

**Mississippi State University
Request for Proposals (RFP) 26-30
RFX (3160007862)
Mobile Educational Aquifer Exhibit**

ISSUE DATE: January 21, 2026

ISSUING AGENCY: Office of Procurement Services

Mississippi State University
Procurement Services – RFP 26-30
405 Garrard Road East
Starkville, MS 39759

Sealed Proposals, subject to the conditions made a part hereof, will be received **February 26, 2026, at 2:00 PM by the MSU Office of Procurement Services, 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 Services, (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 26-30. 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

MSU invites qualified respondents to submit proposals to design and manufacture a mobile educational aquifer exhibit to be fitted on a cargo car hauler trailer that MSU already owns.

3. SCOPE OF SERVICES REQUIRED

Project Overview

Mississippi State University's Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station (MAFES) is seeking sealed bids for the fabrication, delivery, and installation of an interactive mobile educational exhibit within a 24-foot EL8524TA3 cargo car hauler trailer owned by the University.

The completed exhibit will illustrate the Mississippi Alluvial Aquifer, demonstrate groundwater, and surface water interaction, and promote agricultural water conservation practices through visually engaging and hands-on educational components. The exhibit will be used at schools, fairs, and outreach events throughout Mississippi.

Scope of Work

The selected vendor shall provide all labor, materials, equipment, and expertise necessary to design, construct, install, and test the exhibit.

The work shall include, but is not limited to:

Structural design and fabrication of all exhibit components.

Installation of educational models, digital displays, lighting, and interactive elements.

Integration of all electrical and mechanical systems.

Coordination with MAFES staff during the design and build process.

Delivery of a fully completed and functional exhibit, ready for travel and public display.

Construction and Material Standards

Durability: All materials and construction methods shall ensure long-term durability, safety, and functionality under frequent transport and repeated public use.

Materials: Use lightweight, moisture-resistant, and impact-tolerant materials such as aluminum framing, marine-grade plywood, composite panels, or sealed MDF.

Finishes: Surfaces must be smooth, easy to clean, and finished with UV- and moisture-resistant coatings or laminates.

Graphics: All exhibit graphics must be printed on high-quality laminated vinyl or direct-printed aluminum/composite panels rated for long-term indoor/outdoor use.

Electrical Systems: Wiring and components must comply with National Electrical Code (NEC) standards. The system should operate on 110V AC power with standard plug connections.

Lighting: Use LED fixtures for efficiency, low heat output, and consistent illumination.

Anchoring and Safety: All freestanding or movable elements shall be securely fastened to the trailer structure to withstand vibration during transit.

Accessibility: Exhibit layout shall allow safe entry, exit, and circulation for both children and adults, featuring nonslip flooring and adequate illumination.

Functional Requirements

The exhibit shall include the following key components:

Exhibit Area 1(Mississippi Alluvial Aquifer):

3D Aquifer Model: A clear, layered display showing surface topography, soil, and groundwater layers. The model must incorporate a working pump and flow system to demonstrate rainfall, infiltration, and irrigation effects.

Maps of the area of interest within the region, and where the Aquifer overlays

Sediment Layer Display: A tactile, interactive feature with at least five distinct soil/sediment layers, each labeled with material type and educational information.

Exhibit Area 3 (Water Conservation)

Display: A physical model of a plant root system connected to functional moisture sensors with a digital or LED readout that responds to simulated wet/dry soil conditions.

Display of conservation practices that are being promoted for adoption

Exhibit Area 4 (Call to Action)

Interactive Touchscreen: A minimum 32-inch touchscreen monitor preloaded with videos, images, and text modules provided or approved by MAFES.

Trailer Wrap: A full exterior vinyl wrap designed for outdoor exposure, featuring MAFES and Mississippi State University branding and approved graphics.

Power System: The entire exhibit must operate on standard shore power and have optional generator hookup capability.

Maintenance Access: Critical systems such as pumps, wiring, and sensors must be accessible for maintenance and repair without major disassembly.

Deliverables

Upon completion, the vendor shall provide:

Fully completed exhibit, ready for public operation and travel.

Electrical and mechanical layout drawings.

Digital copies of all graphics and visual designs.

Operation and maintenance manuals.

One training session (in-person or virtual) for MAFES personnel covering safe operation, setup, and care of the exhibit.

Review and Quality Assurance

The vendor must submit design drawings, 3D renderings, and material samples for approval prior to fabrication.

Substitutions or material changes must be approved in writing by MAFES.

The final exhibit will undergo inspection and operational testing prior to final acceptance and payment.

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 26-30”

5. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

a) Issuing Office

This RFP is issued by the following office:

Office of Procurement Services
Mississippi State University

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	January 21, 2026
Questions from Vendors Due	February 3, 2026
MSU Q&A Response Due	February 10, 2026
Proposal Submission Deadline – 2:00 p.m.	February 26, 2026
Award Date (Estimated)	March 27, 2026

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 3 pages in length.)
- Corporate Structure and Credentials

- Number of years of experience
- Staffing levels and support proposed
- Examples of similar previous work.
- Knowledge of higher education marketing and needs of consumers
- 3 References
- 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 and design examples of the intended plan to achieve the requirements.
 - Describe how services will be provided to MSU.

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

- i) Base Cost
- ii) Any additional fees that may be incurred
- iii) A statement of Vendor's willingness to negotiate fees based on services provided to other Institutions of Higher Learning in the state of Mississippi

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 the overall objective and functions described in the RFP
- Competitive fees
- Vendor's experience with similar design concepts and marketing plans
- 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 – 10 pts
- Design plan/concepts/ Knowledge of higher education marketing needs and consumers – 55 pts
- Fees – 35 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 February 26, 2026**. It is the responsibility of the respondent to ensure that the proposal package arrives in the Procurement Services office on time. The proposal package should be delivered or sent by mail to:

**Office of Procurement Services
RFP 26-30
405 Garrard Road East
Starkville, 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 can be electronic.

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.

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 affects 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 affects 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 is 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 because 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 contract beginning upon award of the RFP that will end with the completion of the project.

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-](https://www.contracts.msstate.edu/sites/www.contracts.msstate.edu/files/2025-03/Contract_for_MSU_to_Provide_Services2023Oct18_0.docx)

[03/Contract_for_MSU_to_Provide_Services2023Oct18_0.docx](https://www.contracts.msstate.edu/sites/www.contracts.msstate.edu/files/2025-03/Contract_for_MSU_to_Provide_Services2023Oct18_0.docx). 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

[https://www.contracts.msstate.edu/sites/www.contracts.msstate.edu/files/2025-](https://www.contracts.msstate.edu/sites/www.contracts.msstate.edu/files/2025-03/standardaddendum.pdf)

[03/standardaddendum.pdf](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 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: _____