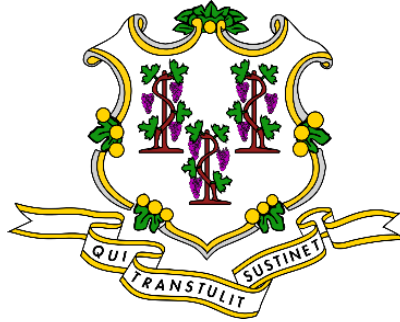


## STATE OF CONNECTICUT PROCUREMENT NOTICE



Request for Proposals (RFP) For  
Promise Program Development & Implementation  
Consultant

RFP Number: 26091001

Issued By:

Office of Higher Education

October 14, 2026

The Request For Proposal is available in electronic format on the State Contracting Portal by filtering by Organization for Office of Higher Education: <https://portal.ct.gov/DAS/CTSource/BidBoard> or from the Agency's Official Contact:

Name: Scott Ciecko  
Address: 450 Columbus Blvd. Suite 707 Hartford, CT 06103  
Phone: 860-947-1851  
Fax: 860-947-1310  
E-Mail: [scott.ciecko@ct.gov](mailto:scott.ciecko@ct.gov)

RESPONSES MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN

November 16 at 5:00 PM EST

The State of Connecticut and the Office of Higher Education is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. The Agency reserves the right to reject any and all submissions or cancel this procurement at any time if deemed in the best interest of the State of Connecticut (State).

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## I. GENERAL INFORMATION

### < A. INTRODUCTION

- 1. RFP Name and Number.** RFP #26091001 / Promise Program Development & Implementation Consultant
- 2. RFP Summary.** The Connecticut Office of Higher Education (OHE) seeks a qualified consultant with demonstrated expertise in the development, launch, operation, and sustainability of Promise Programs to support OHE in implementing Connecticut's statewide initiative to establish new Promise Programs. The consultant will provide technical assistance, stakeholder engagement, locally responsive program design, evaluation metrics, funding strategies, sustainability planning, and implementation support.
- 3. RFP Purpose.** OHE is issuing this Request for Proposals (RFP) to contract with one consultant to implement the Promise Program development provisions established by Substitute Bill No. 380. A Promise Program is a scholarship program that combines scholarship assistance with services and resources, including mentoring, peer support networks, internships, and other supports intended to promote postsecondary academic success. OHE is charged with supporting the establishment of eight new Promise Programs by January 1, 2031, with priority for programs serving students in alliance districts.

Specifically, OHE seeks a consultant to:

- Advise OHE, municipalities, and regional coalitions on the development and launch of new Promise Programs.
- Provide technical assistance on initial funding strategies, stakeholder engagement, locally responsive program design, evaluation metrics, and sustainability planning.
- Support OHE in identifying and prioritizing communities, including alliance districts, that are positioned to establish Promise Programs.
- Develop practical tools, templates, implementation guidance, and a scalable framework for Promise Program development.
- Prepare progress information and written reports that enable OHE to meet its annual legislative reporting requirements.

#### **Problem Statement**

Connecticut seeks to expand access to locally designed Promise Programs that combine scholarship assistance with comprehensive student supports including mentoring, peer support networks, internships, and other resources to promote postsecondary enrollment, persistence, completion, and successful transition to employment.

While Promise Programs have demonstrated a model for connecting financial assistance with student support, communities interested in establishing new programs may lack the specialized expertise, organizational infrastructure, funding strategies, stakeholder partnerships, and implementation capacity necessary to move from initial interest to a sustainable and operational Promise Program.

State law directs the Office of Higher Education (OHE) to support the establishment of eight new Promise Programs by January 1, 2031, with priority given to programs serving students in Connecticut's alliance districts. OHE is responsible for coordinating with interested municipalities and regional coalitions and providing both start-up funding and technical assistance to support the development of these programs.

To accomplish this objective, communities will require structured technical assistance in areas including initial funding strategies; stakeholder engagement with local and regional boards of education, legislative bodies, nonprofit organizations, and businesses; locally responsive program design; development of evaluation metrics; and long-term sustainability planning.

The legislation specifically directs OHE to retain a consultant with expertise in the development and operation of Promise Programs to support this work. Accordingly, OHE seeks a qualified consultant to provide the specialized expertise, strategic guidance, technical assistance, and implementation support necessary to help communities develop viable Promise Programs and establish a sustainable statewide framework for expanding the Promise Program model across Connecticut.

