



TO: Roger Breed, Ed.D.
Commissioner of Education

FROM: Sameano Porchea PhD

SUBJECT: Grant the Commissioner authority to contract with four contractors to assist in the grant proposal development with the research and evaluation team and statewide training.

Proposed Board Action:

Grant the Commissioner authority to contract with four contractors to assist in the grant proposal development with the research and evaluation team and statewide training.

Background Information:

Support the Goals of the 2012 SLDS grant:

Goal 1: Provide a statewide system of professional development training for data analysis that reaches every district;
Goal 2: Research and Evaluation Support and Build a research and evaluation operation in NDE collaboratively with the research community.

Estimated Cost:

Psychometrician Sr. \$32,200.00
Psychometrician \$26,550.00
Education Specialist \$25,470.00
Education Specialist \$28,220.00
Total \$112,440.00

Supporting Documentation Included:

See Attachement A

For Additional Information on this item:

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Evaluation – Stakeholder Engagement

Evaluation is an integral component of all programs. As such, The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation developed a document to guide the process. The goal of The Program Evaluation Standards is to “ensure useful, feasible, ethical and sound evaluation of educational programs, projects, and materials” (Sanders, 1994, pg. xiv). Therefore, they will be used as the foundation from which a solid evaluation plan can be constructed for the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) projects presented in this proposal.

Standard U1- Stakeholder Identification: “Persons involved in or affected by the evaluation should be identified, so that their needs can be addressed (Sanders, 1994, pg. 25)”.

The development and statewide implementation of data tools such as the Integrated Student Information System (ISIS); and Interstate Locator (IL) require involvement of stakeholders from varying levels. Stakeholder engagement is a critical first step needed to facilitate buy-in and increase ownership in proposed deliverables. In the coming months the Data, Research, Evaluation, & IT team will launch a full scale Stakeholder Engagement Campaign. Stakeholders will include but are not limited to students, parents, teachers, school administrators, district superintendents, policy makers, and NDE program staff.

Now that we have identified several stakeholder groups we are in the phase of developing protocols and items for focus groups, interviews, surveys, and town hall sessions. As one of the goals of this proposal is to develop an internal research and evaluation team; the development and piloting of these instruments will need to be facilitated by consultants. Contracts will be needed for the following professionals to assist existing staff during development, administration and reporting at both state and national conferences.

1. Psychometrician Sr. - lead the DREI research and evaluation team in developing SLDS interview, survey and focus group questions, instruments, protocols and training for the collection of data to inform decision making with regard to the SLDS 2012 grant award. Assist the DREI research and evaluation team in selecting appropriate analysis tools and or systems; data analysis and interpretation and completion of an evaluation report. Developing an evaluation plan for the proposed SLDS system and informing the team of best practices in evaluation, research and data analysis. Co-present at the AERA/NCME conference in April of each year.
2. Psychometrician - assist the DREI research and evaluation team in developing SLDS interview, survey and focus group questions, instruments, protocols and training for the collection of data to inform decision making with regard to the SLDS 2012 grant award. Assist the DREI research and evaluation team in selecting appropriate analysis tools and or systems; data analysis and

interpretation and completion of an evaluation report. Co-present at the AERA/NCME conference in April of each year.

3. Education Specialist (interviews) - Conduct SLDS interviews with school and district personnel across the state. Enter data from interviews. Serve as editor for SLDS grant documents to be published or submitted internally and externally. Assist in grant proposal development. Assist the DREI research and evaluation team with statewide training.
4. Education Specialist (focus groups & town halls) - work with the DREI research and evaluation team to finalize protocols and questions for SLDS interviews and focus groups. Conduct focus groups with district and school personnel across the state. Enter data from focus group sessions. Inform DREI of district operational nuances and caveats that may affect decision making. Serve as an editor for SLDS grant documents to be published or submitted internally and externally. Assist in grant proposal development. Assist the DREI research and evaluation team with statewide training.

Standard U3 – Information Scope and Selection: “*Information collected should be broadly selected to address pertinent questions about the program and be responsive to the needs and interests of clients and other specified stakeholders (Sanders, 1994, pg. 37).*”

In an effort to assure appropriate scope and selection of information collected throughout the evaluation of the SLDS project the stakeholders will be enlisted to participate in conversations about their relevant needs, wants and research questions.

Standard F1 Practical Procedures: “*The evaluation procedures should be practical; to keep disruption to a minimum while needed information is obtained.*” (Sanders, 1994, pg. 65)

Article VII, section 2, of the Constitution of Nebraska provides for the creation of the State Department of Education and its duties (Nebraska Education Laws, 2011). The law identifies the duties of the NDE as providing “general supervision and administration of the school system of the state and of such other activities as the Legislature may direct” (pg. 389). As such, it falls to the Department to assure that participating schools and districts are not burdened unnecessarily. Therefore, it will be necessary to have consultants and staff conduct interviews, focus group discussions etc. on site; especially for schools and districts in the far western corners of Nebraska.

Standard U6 – Report Timeliness and dissemination: “*Significant interim findings and evaluation reports should be disseminated to intended users, so that they can be used in a timely fashion (Sanders, 1994, pg. 53).*”

All data collected during various evaluation windows will be analyzed to determine the most appropriate data solutions for the state. Further monthly evaluation updates will be provided in a way such that stakeholders have access to documents outlining the progress of the project and summarizing preliminary findings.

