

Request for Proposals (RFP)

Evaluation- Science of Reading Audit Support

RFP Release: June 27, 2024

Proposal Due Date: July 24, 2024

1. Overview and Scope

Literacy forms the foundation of learning and in Ohio more than half of all entering kindergarteners are not meeting the benchmarks in language and literacy with at least 40% of all third-grade students unable to demonstrate proficiency in reading. The State of Ohio is committed to increasing the number of students that are proficient readers and is supporting multiple efforts including ensuring teachers are prepared to meet the needs of all learners through their teacher preparation programs. As a part of this effort, the Chancellor of the Ohio Department of Higher Education is issuing this RFP for consultative services and technical assistance to evaluate Ohio's institutions of higher education with Chancellor approved teacher preparation programs to determine their alignment with the science of reading.

The [science of reading](#) is an interdisciplinary body of scientific evidence that:

1. Informs how students learn to read and write proficiently;
2. Explains why some students have difficulty with reading and writing;
3. Indicates that all students benefit from explicit and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension and writing to become effective readers;
4. Does not rely on any one model of teaching students to read based on meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues, including a three-cueing approach.

The Chancellor is seeking proposals from qualified vendor(s) and will review proposed consultant services to comprehensively evaluate teacher preparation programs to determine the extent to which their literacy strategies and practices align with the science of reading. The award of this RFP will result in a contract with the Chancellor.

The Chancellor's actions and this RFP are specific to Section 3333.048 of House Bill 33 of the 135th General Assembly which directs the Chancellor to conduct audits that clearly document the degree to which every teacher preparation program at an institution of higher education is effectively teaching the science of reading.

2. Program Process

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| • RFP release date | June 27, 2024 |
| • Questions due by 12 p.m. | July 3, 2024 |
| • Responses to questions received by deadline | July 10, 2024 |
| • Proposals due by 12 p.m. | July 24, 2024 |
| • Review, score, and select vendor(s) | July 24 – July 31, 2024 |
- a) Release of the RFP from the Ohio Department of Higher Education will be posted on June 27, 2024, at <https://highered.ohio.gov/educators/grant-resources>.
 - b) Responsive proposals should be emailed to Krista Maxson at kmaxson@highered.ohio.gov with the subject 'Evaluation - Science of Reading Audit Vendor- [Name of Applicant]'. See Section 6 for detailed submission instructions.

- c) The cost of preparation and delivery of the proposal are solely the responsibility of the applicant.
- d) The Chancellor will provide an opportunity for interested parties to seek assistance by responding to their questions. Interested parties' questions are to be submitted in writing via e-mail to Krista Maxson by July 3, 2024 at 12:00 p.m. Responses to the questions received by the deadline will be posted online at <https://highered.ohio.gov/educators/grant-resources> by the close of business on July 10, 2024.

3. Proposal Criteria

Respondents are to address and demonstrate expertise/experience in the evaluation of teacher preparation programs' alignment with the science of reading. Please see Exhibit I for more information.

RFP responses may consist of two or more parties with shared capabilities and capacity partnering to provide the requested services. This RFP indicates the respondent as "vendor." The vendor may identify as for-profit or non-profit organizations. The Chancellor may make one award to a lead party on behalf of a consortium or partnership.

4. Project Term

The project term will commence upon execution of an agreement with the Chancellor. A final statewide summary report will be due from the vendor by November 21, 2025. . All services must be completed by December 2, 2025.

5. Evaluation & Proposal Scoring Criteria

The cost of preparation and delivery of the proposal are solely the responsibility of the respondent. The Chancellor's staff and appointed review team will evaluate RFP responses based on predetermined criteria. The Chancellor reserves the right to contact any reference to assist in the evaluation of the proposal, to independently verify information contained in the proposal, and to discuss the vendor's qualifications with any person or entity not affiliated with the Chancellor's office. Finalists may be required to make a presentation of the proposal, which would occur in person or virtually. The presentation cannot materially change the information contained in the proposal. The Chancellor shall evaluate the candidates and exercise independent judgment in making the final decision.

