Mississippi State University
Request for Proposals (RFP) 26-13
Talent Management Solution

ISSUE DATE: October 20, 2025

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 **November 20, 2025, 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 at:

Jennifer Mayfield
Office of Procurement and Contracts, (Same address above)
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 26-13. 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 on our website www.msstate.edu.

2. INVITATION TO SUBMIT PROPOSAL ON RFP

Mississippi State University is seeking sealed proposals for a Talent Management Software System from qualified vendors. The Talent Management System will be used to complete full-cycle recruitment, onboarding, performance management, learning, and succession planning.

MSU prefers to acquire an existing system that is commercially available without major customizations, in use by similar Universities and proven to operate effectively over time.

MSU likewise prefers to contract with a vendor that has demonstrated long-term viability as a company and long-term commitment to customers through regular product enhancements, compliance updates, and on-going support.

The product vendor must provide an application with appropriate support to MSU that delivers consistent with industry practices at a firm, fixed price, including externally hosting the system and providing necessary implementation services.

3. SCOPE OF SERVICES REQUIRED

a) Recruitment Marketing

Content Management & Intelligent Career Sites Capability

- Ability to quickly and easily build and maintain career sites, keep content fresh and up to date. Recruitment teams have the ability to ‘lift and shift’ campus content, videos can be embedded into the career site seamlessly, all promoting the organization's employer brand and culture.
- Creation of intelligent career sites that are ‘sticky.’ The consumer-based experience should be similar to Amazon and Netflix encouraging potential candidates to **stay, explore, and engage** with the campus career site, allowing them to build a connection with the organization and their employer brand.
- Ability to view individual and aggregate browsing behavior directly within the tool, the system should be able to automatically generate reports on job seeker

behavior to assist us in understanding what content is resonating with different audiences.

Employer Brand Attraction

- Create a consistent and positive candidate experience that reflects our university brand and culture.
- Increase the conversion of website traffic to the Careers site to support the generation of more enquiries that convert into applications.
- The ability to put in place a recruitment campaign that can be tracked to monitor the effectiveness of each advertising medium from communications to the recruitment backend.
- The ability to build clear online personas that can be used to advertise and to generate content that candidates are more likely to find useful and read and react to the call to action.
- The ability to establish a cost per lead and application conversion to interview /hired.

Marketing Insights

- Ability to create, manage and report on actionable insights including individual sourcing channels, interaction levels with content, number of visits to career site(s), conversion ratios across the recruitment marketing funnel (cut by gender), allowing organization to adjust their sourcing, content, and nurture strategies.
- Reports that indicate overall time to hire, overall recruiting spend e.g., job boards, recruiter staffing spend and time to present to Hiring Managers.

Marketing Automation

- Easily allows recruiter intervention by setting up workflows to automate communications via email, SMS and chatbot. Provides automation through 'Smart lists.'
- Creates nurture sequences (drip feeding content to targeted groups) and candidate job status triggered workflow (such as incomplete applications).
- Allows potential candidates to be engaged and nurtured.
- Ability to create 'virtual' events pages and promote actual 'virtual' events. E.g., Virtual conferences.

Candidate Relationship Management

- Provides tools to build automated and manual pipelines to source and nurture potential candidates including silver medalists and 'offer decline' candidates.

- Ability to craft personalized experiences based on candidate behavior through 1:1 communications (2 way via email and sms) increasing the number of quality potential candidates at the top of the recruitment funnel.
- The system should drive cost efficiencies by reducing reliance on external recruitment agencies and paid job boards.
- The system should provide an easy way to capture, nurture, and engage candidates with highly specialized or desired skills to ensure fast matching and placement against open roles.
- The system must reduce recruiters' time and cost, allowing them to focus their efforts on high impact tasks by automating targeted and proactive sourcing.
- The ability to create targeted recruitment marketing campaigns to attract specific, critical, and high-volume role types.
- The ability to market in person and virtual events to prospective candidates.
- Tracking of event management, including but not limited to dedicated event landing pages and a mobile app for collection of resumes and candidate data at the event.
- The ability to automate communication to event attendees post events.

b) Recruitment

Requisition Management & Posting

Multiple requisition forms allowed (Example: hourly, internal transfer, business unit specific, re-occurring, sourcing, college)

- More than one requisition form/template can be configured in a client's database to accommodate variance in business units or type of recruiting. (Example: A user from the Staff group can enter a requisition and only see and populate fields that are applicable to Staff recruitment. A different user from the faculty group can enter a requisition and only see the fields designated for a Services requisition within the same database.)
- Multiple workflows supported for each requisition type

Data Segregation

- Ability to segregate requisitions and candidates by hire type (administrative, faculty, etc.) or organization

Requisition approval routing workflow and approval status indicator

- Select a list of approvers, route for approval via email.

