



Arlington Public Schools Purchasing Office

Information Item No. 1

Issued on March 7, 2018

RFP TITLE: Evaluation of APS Services for Students with Special Needs

RFP NUMBER: 32FY18

The following questions were received in response to the Request for Proposals issuance and Pre-proposal Conference.

1. Who was responsible for contributing to the Scope of Services in the RFP in addition to the community groups?
 - a. Staff from the Department of Planning and Evaluation and the offices of Special Education, Student Services, and Arlington Tiered System of Support (ATSS) developed an initial draft which was then shared with a stakeholder group involving school staff, other central office staff, and parents. A revised draft was then shared with a wider group of staff and parents for additional feedback. A draft was also shared with the School Board and Superintendent for feedback. Final decisions were made by the initial internal group and three parent representatives.
2. Given the long list of evaluation questions, what is the relative importance of each?
 - a. APS realizes that some may be difficult to answer, and so Offerors are to advise APS on the questions the Offeror considers most feasible to address. But all questions included in the Scope of Services were presented with relative importance from each group. APS is interested in the ideas that the Offeror may have on how to cover the questions listed in the scope, with the understanding that this list may be adjusted as a result of negotiations. Two themes that were brought up frequently by multiple groups were inclusion, and a desire to repeat of the case study methodology used in the last evaluation.
3. Is the scope of work the same as the scope of work for the last study conducted in 2013? If not, how is the scope different?
 - a. The current scope retains many of the elements of the prior scope, and also includes
 - i. Questions specific to our MTSS program, which was put into place as a result of the recommendations from the prior report
 - ii. Questions focusing on social-emotional wellbeing
 - iii. More detailed questions about stakeholder perceptions
 - b. Ultimately, it is the Offeror's responsibility to confirm its understanding of the solicitation and the contents disclosed therein.
4. How important is the case study?
 - a. It is very important to our citizens advisory group (ASEAC) that this data collection be repeated. They speak highly of the evaluation method used in the previous evaluation. We are open to

adjustments to the methodology employed or specific topics covered. For example, some new evaluation questions not covered by the previous evaluation may be appropriately addressed through case studies.

5. Regarding the previous evaluation, it mentioned that the Contractor reviewed 140 records. What information was provided to the prior Contractor?
 - a. The case study process is described in Appendix J of the prior evaluation report starting on page 200. The data used in each case study is described starting on page 206. Link: <https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/APS-Sped-Final-Report-1.18-1.pdf>
 - b. The case study followed a focus group format with some participants who worked directly with the student (ie teachers) and some who did not (ie other school-based staff, central office staff, parents, etc.). The group discussed the student's experience and outcomes based on the student file as well as input from teachers or service providers who worked with the student. Themes specifically addressed during the conversations included referral, assessment, and eligibility; planning and communication; student progress; procedural safeguards/considerations; and other relevant information.
6. Does APS have an automated IEP system?
 - a. Yes. The actual IEPs are all online. Only the summaries are uploaded, not the full reports. There are no signatures on the documents that are posted online.
7. Regarding the online IEP system, are test scores visible in a manner that would identify their eligibility for services?
 - a. There is a summary section on the students. Some of the special education coordinators are very detailed, and others are more summarized. So it really depends on the data input by the coordinator, but all testing information is available on the student. Each quarter the teachers have to update each goal status on the individual student.
 - b. For school year 2018-19, we are considering additional digital storage space to upload assessment components, including Psychological, Speech-Language, and all other evaluation reports. At this time, these reports are only in hard copy in the file at each school, and a central file in the Office of Special Education.
8. How far back is the data stored?
 - a. The full student enrollment record for the student's time in APS.
9. Would direct access to student information systems (Synergy SE and Synergy SIS) be available to the Contractor?
 - a. We have conferred with our Information Services Department and this may be a possibility. More information would be needed to ensure that the access, use of data, and confidentiality agreements would be in alignment with APS policies.
10. Regarding student data that requires secondary analysis, what would the files of student data that are required from APS look like?
 - a. We can provide student data files via Excel or SPSS, and we can work with the vendor on the best format/structure for each dataset. Student data will be extracted manually so there will be an effort to ensure the dataset is clean (i.e. no duplicate IDs) prior to sharing it with the vendor. It would be helpful to know what options the Offeror has for secure data transfer since APS does not currently have an FTP site.
11. How much support can we expect from APS in terms of getting parent/student consent?
 - a. APS will make use of existing communication channels. If we end up selecting student samples for any aspect of the data collection, APS would provide a list of students to be sampled by the vendor. Our existing communication channels would be used to secure parental consent or provide notification with an opt out option.

