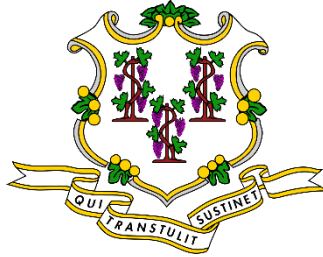


State of Connecticut Procurement Notice



Request for Proposals (RFP) For the Sheff v. O'Neill Comprehensive Study – RFP # 853

Issued By:
Connecticut State Department of Education
December 3, 2024

This Request for Proposal is available in electronic format on the State Contracting Portal by filtering by Organization for CT State Department of Education [CTsource Bid Board](#) or from the CT State Department of Education Official Contact:

Name: Matthew Venhorst
Phone: 860-713-6514
E-Mail: Matthew.Venhorst@ct.gov

This RFP is also available on the CT State Department of Education website at <https://portal.ct.gov/sde/rfp/request-for-proposals/2024-rfps>.

Responses must be Received No Later Than February 21, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. EST

The CT State Department of Education reserves the right to reject any and all submissions or cancel this procurement at any time if deemed in the best interest of the State of Connecticut (State).

The Connecticut State Department of Education is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons. The Connecticut Department of Education does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of: race; color; religious creed; age; sex; pregnancy; sexual orientation; workplace hazards to reproductive systems; gender identity or expression; marital status;

national origin; ancestry; retaliation for previously opposed discrimination or coercion; intellectual disability; genetic information; learning disability; physical disability (including, but not limited to, blindness); mental disability (past/present history thereof); military or veteran status; status as a victim of domestic violence; or criminal record in state employment, in accordance with applicable statutes, unless there is a bona fide occupational qualification excluding persons in any of the aforementioned protected classes. Inquiries regarding the Connecticut State Department of Education's nondiscrimination policies should be directed to: Attorney Louis Todisco, Connecticut State Department of Education, by mail 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 605, Hartford, CT 06103-1841; or by telephone 860-713-6594; or by email louis.todisco@ct.gov.

The Connecticut State Department of Education is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer.

Table Of Contents

	Page
Section I – General Information	
A. Introduction	4
B. Instructions	7
Section II – Purpose Of Rfp And Scope Of Services	
A. CSDE Overview	12
B. Service Overview.	13
C. Scope of Services Description	13
D. Performance Measures	22
E. Contract Management/Data Reporting	23
Section III – Proposal Submission Overview	
A. Submission Format Information	23
B. Evaluation of Proposals	25
Section IV – Proposal Submission Outline And Requirements	
A. Cover Sheet	28
B. Table of Contents	28
C. Executive Summary	28
D. Main Proposal Submission Questions	29
E. Attachments	31
F. Declaration of Confidential Information	31
G. Conflict of Interest – Disclosure Statement	31
H. Statement of Assurances	32
Section V – Mandatory Provisions .	
A. Standard Contract Provisions	32
B. Assurances	32
C. Terms and Conditions	33
D. Rights Reserved to the State	35
E. Statutory and Regulatory Compliance	36
Section VI – Appendix	
A. Abbreviations / Acronyms / Definitions	40
B. Statement of Assurances	41
C. Proposal Checklist	42
D. Additional Relevant Forms	
1 – Attachment A – Cover Sheet	44
2 – Attachment B – Budget	45
3 – Attachment C – Budget Narrative	46

I. General Information

A. Introduction

1. **RFP Name and Number.** Sheff v. O’Neill Comprehensive Study, RFP # 853.
2. **RFP Summary.** The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) seeks qualified organizations with expertise in racial and socioeconomic integration in educational settings to conduct a comprehensive study of the Sheff region and the framework currently in place to meet the goals of the Sheff v. O’Neill litigation (Sheff litigation), as described below. Based on the results of this study, the selected organization will make cost effective recommendations regarding changes to the Sheff system toward the goal of creating a sustainable structure of integrated education in the Hartford region to best serve the goals of the Sheff litigation and support financial stability.

Background

The State, since 1989, has been party to the Sheff litigation in which the Connecticut Supreme Court held, in 1996, that public school students in the City of Hartford attended schools that were racially and ethnically isolated in violation of the Connecticut Constitution, and directed the State to take prompt steps to seek to remedy the violation. The Plaintiffs and Defendants have entered a series of court ordered stipulations in an effort to address the goals of that litigation, the most recent of which, called the [Comprehensive School Choice Plan](#) (the “CCP”), was executed in January 2022, and approved by the Connecticut General Assembly on March 17, 2022, and the Connecticut Superior Court on March 21, 2022 as an Order of the Court. The CCP serves “as a blueprint to a sustainable system of schools that provide attractive and voluntary choice for families and students” and includes a host of commitments on the part of the State, which are designed to serve the goals of the Sheff litigation. The ultimate goal of the Sheff litigation is to meet the demand of Hartford-resident students of color who wish to attend school in desegregated educational settings. This goal is to be attained using a number of voluntary interdistrict programs as described below.

The CCP identifies the following Voluntary Interdistrict Programs as the primary means of meeting demand: the Open Choice program, which allows students to attend school in neighboring suburban school districts when such transfers contribute to the reduction of racial and ethnic isolation; themed Interdistrict Magnet Schools, which presently include Hartford and suburban host magnet

schools and regional magnet schools; charter schools; Hartford Region Connecticut Technical Education and Careers System (CTECS) high schools; and Hartford Region Agricultural Science and Technology Education (ASTE) Schools. These Voluntary Interdistrict Programs are the instruments employed under the CCP to reduce racial, ethnic, and economic isolation.

While any Connecticut resident may apply to attend a Voluntary Interdistrict Program in the Greater Hartford Region within the Sheff portfolio of school options, 22 towns located within Hartford County were initially identified as the “Sheff Towns” by the Sheff plaintiffs and in the first stipulation for purposes of two-way participation in Voluntary Interdistrict Programs. However, subsequent stipulations expanded the reach of participation to 43 towns to include non-Hartford students from other towns within the Greater Hartford Region. Students who reside in any of these 43 towns are included within the transportation zone and are generally eligible to receive free transportation to and from Sheff choice schools and programs, primarily through transportation funded by the State of Connecticut and administered by the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC), a Regional Educational Service Center (RESC) for the region. A small fraction of students currently enrolled in Voluntary Interdistrict Programs reside in other counties, such as Middlesex and Windham Counties, and are outside the transportation zone.

The Regional School Choice Office (RSCO) was established by the CSDE in the second stipulation to the Sheff case to manage the application and placement process for the Voluntary Interdistrict Programs within the Sheff portfolio through a uniform application and placement system. Connecticut families access opportunities to attend Interdistrict Magnet Schools, the Open Choice Program, and the CTECS technical high schools in the Greater Hartford Region through the RSCO School Choice application and placement process. Families interested in attending an ASTE School apply directly to the school through a separate application.

The CCP requires the RSCO to place students in Voluntary Interdistrict Programs based on the Student Assignment Plan from the [Phase IV Stipulation](#) using socioeconomic status (“SES”) to maximize SES diversity in interdistrict magnet schools and CTECS schools included in the RSCO application, in order to increase enrollment of Hartford-resident students in reduced-isolation settings without considering race or ethnicity in the assignment of any individual student. For purposes of maximizing the socioeconomic diversity of interdistrict magnet schools and CTECS schools, the CCP sets a Socioeconomic Diversity Goal of enrolling applicants to to such schools up to a maximum of 60% from Tier A (low SES) and a minimum of 30% from Tier C (high SES) for incoming enrollments for each school. The CCP defines a reduced-isolation setting as a school or program

with an incoming enrollment that satisfies the Socioeconomic Diversity Goal for Tier A of up to a maximum of 60% incoming enrollment. Open Choice schools and ASTE schools within the Sheff portfolio are considered reduced-isolation settings without consideration of SES for purposes of the CCP. For long-term planning and goal setting, the CCP requires the state to continue to seek to 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.

In the more than two decades that it has been in existence, the Sheff system has evolved to a point that it requires significant modifications to meet the commitments in the CCP. Some historical challenges to sustainability have included, in no particular order:

- The sheer size and scale of the system renders transportation a perennial concern, with countless students and prospective students each year exiting Sheff schools or declining to enroll in them as a result of actual or anticipated transportation difficulties.
- The various themes and grade level offerings at the Sheff magnet schools are unevenly distributed throughout the Sheff region, with some geographic areas within the region having an abundance of certain offerings and others having few or none at all.
- It remains difficult to persuade prospective students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds to forgo neighborhood schools in favor of attending schools within the Sheff system, especially in more recent years, with increasing challenges in performance, discipline, and attendance. The perception of fewer extracurricular offerings, and the reality of long bus rides to and from school add to the challenge of attracting a diverse applicant pool.
- Increased enrollment of Hartford-resident students in Sheff Voluntary Interdistrict Programs compounds declining enrollment in Hartford neighborhood schools and creates educational challenges for Hartford Public Schools.

These issues are compounded by the changing demographics of the region. Over the past ten years, overall public student enrollment in Connecticut has decreased while the share of students who identify as Black or Hispanic has increased. As a result, it has been an ongoing challenge to ensure that each of the schools in the Sheff portfolio offers the level of racial and socioeconomic diversity required in the CCP to reduce the racial and ethnic isolation of Hartford-resident students of color.

