



Mississippi First

REQUEST FOR QUOTES

Third-Party Performance Framework Evaluation

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Introduction

Mississippi First is a 501(c)3 non-profit whose mission is to champion transformative policy solutions ensuring educational excellence for every Mississippi child. In September 2022, Mississippi First was awarded a 2022 Charter Schools Program (CSP) grant to help double the number of approved, high-quality charter schools in Mississippi. As part of this grant, Mississippi First is hiring several experts to support the improvement of charter school policy in Mississippi. We are requesting quotes for an expert in charter school performance frameworks to conduct a third-party evaluation of Mississippi's performance framework as adopted by the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board (MCSAB).

Background

As a requirement of the 2022 Charter Schools Program—State Entities grant, Mississippi First must support the improvement of charter school authorizing in the state of Mississippi. One of the requirements of the grant is to address how we will support the authorizer in assessing annual performance data. Mississippi uses a performance framework to evaluate schools on an annual basis and to make renewal, non-renewal, and revocation decisions. The state's current framework, which is extremely controversial among charter school stakeholders (Mississippi First included), was fully adopted in September 2022 after a "pilot" with 2022 data. The 2023 implementation of the framework was its first full implementation following its final adoption. With CSP funds, we seek an expert who can examine the 2022 framework, its 2022 pilot, and the last two years of implementation and provide critique and substantive recommendations for how to solve identified problems. We believe that such an approach will help bridge the gap between the MCSAB and the schools on this issue and result in stronger policy more aligned to best practices.

Unlike other State Entities grantees, Mississippi First has no statutory authority over the MCSAB. This means that the third-party evaluator may not receive the support of the MCSAB in conducting its evaluation, and the MCSAB may, in fact, be actively hostile to the evaluator. However, as a state government agency, the MCSAB must respond to public records requests for any items not available on its website that are important to an evaluation. Other stakeholders are likely to be very forthcoming with information and support.

Mississippi First ultimately cannot control whether the MCSAB adopts any recommendations or proposed policies (although we will certainly advocate they do); however, we believe that providing clear recommendations for improvement of the framework from a credible third-party source with a national perspective will positively add to public conversation about this topic.

SCOPE OF WORK

Mississippi First invites proposals from qualified consultants for the services described below. During the contract period, the Contractor will maintain contact with the Deputy Director of Mississippi First, LeKeshia Perry.

Conduct an independent evaluation of Mississippi's performance framework grounded in national principles and best practices

- Analyze the fit between the current framework and the legal, regulatory, and data context of charter school accountability in Mississippi.
- Evaluate the Mississippi performance framework against national best practices and nationally recognized principles for performance frameworks in each domain (academic, financial, and operational).
- Evaluate the Mississippi performance framework against the requirements of the Mississippi charter school law.
- Evaluate the quality of implementation of the Mississippi performance framework including its 2022 pilot and its recent implementation.
- Seek diverse perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of the adopted performance framework and its implementation, including MCSAB (as feasible), authorized charter schools, advocates, experts, and other relevant stakeholders.
- Reference a wide range of source material, including publicly available policy and procedure documents and documents received by charter schools.

Produce findings and a prioritized list of recommendations for amendments to the Mississippi performance framework or its implementation, if any

- Summarize the findings and recommendations of the evaluation in a report that Mississippi First can share with the MCSAB as well as the US Department of Education.
- Prioritize the recommendations and offer a timeline by which they may be reasonably implemented.
- Provide any further resources or suggestions that may be helpful to the MCSAB or Mississippi First in increasing the likelihood of implementation of the recommendations.
- Suggest any necessary technical assistance that the MCSAB should consider in order to appropriately implement the recommendations.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

Respondents must demonstrate

- Support for charter schools and their role in public education and respect for their unique legal status and autonomy.
- Experience working with charter school authorizers or other policymakers in designing or evaluating performance frameworks.

- Expertise in each of the areas of the Mississippi performance framework (i.e., financial, academic, and operational).
- Knowledge of national best practices and nationally recognized principles for performance frameworks.
- The ability to work in collaboration with diverse groups of people with a positive, professional, and solutions-oriented attitude.

INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED BY THE CONTRACTOR

Provide a quote fulfilling the scope of work to include, at a minimum, the following:

- Background information and qualifications for the expert or experts to fulfill the contract.
- Descriptions of previous relevant work, including any samples.
- A detailed description of the services to be provided including a timeline, persons responsible, and key deliverables.
- A minimum of three (3) references.
- A proposed budget for services, including all expected costs and the expected number of hours devoted to the contract.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Quotes will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Qualifications and experience,
- Demonstrated knowledge of nationally recognized standards and principles or best practices for charter school performance frameworks,
- Relevance of the proposal to scope of work and project rationale,
- Descriptions and samples of previous work, and
- Timeline and cost of services.

CONTRACTING

The award will be made to the prospective Contractor that best meets Mississippi First's needs and requirements. All aspects of the evaluation criteria will be taken into consideration in awarding this contract—i.e., Mississippi First uses a "best value" standard rather than a "lowest bid" standard. As this project will be funded through federal funds, federal procurement rules for a request for quotes and a contract are in effect.

GOVERNING LAW

This contract shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Mississippi, excluding its conflicts of law provisions, and any litigation with respect thereto shall be brought in the courts of the State of Mississippi. The Contractors shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR

The Contractor shall perform all services as an independent Contractor and shall at no time represent that the Contractor is an employee of Mississippi First.

NEGOTIATION AND REJECTION

Mississippi First reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, to waive any informality or irregularity, to define equals, to negotiate with the best proposed offeror to address issues other than those described in the proposal, to award the contract to one other than the low offeror, or to not make any award if it is determined to be in the best interest of Mississippi First.

TIMELINE

- Prospective respondents may ask questions via email until the quote deadline.
- Quotes will be reviewed by Mississippi First staff in the 15 business days following the deadline.
- Respondents may be asked to respond to clarifying questions in writing during the first 10 days of the review period.
- Mississippi First will offer the contract within 15 business days of the deadline, if at all feasible.

SERVICE PERIOD AND TERMS

The contract will be from the date of the award until September 30, 2025.

QUOTE CONDITIONS & INFORMATION

Quotes will be received by Mississippi First until March 31, 2025. Quotes must be submitted via email. Please use "RFQ-Performance Framework" as the subject line of the submission e-mail. Questions regarding this request for quotes can be submitted to Pheron Russell by e-mail at pheron@mississippifirst.org.

Contact:

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