6. Proposal Contents & Page Limits, Format & Submission Instructions

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is designed to furnish detailed information regarding the responder's ability, expertise, and capacity to conduct audits measuring Ohio's teacher preparation programs' alignment with the science of reading using the [approved metrics](#) in the timeframe of January 1, 2025, through October 31, 2025. Upon execution of an agreement the vendor is encouraged to work toward the establishment of schedules, processes and procedures to begin the audit process as close as possible to January 1, 2025. Responders should consider that it may not be possible to schedule on-site visits to campuses during the summer months and plan accordingly. Additional information may be requested. All information submitted in response to this RFP is public information unless a statutory exception exists that exempts it from public release. Responses that are poorly formatted or submitted, incomplete or otherwise determined to not meet the format and submission guidelines may be removed from the pool for review. Proposals shall not contain promotional or display materials.

Contents should be arranged in the following order and be at or less than the noted length:

1. **Cover Page (optional)**
2. **Abstract** – One page or less
3. **Proposal Narrative** –Vendors should respond to the prompts set forth in Exhibits I & II – not to exceed 10 pages.
 - a. Resumes and other supporting material are not included in the page length.
4. **Budget & Budget Narrative (3 pages maximum)** – In a narrative and summarized in an excel spreadsheet, the budget and budget narrative will document:
 - a. Costs for each step of the process.
 - b. The underlying assumption for each cost (i.e., base cost for item or service, number served, etc.)

Submission Instructions: One PDF in 11 pt. Arial font with normal margins, single line spaced on 8.5 x 11-inch paper. In the footer all pages must be numbered consecutively using the format page x of y (e.g., page 3 of 30) with the responder’s name. Consecutive page numbering applies to all pages of the proposal including any appendices.

Attach one PDF of the entire proposal to an email and send it to Krista Maxson at kmaxson@highered.ohio.gov with ‘Evaluation - Science of Reading Audit Vendor - [Name of Applicant]’ in the subject line by 12:00 p.m. on July 24, 2024.

7. Legal Notice & Disclaimers; Obligations to Local, State & Federal Governments

All information submitted in response to this RFP will become property of the Chancellor and is public information unless a statutory exception exists that exempts it from public release under the Ohio Public Records Act, as defined in Section 149.43 of the Ohio Revised Code.

The Chancellor reserves the right to request or use additional information to assist in the review process, to require new proposals from interested parties, to reject any or all proposals responding to this RFP, or to re-issue, modify or cancel the RFP if it is determined that it is in the best interests of the institutions and/or the state. Issuing this RFP does not bind the Chancellor to issuing a contract. The Chancellor administers the process and reserves the right to adjust the dates for this process for whatever reasons are deemed appropriate. All costs incurred in the preparation of a proposal shall be borne by the respondents and are not recoverable under the award. The decisions of the Chancellor are final. Respondents will be notified of the outcome of their proposal at the conclusion of the review process.

The respondents understand that the information provided in this RFP is intended solely to assist in the proposal submission process. To the best of the Chancellor’s knowledge, the information provided in the RFP is accurate; however, the Chancellor does not warrant such accuracy and any errors or omissions subsequently determined will not be construed as a basis for invalidating this RFP. Interested parties bear the sole responsibility of obtaining the necessary information to submit a qualifying proposal. By submitting a proposal, respondents expressly agree to these terms.

- a. **Obligations to Local, State & Federal Governments:** The contract between the Chancellor and the chosen applicant (“vendor”) will require the vendor to comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws in the performance of the project. Vendor(s) must accept full responsibility for payments of all unemployment compensation, insurance premiums, workers’ compensation premiums, income tax deductions, social security deductions and any and all other payroll

deductions required for all employees engaged on the performance of the work authorized by the contract.

