

**The State Education Resource Center (SERC)
Request for Proposals
Program Evaluator for Connecticut's State Systemic Improvement Plan**

SERC RFP Number: 17SERC/001RFP
The State Education Resource Center (SERC)
Procurement Contact: Nicole Hendry

- RFP Issued/Posted on SERC website: December 19, 2016
- Receipt of Questions about RFP: December 19, 2016- January 3, 2017 at 12:00 noon.
- Answers to questions will be posted as an addendum to the RFP on the SERC website: January 4, 2017.
- Proposal Due Date: No later than 4:00 pm on January 10, 2017



The State Education Resource Center (SERC) is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons. SERC does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of race, color, religious creed, sex, age, national origin, ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or expression, disability (including, but not limited to, intellectual disability, past or present history of mental disorder, physical disability or learning disability), genetic information, or any other basis prohibited by Connecticut state and/or federal nondiscrimination laws. SERC does not unlawfully discriminate in employment against qualified persons with a prior criminal conviction. Inquiries regarding SERC's nondiscrimination policies should be directed to:

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General Counsel, SERC

25 Industrial Park Road
Middletown, CT 06457
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Overview and Purpose

The State Education Resource Center (SERC) is seeking competitive proposals from qualified and interested firms to provide project evaluation for activities and products established for the Connecticut State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) as part of federal reporting requirements to the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE), Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has identified a State Identified Measurable Result (SIMR) to increase the reading performance of all 3rd grade students with disabilities statewide, as measured by Connecticut's Approved Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Performance Index. The SSIP is a three-phase implementation project. During phase I, the CSDE focused on the areas of data analysis, infrastructure analysis, the State Identified Measurable Result (SIMR), the selection of coherent improvement strategies, and a theory of action. The CSDE is currently in phase II of implementation. Phase II is focused on revisions to baseline, targets and SIMR, infrastructure development, support for LEA implementation of Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs), and evaluation. Phase III will focus on evidence of progress towards the goals of the SSIP. Additional information about the SSIP can be found online at these links: [SSIP Phase I Report](#) and [SSIP Phase II](#).

External evaluators will provide a holistic assessment of the Content, Input, Product, and Process model using the six factors of the Hexagon Tool as their framework. This evaluation project will run for a minimum of two years (2016-17, and 2017-18) with initial reporting due by March 2017. Evaluation objectives for the intended purpose of measuring short- and long-term objectives of the SSIP evaluation are as follows:

Formative: To document the improvement strategies, activities, and outputs of the CSDE SSIP work in order to:

- Provide formative feedback as to whether the program is sufficiently responsive to the assessed needs (context evaluation);
- Facilitate refinements and inform decisions regarding future planning (input evaluation);
 - Assist in maintaining integrity to the intended design, including implementation fidelity at the LEA and school level (process evaluation); and
- Identify factors or unique occurrences that influence positively or negatively the SSIP's progress and intended outcomes (context, input, and process evaluation).

Summative: To investigate the extent to which the CSDE achieved its objectives and goals as evidenced by:

- Improved state-level capacity for supporting LEAs and schools in implementing and scaling-up EBPs to improve reading for students with disabilities (SWDs) (product evaluation);
- Enhanced LEA and school-level capacity for implementing and sustaining EBPs to improve reading for SWDs (product evaluation); and
- Increased reading performance of all third grade SWDs statewide (product evaluation).

About SERC

SERC is a quasi-public agency established to assist the State Board of Education in the provision of programs and activities that promote educational equity and excellence. SERC provides professional development and information dissemination in the latest research and best practices to educators, service providers, and families throughout the state.

SERC is known for its high-quality, research-based professional support as part of its commitment to improve the achievement of Connecticut's children and youth. Its professional learning opportunities include both statewide programming activities and increasingly on-site, job-embedded technical assistance and learning opportunities in Connecticut public schools, programs, and districts.

SERC was formed in 1969 as the Special Education Resource Center and became the State Education Resource Center under a change in state statutes. Over the years, SERC has offered initiatives that support the achievement of all learners, with the belief that programs are most effective when general education and special education do not function as separate systems, but are united. The change in name appropriately reflects the broad services and programs that SERC has been offering for many years in areas important to both *general* and *special* education. The agency continues to maintain the Special Education Resource Center in addition to its broader responsibilities, including early childhood education and school improvement.

Additional information on SERC is available in our Annual Report, which can be found at our web site www.ctserc.org under the tab "About SERC."

Scope of Product and Services

The selected project evaluator will be required to answer, at a minimum, the following critical project questions using the identified methods.