### **Outcome Goals**

1. Program Expansion: Support OHE toward the statutory goal of establishing eight new Promise Programs by January 1, 2031.
2. Community Readiness: Build the capacity of municipalities and regional coalitions to design and launch sustainable Promise Programs.
3. Equitable Access: Prioritize development strategies that expand opportunity for students in alliance districts and other communities with demonstrated need.
4. Quality and Consistency: Establish a statewide development framework while allowing each Promise Program to respond to its local environment.
5. Accountability and Sustainability: Develop measurable outcomes, evaluation tools, funding strategies, and sustainability plans for new Promise Programs.

**4. Commodity Codes.** The services that the Agency wishes to procure through this RFP are as follows:

- 86000000: Management education and training services

## < B. INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Official Contact.** The Agency has designated the individual below as the Official Contact for purposes of this RFP. The Official Contact is the only authorized contact for this procurement and, as such, handles all related communications on behalf of the Agency. Proposers, prospective proposers, and other interested parties are advised that any communication with any other Agency employee(s) (including appointed officials) or personnel under contract to the Agency about this RFP is strictly prohibited. Proposers or prospective proposers who violate this instruction may risk disqualification from further consideration.

Name: Scott Ciecko  
 Address: 450 Columbus Blvd. Suite 707 Hartford, CT 06103  
 Phone: 860-947-1851  
 E-Mail: scott.ciecko@ct.gov

Please ensure that e-mail screening software (if used) recognizes and accepts e-mails from the Official Contact.

2. **Registering with State Contracting Portal.** Proposers must register with the State of CT contracting portal at <https://portal.ct.gov/DAS/CTSource/Registration> if not already registered. Respondents shall submit the following information pertaining to this application to this portal (on their supplier profile), which will be checked by the Agency contact.
  - Secretary of State recognition – Click on appropriate response
  - Non-profit status, if applicable
  - Notification to Bidders, Parts I-V
  - Campaign Contribution Certification (OPM Ethics Form 1):  
<https://portal.ct.gov/OPM/Fin-PSA/Forms/Ethics-Forms>
3. **RFP Information.** The RFP, amendments to the RFP, and other information associated with this procurement are available in electronic format from the Official Contact.

State Contracting Portal (go to CTsource bid board, filter by Office of Higher Education <https://portal.ct.gov/DAS/CTSource/BidBoard>)

It is strongly recommended that any proposer or prospective proposer interested in this procurement check the Bid Board for any solicitation changes. Interested proposers may receive additional e-mails from CT Source announcing addendums that are posted on the portal. This service is provided as a courtesy to assist in monitoring activities associated with State procurements, including this RFP.

4. **Procurement Schedule.** See below. Dates after the due date for proposals ("Proposals Due") are non-binding target dates only (\*). The Agency may amend the schedule as needed. Any change to non-target dates will be made by means of an

amendment to this RFP and will be posted on the State Contracting Portal and, if available, the Agency’s RFP Web Page.

- RFP Released: October 14, 2026
- Deadline for Questions: October 22, 2026
- Answers Released: October 29, 2026
- Proposals Due: November 16, 2026
- (\*) Proposer Selection: November 23, 2026
- (\*) Start of Contract Negotiations: November 30, 2026
- (\*) Start of Contract: January 1, 2027

**5. Contract Awards.** The award of any contract pursuant to this RFP is dependent upon the availability of funding to the Agency. The Agency anticipates the following:

- Total Funding Available: Up to \$400,000.00
- Number of Awards: One (1)
- Contract Cost: Not to exceed available appropriated funds
- Contract Term: Anticipated through June 30, 2031, subject to funding and contracting authority

**6. Eligibility.** Eligible proposers may be individuals, firms, nonprofit organizations, institutions, or other entities with demonstrated expertise in the development and operation of Promise Programs or comparable place-based scholarship and student-success initiatives. Proposers must demonstrate the capacity to provide statewide consulting, technical assistance, facilitation, research, program design, evaluation, and implementation support.

Proposers should demonstrate direct experience working with municipalities, school districts, higher education institutions, philanthropy, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and other community stakeholders to design or operate scholarship-plus-support models.

Preference will be given to proposers that demonstrate practical experience launching Promise Programs; developing sustainable public-private funding models; facilitating cross-sector coalitions; and designing measurable student-success outcomes.

All eligible proposers must be in good standing with applicable governmental and regulatory requirements and must be capable of beginning services on or near the anticipated contract start date.