12. What percentage of parents have valid email addresses that APS has on record?
 - a. As of 2/27/18, 89% of students in our student information system have an email address listed for a parent, but some small portion of those email addresses will not be valid.
13. Does the district have an annual survey?
 - a. Through 2016-17, we had two alternating biannual districtwide surveys, both of which covered parallel themes of climate and satisfaction. In 2017-18, we are working with a new vendor to develop new survey questions focusing on climate and access to developmental assets, which will be administered in spring 2018. This survey will be administered biannually and therefore will not be administered in 2018-19. In addition, there is a likelihood that the Virginia Department of Education will have a new requirement in 2018-19 that all districts in Virginia participate in a new VDOE climate survey. We anticipate collecting demographic information - including disability status - on our own survey this spring. We are not sure what demographic information will be collected in the state survey next school year.
14. How many languages do you typically translate surveys into?
 - a. For the district-wide surveys, we always translate the student and family surveys into Spanish. Other surveys are done on a case by case basis, and depending on the respondent group, we have sometimes translated into additional languages as well. For example, for a survey of Pre-K parents, we translated the survey into Arabic, Amharic, and Mongolian in addition to Spanish, because of the high proportion of our Pre-K students who speak another language at home. We haven't had high response rates so far with surveys translated into languages other than Spanish.
15. Which stakeholder groups does the Division anticipate collecting feedback from as part of the data collection process?
 - a. We are open to suggestions from the Offeror but anticipate that feedback will be collected in some form from students, parents, and staff.
16. APS conducts some evaluations internally, what makes this requirement different?
 - a. We feel that it is important to have a significant amount of expertise on issues covered in this evaluation (e.g. we need the evaluator to be well-versed in laws and regulations pertaining to special education and 504, national trends, etc.). Another consideration that led to the decision to select an external evaluator for the previous evaluation was to address concerns about objectivity within the community, and that need still exists today.
17. For the two (2) examples of the prior work experience, please clarify how much information we are expected to provide in the written proposal?
 - a. Please provide a summary of the project experiences in your proposal and a link to the full evaluation reports that expand on the summaries provided in your response.
18. Minimum three years' experience providing Evaluation of Services for Students with Special Needs in a school setting?
 - a. APS want to see that you have experience in laws, regulations, and trends pertaining to special education, 504, and MTSS, and so it's important that your experience demonstrates this.
19. Page limit for RFP?
 - a. None.
20. Question 1a on page 11 looks a bit incomplete, To what extent are APS policies and practices relating to evaluation and identification...?
 - a. See Addendum No. 1 for the APS response.

21. Was the Division pleased with the work of the vendor who performed the last study in 2013?
 - a. Yes.
22. Why is the Division doing the study again?
 - a. APS engages in a system of regular evaluation to promote continuous improvement.
23. Will the vendor who performed the last study be eligible to submit a proposal for this study since they will be evaluating the implementation of recommendations they made?
 - a. Yes.
24. What is the budget for this evaluation study?
 - a. Available funding for the Work is defined as \$200,000 in total.
25. What is the expected start date?
 - a. Ideally the contract would be awarded sometime prior July 1, so the Contractor's team could begin collaborating with APS staff in early July and over the 2018 summer, with the primary data collection to occur in the 2018-19 school year.
26. Will APS make available the instruments that were used in the previous evaluation to enable a longitudinal data collection process?
 - a. Instruments are available as appendices in the prior report.
27. Would APS accept a sampling plan for survey/focus group data collection?
 - a. Yes, we are open to suggestions about methodology.