

**Mississippi State University  
Request for Proposals (RFP) 21-90  
Online/Cloud Based Assessment and Tracking System**

ISSUE DATE: August 31, 2021

ISSUING AGENCY: Office of Procurement and Contracts

Mississippi State University  
610 McArthur Hall  
245 Barr Avenue  
Mississippi State, MS 39762

Sealed Proposals, subject to the conditions made a part hereof, will be received **September 23, 2021, at 2:00 PM in the MSU Office of Procurement and Contracts, same address above**, for furnishing services and potentially, optional services as described herein.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Indicate firm name, and RFP number on the front of each sealed proposal envelope or package.

All inquiries concerning this RFP should be directed to:

Jennifer Mayfield  
Office of Procurement and Contracts, (Same address above)  
[jmayfield@procurement.msstate.edu](mailto:jmayfield@procurement.msstate.edu)  
662-325-2550

Any addendum associated with this RFP will be posted at <http://www.procurement.msstate.edu/procurement/bids/index.php> located under RFP 21-90. It is the respondent's responsibility to assure that all addenda have been reviewed and if applicable, signed and returned.

## **1. UNIVERSITY OVERVIEW**

Mississippi State University (MSU) is a comprehensive land grant university of 21,500+ students and approximately 5,000 faculty and staff. The main campus is located adjacent to the community of Starkville in northeast Mississippi, with a remote campus located in Meridian with an enrollment of around 700 students. Additionally, the university operates several remote agricultural experiment stations and has an Extension office located in each of the eighty-two Mississippi counties.

Additional information about MSU can be found at our website [www.msstate.edu](http://www.msstate.edu).

## **2. INVITATION TO SUBMIT PROPOSAL ON RFP**

The Mississippi State University Research and Curriculum Unit (RCU) seeks an online assessment system to author, manage, and deliver approximately 300 assessments per year to more than 20,000 participants per year.

The application should include functionality for authoring and managing items and assessments, item and test analysis, and assessment delivery and reporting. Specific features such as multilingual options, responsive design, multi-platform delivery, and accessibility for test takers with disabilities is preferred. The application should support pre/post course tests, practice tests, certification, and licensing exams. The goal is to implement an assessment that allows for a statewide assessment system with a high degree validity and reliability by providing a streamlined test authoring and delivery tool robust reporting capability.

The system should be flexible and customizable, and it should allow for coordination and collaboration among trainers, educators, and testing professionals to author, schedule, deliver, and report on surveys, quizzes, tests, and exams. The system must allow RCU administrators to upload/download files and manage and customize the testing data, data analysis and reports.

The system should also allow the possible use of a cloud-based server system rather than an onsite server.

## **3. SCOPE OF SERVICES REQUIRED**

### **a) Technical Requirements**

Platform/System – should support a minimum of:

- Application will be hosted on Cloud-based servers
- Windows Server 2016
- IIS8.5
- SQL Server 2016 (with SQL Server Management Studio)
- ASP.NET 3.5 Framework

- End User application capability to be accessed and operated on Windows, IOS, Android, and MacOS devices

#### **b) Users**

There should be no restrictions on the number of users, test taking participants, proctors, Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), or administrators.

#### **c) Reporting/Forms, Custom Fields, Files**

- Reports should be provided in multiple formats. Most reports, if not all, should be viewable on screen with options to download in Excel, PDF, CSV, Word (.doc/.rtf), or API access.
- The system should have the ability to define and modify custom fields by select users and system administrators
- Capability to upload data or documents in multiple formats including but not limited to Excel (.xlsx, .xls), Word (.docx, .rtf), PDF, text, and CSV formats.
- Capability to upload image files such as .jpg, .png or .tif formatted files.