**7. Minimum Qualifications of Proposers.** To qualify for a contract award, a proposer must have the following minimum qualifications:

a. **Promise Program Expertise:**

Demonstrated expertise in the development, launch, management, or evaluation of Promise Programs or closely comparable scholarship-plus-support initiatives.

b. **Strategic Planning and Program Design:**

Experience translating community needs and assets into actionable program models, eligibility structures, student supports, implementation plans, and operating frameworks.

c. **Stakeholder Engagement:**

Demonstrated experience facilitating multi-sector partnerships involving municipalities, boards of education, higher education, nonprofit organizations, philanthropy, employers, and community leaders.

d. **Funding and Sustainability:**

Experience developing start-up funding strategies, diversified funding models, fundraising approaches, and long-term sustainability plans.

e. **Evaluation and Reporting:**

Capacity to establish performance measures, evaluation metrics, data collection approaches, and clear written reports suitable for public agencies and legislative audiences.

f. **Operational Readiness:**

Ability to begin services on or around the anticipated contract start date and provide sufficient staffing through the contract term.

Proposals from proposers that do not meet these minimum qualifications will be deemed ineligible for further review.

**8. Letter of Intent.** A Letter of Intent (LOI) **is not** required by this RFP.

**9. Inquiry Procedures.** All questions regarding this RFP or the Agency's procurement process must be directed, in writing, electronically, (e-mail) to the Official Contact before the deadline specified in the Procurement Schedule. The early submission of questions is encouraged. Questions will not be accepted or answered verbally – neither in person nor over the telephone. All questions received before the deadline(s) will be answered. However, the Agency will not answer questions when the source is unknown (i.e., nuisance or anonymous questions). Questions deemed unrelated to the RFP or the procurement process will not be answered. At its discretion, the Agency may or may not respond to questions received after the deadline. If this RFP requires a Letter of Intent, the Agency reserves the right to answer questions only from those who have submitted such a letter. The Agency may combine similar questions and give only one answer. All questions and answers will be compiled into a written amendment to this RFP. If any answer to any question constitutes a material change to the RFP, the question and answer will be placed at the beginning of the amendment and duly noted as such.

The agency will release the answers to questions on the date established in the Procurement Schedule. The Agency will publish any and all amendments to this RFP on the State Contracting Portal and, if available, on the Agency's RFP Web Page.

**10. RFP Conference.** An RFP conference **will not** be held to answer questions from prospective proposers.

**11. Proposal Due Date and Time.** The Official Contact is the only authorized recipient of proposals submitted in response to this RFP. Proposals must be received by the Official Contact on or before the due date and time:

- Due Date: November 16, 2026
- Time: 5:00 PM EST

Proposals received after the due date and time will be ineligible and will not be evaluated. The Agency will send an official letter alerting late respondents of ineligibility.

An acceptable submission must include the following:

- One (1) conforming electronic copy of the original proposal.
- The proposal must be complete, properly formatted and outlined, and ready for evaluation by the Review Committee.

**12. Multiple Proposals.** The submission of multiple proposals is **not an** option for this procurement.

## II. PURPOSE OF RFP AND SCOPE OF SERVICES

### < A. AGENCY OVERVIEW

#### **Mission**

The Office of Higher Education seeks to advance the promise of postsecondary education for all Connecticut citizens and to advocate on behalf of students, taxpayers, and the postsecondary institutions under its oversight. The agency promotes access, affordability, accountability, and quality across Connecticut’s higher education landscape.

#### **Organizational Overview**

The Connecticut Office of Higher Education was established to provide state-level coordination, quality assurance, and student-focused oversight of higher education activities in Connecticut. OHE operates through three key divisions:

##### 1. **Academic Affairs Division**

Responsible for the oversight and approval of independent colleges and private occupational schools, ensuring academic programs meet established quality standards and regulatory compliance.

##### 2. **Finance Division**

Administers the state’s financial aid programs, including the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship, and supports student affordability through need-based and merit-based initiatives.

##### 3. **Grant Initiatives Division**

Oversees a range of targeted programs and initiatives that promote student success, diversity, and service, including the Minority Advancement Program (MAP), AmeriCorps (Serve Connecticut), and the Alternate Route to Certification (ARC) program.

Together, these divisions advance the agency’s mission of ensuring all students in Connecticut can access a responsive, accountable, and supportive higher education system.

### < B. SERVICE OVERVIEW

#### Promise Program Development & Implementation Consultant

#### **Problem Statement**

Connecticut seeks to expand access to locally designed Promise Programs that combine scholarship assistance with services and resources that promote postsecondary academic success. State law directs OHE to establish a program supporting the creation of new Promise Programs throughout Connecticut, with a goal of eight new programs by January 1, 2031, prioritizing programs serving students in alliance districts. OHE must coordinate with interested municipalities and regional coalitions and provide start-up support and technical assistance. To carry out this work effectively and consistently across multiple communities,

OHE requires specialized consulting expertise in Promise Program development and operation.