In light of these challenges, the State and the various constituencies involved in the Sheff initiative recognize that the current framework currently in place to meet the goals of the stipulations resulting from the Sheff litigation (hereinafter the “Sheff system”) must be reconceived and reconfigured for it to be sustainable over the long-term. The ultimate purpose of the study is for the the selected entity to recommend specific strategies to reconceive, innovate, and reconfigure the Sheff system within the parameters of the CCP to promote long-term sustainability and best serve the goals of the Sheff litigation.

3. **RFP Purpose.** The intent of this RFP is to retain a qualified organization with expertise in racial and socioeconomic integration in educational settings to conduct a comprehensive study of the Sheff system and, based on the results of this comprehensive study, recommend changes to the Sheff system toward the goal of creating a sustainable structure of integrated education in the Hartford region to best serve the goals of the Sheff litigation and support financial stability. Such recommendations and proposals for reconfiguration, redesign and/or innovation of the Sheff system must be within the parameters of the CCP, as such parameters may be modified to the extent acceptable to all parties to the CCP to include the State of Connecticut, the Sheff plaintiffs, and the City of Hartford. Responding organizations may propose collaborations among two or more entities to provide the required expertise to fulfill the responsibilities of this RFP through subcontracting relationships.
4. **Commodity Codes.** The services that the CSDE wishes to procure through this RFP are as follows: 86000000: Education and Training Services.

B. Instructions

1. **Official Contact.** The CSDE has designated the individual below as the Official Contact for purposes of this RFP. The Official Contact is the **only authorized contact** for this procurement and, as such, handles all related communications on behalf of the CSDE. Proposers, prospective proposers, and other interested parties are advised that any communication with any other CSDE employee(s) (including appointed officials) or personnel under contract to the Agency about this RFP is strictly prohibited. Proposers or prospective proposers who violate this instruction may risk disqualification from further consideration.

Name: Matthew Venhorst
Phone: (860) 713-6514
E-Mail: matthew.venhorst@ct.gov

Proposers are advised to ensure that email screening software (if used) recognizes and accepts emails from the Official Contact.

2. **Registering with the State Contracting Portal.** Respondents must register with the State of CT contracting portal at <https://portal.ct.gov/DAS/CTSource/Registration> if not already registered. Respondents shall submit the following information pertaining to this application to this portal (on their supplier profile), which will be checked by the CSDE contact:
 - Secretary of State recognition – Click on appropriate response
 - Non-profit status, if applicable
 - Notification to Bidders, Parts I-V
 - Campaign Contribution Certification (OPM Ethics Form 1):
<https://portal.ct.gov/OPM/Fin-PSA/Forms/Ethics-Forms>
3. **RFP Information.** The RFP, amendments to the RFP, and other information associated with this procurement are available in electronic format from the Official Contact or from the Internet at the following locations:
 - CSDE RFP Web Page: <https://portal.ct.gov/sde/rfp/request-for-proposals/2024-rfps>
 - State Contracting Portal (go to CTsource bid board, filter by “Education, Department of”):
<https://portal.ct.gov/DAS/CTSource/BidBoard>

It is strongly recommended that any proposer or prospective proposer interested in this procurement check the Bid Board for any solicitation changes. Interested proposers may receive additional emails from CTsource announcing addendums that are posted on the portal. This service is provided as a courtesy to assist in monitoring activities associated with State procurements, including this RFP.

4. **Procurement Schedule.** See below. The CSDE may amend the schedule as needed. Any changes will be made by means of an amendment to this RFP and will be posted on the State Contracting Portal and, if available, the CSDE RFP Web Page.
 - RFP Released: December 3, 2024
 - Letter of Intent: N/A
 - Deadline for Questions: January 3, 2025
 - Answers Released: January 15, 2025
 - RFP Conference: January 22, 2025
 - Proposals Due: February 21, 2025

5. **Contract Awards.** The award of any contract pursuant to this RFP is dependent upon the availability of funding to the CSDE. The CSDE anticipates the following:

- Total Funding Available: \$1,000,000
- Contract Term: April 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

6. **Minimum Qualifications of Proposers.** To qualify and be considered for a contract award, a proposer must have the following minimum qualifications, which may be provided directly by the proposer or through subcontracting relationships identified in the RFP response:

- **Comprehensive Evaluation Experience:** Previous experience in conducting comprehensive evaluations of educational systems, preferably in the context of school choice programs, and in evaluating school choice programs and providing direct or consulting services and recommendations in support of school choice system reform in a voluntary and multi-district system to achieve desegregation goals. The proposer also must have experience and expertise in desegregation initiatives, school choice theme development and programming, diverse magnet schools, and meeting diversity goals.
- **Project Management Skills:** Effective project management capabilities to ensure the evaluation is conducted efficiently, within established timelines, and meets the specified objectives.
- **Educational Understanding:** Familiarity with the unique challenges and requirements of school choice systems, including knowledge of voluntary integration efforts across multiple districts and compliance with diversity standards and desegregation goals; as well as awareness of and adherence to relevant regulations and policies governing school choice programming, ensuring that recommendations align with legal requirements.
- **Best Practices Knowledge:**
 - o Knowledge of best practices in school choice and creating integrated educational systems to provide recommendations aligned with proven strategies for efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
 - o The ability to think creatively and propose innovative solutions to address challenges and improve overall effectiveness and efficiency of the Sheff system.
- **Financial Analysis Expertise:** Expertise in school choice funding models with the expertise to evaluate the impact of different financing systems on educational programming and present alternate financing models; expertise in financial analysis and budgeting to assess costs, identify areas for improvement, and recommend cost-effective strategies.

- **Data Analysis Expertise:** Expertise in performing complex and sophisticated data analyses to support data-driven recommendations and correlate achievement metrics, enrollment patterns, transportation routing, and academic/theme programming in school choice environments for purposes of integration planning and reformulation of education programming.

In addition, the following requirements apply to this RFP:

- Bidders must provide details on unique aspects or strengths of the provider/vendor in the area of school choice system development and planning, school integration, and school choice system support and services as part of the executive summary required in response to this RFP.
- Bidders may include collaborations with two or more entities with specific expertise to fulfill different responsibilities of the RFP requirements through a subcontracting relationship but must include the qualifications of such entities in the bid proposal along with written evidence of the intent to subcontract if selected as the successful proposer.
- Bidders must describe at least one (1) but no more than three (3) similar education projects the bidder and/or its proposed subcontractors has conducted.

7. **Letter of Intent.** A Letter of Intent (LOI) is not required by this RFP.

8. **Inquiry Procedures.** All questions regarding this RFP or the CSDE's procurement process must be directed, in writing, electronically via email to the Official Contact before the deadline specified in the Procurement Schedule. The early submission of questions is encouraged. Questions will not be accepted or answered verbally – neither in person nor over the telephone. All questions received before the deadline(s) will be answered. However, the CSDE will not answer questions when the source is unknown (i.e., nuisance or anonymous questions). Questions deemed unrelated to the RFP or the procurement process will not be answered. At its discretion, the CSDE may or may not respond to questions received after the deadline. The CSDE may combine similar questions and give only one answer. All questions and answers will be compiled into a written amendment to this RFP. If any answer to any question constitutes a material change to the RFP, the question and answer will be placed at the beginning of the amendment and duly noted as such. The CSDE will release the answers to questions on the date(s) established in the Procurement Schedule. The CSDE will publish any and all amendments to this RFP on the State Contracting Portal and, if available, on the CSDE's RFP Web Page.

9. **RFP Conference.** A virtual RFP conference will be held on **January 22, 2025 at 1:00 p.m. EST** to answer questions from prospective proposers and may be

accessed via the following link: [RFP Conference Registration](#) for registration. Attendance at the conference is optional. At the conference, attendees will be provided an opportunity to submit written questions, which the Agency's representatives may (or may not) answer at the conference. Any oral answers given at the conference by the Agency's representatives are tentative and not binding on the Agency. All questions submitted will be answered in a written amendment to this RFP, which will serve as the Agency's official response to questions asked at the conference. If any answer to any question constitutes a material change to the RFP, the question and answer will be placed at the beginning of the amendment and duly noted as such. The Agency will publish any and all amendments to this RFP on the State Contracting Portal and, if available, on the Agency's RFP Web Page.

10. **Proposal Due Date and Time.** The Official Contact is the only authorized recipient of proposals submitted in response to this RFP. Proposals must be received by the Official Contact on or before the due date and time: **February 21, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. EST.**

Proposals received after the due date and time will be ineligible and will not be evaluated. The CSDE will send an official letter alerting late respondents of ineligibility.

An acceptable submission must include the following:

- One (1) conforming electronic copy of the proposal.
 - The proposal must be complete, properly formatted and outlined, and ready for evaluation by the Screening Committee.
 - The electronic copy of the proposal must be emailed to the official agency contact for this procurement. The subject line of the email must read: Sheff v. O'Neill Comprehensive Study, RFP # 853. Required forms and appendices may be scanned and submitted as PDFs at the end of the main proposal document. Please ensure the entire email submission is less than 25MB as this reflects the CSDE's server limitations. Respondents should work to ensure there are not additional IT limitations from the provider side.
 - The proposal must carry signatures and unsigned proposals will not be evaluated.