Approval status tracking

- The status of the approval process is tracked and displayed real-time on the requisition in the application as well as in the subsequent emails that go to the 2nd and 3rd approver, etc.
- Approval process progression can be tracked through reporting, ensuring easy identification of bottlenecks or inflated time to fill measures.

Pre-defined approval routing lists

- Lists of approvers can be created, saved, and/or assigned to a user or requisition, or defined by the organizational structure automatically

Approvals can take place directly from email.

- When approving a requisition, the approver can take action directly from the email notification without having to log into the application.

Pre-qualifying questions based on position/job needs, including weighting to filter for top candidates

- Questions developed, defined, and delivered to a candidate in the online application process tied directly to the job posting/requirements, including weighting to filter for top candidates.

Job posting scheduling

- Easily select the appropriate career site(s) for the job to appear with default content prefilled. Scheduling of start and end dates of posting to any given site to allow for staggered posting.

Advanced POSITION descriptions - Formatting and Spell Checking

- Ability to edit and format position descriptions and marketing messages with MS Word like functions for Bolding, Underlining, and Spell Checking.
- Ability to manage and approve position descriptions
- Ability to create requisitions from position descriptions without additional manual effort.

Electronic job board relationship management (facilitation of job posting to all e-media providers)

- Ability to identify and post job opportunities to an unlimited number of electronic job boards and other end destinations. Ability to multi-select boards, and push positions out to the market.

- Ability to post to social media sites such as LinkedIn
- Ability to generate QR codes for onsite recruitment or print campaigns.

Candidate Experience

Unlimited Career Site portals

- Ability to establish an unlimited number of integrated career sites for different purposes - such as College recruiting, location specific Kiosks, or for a specific job family. Determine if there are additional costs per Career Section.
- Mobile application process end to end via any device without the need to download any applications.

Maps to allow the visual identification of work sites

- Embedded maps throughout the job search experience, as well as when applying for "expression of interest" type roles.

Online profile form(s) defined by the client

- Data collection form(s) that can be pushed to a candidate to gather needed information for relationship management and interested resume submissions. Ability to tailor the form to our specification, adding or removing fields.

User defined secure login username and password.

- Candidate created login and password authentication for accessing profile and career management activities.

Candidate login procedure

- Candidate can submit resume and apply to jobs without establishing a password protected user account, account creation should seamlessly form part of an initial application.

Resume submission via upload of file – Candidate

- Candidate can browse their device for their formatted resume and upload them to the candidate resume repository.

Resume submission via upload of file - Recruiter/Manager

- Recruiter/Manager can browse their device for their formatted resume and upload them to candidate resume repository.

- Recruiter/Manager can email a formatted resume to extract information and create an applicant/application record.

Extraction of data from resume to create profile

- Extraction engine behind the text or uploaded resume for population of fielded data in the candidate profile.
- Ability to prefill profile from LinkedIn

Candidate defined Job Agents

- Candidate can establish job search parameters and be notified when jobs are posted which meet their preferences.

Candidate status check

- Candidates can log in to check the status of their application submissions without needing to contact the HR team.

Ability to upload attachments

- Ability to upload large files of multimedia as part of application process
- Please detail any limitations on size or number of files uploaded

Ability for candidate to save a submission as a draft

- Candidates can save draft of application returning later to update or complete

Candidate self-withdrawal

- Ability for candidates to remove themselves from consideration for a position.

Conceptual search for the candidate when searching for jobs

- Candidates can use "free form" language to search for jobs.

Sourcing/CRM

Specific job referral and general referrals

- Employees can submit a resume as a general referral or to a specific job

Notifications to the referring employee and the referred candidate

- Email notifications are automatically sent to the employee making the referral and to the candidate who was referred.

Tracking steps and status searches

- Recruiters can search for candidates based on their tracking steps and statuses against requisitions

Keyword search against free form text and fielded data

- Keyword searches can be performed against text records from candidate and structured data in the same search.

Search criteria highlighted for relevance in record review

- Search results with indicators for criteria matching and relevance in the results.

Configurable search results list

- The column headers that are displayed in a search results list can be configured with different data elements from the candidate record. (Example: Test Score, Internal Applicant, Phone Number)

Ability to search file attachments

- Keyword searching will search the resumes that have been submitted as file attachments as well as text fields.

