



HIGH PLAINS REC #3 SOLE SOURCE REQUEST AND DETERMINATION FORM

A sole source *determination* is not effective until the *sole source request for determination* has been posted for thirty (30) calendar days without challenge, and subsequently approved in writing by the State Purchasing Agent or, for Professional Services Agreements, the Secretary of the Department of Finance and Administration. The foregoing requirement is regardless of whether the *sole source request for determination* has been signed by the Agency and/or the Contractor.

I. Name of Agency: **High Plains Regional Education Cooperative #3**

Agency Chief Procurement Officer: **Brandon Hightree**

Telephone Number: **(575) 445-7090**

Agency Contact for this request: **Brandon Hightree**

Telephone Number & Email Address: **(575) 445-7090; bhightree@hprec.com**

II. Name of prospective Contractor: **NS4ed LLC**

Address of prospective Contractor: **200 E Broadway, Suite 305, Maryville, TN 37804**

Contact Name, Telephone Number and Email Address:

Joseph Goins

865-414-0033

jgoins@ns4ed.com

Amount of prospective contract before tax: **\$106,481.00**

Term of prospective contract: **1 year**

Note: For terms longer than one year, Request for Policy Exemption from DFA MUST be included.

III. Agency is required to state purpose/need of purchase and thoroughly list the services (scope of work), construction or items of tangible personal property of the prospective contract (if this is an amendment request to an existing contract, include current contract number issued by SPD):

PURPOSE:

NMPED desires to enhance targeted support for Career Advisement/Counseling and regional workforce partnerships by supporting professional development and collaboration.

CONTRACTOR will facilitate and direct the work, in order to support the following goals:

- Improving the level of NM career advisement resources
- Improving the level of career advisement professional learning;
- Supporting NM PED in reaching their outcome goals around career advisement/counseling.

Total services contracted by HPREC for Career Advisement/Counseling is per a New Mexico Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for Career Advisement/Counseling with the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) for Fiscal Year 2022.

SCOPE OF WORK:

CONTRACTOR shall perform the following with regards to Career Advisement and Counseling:

1. *Career Counselors NM website:* CONTRACTOR will identify new material and provide updates to the NM's School Counselors' Community of Best Practice (schoolcounselors-nm.com) to keep the website updated weekly so that it is current, relevant, and accurate for 2021-22. Specific updates to include:
 - a. Collaborate: Work with LEAD in the continued development of a community of best practices for school counselors, with an emphasis on assisting counselors in the effective use of labor market information.
 - b. Resource Center: Expand the resource center that displays links to academic/scholarly websites, articles, videos, etc. related to best practices in school counseling, with emphasis on the use of Labor Market Information (LMI).
 - c. News Feed: Maintain a news feed for announcements and updates related to career readiness and counseling practices originating from CCRB and national sources.
 - d. Community Collaboration: Develop a space within the counselor community website that utilizes popular communication tools for counselors to connect and collaborate with each other. Weekly topics and activities will be distributed to encourage counselor participation.
 - e. Job Board: Provide a space on the community website for schools and local organizations to list employment opportunities for counselors and related professions.
 - f. Community Overview Video: Produce a 3-5-minute overview video for the homepage of the counselors' website that introduces counselors to the main features of the community.
 - g. Technology Support Page: Develop a page with the counselors' community webpage that provides access to technology tools and technology-related information that can be used to support counseling activities.

2. *Counseling/Advising Meeting:* Manage and facilitate a one-day virtual or in-person winter school counseling/advising meeting in February 2022. Provide content consultants, registration mechanisms, facilitate surveys, and provide reimbursement to eligible workshop participants.

