

## REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

**RFP NUMBER: EDUD201318500**

**DATE ISSUED: March 20, 2013**

**ELIGIBILITY: Open to All Providers**

**The State of Ohio Department of Education is requesting Proposals for:**

**TITLE: Pupil Transportation Services**

**INQUIRY PERIOD BEGINS: March 21, 2013**

**INQUIRY PERIOD ENDS: April 5, 2013**

**INFORMATION DUE DATE: April 19, 2013**

**INFORMATION REVIEW DATE: April 30, 2013**

**ESTIMATED AWARD DATE: Not Applicable**

### **Section 1: Background**

#### **A. Responsibilities**

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) is responsible for various functions and tasks related to pupil transportation in the state of Ohio. These functions and tasks include, but are not limited to, the following:

#### **1. Training/Outreach**

##### **a. Overseeing basic driver training**

Providing manual/materials/consistency

Overseeing contracts and personnel of 8 regional trainers

Managing certificates

##### **b. Advanced training**

Overseeing courses delivered by 8 trainers

Directly providing advanced courses

##### **c. Training for administrators/fiscal**

d. Seminars with the Ohio Association of School Business Officials (OASBO) and the Ohio Association of Pupil Transportation (OAPT)

e. Website, statewide emails, stakeholder relations

2. Safety
  - a. Road-e-o
  - b. Newsletter
  - c. Poster contest, Love the Bus, etc.
3. Data collection
  - a. Types of information
    - Ridership information
    - Fiscal information
    - Driver information
  - b. Role
    - Managing/troubleshooting data collection system
    - Training system users
    - Creating reports
    - Auditing/tracking/reminding
4. Technical consultations
  - a. Safety, financial, efficiency, routing, etc.
5. Regulatory
  - a. Adoption, oversight, and compliance of ORC 3327 and 4511 and OAC rule 3301-83
  - b. Position papers
  - c. Diabetic waiver oversight
  - d. Administrative suspensions
6. Oversight of school transportation at local level
  - a. Legal requirements to transport a district's own students
  - b. Legal requirement to transport other students (incl. 30-minute rule)
  - c. "Type IV" (payments to parents when transportation is impractical)
  - d. Routing disputes with community schools
  - e. Parent contacts
7. Payments
  - a. To school districts, based on T1, T2, etc. data collection
    - Basic funding support (\$400+ million)
    - Special Ed transportation
    - Community Schools
    - Type IV

## B. Historical Activities

For many years, ODE has performed these functions and tasks via an internal office of pupil transportation. In addition, uncodified law in the budget bill permits ODE to contract for training. Up to \$838,930 in each fiscal year may be used by the Department of Education for training prospective and experienced school bus drivers in accordance with training programs prescribed by the Department. This earmark, and others like it in previous budget bills, has allowed ODE to provide funding for "Ohio pre-service school bus driver training instructors" through service agreements, primarily with educational service centers. ODE has also limited the amount charged for classes and certifications required of school bus drivers, transportation director/supervisors, and on-the-bus instructors, which also provide revenue for the training program.

Current maximum fees: Registration fees for the Pre-Service Program shall not exceed \$50.00. All drivers attending the classroom portion shall be charged. Registration fees for the Advanced Driver Course shall not exceed \$75.00. Registration for driver recertification shall not exceed \$35.00. Registration for van driver certification shall not exceed \$35.00. Other training programs, including but not limited to on-the-bus instructor, and performance evaluation will be provided at no cost to attendees.

Classes are currently provided around the state, with 404 classes offered annually (all figures noted are from FY12), with 6,690 students trained. Courses taught include both preservice (new bus drivers) and recertification (veteran drivers.) The types and annual number of certifications are as follows: Preservice - 1872, recertification - 4003, van certification - 2150. In addition: two three-day advanced classes with 393 students.

### C. RFI

With this RFI, ODE is seeking ideas on the provision of pupil transportation functions by entities other than the Ohio Department of Education, without increasing the expenses of the Department. There are two basic scenarios: entities provide services on list 1, and entities provide services on list 1 and 2. ODE foresees that its employees will continue to provide services on list 3.

#### LIST 1

1. Training/Outreach
  - a. Basic driver training
    - Providing manual/materials/consistency
    - Providing training courses regionally throughout Ohio
    - Managing certificates
  - b. Advanced training
    - Providing manual/materials/consistency
    - Providing training courses regionally throughout Ohio
  - c. Training for administrators/fiscal

#### LIST 2

1. Training/Outreach
  - a. Seminars with the Ohio Association of School Business Officials (OASBO) and the Ohio Association of Pupil Transportation (OAPT)
  - b. Website, statewide emails, stakeholder relations
2. Safety
  - a. Road-e-o
  - b. Newsletter
  - c. Poster contest, Love the Bus, etc.
3. Data collection
  - a. Types of information
    - Ridership information
    - Fiscal information
    - Driver information
  - b. Role

- Managing/troubleshooting data collection system
- Training system users
- Creating reports
- Auditing/tracking/reminding
- 4. Technical consultations
  - a. Safety, financial, efficiency, routing, etc.
- 5. Regulatory
  - a. Diabetic waiver oversight
  - b. Administrative suspensions