Question	Data Collection
A. What needs were addressed and to what extent were the SSIP strategies and activities reflective of the assessed needs?	Independent assessment using the Hexagon Discussion and Analysis Tool Framework (including document review, interviews, and/or focus groups)
B. What procedural plans were adopted to address the needs, and to what extent was the approach a reasonable, potentially successful, and cost-effective response to the assessed needs?	Independent assessment using the Hexagon Discussion and Analysis Tool Framework (including document review, interviews, and/or focus groups)

<p>C. To what extent was the SSIP implemented as planned, specifically with respect to the strategies, activities, and outputs listed in the logic model under both infrastructure development and tiered LEA support?</p>	<p>Independent assessment using the Implementation Drivers Framework (including document review, interviews, and/or focus groups)</p>
<p>D. To what extent did the CSDE achieve its objectives and goals as evidenced by:</p> <p>1) Improved state-level capacity for supporting districts and schools in implementing and scaling-up evidence-based practices to improve reading for students with disabilities?</p> <p>2) Enhanced district and school-level capacity for implementing and sustaining evidence-based practices to improve reading for students with disabilities?</p> <p>3) Increased reading performance of all third grade students with disabilities statewide?</p>	<p>Mixed methods summative review of attainment of short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes listed in the logic model, including data from:</p> <p>Interviews/focus groups with state- and LEA-level stakeholders and participants.</p> <p>State Capacity Assessment, or a similar collaboration instrument (e.g., Partner Tool).</p> <p>Measures of educator learning (e.g., PD evaluation forms, Foundations of Reading Survey).</p> <p>Measures of intervention fidelity (Literacy Evaluation Tool, SRBI Self-Assessment).</p> <p>Measures of family engagement (e.g., parent survey).</p> <p>Universal screens conducted by Tier 3 districts.</p> <p>Smarter Balanced and Alternate Assessment (i.e., ELA Performance Index) and the state's progress in meeting its annual SIMR targets</p>

Monitor and Evaluate Performance:

The grant evaluator must work in collaboration with the SSIP staff designated by the CSDE and SERC during the development and implementation of the SSIP's evaluation plan. Specifically, they will work with the CSDE and SERC personnel to develop and implement a CT SSIP evaluation process that measures progress towards the project's overarching purpose: to improve the grade three literacy outcomes of students with disabilities. The monitoring and evaluation process should include, but not be limited to the following:

- The process evaluation, with careful attention to key implementation factors, will inform the outcome evaluation, which will strive to measure project impact along a continuum of change: (a) short-term (changes the project expects to see); (b) mid-term (changes the project wants to see); and (c) long-term (changes the project hopes to see). Using multiple performance measures at different time intervals, especially for those objectives that are inherently hard to measure, will allow the external evaluation team to compare and confirm findings from multiple sources, thus providing a more comprehensive representation of the project's efforts.
- To ensure that the evaluation provides performance feedback and permits periodic assessment of progress, the evaluation team will work collaboratively with project stakeholders to determine the most useful format for timely formative reporting. All data

will be presented objectively with project improvements in mind, but also with an independent external perspective that can be useful to those deeply involved in the project's day-to-day activities.

- The evaluation team will also produce and disseminate an annual summative evaluation report to project leaders, the USDOE, and other interested stakeholders. These reports will be a compilation of all data gathered and will delineate progress towards the project's intended outcomes, the strategies and activities most effective in meeting these outcomes, significant project successes, and lessons learned.
- The external evaluator will be expected to provide project leaders with information that facilitates accurate, well-informed decisions regarding project performance.

Proposal Requirements

I. The proposal must include the required information in the following sections:

- A. A description of your firm's **qualifications and experience** with project evaluation;
- B. A detailed description of the **methodology**, including a **timeline** for completing the deliverables related to questions A-D;
- C. A **pricing plan** for entire project implementation, with separate costs for each identified line item; and
- E. A detailed description of the firm's organizational information.

II. Required format for proposals:

All proposals must follow the required format. Failure to follow the required format may result in disqualification of a proposal:

- Page Limit: 12 including cover page
- Page Size: 8 ½ x 11; portrait

- Font Size: 12
- Font Type: Times New Roman
- Double-spaced
- Margins: 1" minimum on the top, bottom, and sides of all pages
- All pages must be numbered and single-sided.
- Do not use material in proposals dependent on color distinctions, animated electronics, etc.
- Do not place proposals in notebooks or binders. Metal clips may be used to bind pages together.
- Do not include attachments other than those requested or required by this RFP.