- Proposals received after the due date and time may be accepted by the CSDE as a clerical function, but late proposals will not be evaluated. At the discretion of the CSDE, late proposals may be destroyed.

11. **Multiple Proposals.** The submission of multiple proposals is not an option for this procurement, except that potential subcontractors may propose to work on more than one (1) component of the contract and/or may be included in the proposal of more than one (1) proposer.

12. **No Promotion:** The proposer selected to perform the services which are the subject of this request for proposals shall be prohibited from promoting its own products or services in any reports or recommendations prepared as a part of its services.

II. Purpose Of The Rfp And Scope Of Services

A. CSDE Overview

The CSDE is the administrative arm of the Connecticut State Board of Education (CSBE). Through leadership, curriculum, research, planning, evaluation, assessment, data analysis and other assistance, the CSDE helps to ensure equal opportunity and excellence in education for all Connecticut students. The CSDE is responsible for distributing funds to all Connecticut public school districts and operates the RSCO that administers the application and placement systems for interdistrict choice schools within the Greater Hartford Region in accordance with the CCP in the Sheff litigation, and any related or future stipulations and orders.

Mission

The CSDE's mission is to provide - through leadership and service - insight, expertise, training, encouragement and resources to assist those in the education and related communities to succeed in reducing the racial, ethnic and economic isolation of Hartford-resident students, and helping all Connecticut students become effective lifelong learners, able to reach their personal and career goals and become involved, productive, confident and satisfied members of society.

B. Service Overview

The CSDE is seeking a consulting firm to conduct a comprehensive study of the Sheff system and to use that study to make recommendations regarding reformulation of the Sheff system within the parameters of the CCP toward the goal of creating a sustainable structure of integrated education in the Hartford region to best serve the goals of the Sheff litigation and support financial stability. As described in the Background Section to this RFP, the Sheff system has evolved to a point that it requires significant modifications to remain viable based on the changing demographics of the Hartford region since the inception of the Sheff initiative, the expansive scale of the voluntary interdistrict programming offered, high-performing and attractive educational options in students' home district schools, long rides and centralized transportation services that do not include neighborhood bus stops, challenges to school community and student participation in before- and after-school activities based on the interdistrict nature of Sheff programming, and increasing challenges in Sheff schools with student performance, discipline and attendance.

C. Scope Of Service Description

1. **Scope of Work Tasks and Deliverables:** The scope of work includes a comprehensive study and system analysis of the Sheff region and recommendations regarding reformulation of the Sheff system toward the goal of creating a sustainable structure of integrated education in the Hartford region to best serve the goals of the Sheff litigation and support financial stability. This scope of work includes the tasks and deliverables in this section II.C to culminate in a comprehensive final report with cost effective recommendations for the redesign, reconfiguration and innovation of the Sheff system to support enrollment, compliance with diversity goals, and sustainability. Such recommendations and proposals for reconfiguration, redesign and/or innovation of the Sheff system must be cost effective, and preferably achievable within existing resources. The scope of work may be accomplished through one organization with the requisite expertise, experience and capacity or, alternatively, through one organization as the contracting party with collaborations with other entities as subcontractors to provide the required expertise, experience and capacity for all components of the scope of work.
 - a. Perform a comprehensive examination and system analysis of the current Sheff system to identify strengths and weaknesses, and areas of potential

reformulation, innovation, reconfiguration, and elimination. The examination should include the following:

- examination of historical and current data provided by CSDE to identify trends, challenges, efficiencies, and opportunities within the Sheff system, including projections of future demographics, demand for school choice options, funding considerations, and enrollment patterns;
- analysis of historical, current, and projected transportation expenditures, including consideration of administrative costs, busing services, and prior transportation studies procured by the CSDE, to evaluate cost-efficiency and identify areas for potential savings, improvements, and efficiencies;
- assessment of student attrition from Sheff Voluntary Interdistrict Programs to include a consideration of previous studies and reports procured by the CSDE;
- analysis of demographic trends of student enrollment in Sheff Voluntary Interdistrict Programs and the Sheff Region, including consideration of race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status, student mobility, housing insecurity, and students with high needs;
- assessment of the educational opportunities offered among Sheff Voluntary Interdistrict Programs, based on available theme-based programming, grade levels offered and location of each school, and enrollment patterns associated with each, including demographic analyses and Sheff compliance considerations;
- evaluation of the perceptions, values, educational interests, and beliefs held by families in the Hartford Region regarding Sheff schools, programs, and educational themes, gathered through surveys and focus groups conducted by the successful proposer;
- assessment of historical and current funding models for Sheff Voluntary Interdistrict Programs and the impact of such funding on academic programming, extracurricular offerings, student performance, staff retention, attendance, school climate, and other school factors;
- assessment of the barriers and challenges faced by magnet school operators and Open Choice districts, gathered through surveys and focus groups;
- assessment of student and family experiences in Interdistrict Magnet Schools and the Open Choice Program, gathered through existing data, surveys and focus groups;
- assessment of existing Sheff Voluntary Interdistrict Programs through quantitative and qualitative analyses of various school factors as compared to national standards and Connecticut local school districts

in the Greater Hartford Region to include consideration of extracurriculars, athletics, facilities, academic programming, course offerings, dual enrollment, advanced class options, student performance, student attendance, teacher retention, school climate, educator diversity and other relevant school-based factors;

- review of any additional reports or studies provided by CSDE; and
- review and analysis of additional quantitative and qualitative data and factors as appropriate in support of the comprehensive examination and system analysis of the current Sheff system.

b. Recommend redesign, reconfiguration, and innovation of the Sheff system that will support student enrollment in Sheff Voluntary Interdistrict Programs in compliance with the CCP and create overall sustainability of the Sheff system. Recommendations should be documented in a comprehensive, data-driven report and should, among other considerations, strategies and recommendations:

- identify best practices and relate such practices to adjustments to the Sheff system;
- recommend strategies to leverage best practices among interdistrict magnet schools based on theme alignment and propose adjustments to the system framework to maximize student access to high-quality schools with high demand themes, and opportunities to optimize efficiencies and leverage best practices among Sheff interdistrict magnet schools;
- analyze family decision-making in choosing to apply to and attend a Sheff Voluntary Interdistrict Program and consider such reasoning in recommendations for redesign and reconfiguring of the Sheff system to maximize enrollment in Voluntary Interdistrict Programs in accordance with the Sheff goals of a sustainable system;
- identify strategic linking of geographic areas with specific voluntary interdistrict schools as a means of increasing efficiencies within the overall system, reducing competition among school operators, leveraging best practices, reducing transportation time and costs, meeting the demand of Hartford-resident students for enrollment in a Voluntary Interdistrict Program, complying with diversity goals, and maximizing high demand education themes;
- include an analysis of how school factors, including academic performance, school climate, and theme influence enrollment trends, and recommend adjustments to the system to address such factors;

- evaluate the impact of different financing systems and models on the Sheff system and present alternate financing models with an evaluation of how such models would impact a redesigned choice system;
- analyze the demographic distribution of the region as a whole and by student population by factors including race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, language proficiency, special education needs, housing insecurity, and student mobility, and recommend strategies to reconfigure the system to comply with diversity goals, and frame the system for ongoing sustainability with the Sheff obligations;
- assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the theme-based school model, determining the extent to which existing themes align with student interests, academic success and the overall needs of the Sheff system;
- examine the distribution of theme-based programming and resources across schools, identifying any imbalances and inefficiencies, and recommend reconfiguration strategies to create a complementary system of interdistrict magnet programs, considering high demand themes, student interests, college and career pathway opportunities, transportation costs, best practices, and enrollment trends;
- propose solutions to improve enrollment management and optimize the use of available capacity and school facilities based on an analysis of school enrollment data, including capacity issues in certain schools;
- analyze enrollment patterns and student preferences/perceptions of each type of Sheff Voluntary Interdistrict Program and identify strategies to promote student participation across all program types;
- propose strategies to increase participation in Open Choice by suburban school districts and identify alternate approaches to the Open Choice framework to promote student acceptances and a positive student experience;
- provide recommendations on how the overall system can be reconfigured and innovated to improve programming, increase efficiency, and support sustainability, including potential alternate or additional interdistrict program options as well as consolidations, reconfigurations, or adjustments in school location or specialization;
- recommend strategies for promoting the goals of reducing isolation and promoting integration in the Hartford region;
- assess the current framework for management and operation of Sheff interdistrict magnet schools and recommend strategies to optimize

- efficiencies, support positive student outcomes, and promote student enrollment and compliance with diversity goals;
 - analyze the RSCO School Choice application and placement protocols and recommend adjustments to the application and algorithm design to support student enrollment and compliance with diversity goals; and
 - develop a phased implementation plan for recommended changes, outlining necessary resources, timelines, and potential challenges.
- c. Develop a final report based on the comprehensive evaluation of the current Sheff system and recommend strategies for improvements to the Sheff system as a whole. The proposed plan must be based on best practices, resources needed with the goal of cost effectiveness, preferably achievable within existing resources, maximizing operational efficiencies and an analysis of the potential impact on the system.
- d. For purposes of completing the requirements of this Section II.C.1, the proposer must develop a work plan to address the scope of services in this Section II.C.1 and incorporate the tasks listed in the table below, including a description of how each task will be delivered. The resulting deliverables for each task may be consolidated into one or more reports based on content areas as described in the work plan. Each task should consider the unique characteristics of the Voluntary Interdistrict Program options available to students in the Greater Hartford Region.

