



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**

Address of prospective Contractor: **200 E Broadway, STE 215, Maryville, TN 37804**

Contact Name, Telephone Number and Email Address:

Dr. Joseph Goins

865-414-0033

jgoins@ns4ed.com

Amount of prospective contract before tax: **\$300,000**

Term of prospective contract: **23-24 School Year (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 Early College High Schools (ECHS) and regional workforce partnerships in order to support the following goals:

- Improving the level of ECHS implementation among designated programs;
- Supporting NM PED in reaching their outcome goals around ECHS.

Technical Assistance is dedicated to increasing the capacity of schools to improve, sustain, and expand the services and supports provided within Early College High School Programs.

These services are per an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) College and Career Readiness Bureau (CCRB) and the Agency, with the termination date of June 30, 2024, pursuant to an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with NMPED.

SCOPE OF WORK:

1. ECHS Community of Best Practice Resource Center:

CONTRACTOR will identify new material to publish on the ECHS online resource center weekly so that it is current, relevant, and accurate for 2023-2024. Specific updates to include:

- a. ECHS Website: Update the website with a current look and feel while maintaining the integrity of the site as a hub for professional development, information, resources, and research around New Mexico's Early College High Schools.
- b. Resource Center: Gather & share resources around each design principle representing best practice from designated NM ECHSs and exemplary national models.
- c. News Feed: Identify and post new articles, research, blogs, and webinar opportunities from national associations that advance career preparedness and improve access to postsecondary education.
- d. Community Collaboration: Develop a space within the website that utilizes popular communication tools for ECHS leaders to connect and collaborate with each other. Weekly topics and activities will be distributed to encourage counselor participation.
- e. Events Calendar: Maintain an events page populated with PED and other events related to ECHS.
- f. ECHS Fact Sheet: Develop and publish an ECHS Fact Sheet with information and data specific to ECHS programs.
- g. ECHS Coaching Portal: Create repository of PLC and Professional Learning documents for ECHS leaders and PED to access and review for best practices, resources, and cross-school real-time communication.

2. ECHS Structure and Guidance

CONTRACTOR will provide structure and guidance for Schools wanting to apply to be an ECHS Program, structure will follow the following Model:

Program Implementation and Enrollment - Fall 2023

CONTRACTOR will manage all sites who are interested in making application for an Early College High School using the **Designation Requirements for Designation and Program Approval** criteria. CONTRACTOR will develop a comprehensive review and approval process for each ECHS Applicant.

Designation Timeline – Fall 2023

Develop Marketing Material to support the ECHS Application Process

- **October 2023** – CONTRACTOR will provide an Application and Letter of Intent available online.

ECHS Designation Guidelines (Dates adjustable upon agreement between PED and CONTRACTOR)

- **October 2023** – CONTRACTOR will offer an Early College Designation Orientation.
- **October 2023** – CONTRACTOR will offer an Early College Designation Nuts and Bolts webinar.
- **October 1 – October 16, 2023 / Fall** – CONTRACTOR will offer Individualized technical assistance available, as well as application professional learning series on the Guiding Principles.
- **October 23, 2023** - Early College Designation Application Due
- **October 23 – November 3, 2023** – Designation recommendations reviewed by CONTRACTOR’s Early College Support Team
- **November 3, 2023** – CONTRACTOR will share Early College Designation Revision Recommendations. Revisions which will be due back **November 13, 2023**
- **November 30, 2023** – CONTRACTOR will provide PED with Early College Applications Approval for Announcement

3. Structured Meetings, Convenings, and PLCs:

In collaboration with PED LEAD, CONTRACTOR will plan, develop, and host:

- Annual Planning Conference for Leadership teams within the ECHS community:* CONTRACTOR will plan a 2-day leadership conference for leadership teams in the Fall of 2023 from each ECHS Community. CONTRACTOR will secure meeting location, contract with content consultants, provide registration mechanism, facilitate surveys, and provide lodging and mileage reimbursement to eligible workshop participants.
- Virtual Leadership Meetings:* CONTRACTOR will collaborate with LEAD and PED to host monthly check-in meetings for ECHS leaders September through April. Meetings shall include time for ECHS announcements and an opportunity for ECHS leaders to collaborate and discuss best practices. Agendas will be set with LEAD and input from ECHS leaders.
- Student Convening:* CONTRACTOR and LEAD will collaborate to facilitate a virtual leadership conference for students at the end of fall or beginning of spring semester.
- Data Reporting Mechanism:* CONTRACTOR and LEAD will develop an End of Year reporting instrument for schools to indicate enrollment, cohort tracking, and student academic progress. ECHS reports will be evaluated, compiled, and shared with PED.

