



BUFFALO PUBLIC SCHOOLS PROCUREMENT OFFERING
RFP 27-0627E2-055 INSTRUCTIONAL RIGOR, COGNITIVE COMPLEXITY,
AND THE ERIK M. FRANCIS DEPTH OF KNOWLEDGE FRAMEWORK

Offering Summary

SUMMARY:

Buffalo Public Schools seeks a professional learning partner who will strengthen instructional rigor by helping educators intentionally align standards, instruction, assessment, and student thinking through the Erik M. Francis Depth of Knowledge Framework. The District views Depth of Knowledge as a framework for designing rigorous learning experiences rather than an isolated professional learning topic.

This Request for Proposal (RFP) seeks a strategic partner capable of providing high-quality professional learning, job-embedded coaching, leadership development, and sustainable capacity-building systems that will improve instructional rigor, student engagement, academic discourse, and student achievement.

The district intends to establish a multi-year partnership that builds internal capacity over time through a structured implementation model that includes professional learning, coaching, and train-the-trainer development.

DESIGNATED CONTACTS:

Owner (Primary): Julie Walsh, Supervisor Office of School Leadership
Buyer (Copy To): Susan Faulise

The dates specified on the timeline of this offering are subject to change via addendum

TIMELINE:

Release Date:	08/31/2026 8:00 AM	Advertise Dates:	
Questions Due*:	09/08/2026 4:00 PM	- Website/BONFIRE	08/31/2026
Answers Posted:	09/11/2026 4:00 PM	- Buffalo News	09/01/2026
Offering Closed:	09/18/2026 4:00 PM	- Contract Reporter	08/31/2026
Presentations:	N/A	- Rocket	09/03/2026
Tentative Award:	November 1, 2026	- Criterion	09/05/2026

*Questions regarding this offering must be submitted via the online offering portal @ <https://buffaloschools.bonfirehub.com/portal/?tab=openOpportunities>

PROCUREMENT DATA:

Requisition: 3702694
BPS Commodity Code: 004P PD/Staff Development/Training

OFFERING DATA:

Dates are approximate and dependent upon the award date.



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Initial Award & Contract Term: 10/1/2026-6/30/2027
Extensions: 2 additional years (Pending Funding)
Maximum Term End: 06/30/32

OTHER OFFERING PARAMETERS:

Type of Offering:	RFP
Basis of Award:	Best value
Award may be split among respondents:	No
Award may be consolidated:	No
Subcontractors may be used:	No
Insurance is required:	Yes
NYS DOL Prevailing Reference:	N/A
Response Surety Required ("Bid Bond")	No
Performance Bond Required:	No
Formal contract required:	Yes
Proposals valid for:	90 days past closing minimum

SUBMITTAL OPTIONS:

Please refer to the "Standard Terms, Conditions, and Disclaimers" document for more detailed instructions. Only one method of submittal should be used; mailed responses will be entered into the electronic portal by the BPS Purchase Department for evaluation/scoring purposes.

Submittals may be mailed OR submitted electronically per the instructions below:

Mailed or delivered responses must include two (2) printed copies and one (1) electronic copy.

Electronic submittal is ALLOWED (and encouraged) via BPS BONFIRE portal at:
<https://buffaloschools.bonfirehub.com/portal/?tab=openOpportunities>.

Technical assistance with submitting your response electronically is available by contacting the Buyer at the contact information listed on previous page.

