

RFP # 853 – Addendum 2

This document represents a second addendum to RFP #853 regarding the *Sheff v. O'Neill* Comprehensive Study. This document includes all questions from prospective proposers raised at the RFP conference held on January 22, 2025, along with responses from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE).

Question:

We understand that CSDE's EdSight database will be a primary source of data for this work, and that the State may make personally identifiable student information available as needed. Does the state (or district) gather any additional data, such as data related to transportation (e.g., expenditures, current routes, employment trends), school staffing (e.g., retention, years of experience), school-level and district-level budget and expenditure data, or RSCO's current school choice algorithm, building capacity data?

SDE Response:

EdSight is an important source of data for this study, but the CSDE maintains, and has access to, other sources of data as well. This includes, but is not limited to, data regarding transportation and routing information, compliance goals, school building capacity, applicant demographic information and school and district budget data, among other things. The CSDE intends to make this information available to the successful bidder, subject to applicable confidentiality and privacy rules. The specific algorithm for placing students in *Sheff* interdistrict programs is proprietary and non-disclosable. However, the Phase IV stipulation, which is linked in page 5 of the RFP, outlines the factors used in the placement protocol. See Phase IV Stipulation, Section XII (Student Assignment Plan), pgs. 17-22.

Question:

The RFP references enrollment and demographic projections -- is creating the projections part of the RFP or does the district or the state have projections (or a projection methodology) already?

SDE Response:

Yes, these projections are intended as part of the RFP.

Question:

Will the state help recruit families for focus groups and surveys or provide contact information to reach out to families? Is it allowable to offer incentives (e.g., a small gift card) to thank participants for their time spent on any primary data collection? Is there a limit on the dollar amount of incentives we offer?

SDE Response:

The CSDE will assist in connecting the contractor to families for purposes of any surveys and focus groups that are included in the study. As a matter of CSDE policy, however, participation incentives generally are not permitted using contract funding.

Question:

Will staff at schools in the Voluntary Interdistrict Programs participate in interviews or focus groups on a voluntary basis, or will they be required to participate?

SDE Response:

Historically school staff have participated voluntarily in these opportunities, which we expect will continue and be the preferred basis for participation.

Question:

Do you anticipate that data sharing agreements with entities other than the State Department of Education will be required?

SDE Response:

No.

Question:

Are there specific protocols for data security and student confidentiality that go beyond standard FERPA compliance?

SDE Response:

Yes, in addition to FERPA compliance, the CSDE is required to adhere to confidentiality provisions relating to state contracting, including provisions contained in Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Section 4e-70 et seq.

Question:

Do the style requirements on p. 24 apply to tables and figures, or is it acceptable to use different typeface, font size, or line spacing for tables and figures?

SDE Response:

By their terms, the style requirements on RFP page 24 apply to the entirety of the proposal, and there is no specific exception for tables and figures. However, the CSDE has discretion to waive technical irregularities with respect to formatting of RFP responses. Deviations relating to font size, typeface and line spacing in tables and figures would be considered technical irregularities which the CSDE typically would waive.

Question:

Has the State conducted similar comprehensive studies in the past?

SDE Response:

No, the state has not previously conducted a comprehensive study of the Sheff v. O'Neill System but has commissioned more limited studies concerning transportation, family decision-making, attrition, the application and placement protocol and other analyses. Such studies and analyses will be made available to the successful proposer.

Question:

Does the state plan to make the deliverables from this study publicly available?

SDE Response:

Yes. The Connecticut State Department of Education is a public agency and subject to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Question:

Who at the state do you anticipate will be part of the day-to-day team throughout the course of the project?

SDE Response:

We anticipate that the State team will consist primarily of various members of the Regional School Choice Office and the SDE Division of Legal and Governmental Affairs, along with other staff from other divisions as necessary.

Question:

The relevant qualifications section of the main proposal asks for a list of staff and org chart and then states "In two pages or less, summarize the relevant qualifications, including experience and expertise of the organization. Factors that should be discussed include adequacy of financial resources, and overall technical skills and experience that will enable and ensure that required work to be done. Include references." Does the two-page limit apply to just the narrative or the combined org chart, list and narrative.