4. Focused Professional Development & PLCs Cost:

CONTRACTOR and LEAD will collaborate to expand professional development for

ECHS leaders to advance their mission and outcomes in New Mexico. Such professional development shall include:

- a. Synchronous and/or asynchronous online professional development and PLC sessions based upon design principles and best practices.
- b. Deliver the *Problems of Practice* Series
- c. Areas of need as indicated by ECHS leadership
- d. Other topics of interest for professional development - Practical Outreach and Recruitment, Recruiting and Retaining Staff, Target Student Populations and Equity Guide, Student Supports and Interventions

5. Review, Develop, and Customize Program-Specific Materials Cost:

CONTRACTOR will provide support, assistance, and guidance to ECHS leaders so they can update, or develop, program-specific materials for their ECHS program:

- a. Utilize ‘The Backpack Connection Series’ to assist schools in the development and/or customization of materials and handouts, providing a way for leadership teams to create or review current materials. Rollout materials at leadership conference.
- b. Collaborate with each school to develop a spotlight piece to serve as both a recruiting tool and online recognition of individual programs. This will be accomplished via the “Spotlight School” page on the resource website with a goal of highlighting one school each month. A calendar and template will guide the ECHS leaders through the process and each school will have a OneDrive folder provided to house materials. CONTRACTOR will develop the webpage in conjunction with each school and ensure its accessibility so the schools can link to their own sites.

6. Communication, Coaching, and Support Cost:

CONTRACTOR will provide support and work collaboratively with PED to re-evaluate ECHS designee performance and ensure formal designation as required by NMAC 6.30.13. This process will coincide with the timeline for New Applicants

- a. CONTRACTOR will communicate monthly with ECHS-NM leadership with news, announcements, PED resources, and general resources relevant to performances and designation through a subscription/push platform or check-in meeting.
- b. LEAD and CONTRACTOR will develop a tool for re-evaluation of ECHS designee performance.
- c. CONTRACTOR will provide support to schools requiring a remediation plan. Applications that do not meet the minimum criteria for ECHS recognition require a remediation plan. PED will provide support and guidance to CONTRACTOR in developing the plan and delivering it to schools and principals as necessary.
- d. CONTRACTOR will track, organize, and coach ECHS schools through the designation, application, or remediation processes, as needed. Similarly, a comprehensive data dive tool will be utilized to help track current and historical trends, cohort data, student success rates, and persistence over time.

- e. Support may include collaborating with PED in developing and promoting a system to generate data reports to determine areas of strength or needed improvement. CONTRACTOR will provide technical support to schools to understand their data, as needed.
- f. CONTRACTOR will create an EOY report for all schools to submit to PED in order that CONTRACTOR can evaluate and share trends, updates, and recommendations to help move schools from designated to “exemplary” status through data supports.
- g. LEAD PED and CONTRACTOR will provide a webinar to introduce the concept of early college to schools that may have interest in developing their own program. This webinar will be posted as a resource for on demand use.

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 organization wishes to carry out research and organize necessary meetings related to the Early College High School for the 2024-24 fiscal year. The aim of this technical assistance in relation to the ECHS community is to establish a network based on best practices and address leadership issues through practical problem-solving.

This community will benefit from the research and the professional learning groups that have been cultivated over several years across different states. NS4ed, LLC has laid the groundwork for these community and research protocols, helping ECHS in New Mexico and other states to develop application processes, earn designations, and establish best practices.

In addition to this, the state of New Mexico necessitates a comprehensive Policy Tool for school districts to comprehend career readiness as defined by their local labor market. NS4ed, LLC is the exclusive provider of Pathway2Careers™, a platform that offers fundamental insights about the characteristics and dynamics of the local labor market within a school district’s jurisdiction. The objective is to provide a clear perspective on the realities of the local job market.

The system and report categorize regional labor market information by career clusters to effectively communicate the most valuable clusters in terms of demand and earning potential. Within each cluster, specific organizations are brought into focus, highlighting factors such as demand, earning potential, required education, and career pathways. This pragmatic approach aims to clarify the route for local students into the region’s most promising careers.