Conceptual search engine to match resumes

- Ability to use a large text phrase to find matching resumes using a conceptual search or natural language search engine. Conceptual searches should also be able to be conducted with fielded search.

"More like this" searching

- Ability to take a resume or candidate profile and conduct a search to find other resumes that are similar to it (more like it).

Library of candidate correspondence/communication templates

- Ability to create a library of correspondence templates that can be sent to candidates at the user's discretion.

Editable correspondence at the user level

- Users can make edits to the correspondence at the time of generation and distribution.

Agency Portal

- Functionality designed for the management of third-party staffing agencies. Include the ability to push requisitions to one or more suppliers and receive Agency resume submissions.

Contingent Labor Management

- Functionality designed specifically for the requisition and management of contract/non-permanent labor including the ability to segregate for reporting purposes, and to re-engage after the expiration of any initial contract period.

Candidate Pool Generation (Leads/Prospective Candidates)

- Able to enter limited candidate information (less required fields than regular candidate profile without comprising the configuration of the candidate profile) and develop target candidate pool for key skills

Marketing Campaigns (Leads/Prospective Candidates)

- Include proactive candidate pools in messaging, advertising campaigns, or special event invitations. This should include the ability to send emails to thousands of candidates (as necessary).

Sending resumes to a manager

- Ability to send a "Formatted Resume" or "Interview Packet" to a Hiring Manager.

Assessment and Interview Management

- workflow steps and statuses
- Ability to set up steps and statuses for tracking a candidate through their recruiting process, with flexibility to tailor it for required and desired steps.

Multiple process workflows (Example: employee referral, internal transfers, etc.)

- Ability to create multiple applicant workflows (set of tracking steps & statuses) to be selected at the requisition level.

Workflow triggered alerts

- Alerts can be set up in the system to drive the next step in the process or to function as reminders.

Flexible workflows

- Ability to create a "tree-structure" workflow (i.e., step A can be followed by step B, C, D, or E)

Volume hiring updates

- The ability to change the status for a group of candidates to hired in a single step (e.g., mass hiring in one step).

Integrated Assessments

- Ability to store and/or integrate validated assessment tools into the recruiting workflow for certain jobs

Assessment Triggers

- Ability for Assessment to automatically be presented to a candidate based on their responses to pre-screening questions or other data in their profile.
- Assessment on demand
- Ability to push an online assessment to a candidate on demand via email link.

Interview team member history

- Ability to select and record a list of interviewing team members for a requisition.

Interview team notifications

- Ability to send an email notification (including a calendar meeting request) to the interview team members when scheduling the interview within the system (including interview packets, resumes, etc. when sending the email request).

Storage of interviewer comments

- Ability to configure an online interview feedback form to capture the comments from each interviewer

Interviewer attachments

- Ability to include attachments to the interviewer notifications (e.g., interview guidelines, interview schedule, resume, etc.)

Calendar Integration

- Ability to integrate calendar scheduling ensuring a single step process for checking availability and booking candidates into time slots. Candidates should also be able to self-select available time slots.

Offer Management and Onboarding

Approval routing and status tracking

- Select a list of approvers, route for approval via email. In addition, the status of the approval process is tracked and displayed real-time on the Offer in the application as well as in the subsequent emails that go to the 2nd and 3rd approver, etc.

Pre-defined approval routing lists

- Lists of approvers can be created, saved, and/or assigned to a user or offer.

Offer letters can be generated by merging fields into letter templates.

- Data can be merged from the candidate record, the requisition, and the Offer terms into offer letter templates.

Offer letters can be edited at the user level

- Users can make edits to the offer letter at the time of generation and distribution.

c) Onboarding

- Does the product offer a specific Onboarding module, allowing clients to define required notifications at hire and send notifications through the system (e.g., provisioning, IT for user account setup, new hire, manager checklist, etc.)?

- Electronically provide new hire paperwork and track completion of key documents (I-9, Non Disclosures, Benefits Paperwork)

- Does the solution provide the ability to create an unlimited amount of personalized content for new starters to digest as part of their induction?

- Can the solution support custom tasks to be allocated to the new starter and their manager?