SDE Response:

This two-page limitation applies to the narrative section only.

Question:

For the goals of reduced isolation, is the goal an annual increase of 25% of high SES students or maintaining 25% of high SES student populations?

SDE Response:

The Socioeconomic Diversity Goal is set forth in Section II(1) of the Comprehensive School Choice Plan (CCP). This requires enrolling applicants of applicable schools up to a maximum of 60% from Tier A (low socioeconomic status (SES)) and a minimum of 30% from Tier C (high SES) for incoming enrollments of each school. The CCP also requires the state to continue to seek achieve and maintain the desegregation goal set by the Connecticut Superior Court in its August 7, 2017 ruling in the *Sheff* litigation of a total school enrollment of at least 25% students who self-identify as White, Asian, American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and/or Other Pacific Islander, or two or more of such races, and do not identify as Black/African American or Hispanic/Latino. This is required by CCP Section II(9).

Question:

Section 7 of the main proposal on the Budget seems to imply that the budget and budget narrative is in the 20 page proposal. At the same time, the RFP requests a detailed budget justification "Present a detailed cost narrative that explains the basis and rationale for the costs proposed. Provide assumptions or calculation approaches used to develop the cost proposal." This material could run for many pages. Can the budget justification or much of the

detailed material about the budget justification be in the attachments, rather than the main proposal?

SDE Response:

Yes, supporting materials for the budget justification may be included as appendices.

Question:

In the rfp: between pages 14-17, there is a long list of examination topics; and between pages 17-20, there is a detailed task list. In order to be most responsive to the rfp; which list should we prioritize?

SDE Response:

The CSDE's view is that the list of topics for examination on pages 14-17 aligns with the task list on pages 17-20. The CSDE intends for the table on pages 17-20 to serve as a summary framework for the topics to be examined, the tasks to be completed, and the associated reports to be delivered as part of the scope of work.

Question:

Does the requirement to disclose/report past/present conflict(s) of interest apply to subs or only to the prime applicant?

SDE Response:

The conflict-of-interest disclosure requirement applies to both the primary applicant and proposed subcontractors.

Question:

Can you share a little more about the *Sheff* committee or any other key stakeholder groups that would be involved?

SDE Response:

The composition and work of the RSCO Working Group is detailed in CCP Commitment #13, which appears on pages 25-26 of the CCP. Members of the RSCO Working Group are key stakeholders in the *Sheff* case.

Question:

Just to be clear, would an organizational chart in less than the required 11-point font (for spacing purposes) automatically disqualify a consulting firm's proposal?

SDE Response:

No. As indicated above, deviations of this type would be considered technical irregularities, which the CSDE typically would waive.

Question:

The RFP lists "References" as one of several attachments. Does this refer to citations or to contact information for people who can serve as references? The RFP also requests on page 30 that references be included in the Organizational Chart, Capacity section. Should contact

information for people also be included in this section? Is there a minimum number of references you would like?

SDE Response:

Please include contact information for references if possible. We do not have a particular number of references in mind for inclusion in the submission.

Question:

When answering the question on references, please be clear whether the list of references can be placed in the appendix.

SDE Response:

Yes, references may be included as an appendix.

Question:

May state institutions bid on this contract given the language in RFP Section V(B)(2) requiring state officials and employees to certify “that no elected or appointed official or employee of the State has or will benefit financially or materially from any contract resulting from this RFP.”

SDE Response:

Yes, this provision is not intended to prohibit State entities from submitting a bid for this work or to serve as a blanket prohibition on State entities from executing a contract with the CSDE for this project. Nothing in the Connecticut State Codes of Ethics prohibits a state agency (including a state university) from entering a contract (including a grant implemented by contract) with another state agency. If, however, a state employee (e.g., a university professor) seeks to enter a contract with CSDE in his or her private capacity, then he or she must be sure to abide by the outside-employment provisions in C.G.S. § 1-84 (b) and (c) and the contracting-with-the-state provision in § 1-84 (i).