#### **d) Functions**

The tool should provide front-end access to a secure database of questions. SMEs should be able to author, edit, and tag a large number and variety of question types as well as organize questions into assessments. Other functions should include:

- Ability to include images, audio, or video as part of item stem
- Ability to provide feedback on answers to a test taker
- Randomization of order of questions and choices
- Full permissions for administrators to upload files, download reports, and control testing data
- Full permissions for administrators to add, edit, and delete participants, groups, schedules, and tests
- Ability for administrators to override exam time limits
- Provision of Application Program Interface (API) to integrate with other products/applications, tools and system used at the RCU. APIs to create users and groups, update users and groups, delete users and groups, and schedule users, proctors, readers and assessments are required.
- Ability to deliver thousands of assessments at any point in time
- Ability to translate assessments into multiple languages. A Spanish translation is required.
- Responsive design, allowing assessments to be viewed on any screen size.
- Accessibility for test takers with disabilities such as visual impairments

- Ability to deliver pre/post course tests, practice tests, certification and licensing exams, and performance-based assessments
- Provision of control of roles of users to access certain areas of the application (i.e. user management, assessment management, data management, assessment access)

**e) System Maintenance and Support**

The RCU requests the bidder to provide installation, setup, configuration training, and loading of all existing items organized as they are now. The RCU requests a train-the-trainer approach where the bidder will be asked to train RCU/MDE staff who will then train district test coordinators.

The RCU anticipates flexible technical support plans and a robust set of support resources and product guidelines. Bidders shall provide details on licensing requirements and all ongoing expenses for maintenance and support.

**4. INQUIRIES ABOUT RFP**

Prospective respondents may make written inquiries concerning this request for proposal to obtain clarification of requirements. **Questions should be submitted either via a Word document or plainly typed in the email itself.** Responses to these inquiries may be made by addendum to the Request for Proposal (RFP). Please send your inquiries to Jennifer Mayfield via electronic mail at [jmayfield@procurement.msstate.edu](mailto:jmayfield@procurement.msstate.edu).

All inquiries should be marked “URGENT INQUIRY. MSU RFP 21-90”

**5. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

**a) Issuing Office**

This RFP is issued by the following office:

Office of Procurement and Contracts  
 Mississippi State University  
 245 Barr Avenue, 610 McArthur Hall  
 Mississippi State, MS 39762

**b) Schedule of Critical Dates**

The following dates are for planning purposes only unless otherwise stated in this RFP progress towards their completion is at the sole discretion of the university.

<b>RFP Posted</b>	<b>August 31, 2021</b>
<b>Questions from Vendors Due</b>	<b>September 10, 2021</b>
<b>MSU Q&amp;A Response Due</b>	<b>September 17, 2021</b>



reserves the right to contact and interview anyone connected with any past or present projects with which the respondent has been associated. MSU likewise reserves the right to designate a review committee to evaluate the proposals according to the criteria set forth under this section. MSU may make a written determination showing the basis upon which the award was made, and such determination shall be included in the procurement file.

MSU reserves the right to award this contract in whole or in part depending on what is in the best interest of MSU with MSU being the sole judge thereof.

The evaluation factors set forth in this section are described as follows:

- The Vendor’s ability to deliver an application meeting the overall objective and functions described in the RFP
- Competitive fees
- Availability and access technical support
- Vendor’s experience with similar systems
- Compliance with applicable State and Federal laws and regulations
- The committee may invite finalists for interviews and/or presentations

Failure to attend a requested interview presentation before the committee may result in a proposal not being considered.

Upon award of contract(s), successful respondent(s) will be asked to provide a transition plan and timeline and obtain MSU’s input and concurrence before moving forward.

Proposals will be scored based on the following weights (100 points total):

- Corporate Structure/Years of Experience/References – 25 pts
- Operation Plan/Ease of Use/Services Offered – 25 pts
- Fees – 50 pts

## **8. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION**

Proposals shall be submitted in two packages (envelopes or boxes) as set forth in Section 7. Please make sure that the RFP number is clearly visible on the outside of the package.

**Technical Proposal** – One (1) original and one (1) electronic copy (of the complete technical proposal in one pdf file on a flash drive) of parts 7(b)(i) (Cover Letter), 7(b)(ii) (Corporate Structure and Credentials), and 7(b)(iii) (Operations and Ability to Perform) should be sealed in a package with “Technical Proposal” in the lower left-hand corner. Each submitted package should be a complete copy. The original shall be marked on the first page “Original”.