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### **Service Outcome Goals**

- Statewide Framework: Develop a practical, replicable framework for establishing new Promise Programs in Connecticut.
- Community Pipeline: Assist OHE in identifying, assessing, and supporting municipalities and regional coalitions interested in developing Promise Programs.
- Technical Assistance: Deliver tailored assistance addressing initial funding strategies, stakeholder engagement, program design, evaluation metrics, and sustainability planning.
- Implementation Progress: Advance selected communities from interest/readiness through program design, launch planning, and implementation.
- Legislative Accountability: Provide OHE with timely progress information and annual consultant reports to support statutory reporting through January 1, 2031, or until eight new Promise Programs are established, whichever occurs earlier.

### **Service Policies / Guidelines**

- The consultant must coordinate closely with OHE and work collaboratively with municipalities and regional coalitions interested in establishing Promise Programs.
- Technical assistance must address, at minimum, initial funding strategies; stakeholder engagement; locally responsive program design; development of evaluation metrics; and sustainability planning.
- Stakeholder engagement should include, as appropriate, local or regional boards of education, legislative bodies, nonprofit organizations, businesses, higher education partners, philanthropy, students, families, and community leaders.
- Program designs should reflect local conditions while supporting statewide quality, accountability, and sustainability.
- All work products developed under the contract must be suitable for OHE use in supporting current and future Promise Program communities, Target Communities and Partners.
- The primary users of the consultant's services will be OHE and Connecticut municipalities or regional coalitions seeking to establish new Promise Programs. Priority will be given to development efforts serving students in alliance districts. The consultant will also engage the local and regional partners necessary to create durable scholarship and student-support ecosystems.

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### **Vision for a Successful Service**

A successful engagement will leave OHE with a strong statewide implementation framework, a pipeline of communities prepared to launch Promise Programs, locally tailored program plans, measurable performance expectations, sustainable funding approaches, and clear documentation of progress toward the establishment of eight new Promise Programs by January 1, 2031.

## < C. SCOPE OF SERVICE DESCRIPTION

### **Consultant Experience, Qualifications, and Organizational Capacity (25 points)**

Proposers must demonstrate the experience, qualifications, and organizational capacity necessary to successfully support the development and implementation of Promise Programs across Connecticut. Particular emphasis will be placed on demonstrated Promise Program or comparable experience, the qualifications of key personnel, experience working with diverse community and cross-sector partners, and the organizational capacity to effectively support multiple communities concurrently.

Submissions must include:

- Demonstrated expertise in the development, implementation, and/or operation of Promise Programs or comparable place-based scholarship and student-success initiatives
- Experience providing technical assistance to municipalities, regional coalitions, educational entities, nonprofits, or community partnerships
- Experience with postsecondary access, student success, scholarship, and/or college-to-career initiatives
- Qualifications and relevant experience of proposed key personnel
- Organizational capacity and availability to successfully perform the scope of services

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### **Approach to Promise Program Development & Implementation (30 points)**

Proposers must present a clear, practical, and scalable approach for supporting the development and implementation of new Promise Programs across Connecticut. The proposed approach should demonstrate how the Consultant will assess community readiness, engage key stakeholders, provide tailored technical assistance, support locally responsive program design, and guide communities from initial planning through successful program launch and long-term sustainability.

Submissions must include:

- Clear and feasible approach to assessing community readiness and supporting development of new Promise Programs.
- Approach to developing initial and long-term funding strategies.
- Approach to stakeholder engagement and development of community partnerships.
- Approach to locally responsive program design, including scholarship and student-support components.
- Approach to implementation planning and movement from program concept to operational readiness.
- Approach to supporting communities serving students in alliance districts and addressing differing community needs and capacities.

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### **Technical Assistance, Sustainability, and Knowledge Transfer (20 points)**

Proposers must demonstrate a comprehensive approach to providing responsive technical assistance that builds local capacity and supports the long-term sustainability of new Promise Programs. The proposed approach should also ensure that knowledge, tools,

resources, and promising practices developed through the engagement are effectively transferred to OHE and participating communities for continued use and future program expansion.

Submissions should include:

- Quality and feasibility of proposed technical assistance model for municipalities and regional coalitions
- Approach to developing evaluation metrics and data collection strategies
- Approach to long-term financial and operational sustainability planning
- Development of reusable tools, templates, guidance, and implementation resources for OHE and participating communities
- Strategy for identifying and sharing promising practices and lessons learned across communities

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### **Project Management, Performance Monitoring, and Reporting (15 points)**

Proposers must demonstrate a clear and effective approach to managing the engagement, monitoring progress, and ensuring accountability throughout the contract period. The proposed approach should include defined milestones and deliverables, regular coordination with OHE, systems for tracking community progress and performance, timely identification of challenges, and comprehensive reporting to support program oversight and required legislative reporting.