Global Capabilities & Compliance

EEO Compliance data collection

- Configurable notification and collection of EEO compliance information at variable points in the process

Ability to present Career Sections in Multiple Languages

- Ability to present Career Sections in Multiple Languages

Ability to present the Recruiter and Manager Portals in multiple languages

- Ability to present the Recruiter and Manager Portals in multiple languages

Data Segregation by country, region, or predefined type

- Data Segregation, i.e., preventing users from a particular country or location from seeing candidates who are in another country or location

OFCCP Compliance tools to enable search and applicant declaration

- Functionality consistent with the new OFCCP definition of Internet Applicant (record keeping for searches, candidate submissions, etc.)

Privacy Policy acknowledgements

- Ability to require that candidates agree with the privacy policy before they submit.

Compliance with Data Privacy

- Ability for customers to remove a candidate's data at that candidate's request.

d) Performance

Performance workflow management

- Automated process for evaluating employee performance. The system should automate the workflow of the evaluation cycle; originating with the employee's self-evaluation, route to the supervisor for their evaluation, and then through an established review process.

- Communication tools should be integrated into the workflow process to ensure all evaluations are completed in a timely manner.

- System should automatically prefill employee evaluations with any established Job Duties from a position description where one exists.

- System should allow employee evaluations to be tied to job descriptions and allow customization of evaluations to align with job descriptions.

- Allow multiple evaluation schedules which may include:
    - New employee probationary reviews
    - Partial year reviews
    - Calendar year based review cycle

  - Hire date based review cycle
  - Ability to tie employee goals to organizational goals and/or department goals.

ONGOING / ADHOC PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

- Ability to capture manager / employee feedback throughout the year. Ideally available outside of the performance management solution.
- Please describe the capability of the system to embed a continuous feedback culture throughout the review cycle.
- Please provide any additional information around additional options such as mobile apps or collaboration tools to assist in developing a robust feedback-first approach to performance.
- Goal setting and planning tool for performance improvement. Ideally, the solution would provide options for developing an improvement plan, follow up schedule and documenting the entire process.

e) Reporting and Integration

Standard reports are delivered with the system

- System is delivered with a minimum of twenty standard reports

Ad-hoc reporting capability

- System is delivered with an ad-hoc report writing tool so that a user can create their own reports as needed via an intuitive interface, no custom reporting language or expertise required.
- Ability to add custom graphics and branding to reports.

Reporting Security

- Ability to enable field level security and access to report creation, output, and distribution.

Reporting Distribution

- Ability to generate scheduled reports and distribute through email

Real Time Reporting

- Ability to report on data in the application in real time (not based on a refresh of data in a reporting environment

HRIS Integration

- Ability to create bi-directional integrations from an HRIS to the Talent Management Solution

Integration - Client Self-Service Tools

- Ability for clients to create their own integration touch points as needed (and operationalize these integration points)

Integration - API capability

- Ability to allow clients to create integrations through APIs

f) ADMINISTRATION

- Please describe the capability for MSU to configure and change various components of the system setup independently. Does the administrator have the ability to manage:
    - User Permissions
    - Workflows
    - Lookup information
    - Communication templates
    - Locations
    - Statuses
    - Terminology
    - Application forms and fields

g) Training & Support

1. Describe the proposed approach to training, the type of personnel to be trained, and the location.

2. Do you provide this training directly or through a third-party?

3. Can training for end users be delivered remotely via web conference?

4. Can the training be conducted onsite?

5. Describe your user support model for post-implementation issues.

6. What is the standard service level response for support requests?

7. How are solution enhancement requests from clients handled?

8. What is the procedure for notice of defects and correction of them?

9. Please describe ongoing support costs for help desk, configuration changes, etc.
10. Do you have a "live chat" function for online support?
11. Is there a 24/7 help desk to call for assistance?

h) Implementation

- Provide a high-level project timeline that describes how you see MSU's implementation of your solution proceeding. Include major milestones and key deliverables that will be generated during the project.

- Please describe the implementation approach. Will it be on site / offsite? Are there additional charges for onsite implementation?

- Describe the type of resources that would be assigned to this project.

- Describe the type of MSU resources you would expect to be assigned to the implementation project.

- Can you integrate with MSU's HRIS? How will the data be migrated?

i) Technical Requirements

To ensure compatibility, security, and efficiency, the system must include the following:

- Ellucian Banner Integration – The system must integrate seamlessly with MSU's existing Ellucian Banner system via the Ellucian Ethos API platform.
- Cross-Browser Support – The platform must support major web browsers, including Microsoft Edge, Firefox, Safari, and Chrome.
- Cloud-Based SaaS Solution – The system must be a hosted, Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) solution to ensure scalability, accessibility, and reliability.
- Authentication, Single Sign-On (SSO), and Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) Support – The system must integrate with MSU's authentication system, supporting CAS or Shibboleth for secure and seamless access. It must also support Single Sign-On (SSO) functionality and be fully compatible with MSU's Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) requirements to enhance security and streamline user access.
- Provide a completed Higher Education Cloud Vendor Assessment Tool (HECVAT) (lite version available at: https://www.ren-isac.net/public-resources/hecvat.html).