Selection Criteria

A selection committee will review and score all proposals by February 21, 2017. Reviewers will consider the quality, thoroughness, and clarity of each bidder's response in reference to:

- A. The qualifications and experience of the bidder (35% of overall score);

- B. The methodology and timeline for the deliverables in questions A-D of the Scope of Work section (35% of overall score);
- C. Proposed pricing of services related to the questions A-D in the Scope of Work section (20% of overall score);

Proposal Schedule Release of RFP by electronic means on the SERC website at ctserc.org	December 19, 2016
Receipt of questions	By 12:00 p.m. on January 3, 2017
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Proposal due date	By 4:00 p.m. on January 10, 2016

D. The bidder's organizational information (10% of overall score).

Instructions to Proposers

I. Proposal Timeline

During the period from your organization's receipt of this Request for Proposals and until a contract is awarded, your organization shall not contact any employee of SERC for additional information except in writing directed to Nicole Hendry, SERC Consultant, at hendry@ctserc.org.

II. Questions

Questions for the purpose of clarifying the RFP must be submitted **in writing by email** and must be received no later than **12:00 p.m. on January 3, 2017**.

Questions must be emailed to Nicole Hendry, SERC Consultant, at hendry@ctserc.org.

Questions and responses will be posted as an "Addendum to the Connecticut State Systemic Improvement Plan RFP" on the SERC website at <http://www.ctserc.org/ssiprpf> by 4:00 p.m. on January 4, 2017. Please note that submissions of questions for response do not in any way enhance or guarantee the chances of receiving a contract through this proposal.

III. Proposal Submission

All responses to this solicitation must be received by January 10, 2017 no later than 4:00 p.m. The attached cover page must bear an **original signature** of the **official authorized** to submit the proposal. Electronic submissions and faxed copies of proposals will not be accepted. Please submit **one (1) original** and **three (3) copies** of the proposal addressed to:

Nicole Hendry
 SERC Library
 25 Industrial Park Road
 Middletown, CT 06457
 Attention: SSIP

General Information

I. Contract Period

The contract period shall begin day of approval through June 30, 2018. SERC reserves the right to extend this contract.

II. Contract Award

SERC reserves the right to award the contract in a manner deemed to be in the best interests of SERC.

III. Stability of Proposed Prices

Any price offerings from proposers must be valid for a period of 30 days from the due date of the proposals.

IV. Amendment or Cancellation of the RFP

SERC reserves the right to cancel, amend, modify, or otherwise change this RFP at any time if it deems it to be in the best interests of SERC.

V. Proposal Modifications

No additions or changes to any proposal will be allowed after the proposal due date, unless such modification is specifically requested by SERC. SERC, at its option, may seek proposer retraction and clarification of any discrepancy or contradiction found during its review of proposals.

VI. Proposer Presentation of Supporting Evidence

Proposers must be prepared to provide any evidence of experience, performance, ability, and/or financial surety that SERC deems to be necessary or appropriate to fully establish the performance capabilities represented in their proposals.

VII. Proposer Demonstration of Proposed Services and or Products

Proposers must be able to confirm their ability to provide all proposed services.

VIII. Erroneous Awards

SERC reserves the right to correct inaccurate awards. This includes revoking the awarding of a contract to a proposer and subsequently awarding the contract to a different proposer. Such action shall not constitute a breach of contract on the part of SERC because the contract with the initial proposer will be deemed voided as if no contract were ever in place.

IX. Proposal Expenses

Proposers are responsible for all costs and expenses incurred in the preparation of proposals and for any subsequent work on the proposal that is required.

X. Ownership of Proposals

All proposals shall become the property of SERC and will not be returned.

XI. Ownership of Subsequent Products

Any product, whether acceptable or unacceptable, developed under a contract awarded as a result of this RFP shall be the sole property of SERC unless otherwise stated in the contract.

XII. Oral Agreement or Arrangements

Any alleged oral agreements or arrangements made by proposers with SERC will be disregarded in any proposal evaluation or associated award.

XIII. Not a Contract

This RFP is not a contract and, alone, shall not be interpreted as such. Rather, this RFP only serves as the instrument through which proposals are solicited. SERC will pursue negotiations with the highest scoring proposal. If, for some reason, SERC and the initial proposer fail to reach consensus on the issues relative to a contract, then SERC may commence contract negotiations with other proposers. SERC may decide at any time to start the RFP process again.

The selected proposer will be required to sign a formal contract. The contract may include a liquidated damages clause at the discretion of SERC, including other relevant clauses.

XIV. Subcontractors

SERC must approve any and all subcontractors utilized by the successful proposer prior to any such subcontractor commencing any work. Proposers acknowledge by the act of submitting a proposal that any work provided under the contract is work conducted on behalf of SERC and that the SERC Executive Director or designee may communicate directly with any subcontractor as SERC deems to be necessary or appropriate.

It is also understood that the successful proposer shall be responsible for all payment of fees charged by the subcontractor(s). A performance evaluation of any subcontractor shall be provided promptly by the successful proposer to SERC upon request. The successful proposer must provide the majority of services described in the specifications.

XV. Accounting Procedures

Generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) or another acceptable accounting method must be utilized.