that as the department.

12:42:55 --> 12:42:58

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Oh, Anna Beth, I'm not sure about that.

12:43:01 --> 12:43:10

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): I will find that out. I don't want to speak now because I'm not sure if I'm allowed to do that. But if I am, I'll make sure that I include that in the Q&A as well.

12:43:13 --> 12:43:16

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): RFP process rules are...

12:43:16 --> 12:43:20

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): A fun thing to navigate.

12:43:20 --> 12:43:27

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Any other questions that folks have? You've all had some wonderful questions and have given me an opportunity to.

12:43:27 --> 12:43:32

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): talk about things that I love and am passionate about. So it's been great.

12:43:37 --> 12:43:45

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Yes, Leslie, I will be posting that on our website. Let me grab you the link for that, um, because you'll see it right on there, um, once I post it.

12:43:45 --> 12:43:55

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Um, and what I'll do as well is we'll add that into the Q&A as a question answer, like, I'll put the link to the page as well on there, but, um, I'll give you the link to our page anyways.

12:43:58 --> 12:44:02

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): If you haven't checked out our website, that's another great.

12:44:02 --> 12:44:05

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Great opportunity to look at.

12:44:05 --> 12:44:21

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Um, another great question, is there a preference for bidders based in Maine? No, currently we do not have any preferences set up, um, on that front. Really looking for the, the best, um, partnership to be able to effectively evaluate the program. So, location is not...

12:44:21 --> 12:44:24

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): consideration for us right now.

12:44:24 --> 12:44:34

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Certainly knowledge of Maine helps because it'll help you to answer the bid effectively, but don't need to be in Maine.

12:44:43 --> 12:44:46

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Any other questions?

12:44:47 --> 12:44:54

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): I'm constantly working on my Zoom wait time. It's even harder when we can't see your faces.

12:45:04 --> 12:45:08

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): All right. Well, we will work on pulling — oh.

12:45:08 --> 12:45:13

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): One in the chat. Just as soon as I think my wait time's long enough, it's never long enough.

12:45:13 --> 12:45:28

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): You noted the eligible orgs are main SAUs who serve publicly funded students. No worries at all, Kim. Yes, the eligible organizations are main SAUs who serve publicly funded students. Are you eligible organizations for the MLTI program, or are you asking a different question?

12:45:32 --> 12:45:46

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Oh, for the RFP. Eligible organizations are that Education Policy Research Institute. Those are the organizations eligible to bid on the RFP. I apologize. I thought that you meant who was eligible for opting into the MLTI program.

12:45:51 --> 12:45:55

Kim Muller: No, thanks. That's fine. Yeah, I wasn't clear.

12:45:55 --> 12:45:59

Emma-Marie Banks (ME): Awesome. Great. Thank you. No worries at all.