**THIS PAGE RESERVED FOR OFFERING
SUMMARY**



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Offering Specification

1) GENERAL INFORMATION

- a. **GENERAL DEFINITIONS:** Please refer to “Standard Terms, Conditions, & Disclaimers”.
- b. **OFFERING SPECIFIC DEFINITIONS:**
1. **Train-the-Trainer (TOT):** A professional learning model designed to build internal organizational capacity by preparing selected educators and leaders to independently facilitate training, provide coaching, support implementation, and sustain continuous improvement efforts. Through a structured sequence of learning experiences, participants develop the knowledge, skills, resources, and facilitation expertise necessary to train and support colleagues, ensuring long-term sustainability and scalability of the initiative.
 2. **District Comprehensive Improvement Plan (DCIP):** The District Comprehensive Improvement Plan (DCIP) is a district-level strategic improvement plan required by NYSED that outlines how the district will:
 - Strengthen high-quality Tier 1 instruction across all schools.
 - Address identified needs and inequities.
 - Improve student outcomes through coherent districtwide systems and supports.
 - Align district actions, professional learning, coaching, curriculum implementation, attendance initiatives, and student support structures.
 - Provide the framework that guides and aligns school-level SCEPs (School Comprehensive Education Plans).
 3. **School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP):** The School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) is a NYSED-required school improvement plan that outlines how a school will strengthen Tier 1 core instruction, address identified needs, and improve student outcomes through coherent, sustainable instructional systems and practices. It is developed through a collaborative planning process and is aligned to the priorities and expectations established in the District Comprehensive Improvement Plan (DCIP).
 4. **Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI):** Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools are schools identified by NYSED for intensive improvement efforts and are required to implement a School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) to improve student achievement and school performance.
 5. **Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI):** An Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) school is a school identified by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) because one or more student subgroups are consistently underperforming and would meet the criteria for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) if considered on their own. ATSI schools are required to develop and implement a School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP) that specifically addresses the needs of the identified subgroup(s) while strengthening overall school systems and instructional practices.
 6. **Receivership-** A Receivership School is a school that has been identified by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) as persistently low-performing and requires intensive support and oversight to improve student outcomes. Under the Receivership program, the district superintendent serves as the "receiver" and is granted additional authority and flexibility to implement turnaround strategies, monitor progress, and ensure measurable improvement. Schools in Receivership receive targeted technical assistance, performance



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monitoring, and may be eligible for supplemental funding to support improvement efforts.

c. VENDOR INFORMATION:

Qualified vendors are encouraged to submit a response for providing the goods and / or services described. If the vendor plans to subcontract any of the work described in the **Scope of Work** the vendor must complete all response requirements for the subcontractor. If a vendor plans a joint venture with another company and/or utilizes subcontractors, the vendor shall specify accordingly and complete all response requirements for each company involved in the offering response.

d. RESPONSES:

Any and all contracts awarded as a result of this offering are subject to the Terms & Conditions stated in the offering. The submission of any other terms or conditions by a respondent may be cause for rejection of the response.

All responses should clearly state/include the following:

STANDARD REQUIREMENTS:

1. Completion of "Offering Questionnaire", Question Set 1 "Standard Response Requirements".
2. Current Certificate of Liability Insurance.
3. Completed "Equal Employment Opportunity Employee Information Report"; form provided.
4. Signed "Non-Collusive Bidding Certification"; form provided.
5. Respondent must provide a list of at least three (3) client references and their contact information. References will be contacted at the sole discretion of the District.
6. Cost proposal in the requested format.
7. Optional items **as required by responses** to the "Offering Questionnaire", including but not limited to:
 - a. "Disclosure Narrative", any format.
 - b. "Debarment Narrative", any format.
 - c. "Certifications" such as MBE/WBE/SDVOB
 - d. "Policy 5414 Compliance Narrative", any format.
 - e. "Subcontractor Documentation", any format.
 - f. "Anti-Lobbying Narrative", any format.
8. Respondents may submit any other information they consider relevant to their response to this offering by using the "Other Vendor Information" document upload.



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2) SCOPE OF WORK

Buffalo Public Schools (BPS) serves approximately 30,000 students across approximately 60 schools and is committed to ensuring equitable access to rigorous, engaging, and supportive learning experiences for all students. The District's Strategic Plan, Moving Forward Together: BPS' Strategic Plan 2026–2031, establishes a clear vision for increasing academic achievement. Through our mission, vision and core beliefs, BPS ensures that every student graduates prepared, confident, and inspired to succeed in college, career, and life. |

BPS currently has 35 schools identified by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) for support and improvement, including schools designated as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI), Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI), and/or Receivership schools.

The District seeks to strengthen instructional practice and instructional leadership through the implementation of a rigorous instructional framework that promotes higher-order thinking, student discourse, problem-solving, and meaningful engagement. This work should be grounded in the original research of Dr. Norman Webb and the instructional applications developed by Erik M. Francis. Vendors should demonstrate an understanding that Depth of Knowledge reflects the cognitive complexity of the standards, and the thinking students must demonstrate. This professional learning should **not** simply use higher-level verbs, question stems, or the traditional DOK Wheel.

DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

This RFP is directly aligned to Priority 1: Academic Excellence, of the Buffalo Public Schools Strategic Plan 2026–2031. Priority 1 establishes ambitious goals for increasing proficiency in ELA, Mathematics, Science, Advanced Placement/Dual Credit participation, and graduation rates. The selected vendor shall demonstrate how proposed services support strategies three and four of Priority 1:

Strategy 3

Strengthen Literacy Across All Content Areas

- Academic discourse
- Student engagement
- Visible thinking
- Increased rigor
- Increased Depth of Knowledge (DOK)

Strategy 4

Build Systems for Coaching, Monitoring, and Accountability

- Instructional coaching cycle
- Professional Learning Communities |
- Frequent walkthroughs
- Actionable feedback
- Leadership development



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- Monitoring implementation fidelity

PURPOSE

Buffalo Public schools seeks a professional learning partner with demonstrated expertise through the Erik M. Francis Depth of Knowledge Framework for Powerful Learning and experience leading districtwide implementation efforts focused on instructional rigor and student achievement. The selected consultant shall support teachers, instructional coaches, school/district and administrators in creating school and classroom environments where students consistently experience:

- Cognitively demanding tasks.
- Challenging grade-level work with appropriate supports.
- Opportunities to think deeply and explain their thinking.
- Productive struggle and authentic problem-solving.
- Academic discourse and collaboration.
- Inquiry-based learning.
- Visible thinking.
- High expectations paired with meaningful support.
- Real-time instructional responsiveness.
- A strong sense of belonging, safety, and inclusion.

The items bulleted above were taken directly from the District's Comprehensive Instructional Plan (DCIP).

TARGET POPULATION

The selected consultant must demonstrate the capacity to support the instructional improvement efforts of 35 NYSED-identified schools

- Elementary Schools (Pre K-8)
 - Number of Teachers- 1,423.00
 - Number of Administrators- 88
- High Schools (9-12)
 - Number of Teachers- 377
 - Number of Administrators- 25

Additional participants will include:

- District Leaders
- District Coaches

DEMONSTRATED OUTCOMES

The District is specifically seeking consultants with documented proof of impact in the:

- Analyzing grade-level standards to determine intended cognitive complexity;
- Designing rigorous instructional tasks aligned to standards;



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- Developing formative and summative assessments that reflect appropriate cognitive demand;
- Coaching and motivating teachers and instructional leaders to strengthen instructional rigor;
- Facilitating professional learning that results in measurable improvements in classroom instruction.
- Alignment of High-Quality Tier 1 Instruction to the district's definition

Preference will be given to consultants who can demonstrate direct experience training educators in the Erik M. Francis model and framework. Proof of impact should include but not be limited to:

- Participant feedback survey data
- Prior presentation samples
- District data

THREE-PHASE IMPLEMENTATION MODEL

PHASE I- Year 1 (\$250,000.00 - 300,000.00)

FOUNDATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

School Year 2026–2027

The primary focus of Phase I is professional learning and foundational implementation.

Required Services:

- Professional Development for Teachers
- Professional Development for Administrators
- Professional Development for Instructional Coaches
- Job-Embedded Professional Learning
- After-Hours Professional Learning
 - The consultant must be available to provide:
 - After-school workshops
 - Evening learning sessions
 - Virtual learning opportunities

Phase I Deliverable

Develop common districtwide understanding and implementation of the Erik M. Francis DOK Framework.

PHASE II- Year 2 (Pending Contract Extension and Funding)

COACHING AND IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT

School Year 2027–2028

The focus of Phase II is implementation, monitoring, and refinement.

On-Site Coaching

The consultant shall provide:

- Teacher coaching cycles
- Instructional walkthrough support
- Leadership coaching



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- Model lessons
- PLC facilitation
- School improvement planning support
- Off-Site Coaching
- The consultant shall provide:
 - Virtual coaching
 - Office hours
 - Leadership consultation
 - Online learning communities
 - Data review sessions

Phase II Deliverable

Increase implementation fidelity and strengthen systems for coaching, monitoring, and accountability across participating schools.

PHASE III- Year 3 (Pending Contract Extension and Funding)

TRAIN-THE-TRAINER AND SUSTAINABILITY

School Year 2028–2029

The focus of Phase III is building long-term internal capacity.