Submissions should include:

- Clear work plan, implementation timeline, milestones, and deliverables
- Approach to tracking community progress, technical assistance activities, and performance measures
- Quality and feasibility of progress-reporting methodology, including support for OHE's statutory reporting requirements
- Communication, collaboration, issue escalation, and ongoing coordination with OHE

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### **Budget and Cost Proposal (10 points)**

Proposers must provide a clear, reasonable, and cost-effective budget that aligns with the proposed scope of work, staffing approach, and anticipated deliverables. The cost proposal should demonstrate efficient use of available resources, clearly identify all proposed costs and assumptions, and reflect the capacity to scale services as additional communities enter the Promise Program development process.

Required elements include:

- Clarity and completeness of proposed budget and cost structure
- Reasonableness of costs in relation to proposed services, staffing, and deliverables
- Cost-effectiveness and demonstrated efficient use of State resources

The proposers must also commit to responsive communication with OHE throughout the contract period.

## < D. PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The following performance metrics highlight key priorities that will be analyzed with providers/vendors collaboratively during the life of the contract. This is not an exhaustive list, but rather an indication of significant performance metrics of interest to the Agency. The Agency looks forward to working with providers/vendors to define additional important performance metrics.

### Core Performance Metrics

#### 1. Community Engagement and Readiness

*Definition:* Number and status of municipalities or regional coalitions assessed, engaged, and receiving technical assistance.

*Target:* Progress consistent with an implementation pathway capable of supporting eight new Promise Programs by January 1, 2031.

#### 2. Technical Assistance Delivery

*Definition:* Completion of agreed technical-assistance activities addressing funding, stakeholder engagement, program design, evaluation, and sustainability.

*Target:* 100% of approved technical-assistance deliverables completed according to the agreed work plan.

#### 3. Program Development Milestones

*Definition:* Demonstrated progress of participating communities through readiness, design, funding, governance, launch planning, and implementation milestones.

*Target:* Milestones established with OHE and achieved or appropriately adjusted based on documented community conditions.

#### 4. Reporting Compliance

*Definition:* Timely and complete submission of progress reports and annual consultant reporting materials.

*Target:* 100% of required reports submitted on time and in the required format.

### Notes on Evaluation and Collaboration

- OHE anticipates using these metrics as the foundation for ongoing program monitoring, implementation adjustments, and assessment of statewide progress.
- The Agency encourages proposers to recommend additional meaningful measures related to community readiness, program launch, student supports, funding sustainability, and implementation quality.
- Performance measures may be refined collaboratively during contract negotiation and implementation, provided they remain aligned with statutory requirements and the goals of this RFP.

## < **E. CONTRACT MANAGEMENT/DATA REPORTING**

As part of the State’s commitment to outcomes-oriented contract management, OHE will actively collaborate with the consultant to monitor progress, resolve implementation barriers, and strengthen the development of Promise Programs. Reliable and relevant information will be necessary to support OHE oversight and statutory reporting.

### **Data Collection and Reporting Requirements**

The consultant will be required to collect and submit regular information on statewide and community-level implementation. At a minimum, the consultant must:

- Submit regular progress reports to OHE on a schedule established during contract negotiation. Reports must include:
  - ★ Communities contacted, assessed, or actively receiving technical assistance
  - ★ Status of each participating community and progress against agreed milestones
  - ★ Stakeholder engagement activities and key decisions
  - ★ Funding strategy and sustainability planning progress
  - ★ Program design and evaluation framework development
  - ★ Implementation barriers, risks, corrective actions, and decisions needed from OHE
  - ★ Progress toward the statewide goal of eight new Promise Programs
- Submit an annual consultant progress report in sufficient time for OHE to meet its January 1 legislative reporting requirement, and a final report at the conclusion of the engagement, summarizing:
  - ★ Statewide progress toward establishing new Promise Programs
  - ★ Status and accomplishments of participating communities
  - ★ Technical assistance delivered and tools developed
  - ★ Lessons learned and promising practices
  - ★ Recommendations for sustainability, scaling, and future implementation

OHE reserves the right to request additional data or analysis as needed to evaluate performance, respond to legislative or stakeholder inquiries, and support program administration.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Consultant Responsibilities**

The selected Consultant will work in close partnership with OHE to support the development, implementation, and sustainability of new Promise Programs throughout Connecticut.

The Consultant will:

- Serve as the subject-matter expert on the development, implementation, operation, and sustainability of Promise Programs.