3. *Professional Development:* Provide online training courses on the use of labor market information in educational practices, offering a total of eight hours of professional development training to school counselors.
 - a. Emphasis on the value of LMI: Attention will be directed to communicating the value of LMI to counselors through monthly meeting presentations, weekly discussion activities, and dedicated information sessions that introduce counselors to LMI.
 4. *Newsletter:* Work with staff from CCRB to deliver a monthly newsletter to school counselors that presents topics related to the use labor market information in education and best practices in school counseling. Newsletters shall display brief summaries and links to timely and relevant news, as well useful online resources that support counseling activities. Announcements from CCRB will also be included. Distribution of newsletters will be on or before the first Friday of each month starting in August and ending in May.
 5. *Monthly School Counselor Meetings:* Offer monthly meetings for school counselors. Meetings will be one hour in length and delivered on around the 15th of each month starting in August and ending in April, with the month of December excluded.
 6. *Feedback Surveys:* Regular surveys will be distributed to counselors to assess the effectiveness of the community and counselor needs and content will be adjusted to the survey results.
 7. *Professional Learning Communities:* Fall and spring professional learning communities will be offered to counselors with each community including 2-3 one-hour sessions focused on a particular topic related to best practices for school counselors.
- IV. Provide a detailed explanation of the criteria developed and specified by the agency as necessary to perform and/or fulfill the contract and upon which the state agency reviewed available sources. (Do not use “technical jargon;” use plain English. Do not tailor the criteria simply to exclude other contractors if it is not rationally related to the purpose of the contract.)

The agency desires to conduct research and facilitate required meetings related to the School Counselor Community for fiscal year 2021-2022. The technical assistance related to the school counselor community is to build a community of best practices and utilize problems of practice within the leadership.

The community will utilize the research and the professional learning communities that have been developed over the 12 months to continue the growth. NS4ed, developed the community and research protocols in FY 2020 and saw over 400+ counselors benefit from the research and the protocols.

The state of New Mexico also requires a statewide Policy Tool for school districts to understand career readiness as defined by their local labor shed. NS4ed, is the sole provider of a system, Pathway 2 Careers (P2C) that provides basic intelligence on the characteristics and dynamics of the labor market in which a local School District is located. It seeks to provide perspective on the realities of the local job market. The report and system organize regional labor market information by career clusters to clearly communicate the highest-value clusters in terms of demand and earning potential. Within each cluster, specific organizations are highlighted, with particular emphases on the demand, earning potential, requisite education, and career pathways. This practical approach serves to make clear the path for local students into the region's highest-value careers.

This confirms that NS4ed, LLC is the sole source provider, sole publisher, sole ASP hosting source, and sole distributor of Pathway2Careers (P2C) career identification and readiness platform. P2C is federally trademarked, and 100% of its properties and systems are solely and wholly owned by NS4ed. NS4ed has not reassigned any rights to any other entities to sell or host these programs.

System Overview. P2C utilizes national, state, and labor-shed occupational data in conjunction with NS4ed expertise and guidance to evaluate and interconnect available occupations and the personal interests of students. P2C provides guided occupational analysis to align the interests, skills, and academic priorities of students and education leaders. P2C and its systems serve as the foundation for both education leaders' and students' continuing career readiness assessments and promote the attainment of career and college ready skills and training.

Unique Capabilities. P2C is a bridge between education and industry to help educators connect with the realities of their local job market.

- a. P2C is a flexible framework that allows educators to explore labor market information and access innovative methods for preparing students for careers.
 - b. The P2C platform provides a labor market exploration system to identify high-value career destinations for students.
 - c. P2C provides specifically crafted career readiness resources to ensure student users become career ready.
 - d. NS4ed exclusively utilizes its extensive labor market analysis, delivering the most high-value career options in local communities to users.
 - i. NS4ed utilizes numerous datasets, dependent upon the individual needs of each client or user, to create personalized analysis to connect clients to data specific to their concerns, needs, and location.
- V. Provide a detailed, sufficient explanation of the reasons, qualifications, proprietary rights or unique capabilities of the prospective contractor that makes the prospective contractor ***the one source*** capable of providing the required professional service, service, construction or item(s) of tangible personal property. (Please do not state the source is the "best" source or the "least costly" source. Those factors do not justify a "sole source.")