Tasks	Deliverables
Examine historical, current and projected data to identify trends, challenges, efficiencies, and opportunities within the <u>Sheff</u> system.	Report(s) providing analysis/evaluation process and results, insights, and proposed strategies and recommendations as set forth in this table and Section II.C.1.
Analyze transportation expenditures to evaluate cost-efficiency of the transportation system.	
Address student attrition from Voluntary Interdistrict Programs.	
Analyze current, historical, and projected demographic trends.	
Assess educational offerings.	
Evaluate perceptions, values, educational interests and beliefs, theme interests regarding <u>Sheff</u> Voluntary	

Tasks	Deliverables
Interdistrict Programs and schools through focus groups and surveys.	
Assessment of the barriers and challenges faced by magnet school operators and Open Choice districts, through surveys and focus groups.	
Assess historical and current funding models for <u>Sheff</u> Voluntary Interdistrict Programs and present alternate financing models with an evaluation on how such models would impact the redesigned system.	
Assessment of the impact of current and projected Hartford-resident enrollment in <u>Sheff</u> Voluntary Interdistrict Programs on Hartford neighborhood schools.	
Assessment of existing <u>Sheff</u> Voluntary Interdistrict Programs as compared to national standards and Connecticut local school districts in the Greater Hartford Region.	
Identify industry best practices and relate such practices to adjustments to the <u>Sheff</u> system.	
Address family decision-making in choosing to apply to and attend a <u>Sheff</u> Voluntary Interdistrict Programs.	
Identify strategic linking of geographic areas with specific voluntary interdistrict schools.	
Analyze academic performance across schools, identifying disparities in performance by student group, graduation rates and college readiness.	
Analyze the demographic distribution of the region as a whole and by student population by factors including race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, language proficiency, student mobility, housing insecurity, and special education needs.	

Tasks	Deliverables
<p>Assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the theme-based school model, determining the extent to which existing themes align with student interests, academic success and the overall needs of the <u>Sheff</u> system to include an examination of the distribution of theme-based programming and resources across schools, identifying any imbalances and inefficiencies.</p>	
<p>Analyze school enrollment data, including capacity issues in certain schools, and propose solutions to improve enrollment management and optimize the use of available spaces.</p>	
<p>Analyze enrollment patterns and student preferences/perceptions of each type of <u>Sheff</u> Voluntary Interdistrict Program, including evaluation of the framework of each program type and how such programs impact each other and the system as a whole.</p>	
<p>Assess the current framework for management and operation of <u>Sheff</u> interdistrict magnet schools.</p>	
<p>Analyze the RSCO School Choice application and placement protocols.</p>	<p>Report evaluating the RSCO School Choice application and placement protocols and recommending adjustments to the application and algorithm design to support informed family decision-making, student enrollment and compliance with diversity goals.</p>
<p>Provide recommendations on how the overall system can be made more efficient, including potential consolidations, reconfigurations, or adjustments in school location, program types, and/or specializations.</p>	<p>Report evaluating the overall system, to include analyses and insights from the tasks from the scope of work, with targeted strategies to reconfigure and innovate the <u>Sheff</u> system to enhance effectiveness of Voluntary Interdistrict Programs at serving <u>Sheff</u> goals.</p>
<p>Develop a phased implementation plan for recommended changes to the <u>Sheff</u></p>	<p>Report including targeted strategies for reconfiguring, redesigning, and</p>

Tasks	Deliverables
system, outlining necessary resources, timelines, and potential challenges.	innovating the <u>Sheff</u> system to best achieve <u>Sheff</u> goals.
Submit a final report summarizing key findings, recommendations, and implementation plan from the evaluation of the <u>Sheff</u> system.	Final report providing cohesive overview of the entire process and proposed redesign, reconfiguration, and innovation of the <u>Sheff</u> system that will support student enrollment and sustainability.

- e. For purposes of completing the requirements of this Section II.C.1, the selected organization will consult with the CSDE and various stakeholders, including school and district operators, school staff, plaintiffs to the Sheff litigation, parents, students, the RSCO Working Group, and other stakeholders identified by the SDE, for purposes of data and information gathering for the comprehensive study. In addition to information from stakeholders, the proposer will make use of the various resources available from prior studies, analyses and surveys including (1) studies completed by Dr. Casey Cobb through three (3) separate Memoranda of Agreement to evaluate student attrition from Voluntary Interdistrict Programs, the impact of transportation on family decision-making, and applicant declines to offers of enrollment; (2) marketing surveys on Connecticut residents' awareness and perceptions of Voluntary Interdistrict Programs; and (3) various analyses of school choice funding.

2. Organizational Expectations

The successful proposer will have:

- substantial expertise and experience in school choice systems, strategic planning for achieving diversity and enrollment goals, school integration, and school and program evaluation;
- significant expertise and experience in magnet school reformulation, magnet theme planning and development, magnet school planning and evaluation, high-quality and high-demand themed education, and magnet school best practices for theme integration and educational support;
- background and expertise in school choice systems to quickly develop substantial knowledge and understanding of the Voluntary Interdistrict Offerings in the Greater Hartford Region and the system of school choice offerings coordinated through RSCO;
- substantial experience with school redistricting, especially in an interdistrict environment with voluntary participation and integration goals;
- significant experience with socioeconomic-based school assignment systems and complex placement algorithms;
- clearly defined project objectives, outlining the specific goals and outcomes the proposer aims to achieve through the evaluation;

- a well-defined evaluation plan that outlines the tasks, activities and timelines of the evaluation process;
- clearly established timelines and milestones for key phases of the evaluation, ensuring that the project progresses on schedule and meets deadlines;
- sufficient personnel, technology, and financial resources to facilitate a thorough and comprehensive evaluation;
- active collaboration with the CSDE to align the evaluation with the unique needs, goals, and priorities of the Sheff system; and
- commitment to cultural sensitivity and awareness, recognizing and respecting the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of the communities involved in the school choice system.

3. Service Expectations

The successful proposer will:

- collaborate with RSCO to ensure alignment with the contract requirements, gather relevant data, understand specific needs and objectives, and incorporate feedback throughout the process;
- identify best practices and relate such practices to adjustments to the Sheff system;
- complete the tasks and deliverables in Section II.C.1 in a timely and comprehensive manner to address the main goal of the RFP;
- provide recommendations on how the overall system can be made more efficient, including potential consolidations, reconfigurations, or adjustments in school location or specialization;
- recommend strategies for improving the goals of reducing isolation and promoting integration in the Hartford region; and
- develop a phased implementation plan for recommended changes, outlining necessary resources, timelines, and potential challenges.

4. Staffing Expectations

The successful proposer will have:

- staffing with substantial knowledge and experience in school choice systems, strategic planning for achieving diversity and enrollment goals, school integration, and school and program evaluation;
- a clear staffing model with defined roles, responsibilities, and expertise for the evaluation of the Sheff system as required by the scope of work, including data analysts, project managers, and other relevant positions; and
- clearly defined lines of supervision and management, indicating who will oversee the evaluation process, coordinate team efforts and ensure that project objects are met. Please provide resumes of key personnel.

5. Data and Technology Expectations

The successful proposer will:

- ensure access to sufficient and up-to-date computer hardware, including servers/workstations capable of handling large volumes of data;
- ensure access to advanced software for complex visualizations to present work plans, data analyses and evaluation recommendations;
- design and complete data analyses with appropriate graphic visualizations to establish enrollment, performance, and magnet theme analyses to inform school evaluation and reformulation recommendations;
- consolidate findings and publish report(s) for using appropriate software and visualizations; and
- have the ability to participate in remote video meetings with school and CSDE staff as necessary.

6. Financial Expectations

Provide any documentation that supports the organization's past, present and future financial stability. This may include any financial support up to and including audited financial statements.

7. Budget Expectations

The budget for this project is up to \$1,000,000. The successful bidder must provide a detailed budget narrative and itemized detailed budget of costs associated with the requested services.

D. Performance Measures

The following performance metrics highlight key priorities that will be analyzed with providers/vendors collaboratively during the life of the contract. This is not an exhaustive list, but rather an indication of significant performance metrics of interest to the CSDE.

- **Timeliness:** Follow the established timelines for completing each task and associated deliverables as agreed upon by RSCO and the contractor.
- **Accuracy of Data Analysis:** Ensure accuracy and reliability of data analysis to generate meaningful insights and recommendations.
- **Comprehensiveness of Reports:** Ensure that reports are covering all relevant aspects of the assigned tasks as outlined in Section II.C of this RFP that provide a holistic understanding of the Sheff system's strengths, challenges and strategies for improvement.
- **Quality of Recommendations:** Ensure that recommendations are well-founded, practical, and tailored to address the specific challenges and opportunities identified in the analysis.