- Assist OHE in identifying and assessing municipalities, regional coalitions, and communities interested in establishing new Promise Programs, with particular attention to communities serving students in alliance districts.
- Conduct readiness and capacity assessments to determine each community's existing resources, partnerships, needs, opportunities, and barriers to establishing a Promise Program.
- Provide individualized and group technical assistance to participating municipalities and regional coalitions throughout the planning and implementation process.
- Assist communities with developing initial and long-term funding strategies, including identification of public, private, philanthropic, business, and community-based resources.
- Facilitate stakeholder engagement involving local and regional boards of education, municipal legislative bodies, nonprofit organizations, businesses, higher education institutions, community leaders, students, families, and other appropriate partners.
- Guide communities in developing Promise Program models that reflect their local environment, student population, community needs, available resources, and postsecondary opportunities.
- Assist communities in establishing program eligibility requirements, scholarship structures, student support strategies, governance structures, operational procedures, and implementation timelines, as appropriate.
- Support the incorporation of student success services and resources, which may include mentoring, peer support networks, internships, and other supports consistent with the statutory definition of a Promise Program.
- Develop recommended evaluation metrics and data collection strategies that enable programs and OHE to measure implementation, student participation, outcomes, and overall program effectiveness.
- Assist each developing Promise Program with creating a sustainability plan addressing long-term financing, partnerships, governance, operations, and continued community engagement.
- Develop tools, templates, guidance documents, implementation roadmaps, and other resources that can be used by OHE and communities to support current and future Promise Program development.
- Identify implementation challenges, emerging issues, promising practices, and recommended corrective or strategic actions and communicate them promptly to OHE.
- Participate in regular meetings and progress reviews with OHE and participating communities.
- Maintain appropriate documentation of technical assistance, stakeholder engagement, community progress, milestones, and deliverables.
- Prepare and submit progress reports to OHE in a format and schedule established by the Agency, including information necessary for OHE to meet its statutory reporting obligations to the General Assembly. The legislation requires annual progress reporting on the establishment of new Promise Programs until eight programs are established or January 1, 2031, whichever occurs first.

- Provide recommendations to OHE regarding strategies for strengthening and expanding the Promise Program initiative statewide.

**Office of Higher Education Responsibilities**

OHE will provide overall leadership, contract oversight, policy direction, and state-level coordination for the Promise Program initiative.

OHE will:

- Serve as the lead state agency responsible for administration and oversight of the Promise Program initiative.
- Establish overall program priorities, expectations, timelines, and performance requirements consistent with applicable state law and available appropriations.
- Coordinate with municipalities and regional coalitions interested in establishing new Promise Programs, as required by the legislation.
- Identify and/or approve communities that will receive Consultant technical assistance, including consideration of the statutory priority for Promise Programs serving students in alliance districts.
- Serve as the primary liaison between the Consultant and relevant state agencies, municipalities, regional coalitions, educational institutions, and other statewide partners, as appropriate.
- Provide the Consultant with available program information, statutory requirements, state guidance, relevant data, and other materials necessary to perform the contracted services.
- Review and approve Consultant work plans, deliverables, reports, technical assistance materials, recommendations, and other products developed under the contract.
- Make policy and programmatic decisions that remain within the authority of OHE; the Consultant will provide advice and recommendations but will not exercise decision-making authority on behalf of the State.
- Determine the amount and administration of available start-up funding for new Promise Programs, consistent with statutory requirements and available appropriations. The legislation assigns this funding responsibility to OHE and provides that the amount is designated by the OHE Commissioner.
- Monitor Consultant performance, contract compliance, expenditures, timelines, and progress toward required deliverables.
- Convene or participate in regular contract-management meetings with the Consultant to review progress, resolve implementation issues, and establish upcoming priorities.
- Provide timely feedback and decisions necessary for the Consultant to proceed with assigned activities.
- Coordinate state-level communications and stakeholder engagement when OHE participation or authority is required.
- Maintain responsibility for official communications, funding decisions, statutory compliance, and reporting to the General Assembly.

- Use Consultant progress reports, data, recommendations, and other deliverables to prepare and submit required state reports and to inform continued development of the statewide Promise Program initiative.

**Ongoing Collaboration and Oversight**

OHE and the Consultant will maintain an ongoing, collaborative working relationship throughout the contract period to ensure that technical assistance activities remain aligned with statutory requirements, community needs, established deliverables, and the State's goal of supporting the establishment of new Promise Programs.

OHE will conduct regular contract management meetings, anticipated to occur at least monthly, with the Consultant. Additional meetings may be scheduled during periods of significant planning, community engagement, program launch, or preparation of required reports.