Participants

- District Instructional Coaches
- School-Based Coache
- Teacher Leaders
- Administrative Leaders

Required Services

- Train-the-Trainer Academy
- The consultant shall develop a cadre of district facilitators capable of independently sustaining implementation.

Training shall include

- Facilitating DOK professional learning
- Coaching teachers and leaders
- Conducting instructional walkthroughs
- Supporting PLCs
- Developing school-based implementation plans

Phase III Deliverables

The consultant shall provide:

- Facilitator guides
- Coaching protocols
- Training resources
- Sustainability plans
- Capacity-building tools



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EXPECTED OUTCOMES

By the conclusion of this initiative, Buffalo Public Schools expects evidence of:

Teacher Outcomes

- Teachers intentionally design and facilitate learning experiences that align instructional tasks and assessments to the intended cognitive complexity of grade-level standards.
- Improve lesson plan quality
- Increased academic discourse
- Greater use of formative assessment

Administrator Outcomes

- Improved administrator capacity to lead instructional feedback on DOK and rigor
- Improved feedback practices
- Effective DOK walkthrough implementation
- Stronger coaching systems

Student Outcomes

Students will increasingly experience:

- Rigorous grade-level instruction
- Productive struggle
- Collaboration and discourse
- Deep thinking and reasoning
- Problem-solving opportunities
- Increased engagement
- Visible thinking
- Academic confidence

District Outcomes

- Sustainable coaching systems
- Districtwide implementation structures
- Internal facilitation capacity
- Improved alignment to Priority 1 Academic Excellence goal and strategies 3 and 4 of the district strategic plan

OFFERING SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS:

a. **PROJECT REQUIREMENTS**

Proposals shall include:

Organizational Background

- Organizational history
- Relevant experience
- Qualifications



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Technical Proposal

- Description of services and alignment to BPS Strategic Plan Priority1: Academic Excellence
- Vendors shall describe:
 - Definition of instructional rigor and expertise in increasing instructional rigor and cognitive complexity using Erik M. Francis' DOK framework
 - How the Erik M. Francis Depth of Knowledge Framework supports rigorous instruction;
 - How their professional learning model helps educators align standards, instruction, assessment, and student thinking;
 - How they ensure equitable access to rigorous learning experiences for all students.
- Three-phase implementation plan
- Coaching model (Phase 2 and 3)
- Leadership development model (District and School)
- Capacity-building strategy
- Sustainability Plan (Phase 3)
- Experience supporting schools identified for continuous improvement by the State Education Department

Personnel

- Key staff
- Qualifications
- Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- Capacity to Support 35 Elementary and Secondary Schools

References

- Minimum of three educational references. At least one reference should be from district leadership.

Budget Proposal

Vendors must provide:

- Total all-inclusive cost to perform duties under scope of work
- Detailed budget narrative
- Cost breakdown by phase
- Daily rates
- Travel costs
- Materials costs
- Optional services



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3) EVALUATION PROCEDURES

a. Review of Responses

Responses will be evaluated by a cross functional team consisting of subject matter experts and a Purchasing representative.

b. Respondent's Presentations

Respondents may be required to present once, at the District's discretion, which will include a question and answer session with the evaluation team. Questions and specific requests to be addressed during the presentation will be forwarded to the respondents.

c. Evaluation Criteria

Responses will be evaluated on a 100 point scale as defined in the table below. Cost will be calculated proportionally compared to lowest cost response. The minimum non-cost score is 56 points.

CRITERIA	VALUE
COST	25
Expertise in Increasing Instructional Rigor and Cognitive Complexity Using Erik M Francis' DOK Framework	20
Alignment to BPS Strategic Plan Priority 1: Academic Excellence	15
Quality of Multi-Year Implementation Plan (Phase I-III)	15
Experience Supporting Schools Identified for Continuous Improvement by the State Education Department	15
Capacity to Support 35 Elementary and Secondary Schools	10

d. Final Selection

The Board of Education and its representatives will select a firm based upon the recommendations of the evaluation team. It is anticipated that a firm will be selected by the date listed in the offering summary. Following notification of the firm selected, it is expected that a contract will be executed between both parties. The selected firm must be prepared to begin work upon execution of the BPS contract. The contract will not necessarily be awarded to the response with the lowest cost projection.