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Ensure effective stakeholder engagement throughout the study process, soliciting input, addressing challenges, and ensuring alignment to priorities.
- **Adherence to Industry Best Practices:** Ensure that industry best practices in voluntary desegregation systems are followed and that recommended adjustments to the Sheff system align with efficiency and effectiveness standards.

E. Contract Management/Data Reporting

As part of the State’s commitment to becoming more outcomes-oriented, the SDE seeks to actively and regularly collaborate with providers/vendors to enhance contract management, improve results, and adjust service delivery and policy based on learning what works. Reliable and relevant data is necessary to ensure compliance, inform trends to be monitored, evaluate results and performance, and drive service improvements. As such, CSDE reserves the right to request/collect other key data and metrics from providers/vendors.

- The CSDE will collaborate with the successful proposer regarding data and analysis from the various tasks set forth in Section II.C, previous studies and reports, feedback from focus groups and surveys, and preliminary insights and recommendations and such collaborations may include periodic meetings to troubleshoot challenges, review data to identify opportunities for improvements in the short-term, and to ensure desired outcomes.
- The successful proposer will provide timely reports to CSDE that communicate key analyses, preliminary conclusions and insights, and final recommendations as indicated in Section II.C.
- Reports should include data visualization charts and graphs to illustrate trends and patterns.

III. Proposal Submission Overview

A. Submission Format Information

1. **Required Outline.** All proposals must follow the required outline presented in Section IV – Proposal Outline. Proposals that fail to follow the required outline will be deemed non-responsive and not evaluated.
2. **Cover Sheet.** The Cover Sheet is Page 1 of the proposal. Proposers must complete and use the Cover Sheet form provided by CSDE in Attachment A.

3. **Table of Contents.** All proposals must include a Table of Contents that conforms with the required proposal outline.
4. **Executive Summary.** Proposals must include a high-level summary, not exceeding 2 pages, of the main proposal and cost proposal. The summary must also include the organization's eligibility and qualifications to respond to this RFP.
5. **Attachments.** Attachments are permitted as indicated in Section III.A.6 under Style Requirements and as otherwise identified in the RFP. Required Appendices or Forms must not be altered or used to extend, enhance, or replace any component required by this RFP. Failure to abide by these instructions will result in disqualification.
6. **Style Requirements.** *This is an Electronic Submission.*
Submitted proposals must conform to the following specifications:
 - Page Size: 8.5"x11" format
 - Page Limit: None specified, however, Executive Summary is limited to 2 pages and Main Proposal is limited to 20 pages. Additional attachments are permitted, but total submission shall not exceed 25MB.
 - Font Size: 11 point minimum
 - Font Type: Arial, Tahoma or Verdana
 - Margins: 1"
 - Line Spacing: 1.5 spacing
7. **Pagination.** The proposer's name must be displayed in the header of each page. All pages, including the required Appendices and Forms, must be numbered in the footer.
8. **Packaging and Labeling Requirements.** n/a
9. **Declaration of Confidential Information.** Proposers are advised that all materials associated with this procurement are subject to the terms of the Freedom of Information Act, C.G.S. §§ 1-210 et seq (FOIA), the Privacy Act, and all rules, regulations and interpretations resulting from them. If a proposer deems that certain information required by this RFP is confidential, the proposer must label such information as CONFIDENTIAL prior to submission. The proposer must reference where the information labeled CONFIDENTIAL is located in the

proposal. EXAMPLE: Section G.1.a. For each subsection so referenced, the proposer must provide a convincing explanation and rationale sufficient to justify an exemption of the information from release under the FOIA. The explanation and rationale must be stated in terms of (a) the prospective harm to the competitive position of the proposer that would result if the identified information were to be released and (b) the reasons why the information is legally exempt from release pursuant to C.G.S. § 1-210(b).

10. Conflict of Interest – Disclosure Statement. Proposers must include a disclosure statement concerning any current business relationships (within the last three (3) years) that pose a conflict of interest, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-85. A conflict of interest exists when a relationship exists between the proposer and a public official (including an elected official) or State employee that may interfere with fair competition or may be adverse to the interests of the State. The existence of a conflict of interest is not, in and of itself, evidence of wrongdoing. A conflict of interest may, however, become a legal matter if a proposer tries to influence, or succeeds in influencing, the outcome of an official decision for their personal or corporate benefit. In the absence of any conflict of interest, a proposer must affirm such in the disclosure statement. Example: “[name of proposer] has no current business relationship (within the last three (3) years) that poses a conflict of interest, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-85.”

B. Evaluation Of Proposals

- 1. Evaluation Process.** It is the intent of the CSDE to conduct a comprehensive, fair, and impartial evaluation of proposals received in response to this RFP. When evaluating proposals, negotiating with successful proposers, and awarding contracts, the CSDE will conform with its written procedures for Purchase of Service (POS) and PSA procurements (pursuant to C.G.S. § 4-217) and the State’s Code of Ethics (pursuant to C.G.S. §§ 1-84 and 1-85). Final funding allocation decisions will be determined during contract negotiation.
- 2. Evaluation Review Committee.** The CSDE will designate a Review Committee to evaluate proposals submitted in response to this RFP. The Review Committee will be composed of individuals, CSDE staff or other designees as deemed appropriate. The contents of all submitted proposals, including any confidential information, will be shared with the Review Committee. Only proposals found to be responsive (that is, complying with all instructions and requirements described herein) will be reviewed, rated, and scored. Proposals that fail to comply with all instructions will be rejected without further consideration. The Review Committee

shall evaluate all proposals that meet the Minimum Submission Requirements by score and rank ordering and make recommendations for awards. The Commissioner of Education will make the final selection. Attempts by any proposer (or representative of any proposer) to contact or influence any member of the Review Committee may result in disqualification of the proposer.

3. **Minimum Submission Requirements.** To be eligible for evaluation, proposals must (1) be received on or before the due date and time; (2) meet the Proposal Format requirements; (3) meet the Eligibility and Qualification requirements to respond to the procurement; (4) follow the required Proposal Outline; and (5) be complete. Proposals that fail to follow instructions or satisfy these minimum submission requirements will not be reviewed further. The CSDE will reject any proposal that deviates significantly from the requirements of this RFP.
4. **Evaluation Criteria (and Weights).** Proposals meeting the Minimum Submission Requirements will be evaluated according to the established criteria. The criteria are the objective standards that the Review Committee will use to evaluate the technical merits of the proposals. Only the criteria listed below will be used to evaluate proposals. The weights are disclosed below.
 - Strengths and Qualifications of Organization (20%)
 - Scope of Service (20%)
 - Staffing/Organizational Capacity (20%)
 - Data and Technology (10%)
 - Work Plan (15%)
 - Financial Profile (5%)
 - Cost Competitiveness and Budget Narrative (10%)

Note:

As part of its evaluation of the Staffing/Organizational capacity criteria, the Review Committee will review the proposer's demonstrated commitment to affirmative action, as required by the Regulations of CT State Agencies § 46A-68j-30(10).

5. **Proposer Selection.** Upon completing its evaluation of proposals, the Review Committee will submit the rankings of all proposals and recommendations to the Commissioner. The final selection of a successful proposer is at the discretion of the Commissioner. Any proposer selected will be so notified and awarded an opportunity to negotiate a contract with the CSDE. Such negotiations may, but will not automatically, result in a contract. Any resulting contract will be posted on

the State Contracting Portal. All unsuccessful proposers will be notified by e-mail about the outcome of the evaluation and proposer selection process. The CSDE reserves the right to decline to award contracts for activities in which the Commissioner considers there are not adequate respondents.

6. **Debriefing.** Within ten (10) days of receiving notification from the CSDE, unsuccessful proposers may contact the Official Contact and request information about the evaluation and proposer selection process. The e-mail sent date will be considered “day one” of the ten (10) days. If unsuccessful proposers still have questions after receiving this information, they may contact the Official Contact and request a meeting with the CSDE to discuss the evaluation process and their proposals. If held, the debriefing meeting will not include any comparisons of unsuccessful proposals with other proposals. The CSDE may schedule and hold the debriefing meeting within fifteen (15) days of the request. The CSDE will not change, alter, or modify the outcome of the evaluation or selection process as a result of any debriefing meeting.
7. **Appeal Process.** Proposers may appeal any aspect the CSDE’s competitive procurement, including the evaluation and proposer selection process. Any such appeal must be submitted to the Commissioner or the Commissioner’s designee. A proposer may file an appeal at any time after the proposal due date, but not later than thirty (30) days after an agency notifies unsuccessful proposers about the outcome of the evaluation and proposer selection process. The e-mail sent date will be considered “day one” of the thirty (30) days. The filing of an appeal shall not be deemed sufficient reason for the CSDE to delay, suspend, cancel, or terminate the procurement process or execution of a contract. More detailed information about filing an appeal may be obtained from the Official Contact.
8. **Contract Execution.** Any contract developed and executed as a result of this RFP is subject to the Agency’s contracting procedures, which may include approval by the Office of the Attorney General (OAG). Fully executed and approved contracts will be posted on State Contracting Portal and the CSDE website.

IV. Required Proposal Submission Outline

A. Cover Sheet

B. Table of Contents

C. Executive Summary

D. Main Proposal

E. Attachments (clearly referenced to summary and main proposal where applicable)

F. Declaration of Confidential Information

G. Conflict of Interest – Disclosure Statement

H. Statement of Assurances

A. Cover Sheet

The Respondent must use the Cover Sheet provided in Attachment A.