These meetings may be used to:

- Review progress toward the development and establishment of new Promise Programs, including progress toward the statutory goal of establishing eight new programs by January 1, 2031.
- Review the status, readiness, milestones, and technical assistance needs of participating municipalities and regional coalitions.
- Assess progress in communities serving students in alliance districts, consistent with the statutory priority established for the initiative.
- Review technical assistance provided in the areas of funding strategies, stakeholder engagement, program design, evaluation metrics, and sustainability planning.
- Identify implementation barriers, emerging risks, resource needs, and other issues requiring OHE guidance or intervention.
- Review upcoming Consultant activities, community meetings, stakeholder engagement efforts, and anticipated deliverables.
- Review data and performance measures to assess community progress and inform adjustments to technical assistance strategies.
- Discuss promising practices and lessons learned that may be applicable across participating communities.
- Coordinate communications with municipalities, regional coalitions, state agencies, educational institutions, philanthropic organizations, businesses, and other stakeholders, as appropriate.
- Review Consultant expenditures, contract deliverables, timelines, and overall performance.
- Determine whether modifications to work plans, technical assistance strategies, or implementation timelines are necessary.
- Review and finalize information needed to support OHE's required reporting to the General Assembly.

The Consultant will maintain regular communication with the designated OHE project lead and will promptly notify OHE of significant implementation challenges, delays, changes in

community readiness, or other circumstances that may affect achievement of contract objectives.

OHE will retain responsibility for contract oversight, approval of deliverables, policy and funding decisions, and determination of statewide program priorities. The Consultant will provide recommendations, technical expertise, implementation support, and information necessary to assist OHE in making those decisions.

### **Continuous Improvement**

OHE and the Consultant will use information gathered through community engagement, technical assistance activities, performance monitoring, and implementation experience as a continuous feedback loop. Lessons learned from communities developing early Promise Programs should be used to refine technical assistance tools and approaches for subsequent communities.

This is particularly important because the legislation envisions an expansion process occurring through January 1, 2031, or until eight new Promise Programs have been established, whichever occurs first.

### III. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION OVERVIEW

#### < A. SUBMISSION FORMAT INFORMATION

1. **Required Outline.** All proposals must follow the required outline presented in Section IV – Proposal Outline. Proposals that fail to follow the required outline will be deemed non-responsive and will not be evaluated.
2. **Cover Sheet.** The Cover Sheet is Page 1 of the proposal.
3. **Table of Contents.** All proposals must include a Table of Contents that conforms with the required proposal outline.
4. **Executive Summary.** Proposals must include a high-level summary of the main proposal and cost proposal, not to exceed 2 pages. The summary must also include the organization's eligibility and qualifications to respond to this RFP. Executive Summary should also include (a) a summary of the proposed program (b) proposer's capacity and resources (c) commitment to outcomes and collaboration (d) cost-effectiveness.
5. **Attachments.** Attachments other than the required Appendices or Forms identified in the RFP are not permitted and will not be evaluated. Further, the required Appendices or Forms must not be altered or used to extend, enhance, or replace any component required by this RFP. Failure to abide by these instructions will result in disqualification.

#### 6. **Style Requirements.** THIS IS AN ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION.

Submitted proposals must conform to the following specifications:

- Paper Size: Standard Letter
- Page Limit: 25 pages, excluding required attachments such as the cover sheet
- Font Size: 12
- Font Type: Times New Roman
- Margins: 1 inch margins
- Line Spacing: 1.5

7. **Pagination.** The proposer's name must be displayed in the header of each page. All pages, including the required Appendices and Forms, must be numbered in the footer.
8. **Declaration of Confidential Information.** Proposers are advised that all materials associated with this procurement are subject to the terms of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the Privacy Act, and all rules, regulations and interpretations resulting from them. If a proposer deems that certain information required by this RFP is confidential, the proposer must label such information as CONFIDENTIAL prior

to submission. In subsection C of the proposal submission, the proposer must reference where the information labeled CONFIDENTIAL is located in the proposal. EXAMPLE: Section G.1.a. For each subsection so referenced, the proposer must provide a convincing explanation and rationale sufficient to justify an exemption of the information from release under the FOIA. The explanation and rationale must be stated in terms of (a) the prospective harm to the competitive position of the proposer that would result if the identified information were to be released and (b) the reasons why the information is legally exempt from release pursuant to C.G.S. § 1-210(b).