This document verifies that NS4ed, LLC is the exclusive provider, publisher, ASP hosting source, and distributor of the Pathway2Careers™ (P2C) career identification and readiness platform. Pathway2Careers™ is a federally trademarked entity with all its properties and systems completely owned by NS4ed, LLC. There has been no transfer of rights to any other entities to sell or host these programs.

System Description: Pathway2Careers™ employs national, state, and local labor data along with NS4ed's expertise to evaluate and link potential occupations with students' personal interests. P2C™ offers guided occupational analysis to align students' and education leaders' interests, skills, and academic goals. The P2C™ systems form the basis for ongoing career readiness assessments for both education leaders and students, promoting the acquisition of skills and training for career and college readiness.

Distinct Features: P2C™ acts as a conduit between the education sector and industry, enabling educators to gain insights into their local job market realities. It offers a versatile framework that allows educators to delve into labor market information and discover innovative ways to prepare students for their careers. The P2C™ platform provides a system for exploring the labor market to pinpoint high-value career paths for students. It also offers specially designed career readiness resources to ensure students become career ready.

Exclusively, NS4ed uses its comprehensive labor market analysis to provide users with the most valuable local career options. Depending on each client's or user's unique needs, NS4ed employs various datasets to generate personalized analyses that connect clients with data relevant to their specific 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.”)**

NS4ed is a recognized partner in the education industry, offering evidence-based, career readiness solutions for students. They are the exclusive owners of the website domains used by NMPED, including <http://www.echs-nm.com>.

The team at NS4ed, led by Dr. Joseph Goins, has created self-guided tutorials and online training courses that focus on the application of labor market information in educational practices. These resources have been utilized by educators nationwide, specifically for career readiness resources and the application of labor market data in educational settings through <http://careerpathways-nm.com>. Their approach ensures the information is relatable and developmentally suitable for learners across a range of ages and backgrounds.

Moreover, NS4ed has proprietary rights to the "Problems of Practice Series" and "The Backpack Connection Series". These series have been exclusively designed and developed by NS4ed for professional development purposes.

- 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 the ideal choice to fulfill the contract's objectives for several reasons:

- A. With their extensive experience in delivering Professional Learning Communities, Monthly Meetings, and Special Events the ECHS of NM and other states, NS4ed brings a unique perspective and insight.
- B. The ongoing support and provision of best practices in 2023-24 are crucial for the development of the counselor community, and NS4ed is well-equipped to provide this continuous assistance.
- C. With nearly 10 years of collaboration with HPREC and NM PED, NS4ed possesses valuable firsthand knowledge of previous initiatives and efforts. This existing familiarity allows them to initiate the Scope of Work promptly without wasting time on learning the history. Additionally, Dr. Joseph Goins, Founder & CEO of NS4ed, has established strong relationships built on mutual respect and trust with key stakeholders, including representatives from HPREC and NM PED, as well as principals, counselors, and other leaders in the state. This level of familiarity uniquely qualifies NS4ed to provide 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.

NS4ed is the sole source that can effectively fulfill the contract's purpose due to the proprietary nature of the specialized domains required for the Scope of Work outlined by the Agency. Other professional services lack the necessary expertise and access to these proprietary domains, making them unable to meet the contract requirements.


Furthermore, the previous work completed by NS4ed plays a vital role in the successful execution of the proposed Scope of Work. Without experiential knowledge of NS4ed's past projects, another educational consultant would struggle to complete the SOW within the contract's timeframe. This further emphasizes the unique qualifications and irreplaceable value that NS4ed brings to the table as the sole source for this contract.

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.

After conducting an extensive search, HPREC discovered that no other contractor possesses comprehensive professional experience in public education, workforce development, early college high schools, curriculum development, employer engagement, and private industry. Furthermore, the Executive Director of HPREC found Dr. Joseph

Goins to be a national expert in Early College High Schools and Workforce Readiness, with a strong background in developing research into practice. Dr. Goins and NS4ed have provided their expertise and credibility in multiple states, making them the ideal candidate for the contract.

Certified by:



Agency Chief Procurement Officer

Date: 8/31/23

Agency Approval by:



Agency or Entity Head or Designee

Date: 08/31/2023