Legal Name is defined as the name of provider, vendor, CT State agency, or municipality submitting the proposal. *Contact Person* is defined as the individual who can provide additional information about the proposal or who has immediate responsibility for the proposal. *Authorized Official* is defined as the individual empowered to submit a binding offer on behalf of the proposer to provide services in accordance with the terms and provisions described in this RFP and any amendments or attachments hereto.

B. Table of Contents

Respondents must include a Table of Contents that lists sections and subsections with page numbers that follow the organization outline and sequence for this proposal.

C. Proposer Executive Summary

The page limitation for this section is 2 pages briefly describing how the Respondent meets the eligibility and qualification criteria outlined in the Proposal Overview and a brief overview of why the Respondent should be selected for the activities highlighted in the scope of services.

D. Main Proposal Submission

***Please note the maximum total page length for this section is twenty (20) (all appendices and other attachments should be referred to in section D and then placed in section E). The CSDE Review Committee will not read proposals longer than twenty (20) pages in this section.

In order to be considered a responsive proposal, the Main Proposal Submission must include the following required components:

1. Strengths and Qualifications of Organization

Organization Description and History: Provide a general overview of your organization including its history and prior experiences engaging with relevant key stakeholders, to include such information for any subcontractors to the proposal.

- A. **Overall Qualifications:** Provide a general overview of your organization. What sets your organization apart from your competitors? Why is your organization uniquely qualified to conduct this scope of service?
- B. **Experience:** Describe the extent of your organization's experience conducting similar services for a public organization. How does that experience relate to the services sought in this proposal?
- C. **Management Plan:** Describe how management will provide high quality service. The overall management plan for the proposal should speak in terms of systems, procedures and controls that will ensure the partnership will meet its goals and purpose, and how all tasks will be completed in a timely manner.
- D. **Appropriate Insurance:** A statement that contains a listing of current active business insurance of the organization is sufficient. Certificates of insurance are acceptable, but not required, unless a contract is awarded that specifies this need.

2. Scope of Service

Describe the proposed services in detail sufficient to demonstrate an understanding of the work to be performed, the partnership needs and the desired results. Proposals must address all of the elements listed in the Scope of Service in Section II.C, and should describe the agency's philosophy, strategies and techniques for integrating each component, paying particular attention to voluntary interdistrict program options and diversity considerations.

3. Staffing/Organizational Capacity

- **Project Staff:** Describe the team that would provide these services. Indicate key staff to be assigned to the program by name (if known), title, qualifications and job descriptions. Include resumes of key personnel.
- **Organizational Chart, Capacity:** Indicate, through an organizational chart and supporting narrative, the lines of authority and responsibility related to the proposed program and its components. Include all project staff as well as all management level staff either dedicated to or accountable for each phase of this project. 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.

4. Data and Technology

- A. **Computer Systems:** Demonstrate access to contemporary and ample computer hardware including services and workstations to manage substantial data volumes.
- B. **Database Management Systems:** Demonstrate the ability to utilize database management systems for systematic organization and storage of program evaluation records.
- C. **Data Reporting Tools:** Show the ability to utilize reporting tools to generate comprehensive reports based on the evaluated data. Reports should present key findings and recommendations in a clear and accessible format, with the capability to customize reports based on the specific requirements of stakeholders.
- D. **Data Security:** Demonstrate the ability to safeguard sensitive information related to student data and other confidential information. Proposers are expected to implement robust data encryption measures.

5. Work Plan

- A. **Methodology:** Provide a detailed description of your organization's ability, approach, and methodology for this project in line with the RFP objectives and key elements outlined in the scope of service.
- B. **Implementation timeline:** Provide an implementation timeline for your project, including key milestones related to the scope of service. Include estimates of the timeframe of implementation.

6. Financial Profile

Fiscal Stability: What is the fiscal health of your organization? Provide any documentation that supports the organizations past, present, and future fiscal stability. This may include any financial support up to and including audited financial statements.

7. Cost Competitiveness and Budget Narrative

- A. Complete a budget proposal in its entirety that will enable the effective delivery of the proposed services.
- B. 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.

E. Attachments

See the Proposal Checklist in Section VI.C for a list of relevant attachments. The required attachments must not be altered or used to extend, enhance, or replace any component required by this RFP. Failure to abide by these instructions may result in disqualification. Additional attachments should include but are not limited to the following:

- Resumes of Key Personnel
- Audited Financial Statements, if included
- References
- Evidence of minimal qualifications as required by Section I.B.6

F. Declaration of Confidential Information

If a proposer deems that certain information required by this RFP is confidential, the proposer must label such information as CONFIDENTIAL prior to submission. The proposer must reference where the information labeled CONFIDENTIAL is located in the proposal. EXAMPLE: Section G.1.a. For each subsection so referenced, the proposer must provide a convincing explanation and rationale sufficient to justify an exemption of the information from release under the FOIA. The explanation and rationale must be stated in terms of (a) the prospective harm to the competitive position of the proposer that would result if the identified information were to be released and (b) the reasons why the information is legally exempt from release pursuant to C.G.S. § 1-210(b).

G. Conflict of Interest – Disclosure Statement

Proposers must include a disclosure statement concerning any current business relationships (within the last three (3) years) that pose a conflict of interest, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-85. A conflict of interest exists when a relationship exists between the proposer and a public official (including an elected official) or State employee that may interfere with fair competition or may be adverse to the interests of the State. The existence of a conflict of interest is not, in and of itself, evidence of wrongdoing. A conflict of interest may, however, become a legal matter if a proposer tries to influence, or succeeds in influencing, the outcome of an official decision for their personal or corporate benefit. In the absence of any conflict of interest, a proposer must affirm such in the disclosure statement. Example: “[name of proposer] has no current business relationship (within the last three (3) years) that poses a conflict of interest, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-85.”

H. Statement of Assurances

Proposers must include the Statement of Assurances provided in Section VI.B. Sign and return and place after Conflict of Interest-Disclosure Statement.

V. Mandatory Provisions

A. Standard Contract Provisions

Proposers may view the Comptroller’s Office PSA Terms and Conditions, available here <https://www.osc.ct.gov/vendor/rfps/2005/hbcs/AttachmentIItemsandconditions.xls>, which includes generic state contract requirements.

B. Assurances

By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, a proposer implicitly gives the following assurances:

1. **Collusion.** The proposer represents and warrants that the proposer did not participate in any part of the RFP development process and had no knowledge of the specific contents of the RFP prior to its issuance. The proposer further represents and warrants that no agent, representative, or employee of the State participated directly in the preparation of the proposer’s proposal. The proposer also represents and warrants that the submitted proposal is in all respects fair and is made without collusion or fraud.

2. **State Officials and Employees.** The proposer certifies 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. The Agency may terminate a resulting contract if it is determined that gratuities of any kind were either offered or received by any of the aforementioned officials or employees from the proposer, contractor, or its agents or employees.
3. **Competitors.** The proposer assures that the submitted proposal is not made in connection with any competing organization or competitor submitting a separate proposal in response to this RFP. No attempt has been made, or will be made, by the proposer to induce any other organization or competitor to submit, or not submit, a proposal for the purpose of restricting competition. The proposer further assures that the proposed costs have been arrived at independently, without consultation, communication, or agreement with any other organization or competitor for the purpose of restricting competition. Nor has the proposer knowingly disclosed the proposed costs on a prior basis, either directly or indirectly, to any other organization or competitor.
4. **Validity of Proposal.** The proposer certifies that the proposal represents a valid and binding offer to provide services in accordance with the terms and provisions described in this RFP and any amendments or attachments hereto. The proposal shall remain valid for a period of 180 days after the submission due date and may be extended beyond that time by mutual agreement. At its sole discretion, the Agency may include the proposal, by reference or otherwise, into any contract with the successful proposer.
5. **Press Releases.** The proposer agrees to obtain prior written consent and approval of the Agency for press releases that relate in any manner to this RFP or any resultant contract.

C. Terms And Conditions

By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, a proposer implicitly agrees to comply with the following terms and conditions:

1. **Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action.** The State is an Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action employer and does not discriminate in its hiring, employment, or business practices. The State is committed to complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and does not discriminate on the basis of disability in admission to, access to, or operation of its programs, services, or activities.