**Cost Proposal** – One (1) original and one (1) electronic copy (of the complete cost proposal in one pdf file on a flash drive). Should be sealed in a package with “Cost Proposal” in the lower left-hand corner. Each submitted package should be a complete copy. The original shall be marked on the first page “Original”.

The proposal package must be received on or before **2:00 p.m. on September 23, 2021**. It is the responsibility of the respondent to ensure that the proposal package arrives in the Procurement and Contracts office on-time. The proposal package should be delivered or sent by mail to:

**Office of Procurement and Contracts  
Mississippi State University  
610 McArthur Hall  
245 Barr Avenue  
Mississippi State, MS 39762**

Your response must include the signature page included in this RFP (See Appendix A) and contain the signature of an authorized representative of the respondent’s organization. The signature on the “Original” signature page should be in blue ink.

MSU reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and to waive informalities and minor irregularities in proposals received and to accept any portion of a proposal or all items bid if deemed in the best interest of the University to do so.

Proposals received after the stated due date and time will be returned unopened. Submission via facsimile or other electronic means will not be accepted.

## **9. PCI COMPLIANCE ISSUES (IF APPLICABLE)**

The vendor must provide a PCI compliant processing environment using one of the approved options below. If the vendor is unable to fully adhere to one of these options, the proposal will be removed from consideration.

- **Option 1** – Integrate with MSU’s existing third-party solution (NelNet Business Solutions – Commerce Manager), because all hardware, software and back-end processing have been vetted and credit/debit card payments are automatically posted to Banner.
- **Option 2** – Use alternative third-party solution. Use a different MSU Merchant ID but same bank account.
  - Work with members of MSU’s PCI Council and third-party PCI Compliance consultant to review business needs and proposed solution.

- Ensure card transactions processed by university personnel are performed using a PCI-validated point to point encrypted (P2PE) solution. The solution must be listed on the PCI council's website (<https://www.pcisecuritystandards.org>), must not be expired, and devices to be used with the solution must have a PIN transaction security (PTS) expiration date at least 3 years past the date of installation.
  - Obtain the following solution information
  - Attestation of compliance (AoC) from all parties involved in handling or that affect the security of cardholder data.
  - Verify that all devices have a current PTS certification and have an expiration date at least 3 years past the installation date of the solution.
  - Obtain a data flow diagram showing where payment card data will be introduced to the proposed solution and all steps/hops it will take until payment information is delivered to the merchant processing bank. This will determine all of the service providers that must provide an AoC.
  - Require specific reporting requirements and interfaces to support Banner integration and automatic posting of credit/debit card payments to the ERP. The exact file layout will be provided upon request.
- **Option 3** – Use alternative third-party solution. Use vendor's Merchant ID.
    - Work with members of MSU's PCI Council and third-party PCI Compliance consultant to review the solution.
    - Ensure card transactions processed by university personnel are performed using a PCI-validated point to point encrypted (P2PE) solution. The solution must be listed on the PCI council's website (<https://www.pcisecuritystandards.org>), must not be expired, and devices to be used with the solution must have a PIN transaction security (PTS) expiration date at least 3 years past the date of installation.
    - Obtain the following solution information
    - Attestation of compliance (AoC) from all parties involved in handling or that affect the security of cardholder data.
    - Verify that all devices have a current PTS certification and have an expiration date at least 3 years past the installation date of the solution.
    - Obtain a data flow diagram showing where payment card data will be introduced to the proposed solution and all steps/hops it will take until payment information is delivered to the merchant processing bank. This will determine all of the service providers that must provide an AoC.
    - Payments due MSU will be remitted on a predetermined basis, net of all applicable fees and merchant discounts. Banner integration not required.



## **10. TWO-PHASE, BEST AND FINAL OFFER**

If the initial proposals do not provide MSU with a clear and convincing solution, or if MSU feels it is appropriate to offer the potential providers an opportunity to submit revised proposals, MSU reserves the right to use a two-phase approach and/or invite Best and Final Offers (BAFO). Based on the information obtained through the proposal submittals (Phase-One), MSU may choose a specific business model, and potential providers may be asked to submit revised proposals based upon that specific model.

