

Independent Evaluation of ESSI STAT Contract

STATEMENT OF WORK Fixed Price

Independent Evaluation of ESSI STAT Contract

I. Background and Purpose

NCES requires assistance in the form of independent research, advice, and support based on high-level expertise in the Center's mission to collect and disseminate statistics and other data related to education in the United States and other nations.

The work assigned to NCES, which serves as the statistical agency of the U.S. Department of Education, is typically complex, long term, and flexible. For example, a typical assignment may call for a complicated, state-representative national survey that requires a period of more than five years to establish, and that must adapt to changing policy requirements during its development. The Education Statistics Services Institute (ESSI) contractor has provided support to NCES in the conduct of these activities by participating in and assisting with a broad range of support activities from the development of highly technical computer programs, school finance research, technical review of publications and methodology reports, analysis of disclosure risk data files, policy-relevant analytic support skills, assistance with the development and administration of various questionnaires and or surveys, international projects with ongoing requirements of data analysis, reporting and collection, senior level editorial and writing skills and conducting quality control audits of data files are but a few of the typical activities. Accordingly, the assistance must be provided to NCES under a long-term commitment and collaboration with the agency and its programs.

Purpose

During the past three years, NCES has secured statistical and other technical assistance through a five-year, Performance Based Contract with the American Institutes of Research (AIR). The contract with AIR provides services to NCES through the Education Statistics Services Institute (ESSI). The ESSI provides technical support to NCES in statistical research and analysis, data development and project management.

On January 1, 2009, NCES began the fourth year of its five-year contract with AIR. In 2010 NCES can exercise an option to recommend continuation of the contract for another five years (through December 31, 2015) or it can recommend termination of the contract at the end of the first five years, December 31, 2010. In order to make a sound recommendation, based upon feedback of staff who utilize the ESSI, NCES seeks to

contract with an outside independent vendor to conduct an evaluation of the services provided by ESSI during the period September 29, 2005 – April 30, 2009, as well as to gather information and provide recommendations for revisions to the current contract to improve the services that will be needed during the next five years. The ESSI is simply the vehicle through which NCES acquires statistical support services. NCES seeks to determine if the current vehicle or mechanism for acquiring support services is still viable, or if some other mechanism is necessary in order to better meet its needs.

II. Specific Tasks

The vendor shall conduct at least two focus group meetings with NCES staff to evaluate the body of work undertaken by the ESSI for NCES. Of primary concern is whether the ESSI work has added value to the NCES statistical program and if the work has helped NCES meet its legislative requirement in the areas of statistical research and analysis and data development. Additionally, NCES is responsible for the timely delivery of high quality assessment data to its users in the executive and legislative branches of government and to the public. NCES must ensure that recently collected survey data are of high quality. It is equally important that the vendor collect feedback, input and recommendations on the types of services NCES will need during the next five years. The vendor may conduct a limited number of private interview sessions after the focus groups with individuals who wish to add to their comments.

The vendor shall:

- Review background material on NCES and the ESSI that will be supplied by NCES.
- Schedule 4-6 participants for each focus group based on a list of eligible participants provided by NCES. Send e-mails or make reminder phone calls and obtain confirmation that participants will show up at the scheduled time and place. Work with NCES Contracting Office Representative (COR) to arrange for NCES conference rooms at 1990 K Street, NW and to implement other needed logistics.
- Schedule private interview session with at least three NCES Associate Commissioners of Education, the Chief Statistician and or at least four ESSI Task Leaders. The vendor shall conduct private interview sessions with the NCES Associate Commissioners of Education to obtain their view on the focus of the agency and the types of statistical support services he/she believes will be necessary during the next five years.
- Meet with the NCES COR for the ESSI on May 22, 2009 or three days after the award of this contract to begin the developing question and interview protocols

for the focus group meetings. Prepare a general focus group protocol based on the concerns expressed by NCES and on the issues addressed in the background materials for NCES' review by May 29, 2009. NCES' comments shall be addressed in the final protocol.

- Conduct two focus groups, each lasting approximately two hours in length, tentatively scheduled for June 8-9, 2009. The discussions shall be based on the protocol approved by NCES and shall also address additional issues raised during the group discussion that were not considered in advance. All participants shall be encouraged to contribute to the discussion. An attempt shall be made to determine and document where there is consensus on issues and where there are opposing views and why.
- A form prepared by the vendor shall be handed out to participants at the end of each meeting to allow them to provide any additional comments on the protocol questions that were not expressed during the group discussion.
- Contractor shall make him/herself available after each focus group meeting to talk individually with those participants whose comments could not be made in the group meeting.
- Record notes of the focus groups that accurately document the discussion. A verbatim transcript of the group discussion will not be necessary.
- Prepare a concise summary report synthesizing the interview sessions, the individual discussions, group discussions and comments form. The report shall provide recommendations concerning the ways in which NCES can maximize the work of the ESSI and or a similar outside contractual group to meet its needs. The report will be used by NCES to ensure that the work of the ESSI or a similar outside contractual group enhances NCES' statistical program. A draft of the report shall be delivered on or about June 26, 2009 for NCES' review. The final report, incorporating NCES' comments, shall be delivered on or about July 6, 2009.
- The contractor shall meet with the NCES task leader on an as needed basis to review activities and refine task schedules.