Vendor(s) will be required to certify in the contract, among other things, that they do not owe any delinquent taxes or money to the state or a political subdivision of the state whether the amounts owed are being contested in a court of law or not.

- b. Trade Secret Language:** All information submitted in response to this RFP becomes property of the Chancellor and is public information unless a statutory exception exists that exempts it from public release under the Ohio Public Records Act, as defined in Section 149.43 of the Ohio Revised Code:

All Lead Respondents are strongly discouraged from including in a proposal any information that the Lead Applicant considers to be a “trade secret,” as that term is defined in Section 1333.61(D) of the Ohio Revised Code. The institution or business asserting trade secrets bears the responsibility to take formal action if necessary and defend such assertion. Otherwise, public records laws may require disclosure.

If any information in the proposal is to be treated as a trade secret, the proposal must:

- a. Identify each and every occurrence of the information within the proposal with an asterisk before and after each line containing trade secret information and underline the trade secret information itself;
- b. Identify that the proposal contains trade secret information in the cover letter; and
- c. Include a summary page immediately after the cover letter that lists each page in the proposal that includes trade secret information and the number of occurrences of trade secret information on that page.
- d. To determine what qualifies as trade secret information, refer to the definition of “trade secret” in the Ohio Revised Code at 1333.61(D), which is reproduced below for reference:

(D) “Trade Secret” means information, including the whole or any portion or phase of any scientific or technical information, design, process, procedure, formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique or improvement, or any business information or plans, financial information, or listing of names, addresses, or telephone numbers that satisfies both of the following:

(1) It derives independent economic value, actual or potential, from not being generally known to, and not being readily ascertainable by proper means by, other persons who can obtain economic value from its disclosure or use.

(2) It is the subject of efforts that are reasonable under the circumstances to maintain its secrecy.

- a. *The Ohio Department of Higher Education requires non-disclosure agreements from all non-Department of Higher Education persons who may have had access to proposals containing trade secret information, including evaluators.*
- b. *If the Responder claims that a record is not subject to disclosure under the Ohio Public Records law based on trade secret, it will bear costs of defending this claim.*

Questions should be directed to Krista Maxson, email at kmaxson@highered.ohio.gov with the subject ‘Evaluation – Science of Reading Audit Support RFP’.

EXHIBIT I

- A. The Chancellor is seeking parties with the appropriate qualifications to complete audits of up to 50 teacher preparation programs starting in January of 2025 and submit reports as outlined below. The vendor must provide evidence of:
1. Demonstrated ability to evaluate reading course syllabi to assess alignment with the science of reading. This includes identifying practices that do not align with the science of reading.
 2. Demonstrated ability to evaluate course assessments, textbook(s) and assigned readings to determine the extent to which instruction in the course aligns to the science of reading.
 3. Demonstrated ability to conduct interviews with faculty, candidates, and teachers to determine the extent to which teacher preparation programs align to the science of reading.
 4. Demonstrated ability to make course observations to assess alignment with the science of reading.
 5. Demonstrated ability to provide a comprehensive report of audit results.
- B. Costs and Timeline
1. Respondents are to provide detailed cost estimates related to the implementation of this initiative.
 2. Timelines are to be submitted in bar chart form such as the GANTT format.
- C. Deliverables
1. By October 30, 2024, submit a schedule of audits to ODHE.
 2. Beginning after January 1, 2025, and completing by October 31, 2025, perform audits of up to 50 Teacher Preparation Programs.
 3. Submit interim reports and audit reports to the Chancellor on a timeline agreed upon by the Chancellor and the vendor.
 4. Submit a final report to the Chancellor summarizing the findings of the completed audit(s) by November 21, 2025.

The vendor should have experience or expertise with evaluation of higher education institutions with respect to alignment with the science of reading.