The evaluation committee may develop, for distribution to the top-ranked firms, refined written terms with specific information on what is being requested as a result of information obtained through initial RFP submittal process. Proposers may be asked to reduce cost or provide additional clarification to specific sections of the RFP. Selected proposers are not required to submit a BAFO and may submit a written response notifying the solicitation evaluation committee that their response remains as originally submitted.

## **11. TERM OF CONTRACT**

It is MSU's intention to enter into a one-year agreement for this contract that will be reviewed annually. We reserve the right to renew this agreement for two (2) additional one-year periods.

MSU reserves the right to terminate this agreement with thirty (30) days-notice, by the Director of Procurement and Contracts via certified mail to the address listed on the signature page of this RFP (See Appendix A) if any of the terms of the proposal and/or contract are violated.

In the event the contractor fails to carry out and comply with any of the conditions and agreements to be performed under the specifications, MSU will notify the contractor, in writing, of such failure or default. In the event the necessary corrective action has not been completed within a ten (10) day period, the contractor must submit, in writing, why such corrective action has not been performed. The University reserves the right to determine whether or not such noncompliance may be construed as a failure of performance of the contractor.

Termination of contract by contractor without cause can only occur with at least one-hundred and twenty (120) days-notice prior to the proposed termination of the contract.

In the event MSU employs attorneys or incurs other expenses it considers necessary to protect or enforce its rights under this contract, the contractor agrees to pay the attorney's fees and expenses so incurred by MSU.

## **12. ACCEPTANCE TIME**

Proposal shall be valid for one-hundred and eighty (180) days following the proposal due date.

### 13. RFP CANCELLATION

This RFP in no manner obligates MSU to the eventual purchase of any services described, implied or which may be proposed until confirmed by a written contract. Progress towards this end is solely at the discretion of MSU and may be terminated without penalty or obligations at any time prior to the signing of a contract. MSU reserves the right to cancel this RFP at any time, for any reason, and to reject any or all proposals or any parts thereof.

### 14. INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR CLAUSE

The contractor shall acknowledge that an independent contractor relationship is established and that the employees of the contractor are not, nor shall they be deemed employees of MSU and that employees of MSU are not, nor shall they be deemed employees of the contractor.

### 15. OTHER CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS

**Award Terms:** This contract shall be awarded at the discretion of the University based on the capabilities and overall reputation of the Supplier, as well as the cost. Acceptance shall be confirmed by the issuance of a contract from the University.

**Standard Contract:** The awarded contractor(s) will be expected to enter into a contract that is in substantial compliance with MSU's standard contract [http://www.procurement.msstate.edu/pdf/standard\\_rfp\\_contract.pdf](http://www.procurement.msstate.edu/pdf/standard_rfp_contract.pdf). Proposal should include any desired changes to the standard contract. It should be noted that there are many clauses which the MSU cannot change (see Standard Addendum <http://www.procurement.msstate.edu/contracts/standardaddendum.pdf>) Significant changes to the standard contract may be cause for rejection of a proposal.

**The Procurement Process:** The following is a general description of the process by which a firm will be selected to fulfill this Request for Proposal.

- Request for Proposals (RFP) is issued to prospective suppliers.
- A deadline for written questions is set.
- Proposals will be received as set forth in Section 8.
- Unsigned proposals will not be considered.
- All proposals must be received by MSU no later than the date and time specified on the cover sheet of this RFP.
- At that date and time, the package containing the proposals from each responding firm will be opened publicly and the name of each respondent will be announced.
- Proposal evaluation: The University will review each proposal.
- At their option, the evaluators may request oral presentations or discussions for the purpose of clarification or to amplify the materials presented in the proposal

- Respondents are cautioned that this is a request for proposals, not a request to contract, and the MSU reserves the unqualified right to reject any and all proposals when such rejection is deemed to be in the best interest of the University.
- The proposals will be evaluated according to the criteria set forth in Section 7.

## APPENDIX A: SIGNATURE PAGE

Provide information requested, affix signature and return this page with your proposal:

Name of Firm: \_\_\_\_\_

Complete Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_