LIST 3

- 1. Data collection
  - Providing the on-line data-collection system
- 2. Regulatory
  - a. Adoption, oversight, and compliance of ORC 3327 and 4511 and OAC rule 3301-83
  - b. Position papers
- 3. Oversight of school transportation at local level
  - a. Legal requirements to transport a district's own students
  - b. Legal requirement to transport other students (incl. 30-minute rule)
  - c. "Type IV" (payments to parents when transportation is impractical)
  - d. Routing disputes with community schools
  - e. Parent contacts
- 4. Payments
  - a. To school districts, based on T1, T2, etc. data collection
    - Basic funding support (\$400+ million)
    - Special Ed transportation
    - Community Schools
    - Type IV

**Section 2: Objectives**

This RFI is intended to allow entities to provide information helpful to ODE's subsequent RFP. With the help of RFI responses, ODE will craft an RFP to be issued, with the aim of awarding one or more contracts for pupil transportation services. Entities are encouraged to propose a contracting system that would do all of the following:

GENERAL

- 1. Provide the functions shown on list 1, or on list 1 and 2 combined.
- 2. Ensure quality control over the provision of the functions and tasks.

TRAINING/OUTREACH (list 1)

- 3. Provide certifications, renewals and revocations as required by rule for bus drivers and other applicants.
- 4. Maintain training and certification records in ODE's database.
- 5. Address the method for providing training that meets the needs of those to be trained, given their availability at certain times, and their physical location.
- 6. Provide creative communication methods to reach intended audiences and with the aim of improving pupil transportation safety and minimizing injuries to students.

SAFETY (list 2)

7. Provide statewide campaigns and/or events to effectively promote school bus safety

DATA COLLECTION (list 2)

8. Ensure that school districts provide accurate and timely information into ODE's on-line data collection system.

TECHNICAL CONSULTATION (list 2)

9. Provide technical assistance to school districts who request such assistance, to improve the efficiency, cost, and safety of their pupil transportation.

REGULATORY (list 2)

10. Implement a system to accurately produce and track diabetic waivers and administrative suspensions according to enacted rules.

RFI Directions

1. Propose a system for meeting the objectives listed above. Possibilities include:

a. One entity is selected by ODE and provides all functions

b. ODE selects multiple entities, who propose provisions of certain functions, in certain geographical areas

c. ODE sets a standard to provide functions, and any qualifying entity is allowed to provide those functions.

d. Any other system

2. Indicate how funding would work. What would be the basis for payment? How would the \$838,930 earmarked in the budget be used? Assume a maximum of \$1.1 million payment from ODE, including the earmark. What is the proposal for fees charged to pupil transportation providers or personnel?

3. Propose changes to lists 1, 2, and 3 that would support a more effective or efficient system.

### **Section 3: Overview of the Scope of Work**

The Ohio Department of Education is requesting information (RFI) for provision of pupil transportation functions for the purpose of ensuring a safe and effective transportation system, meeting the needs of school districts which provide pupil transportation while meeting all the requirements in law and rule.

The respondent must provide a narrative addressing each of the three points in the "RFI Directions" above. Respondant must show how each of the six objectives will be met.

RFI submissions should not exceed 20 pages. They should focus on concepts and describing a framework. No more than five pages of the submission may address how a particular entity would best meet the needs of the RFI.

Based on the responses to the RFI, ODE will consider all suggestions, and release a more detailed RFP. Entities will have the opportunity to respond to the RFP, regardless of their response to the RFI. ODE's intention is to award one or more contracts or agreements to entities based on the RFP response. ODE reserves the right to modify lists 1, 2, and 3, and the right to not contract for any or all of the pupil transportation function if it determines that its own staff can provide the functions more efficiently and effectively.

**Section 4: Inquiry**

All questions regarding this RFI should be submitted online only. Accordingly, the Department will post responses online so that interested vendors may access and share the same information.

**Section 5: Special Notice**

The Department will not enter into a contract as a result of this solicitation (RFI). The objective is to obtain guidance and technical direction from potential bidders, from which a final RFP will be developed.

**Section 6: Submission Information**

**Submissions must reference the RFI number above and should be submitted:**

**Either by email to:**

**Name:** Denise Willis-Thompson

**Email Address:** Denise.Willis-Thompson@education.ohio.gov

**Please also email a copy to:**

**Name:** Amadu Sankoh, Agency Procurement Officer

**Email Address:** [Amadu.sankoh@ode.state.oh.us](mailto:Amadu.sankoh@ode.state.oh.us)

**OR by Regular mail to:**

**Name:** Denise Willis-Thompson

**Address:** Ohio Department of Education  
Office of Quality School Choice & Funding  
25 South Front Street, Mail Stop 310  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

**Please also mail a copy to:**

Amadu Sankoh, Agency Procurement Officer  
25 South Front Street, Mail Stop G  
Columbus, OH 43215

**Do Not Write Below this Line – Vendor Guidance Only**

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**Proposal Format (For Vendor Response)**

**Signed Cover Letter** (Required – as acceptance of all the terms of this RFI)

**Suggested Work Plan** (Required – Must Reference RFI Number on cover page)

**Cost Summary** (For evaluation purposes only)

**Offeror Profile:** (Optional, unless specifically required)

**Staffing Level for Work Plan:** (Optional, unless specifically required)

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