- Provide applicable certifications such as SOC2/FEDRAMP/HITRUST if available.
- Provide product interfaces that are compliant with WCAG 2.0 AA and provide VPAT if available.

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.

All inquiries should be marked "URGENT INQUIRY. MSU RFP 26-13"

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.

RFP Posted	**October 20, 2025**
Questions from Vendors Due	**October 31, 2025**
MSU Q&A Response Due	**November 7, 2025**
Proposal Submission Deadline – 2:00 p.m.	**November 20, 2025**
Award Date (Estimated)	**December 15, 2025**

6. PROPOSAL CONTENTS

This is a two-step RFP process. The technical proposals and the cost proposals are to be submitted in separate sealed envelopes. Indicate firm name, RFP# and word "Technical

Proposal” on the front of the sealed technical proposal envelope or package. Indicate the firm name, RFP# and the word “Cost Proposal” on the front of the sealed proposal envelope or package.

At a minimum, the following items should be included in the contents of the Technical Proposal:

- Cover letter, indicating the scope of the proposal. The letter should include an overview of the services being offered. The letter should include a statement of exceptions to any of the terms and conditions outlined in this RFP. (Cover letter should be no more than three pages in length.)

- Company Overview
    - Identify your local company and local headquarters, along with the name and headquarters of your parent corporation, if applicable. Provide address, main phone number, and website URL.
    - Provide a brief overview of your company and history of your organization.
    - What form of ownership (e.g., corporation, employee owned, private) exists for your company?
    - Please identify the solution(s) you are proposing.
    - How do you sell your proposed solution (e.g., ASP, Vendor-hosted, customer-hosted, etc.)?
    - Please describe your client support model and cost structure.
    - If a SaaS model, where is your data hosted?

- Corporate Structure and Credentials
    - Number of years of experience
    - Staffing levels and support proposed
    - Examples of similar previous work.

- Operations and Ability To Perform
    - Provide operation plan. This should include, but not be limited to, acknowledgement and agreement with all requirements as well as explanations, where applicable, of the intended plan to achieve the requirements.
    - Describe how services will be provided to MSU.

- Please provide your cost structure for the first five years of use and detail all costs MSU would likely incur. These costs may include:
    - Software license fees
    - Hosting fees
    - Transaction fees
    - Implementation fees
    - Training fees
    - Documentation fees
    - Hardware costs
    - Support fees
    - Additional third-party software costs
    - Maintenance costs
    - Customization costs

7. DISCUSSIONS/EVALUATION CRITERIA/AWARD PROCESS

MSU reserves the right to conduct discussions with any or all respondents, or to make an award of a contract without such discussions based only on evaluation of the written proposals. MSU 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 – 20 pts
- Operation Plan/Ease of Use/Services Offered – 30 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.

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 proposal package must be received on or before **2:00 p.m. on November 20, 2025**. 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 can be electronic.

MSU reserves the right to reject any or 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. Currently RFP submissions via facsimile or other electronic means are not acceptable.

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 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 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 a four (4) year contract, estimated to begin July 1, 2026.

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 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's 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. DISCLOSURE OF PROPOSAL CONTENTS

Proposals will be kept confidential until evaluations and award are completed by MSU. At that time, all proposals and documents pertaining to the proposals will be open to the public, except for material that is clearly marked proprietary or confidential.

IMPORTANT! The offeror/proposer should mark any and all pages of the proposal considered to be proprietary information which may remain confidential in accordance with Mississippi Code Annotated 25-61-9 and 79-23 1 (1972, as amended). Each page of the proposal that the proposer considers trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information should be on a different color paper than non-confidential pages and be marked in the upper right-hand corner with the word "CONFIDENTIAL."

Failure to clearly identify trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information will result in that information being released subject to a public records request.

16. 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 https://www.contracts.msstate.edu/sites/www.contracts.msstate.edu/files/2025-03/Standard_Services_Contract2023Oct18.docx. Proposal should include any changes desired to the standard contract. It should also be noted that there are many clauses which the MSU cannot change. (see Standard Addendum https://www.contracts.msstate.edu/sites/www.contracts.msstate.edu/files/2025-03/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: ____