2. **Preparation Expenses.** Neither the State nor the Agency shall assume any liability for expenses incurred by a proposer in preparing, submitting, or clarifying any proposal submitted in response to this RFP.
3. **Exclusion of Taxes.** The Agency is exempt from the payment of excise and sales taxes imposed by the federal government and the State. Proposers are liable for any other applicable taxes.
4. **Proposed Costs.** No cost submissions that are contingent upon a State action will be accepted. All proposed costs must be fixed through the entire term of the contract.
5. **Changes to Proposal.** No additions or changes to the original proposal will be allowed after submission. While changes are not permitted, the Agency may request and authorize proposers to submit written clarification of their proposals, in a manner or format prescribed by the Agency, and at the proposer's expense.
6. **Supplemental Information.** Supplemental information will not be considered after the deadline submission of proposals, unless specifically requested by the Agency. The Agency may ask a proposer to give demonstrations, interviews, oral presentations or further explanations to clarify information contained in a proposal. Any such demonstration, interview, or oral presentation will be at a time selected and in a place provided by the Agency. At its sole discretion, the Agency may limit the number of proposers invited to make such a demonstration, interview, or oral presentation and may limit the number of attendees per proposer.
7. **Presentation of Supporting Evidence.** If requested by the Agency, a proposer must be prepared to present evidence of experience, ability, data reporting capabilities, financial standing, or other information necessary to satisfactorily meet the requirements set forth or implied in this RFP. The Agency may make onsite visits to an operational facility or facilities of a proposer to evaluate further the proposer's capability to perform the duties required by this RFP. At its discretion, the Agency may also check or contact any reference provided by the proposer.
8. **RFP Is Not An Offer.** Neither this RFP nor any subsequent discussions shall give rise to any commitment on the part of the State or the Agency or confer any rights on any proposer unless and until a contract is fully executed by the necessary parties. The contract document will represent the entire agreement between the proposer and the Agency and will supersede all prior negotiations, representations or agreements, alleged or made, between the parties. The State shall assume no liability for costs incurred by the proposer or for payment of

services under the terms of the contract until the successful proposer is notified that the contract has been accepted and approved by the Agency and, if required, by the OAG.

D. Rights Reserved To The State

By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, a proposer implicitly accepts that the following rights are reserved to the State:

1. **Timing Sequence.** The timing and sequence of events associated with this RFP shall ultimately be determined by the Agency.
2. **Amending or Canceling RFP.** The Agency reserves the right to amend or cancel this RFP on any date and at any time, if the Agency deems it to be necessary, appropriate, or otherwise in the best interests of the State.
3. **No Acceptable Proposals.** In the event that no acceptable proposals are submitted in response to this RFP, the Agency may reopen the procurement process, if it is determined to be in the best interests of the State.
4. **Award and Rejection of Proposals.** The Agency reserves the right to award in part, to reject any and all proposals in whole or in part, for misrepresentation or if the proposal limits or modifies any of the terms, conditions, or specifications of this RFP. The Agency may waive minor technical defects, irregularities, or omissions, if in its judgment the best interests of the State will be served. The Agency reserves the right to reject the proposal of any proposer who submits a proposal after the submission date and time.
5. **Sole Property of the State.** All proposals submitted in response to this RFP are to be the sole property of the State. Any product, whether acceptable or unacceptable, developed under a contract awarded as a result of this RFP shall be the sole property of the State, unless stated otherwise in this RFP or subsequent contract. The right to publish, distribute, or disseminate any and all information or reports, or part thereof, shall accrue to the State without recourse.
6. **Contract Negotiation.** The Agency reserves the right to negotiate or contract for all or any portion of the services contained in this RFP. The Agency further reserves the right to contract with one or more proposer for such services. After reviewing the scored criteria, the Agency may seek Best and Final Offers (BFO) on cost from proposers. The Agency may set parameters on any BFOs received.
7. **Clerical Errors in Award.** The Agency reserves the right to correct inaccurate awards resulting from its clerical errors. This may include, in extreme circumstances, revoking the awarding of a contract already made to a proposer

and subsequently awarding the contract to another proposer. Such action on the part of the State shall not constitute a breach of contract on the part of the State since the contract with the initial proposer is deemed to be *void ab initio* and of no effect as if no contract ever existed between the State and the proposer.

8. **Key Personnel.** When the Agency is the sole funder of a purchased service, the Agency reserves the right to approve any additions, deletions, or changes in key personnel, with the exception of key personnel who have terminated employment. The Agency also reserves the right to approve replacements for key personnel who have terminated employment. The Agency further reserves the right to require the removal and replacement of any of the proposer's key personnel who do not perform adequately, regardless of whether they were previously approved by the Agency.

E. Statutory And Regulatory Compliance

By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, the proposer implicitly agrees to comply with all applicable State and federal laws and regulations, including, but not limited to, the following:

1. **Freedom of Information, C.G.S. § 1-210.** The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) generally requires the disclosure of documents in the possession of the State upon request of any citizen, unless the content of the document falls within certain categories of exemption, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-210(b). Proposers are generally advised not to include in their proposals any confidential information. If the proposer indicates that certain documentation, as required by this RFP, is submitted in confidence, the State will endeavor to keep said information confidential to the extent permitted by law. The State has no obligation to initiate, prosecute, or defend any legal proceeding or to seek a protective order or other similar relief to prevent disclosure of any information pursuant to a FOIA request. The proposer has the burden of establishing the availability of any FOIA exemption in any proceeding where it is an issue. While a proposer may claim an exemption to the State's FOIA, the final administrative authority to release or exempt any or all material so identified rests with the State. In no event shall the State or any of its employees have any liability for disclosure of documents or information in the possession of the State and which the State or its employees believe(s) to be required pursuant to the FOIA or other requirements of law.
2. **Contract Compliance, C.G.S. § 4a-60 and Regulations of CT State Agencies §§ 46a-68j-21 thru 43, inclusive.** CT statute and regulations impose certain obligations on State agencies (as well as contractors and subcontractors doing business with the State) to ensure that State agencies do not enter into contracts

with organizations or businesses that discriminate against protected class persons.

3. **Consulting Agreements Representation, C.G.S. § 4a-81.** Pursuant to C.G.S. § 4a-81 the successful contracting party shall certify that it has not entered into any consulting agreements in connection with this Contract, except for the agreements listed below. "Consulting agreement" means any written or oral agreement to retain the services, for a fee, of a consultant for the purposes of (A) providing counsel to a contractor, vendor, consultant or other entity seeking to conduct, or conducting, business with the State, (B) contacting, whether in writing or orally, any executive, judicial, or administrative office of the State, including any department, institution, bureau, board, commission, authority, official or employee for the purpose of solicitation, dispute resolution, introduction, requests for information, or (C) any other similar activity related to such contracts. "Consulting agreement" does not include any agreements entered into with a consultant who is registered under the provisions of chapter 10 of the Connecticut General Statutes as of the date such contract is executed in accordance with the provisions of § 4a-81 of the Connecticut General Statutes. Such representation shall be sworn as true to the best knowledge and belief of the person signing the resulting contract and shall be subject to the penalties of false statement.
4. **Campaign Contribution Restriction, C.G.S. § 9-612.** For all State contracts, defined in section 9-612 of the Connecticut General Statutes as having a value in a calendar year of \$50,000 or more, or a combination or series of such agreements or contracts having a value of \$100,000 or more, the authorized signatory to the resulting contract must represent that they have received the State Elections Enforcement Commission's notice advising state contractors of state campaign contribution and solicitation prohibitions, and will inform its principals of the contents of the notice, as set forth in "Notice to Executive Branch State Contractors and Prospective State Contractors of Campaign Contribution and Solicitation Limitations." Such notice is available at https://seec.ct.gov/Portal/data/forms/ContrForms/seec_form_11_notice_only.pdf
5. **Gifts, C.G.S. § 4-252.** Pursuant to section 4-252 of the Connecticut General Statutes and Acting Governor Susan Bysiewicz's Executive Order No. 21-2, the Contractor, for itself and on behalf of all of its principals or key personnel who submitted a bid or proposal, represents:
 - (1) That no gifts were made by (A) the Contractor, (B) any principals and key personnel of the Contractor, who participate substantially in preparing bids, proposals or negotiating State contracts, or (C) any agent of the Contractor or principals and key personnel, who participates substantially in preparing bids,

proposals or negotiating State contracts, to (i) any public official or State employee of the State agency or quasi- public agency soliciting bids or proposals for State contracts, who participates substantially in the preparation of bid solicitations or requests for proposals for State contracts or the negotiation or award of State contracts, or (ii) any public official or State employee of any other State agency, who has supervisory or appointing authority over such State agency or quasi-public agency;

(2) That no such principals and key personnel of the Contractor, or agent of the Contractor or of such principals and key personnel, knows of any action by the Contractor to circumvent such prohibition on gifts by providing for any other principals and key personnel, official, employee or agent of the Contractor to provide a gift to any such public official or State employee; and

(3) That the Contractor is submitting bids or proposals without fraud or collusion with any person.

Any bidder or proposer that does not agree to the representations required under this section shall be rejected and the State agency or quasi-public agency shall award the contract to the next highest ranked proposer or the next lowest responsible qualified bidder or seek new bids or proposals.

6. **Iran Energy Investment Certification C.G.S. § 4-252a.** Pursuant to C.G.S. § 4-252a, the successful contracting party shall certify the following: (a) that it has not made a direct investment of twenty million dollars or more in the energy sector of Iran on or after October 1, 2013, as described in Section 202 of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Divestment Act of 2010, and has not increased or renewed such investment on or after said date. (b) If the Contractor makes a good faith effort to determine whether it has made an investment described in subsection (a) of this section it shall not be subject to the penalties of false statement pursuant to section 4-252a of the Connecticut General Statutes. A "good faith effort" for purposes of this subsection includes a determination that the Contractor is not on the list of persons who engage in certain investment activities in Iran created by the Department of General Services of the State of California pursuant to Division 2, Chapter 2.7 of the California Public Contract Code. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to impair the ability of the State agency or quasi-public agency to pursue a breach of contract action for any violation of the provisions of the resulting contract.
7. **Nondiscrimination Certification, C.G.S. §§ 4a-60 and 4a-60a.** If a bidder is awarded an opportunity to negotiate a contract, the proposer must provide the State agency with written representation in the resulting contract that certifies the bidder complies with the State's nondiscrimination agreements and warranties.