Standard F2 – Political Viability: *“The evaluation should be planned and conducted with anticipation of the different positions of various interest groups, so that their cooperation may be obtained, and so that possible attempts by any of these groups to curtail evaluation operations or to bias or misapply the results can be averted or counteracted (Sanders, 1994, pg. 71).”*

Standard A11 – Impartial Reporting: *“Reporting procedures should guard against distortion caused by personal feelings and biases of any party to the evaluation, so that evaluation reports fairly reflect the evaluation findings (Sanders, 1994, pg. 181).”*

Implementation of statewide programs, even on a pilot basis, requires the support of stakeholders at all levels. It is with this understanding that NDE has and continues to obtain feedback from stakeholders to assure varying interests are represented throughout the proposed methodologies. Stakeholder groups will participate in focus groups, interviews, and surveys during the grant award period. These qualitative methods will allow NDE to gather data in a manner that is less likely to yield biased results.

Standard P1 – Service Orientation: *“Evaluations should be designed to assist organizations to address and effectively serve the needs of the full range of targeted participants (Sanders, 1994, pg. 81).”*

Prior to development, stakeholder groups will be given opportunities to provide guidance regarding the utility of the proposed tools and materials. This guidance will be used during development to assure that the proposed deliverables effectively address the identified needs. Further, as the project progresses stakeholder groups will be informed about the types and purposes for varying evaluation methods. Additionally, they will be provided opportunities to offer suggestions for improvement, considerations, and other appropriate feedback.

Standard A1 – Program Documentation: *“The program being evaluated should be described and documented clearly and accurately, so that the program is clearly identified (Sanders, 1994, pg. 127).”*

Standard A3 – Described Purposes and Procedures: *“The purposes and procedures of the evaluation should be monitored and described in enough detail, so that they can be identified and assessed (Sanders, 1994, pg. 137).”*

Standard A4– Defensible Information Sources: *“The sources of information used in a program evaluation should be described in enough detail, so that the adequacy of the information can be assessed (Sanders, 1994, pg. 141).”*

Continuous evaluation and reflection are key components of a successful project. Detailed documentation of both the project and the methods of evaluation are necessary not only as proof of progress or completion but also to corroborate reliability, effectiveness, validity of inferences, adequacy and appropriateness of processes. Therefore both a comprehensive evaluation report and technical document will be completed and published by NDE on an annual basis. Prior to publication stakeholder groups will have access to draft versions of each document for review.

Standard A5 – Valid Information: *“The information gathering procedures should be chosen or developed and then implemented so that they will assure that the interpretation arrived at is valid for the intended use (Sanders, 1994, pg. 145).”*

Standard A6 – Reliable Information: *“The information gathering procedures should be chosen or developed and then implemented so that they will assure that the information obtained is sufficiently reliable for the intended use (Sanders, 1994, pg. 153).”*

Approach: A mixed-methods approach will be used to obtain and analyze data appropriate to the proposed projects. During the development stage NDE staff will guide the development of protocols, and content for each set of formal and informal interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys. Additionally, protocols and forms for documentation of observations will be developed. Finally, protocols will be developed for documentation of data retrieval from current systems. These standardized protocols will minimize possible error associated with individuals being assessed and conducting assessments. Therefore increasing reliability of processes and validity of inferences based on results.

Collection: Initially, baseline data will be collected regarding the time and money expended by varying levels of stakeholders in efforts to obtain and use data in meaningful ways. This data will be collected through an analysis of our current systems in tandem with interview, focus group and survey responses from current users. This data will be used in a comparison analysis after implementation of and training for the proposed data tools. Additionally, data will be collected on a continuous basis through observations, surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

Analysis: Both quantitative and qualitative data will be analyzed using appropriate quasi-experimental parametric or non-parametric procedures.

Reporting: The results from all data analysis will be presented in the annual evaluation, and technical reports. These reports will be formatted using the guidelines provided by the American Psychological Association (APA). Tables and figures will be presented in a clear and concise manner such that they are easily interpreted.

Standard A7 – Systematic Information: *“The information collected, processed, and reported in an evaluation should be systematically reviewed and any errors found should be corrected (Sanders, 1994, pg. 159).”*

One component of the grant proposal is the development of a research and evaluation team at the NDE. This team will be composed in a way that allows for independent replication and comparison of datasets and analysis results. Independent replication and comparison systematically addresses possible errors and facilitates correction.

Standard A8 – Analysis of Quantitative Information: *“Quantitative information in an evaluation should be appropriately and systematically analyzed so that evaluation questions are effectively answered (Sanders, 1994, pg. 165).”*

Standard A9 – Analysis of Qualitative Information: *“Qualitative information in an evaluation should be appropriately and systematically analyzed so that evaluation questions are effectively answered (Sanders, 1994, pg. 171).”*

The research and evaluation team will be responsible for proposing, and carrying out appropriate analysis. Analysis will be selected based on the type of data collected and the research questions to be addressed. These research questions will be reviewed by Stakeholder groups will review and approve the research questions prior to analysis. Graduate students from UNL will assist in the development of these questions based on the descriptive statistics from preliminary data. Additionally, these graduate students will assist in conducting and replicating the data analysis and reporting.