III. Period of Performance

The Contractor shall complete all activities from the time of award through July 17, 2009.

IV. Deliverables

The following deliverables will be produced:

1. The review of NCES provided background materials shall be completed within 5 working days or less after the contractor receives the materials for review. Through the review and feedback provided the vendor shall demonstrate an understanding and or ask additional questions to better understand the needs of NCES as they relate to the function and work expected of the ESSI. This information will serve as the basis for the COR to answer questions and or provide additional background information.
2. The vendor shall develop and provide the COR with a list of questions and interview protocols for the focus group meeting by the date specified below in the table of scheduled deliverables.
3. At least one written report shall be submitted each month that includes the following:
 - a. The progress on each activity conducted under this task;
 - b. Accomplishments associated with each activity for the month;
 - c. Problems that have been resolved or are in need of resolution;
 - i. A discussion of the work performed during the next monthly reporting period;
 - ii. Calendar of activities accurate for all past activities and the upcoming month, revised as necessary;
 - iii. Expected future technical and budgetary problems and proposed solutions to these.

Schedule of Deliverables

Deliverable number	Activity	Deliverable	Estimated due date
1	Meetings with NCES	Summary of meeting if requested by NCES.	One week after meeting.
2		Prepare memorandum that summarizes review of	May 29, 2009

		background materials, highlighting vendors understanding of NCES' support needs through the ESSI.	
2	Develop list of interview questions & protocols.	Develop list of interview questions and submit for NCES' approval. Develop and discuss with COR protocol for administering the questionnaire and gathering additional information from the participants	May 29, 2009 May 29, 2009
3	Develop summary report of vendor conducted meetings	Develop a summary report synthesizing the interview sessions, individual and discussions and comments form	June 22, 2009
	Make recommendations to NCES.	Develop a report that includes recommendations for improvement to NCES based upon the vendor's findings	June 29, 2009

VI. Other Requirements

Confidentiality Requirements

The Contractor shall implement such confidentiality and security provisions as NCES may require.

Progress Reporting

In addition to the monthly written report, the Contractor shall have a monthly meeting (contractor and vendor can agree to hold monthly progress meeting by telephone) with the NCES task leader and other involved NCES staff to discuss the progress of each activity underway at that time.

VII. Government Furnished Property

Restricted data files as needed.

VIII. Contact Information

The Contractor shall send all deliverables to:

Alean Miller, COR

1990 K Street, NW 9076

Washington, DC 20006

Phone: (202) 502-7406

Fax: (202) 502-7490

Alean.Miller@ed.gov

Place of Performance:

National Center for Education Statistics

1990 K Street, NW, Room 9076

Washington, DC 20006

Phone: 202-502-7406

Country: USA

Evaluation Criteria:

To address and carry out effectively the range of duties and responsibilities described above, the incumbent must submit a response comprised of the following:

Section 1: Corporate Overview & Capabilities (30 points)

- Company's professional history of at least 5 years in program evaluation as it relates to the Statement of Work;
- Company's professional staff qualifications and experiences of at least 5 years as related to the Statement of Work;

Section 2: Program Evaluation Qualifications (must be in relation to Statement of Work) (20 points)

- Company's Overall Technical Capabilities;
- Key Personnel (provide resumes representative of experience collecting information within statement of work);
- Excellent proven written and oral English communication skills are required, excellent computer skills, particularly with Microsoft Office software (word processing and spreadsheets) as well as personal initiative, organization skills, the ability work independently and the capacity to present information articulately and professionally are required;
- Good interpersonal skills and an ability to work effectively as a member of a team as well as ability to coordinate groups are required. The qualified incumbent must possess poise, be able to think on his/her fee, be assertive and proactive, yet sensitive to any given situation when working to collect information from participants;

Section 3: Demonstration of Understanding of Statement of Work (20 points)

- Response must demonstrate a clear understanding of NCES, the work of the ESSI and the tasks as identified in the Statement of Work. The response must include a timetable for accomplishing the work including submitting specified deliverables by the deadline.

Section 4: Past Performance References (15 points)

- Past Performance/References shall be similar in scope and size. Past Performance/References must be submitted for current work being performed or work that has been done within the past five years;

Section 5: Pricing and Page Restrictions (15 points)

- Offers shall not exceed \$25,000. Offers shall provide a detailed budget that include costs and number of anticipated hours on the project for each person

assigned; travel/per diem; non-personnel expenses and other information that justifies the total budget. The response shall not exceed 10 pages, excluding cover sheet and Resumes.