This nondiscrimination certification is required for all State contracts – regardless of type, term, cost, or value. Municipalities and CT State agencies are exempt from this requirement. The authorized signatory of the contract shall demonstrate his or her understanding of this obligation by either (A) initialing the nondiscrimination affirmation provision in the body of the resulting contract, or (B) providing an affirmative response in the required online bid or response to a proposal question, if applicable, which asks if the contractor understands its obligations. If a bidder or vendor refuses to agree to this representation, such bidder or vendor shall be rejected and the State agency or quasi-public agency shall award the contract to the next highest ranked vendor or the next lowest responsible qualified bidder or seek new bids or proposals.

8. **Access to Data for State Auditors.** The Contractor shall provide to OPM access to any data, as defined in C.G.S. § 4e-1, concerning the resulting contract that are in the possession or control of the Contractor upon demand and shall provide the data to OPM in a format prescribed by OPM or CSDE and the State Auditors of Public Accounts at no additional cost.
9. **Other Provisions.** The Contractor shall comply with all applicable State of Connecticut and the Department policies including the CSDE Ethics Policy. The Contractor shall also comply with all federal and state statutes and regulations regarding the protection of all confidential data including, but not limited to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (“FERPA”).

VI. Appendix

A. Abbreviations / Acronyms / Definitions

BFO	Best and Final Offer
C.G.S.	Connecticut General Statutes
CHRO	Commission on Human Rights and Opportunity (CT)
DAS	Department of Administrative Services (CT)
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act (CT)
IRS	Internal Revenue Service (US)
LOI	Letter of Intent
OAG	Office of the Attorney General
OPM	Office of Policy and Management (CT)
OSC	Office of the State Comptroller (CT)
PSA	Personal Service Agreement P.A. Public Act (CT)
RFP	Request For Proposal
SEEC	State Elections Enforcement Commission (CT)
U.S.	United States

- *contractor*: a private provider organization, CT State agency, or municipality that enters into a POS contract with the Agency as a result of this RFP.
- *proposer*: a private provider organization, CT State agency, or municipality that has submitted a proposal to the Agency in response to this RFP. This term may be used interchangeably with respondent or bidder throughout the RFP.
- *prospective proposer*: a private provider organization, CT State agency, or municipality that may submit a proposal to the Agency in response to this RFP, but has not yet done so
- *subcontractor*: an individual (other than an employee of the contractor) or business entity hired by a contractor to provide a specific service as part of a PSA with the Agency as a result of this RFP

B. Statement Of Assurances

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)

The undersigned Respondent affirms and declares that:

- a. This proposal is executed and signed with full knowledge and acceptance of the RFP CONDITIONS stated in the RFP.
- b. The Respondent will deliver services to the Agency at or below the cost proposed in the RFP and within the timeframes therein.
- c. The Respondent will seek prior approval from the CSDE before making any changes to the location of services.
- d. Neither the Respondent or any official of the organization nor any subcontractor the Respondent of any official of the subcontractor organization has received any notices of debarment or suspension from contracting with the State of CT or the Federal Government.
- e. Neither the Respondent or any official of the organization nor any subcontractor to the Respondent of any official of the subcontractor's organization has received any notices of debarment or suspension from contracting with other states within the United States.

Legal Name of Organization:

Authorized Signatory

Date

C. Proposal Checklist

To assist respondents in managing proposal planning and document collation processes, this document summarizes key dates and proposal requirements for this RFP. Please note that this document does not supersede what is stated in the RFP. Please refer to the Proposal Submission Overview, Required Proposal Submission Outline, and Mandatory Provisions (Sections III, IV, and V of this RFP) for more comprehensive detail. **This is a tool for proposers to use.** It is the responsibility of each respondent to ensure that all required documents, forms, and attachments, are submitted in a timely manner.

Key Dates

- RFP Released: December 3, 2024
- Letter of Intent: N/A
- Deadline for Questions: January 3, 2025
- Answers Released: January 15, 2025
- RFP Conference: January 22, 2025
- Proposals Due: February 21, 2025

Registration with State Contracting Portal (if not already registered):

- Register at: <https://portal.ct.gov/DAS/CTSource/Registration>
- Submit required forms:
 - Campaign Contribution Certification (OPM Ethics Form 1): <https://portal.ct.gov/OPM/Fin-PSA/Forms/Ethics-Forms>

Proposal Content Checklist

- **Cover Sheet** – See Attachment A
- **Table of Contents**
- **Executive Summary** – 2 pages, maximum
- **Main proposal (20 pages maximum) answering all questions with relevant attachments.** Proposers should use their discretion to determine whether certain required information is sufficiently captured in the body of their proposal or requires additional attachments for clarification.
- **IRS Determination Letter** (for nonprofit proposers)
- **Two years of most recent annual audited financial statements; OR any financial statements prepared by a Certified Public Accountant** for proposers whose organizations have been incorporated for less than two years.
- **Resumes of key personnel**
- **References**
- **Proposed budget** – See Attachment B

- **Budget Narrative** – See Attachment C
- **Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement**
- **Statement of Assurances**

Formatting Checklist

- Is the proposal formatted to fit 8 ½ x 11 (letter-sized) paper?
- Is the executive summary of the proposal within the 2-page limit?
- Is the main body of the proposal within the 2-page limit?
- Is the proposal in 11-point minimum and Arial, Tahoma or Verdana font?
- Does the proposal format follow normal (1 inch) margins and 1.5 line spacing?
- Does the proposer's name appear in the header of each page?
- Does the proposal include page numbers in the footer?
- Are confidential labels applied to sensitive information (if applicable)?

D. Additional Relevant Forms

Attachment A – Cover Sheet

Sheff v. O'Neill Comprehensive Study
RFP # 853

Bidder's Legal Name	
Bidder's Address	
Bidder's Fein	
Contact Person	
Contact's Title	
Phone(S)	
E-Mail Address	

We have read the Request for Proposals and fully understand its intent and contents. We certify that we have adequate personnel, insurance, equipment, and facilities to fulfill the specified requirements. We understand that our ability to meet the criteria and provide the required goods or services shall be evaluated by a Selection Committee.

It is further understood and agreed that all information included in or attached to our proposal that is required by the Request for Proposals or otherwise shall be public record upon delivery to CSDE. In addition, we are aware that CSDE reserves the right to reject any or all bids.

I certify that the information contained in this proposal is accurate and presented in good faith to the best of my knowledge. I further certify that I am authorized to submit this proposal and will abide by the conditions set forth in the Request for Proposal.

Submitted by: _____
(Authorized Official's Signature)

(Date)

(Title)

(E-mail Address)

Attachment B – Budget

Bidder:	
Project Title:	
Total Project Cost:	

Codes	Descriptions	Budget Amount
100	Personal Services – Salaries	
200	Personal Services – Benefits	
300	Purchase Prof Tech Services	
500	Other Purchased Services	
600	Supplies and Materials	
890	Other Objects	
940	Indirect Costs/Administrative Services	
	Total	

Attachment C – Budget Narrative

Codes	Descriptions	Budget Amount
100	<p>Personal Services – Salaries. Amounts paid to both permanent and temporary employees including personnel substituting for those in permanent positions. This includes gross salary for personal services rendered while on the payroll of the bidder. Specify titles and salary information (hourly rate, total to be charged to the project, etc.)</p>	
	(Example: Magnet consultant @ \$50/hr x 100 hrs = \$5,000)	
200	<p>Personal Services – Employee Benefits. Amounts paid by the bidder on behalf of employees; these amounts are not included in the gross salary, but are in addition to that amount. Such payments are fringe benefit payments and, while not paid directly to employees, nevertheless are parts of the cost of personal services.</p>	
300	<p>Purchased Professional And Technical Services. Services which by their nature can be performed only by persons or firms with specialized skills and knowledge. Included are the services of consultants, auditors, programmers, etc.</p>	

Codes	Descriptions	Budget Amount
500	<p>Other Purchased Services. Amounts paid for services rendered by organizations or personnel not on the payroll of the bidder (separate from Professional and Technical Services or Property Services). Include expenses related to communications, travel (hotel, airfare, meals, etc.), insurance coverage, printing and binding - publication costs.</p>	
	<p>(Example: 10 round trip airfares to Hartford @ \$500 = \$5,000)</p>	
600	<p>Supplies & Materials. Amounts paid for consumable goods, office supplies, transportation supplies, software, etc.</p>	
890	<p>Other Objects. (Miscellaneous Expenditures) Expenditures for goods or services not properly classified in one of the above objects.</p>	

Codes	Descriptions	Budget Amount
940	Indirect/Administrative Costs. Costs incurred by the bidder, which are not directly related to the project but are a result thereof. Include management fees (with breakdown) and other indirect or administrative costs.	
	Total	

Additional space, if needed, to provide detailed cost narrative that explains the basis and rationale for the costs proposed. Use the space below to include assumptions or calculation approaches used to develop the cost proposal.