EXHIBIT II

A. Respondent Information - The response needs to reference and address the proposal outline found in Exhibit I.

1. Describe the vendor and/or team. If your team is affiliated with two or more parties provide the following information:
 - Name(s);
 - Address(es);
 - Name and Contact (e-mail and phone) for this RFP.
2. Describe previous and current work by the team that demonstrates relevant subject matter expertise related to the science of reading.
3. Describe the structure and composition of the team to provide the requested services.
4. For each participating vendor provide the history of the vendor.
5. Detail team experience with documentation in conducting audits of teacher preparation programs to assess the extent to which they align with the science of reading.
6. Identify and list any recognition from independent sources the vendor(s) received demonstrating the vendor's expertise and credibility.
7. Describe the vendor's relevant experience providing similar services.
8. Please list one reference client.
9. Describe the vendor's expertise. Provide resumes demonstrating relevant experience and expertise for key individuals involved in the contract.
10. Provide a detailed implementation plan and narrative highlighting roles and responsibilities of team members to complete the proposed work.
11. Provide a description of the costs listed in the budget narrative.

B. Service Structure

1. Describe your service model (staff, responsibilities, interactions with our plan, frequency of in-person meetings, frequency of conference calls, team dynamics).
2. List the primary contact for our relationship and address the following questions:
 - Overall experience with evaluating alignment with science of reading.
 - Education, honors, designations and other credentials.
 - Regular activities to stay current on the science of reading research and implementation.
 - Areas of expertise;
 - Years with the group/organization/firm;
 - Role at the group/organization/firm;
 - Number of plans supported;
 - Average size of plans supported.
3. Will the primary contact be the only person with whom we will be working? Yes or No

If no, please list name(s), titles, contact information, and profile information for each person:

- Overall experience with evaluating alignment with science of reading.
- Education, honors, designations and other credentials;
- Regular activities to stay current on the science of reading research and implementation;
- Areas of expertise;
- Years with the group/organization/firm;
- Role at the group/organization/firm;
- Number of clients;
- Average size of clients.

C. Conflicts of Interest

Do you foresee any conflicts of interest with entities who may seek to be designated as contractor(s)?

1. List potential conflicts of interest:

D. Vendor Certification Form

1. The vendor is not currently subject to an “unresolved” finding for recovery under Revised Code Section 9.24, and the vendor will notify the procurement representative any time it becomes subject to such a finding before the award of a contract arising out of this RFP.
2. The vendor certifies that its responses to the following statements are true and accurate. The vendor’s answers apply to the last seven years. Please indicate Yes or No in each column.
 - The vendor has had a contract terminated for default or cause.
 - The vendor has been assessed any penalties in excess of \$10,000.00, including liquidated damages, under any of its existing or past contracts with any organization (including any governmental entity).
 - The vendor was the subject of any governmental action limiting the right of the vendor to do business with that entity or any other governmental entity.
 - Trading in the stock of the company has ever been suspended with the date(s) and explanation(s).
 - The vendor, any officer of the vendor, or any owner of a 20% interest or greater in the vendor has filed for bankruptcy, reorganization, a debt arrangement, moratorium, or any proceeding under any bankruptcy or insolvency law, or any dissolution or liquidation proceeding.
 - The vendor, any officer of the vendor, or any owner with a 20% interest or greater in the vendor has been convicted of a felony or is currently under indictment on any felony charge.
3. If the answer to any item above is affirmative, the vendor must provide complete details about the matter. While an affirmative answer to any of these items will not automatically disqualify a vendor from consideration, at the sole discretion of the State, such an answer and a review of the background details may result in a rejection of the proposal. The State will make this

decision based on its determination of the seriousness of the matter, the matter's possible impact on the vendor's performance under the contract, and the best interest of the State.

4. The vendor certifies that neither it nor any of its people that may work on or benefit from the Contract through the vendor has a possible conflict of interest (e.g., employed by the State of Ohio, etc.) other than the conflicts identified immediately below:
5. The State may reject a proposal in which an actual or apparent conflict is disclosed. And the State may cancel or terminate the contract for cause if it discovers any actual or apparent conflict of interest that the vendor did not disclose in its proposal.