In reviewing the Scope of Work, NS4ed is the one source capable of providing the required professional services in the following ways:

- NS4ed currently hosts, and has proprietary ownership of, website domains used by NMPED including <https://schoolcounselors-nm.com/> , <http://careerpathways-nm.com/> and <http://www.echs-nm.com/>. NS4ed is currently updating backend design for <http://careerpathways-nm.com/> in order to provide a more user-friendly, supportive experience for its customers. This will be ready to roll out by the end of the month. Regular updates for the <https://schoolcounselors-nm.com/> website occur weekly, at a minimum.
- NS4ed has developed self-directed tutorials and online training courses on the use of labor market information in educational practices. Dr. Danielle Tallent, Chief Learning Officer at NS4ed, has provided focused professional development to educators in New Mexico on the use of LMI and <http://careerpathways-nm.com> She focuses primarily on career readiness resources and the use of labor market data in educational settings, making information relatable and developmentally appropriate to learners of diverse ages and backgrounds.

VI. Provide a detailed, sufficient explanation of how the professional service, service, construction or item(s) of tangible personal property is/are ***unique and how this uniqueness is substantially related to the intended purpose of the contract.***

NS4ed is uniquely qualified to fulfill the intended purpose of the contract in the following ways:

- NS4ed delivered Professional Learning Communities, Monthly Meetings, and Special Events for the School Counselor Community with the following programs:
 - <https://schoolcounselors-nm.com/plc-archives/>
 - <https://schoolcounselors-nm.com/2021-22-monthly-meetings/>
 - <https://schoolcounselors-nm.com/special-events/>
- The continual nature of the support and best practices for 2021 will be critical for the development of the counselor community.
- NS4ed recently conducted needs assessments for the 10 CTE regions in New Mexico, led meetings to discuss those assessments and developed reports for each region to serve as the foundation for the development, improvement, approval, and funding of NM CTE programs. This previous work easily segues into the development of reports for each region analyzing the impact of the worldwide pandemic and New Mexico's specific economic situation so that needs assessments can be updated.
- NS4ed has Five years' experience working with HPREC, NMPED, and the New Mexico Association for Career and Technical Education. Having personal, experiential knowledge of initiatives and efforts during these partnerships, means that NS4ed can jump right into the Scope of Work without taking valuable time to learn the history of efforts to date. Additionally, Joseph Goins, CEO of NS4ed, has built working relationships based on mutual respect and trust with representatives from HPREC and NMPED as well as principals, counselors and other leaders in the state's. Based on this familiarity, NS4ed is uniquely qualified to offer more personalized, targeted and exceptional service.

VII. Explain why other similar professional services, services, construction or item(s) of tangible personal property ***cannot*** meet the intended purpose of the contract.

Similar professional services cannot meet the intended purpose of contract due to the proprietary nature of domains necessary to fulfill the Scope of Work as designed by the Agency. Additionally, without having experiential knowledge of work previously completed by NS4ed, the SOW as presented cannot be completed by another educational consultant within the time-frame of the contract, as proposed.

- VIII. Provide a narrative description of the agency's due diligence in determining the basis for the procurement, including procedures used by the agency to conduct a review of available sources such as researching trade publications, industry newsletters and the internet; contacting similar service providers; and reviewing the State Purchasing Divisions' Statewide Price Agreements. Include a list of businesses contacted (***do not state that no other businesses were contacted***), date of contact, method of contact (telephone, mail, e-mail, other), and documentation demonstrating an explanation of why those businesses could not or would not, under any circumstances, perform the contract; or an explanation of why the agency has determined that no businesses other than the prospective contractor can perform the contract.

HPREC did an extensive search on the internet, as well as the GSD Price Agreements, and found no contractor that can offer professional experience in public education, career advisement and counseling, regional workforce partnerships, LMI development, employer engagement and private industry.

In addition, the Executive Director of HPREC has done extensive research around early Career Advisement and Counseling as well as Workforce Partnerships. At the national level, Dr. Joseph Goins has been the content person for the Association of Education Service Agencies (AESAs). His broad background makes him the expert in developing current research into practice. Dr. Goins has provided his knowledge and expertise in multiple states over the past several years developing credibility across the nation's service centers.

Certified by:

Date: Sep 10, 2021

Buando Hightax

Agency Chief Procurement Officer

Agency Approval by:

Date: Sep 10, 2021

R. Stephen Aguirre

Agency or Entity Head or Designee

Career Advisement & Counseling - NS4ed

Final Audit Report

2021-09-10

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