- 9. Conflict of Interest - Disclosure Statement.** Proposers must include a disclosure statement concerning any current business relationships (within the last three (3) years) that pose a conflict of interest, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-85. A conflict of interest exists when a relationship exists between the proposer and a public official (including an elected official) or State employee that may interfere with fair competition or may be adverse to the interests of the State. The existence of a conflict of interest is not, in and of itself, evidence of wrongdoing. A conflict of interest may, however, become a legal matter if a proposer tries to influence, or succeeds in influencing, the outcome of an official decision for their personal or corporate benefit. The Agency will determine whether any disclosed conflict of interest poses a substantial advantage to the proposer over the competition, decreases the overall competitiveness of this procurement, or is not in the best interests of the State. In the absence of any conflict of interest, a proposer must affirm such in the disclosure statement. Example: "[name of proposer] has no current business relationship (within the last three (3) years) that poses a conflict of interest, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-85."

## < **B. EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS**

- 1. Evaluation Process.** It is the intent of the Agency to conduct a comprehensive, fair, and impartial evaluation of proposals received in response to this RFP. When evaluating proposals, negotiating with successful proposers, and awarding contracts, the Agency will conform with its written procedures for PSA procurements (pursuant to C.G.S. § 4-217) and the State's Code of Ethics (pursuant to C.G.S. §§ 1-84 and 1-85). Final funding allocation decisions will be determined during contract negotiation.
- 2. Evaluation Review Committee.** The Agency will designate a Review Committee to evaluate proposals submitted in response to this RFP. The Review Committee will be composed of individuals, Agency staff or other designees as deemed appropriate. The contents of all submitted proposals, including any confidential information, will be shared with the Review Committee. Only proposals found to be responsive (that is, complying with all instructions and requirements described herein) will be reviewed, rated, and scored. Proposals that fail to comply with all instructions will be rejected without further consideration. The Review Committee shall evaluate all proposals that meet the Minimum Submission Requirements by score and rank

ordered and make recommendations for awards. The Commissioner will make the final selection. Attempts by any proposer (or representative of any proposer) to contact or influence any member of the Review Committee may result in disqualification of the proposer.

- 3. Minimum Submission Requirements.** To be eligible for evaluation, proposals must (1) be received on or before the due date and time; (2) meet the Proposal Format requirements; (3) meet the Eligibility and Qualification requirements to respond to the procurement, (4) follow the required Proposal Outline; and (5) be complete. Proposals that fail to follow instructions or satisfy these minimum submissions requirements will not be reviewed further. The Agency will reject any proposal that deviates significantly from the requirements of this RFP.
- 4. Evaluation Criteria (and Weights).** Proposals meeting the Minimum Submission Requirements will be evaluated according to the established criteria. The criteria are the objective standards that the Review Committee will use to evaluate the technical merits of the proposals. Only the criteria listed below will be used to evaluate proposals. The weights are disclosed below.

| Evaluation Category                                                          | Evaluation Criteria                                                                                                                                                   | Points    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>1. Consultant Experience, Qualifications, and Organizational Capacity</b> |                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>25</b> |
|                                                                              | Demonstrated expertise in the development, implementation, and/or operation of Promise Programs or comparable place-based scholarship and student-success initiatives | 10        |
|                                                                              | Experience providing technical assistance to municipalities, regional coalitions, educational entities, nonprofits, or community partnerships                         | 5         |
|                                                                              | Experience with postsecondary access, student success, scholarship, and/or college-to-career initiatives                                                              | 4         |
|                                                                              | Qualifications and relevant experience of proposed key personnel                                                                                                      | 4         |
|                                                                              | Organizational capacity and availability to successfully perform the scope of services                                                                                | 2         |
| <b>2. Approach to Promise Program Development &amp; Implementation</b>       |                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>30</b> |
|                                                                              | Clear and feasible approach to assessing community readiness and supporting development of new Promise Programs                                                       | 6         |
|                                                                              | Approach to developing initial and long-term funding strategies                                                                                                       | 5         |
|                                                                              | Approach to stakeholder engagement and development of community partnerships                                                                                          | 6         |

| <b>Evaluation Category</b>                                             | <b>Evaluation Criteria</b>                                                                                                        | <b>Points</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>3. Technical Assistance, Sustainability, and Knowledge Transfer</b> | Approach to locally responsive program design, including scholarship and student-support components                               | 5             |
|                                                                        | Approach to implementation planning and movement from program concept to operational readiness                                    | 5             |
|                                                                        | Approach to supporting communities serving students in alliance districts and addressing differing community needs and capacities | 3             |
|                                                                        |                                                                                                                                   | <b>20</b>     |
|                                                                        | Quality and feasibility of proposed technical assistance model for municipalities and regional coalitions                         | 6             |
|                                                                        | Approach to developing evaluation metrics and data collection strategies                                                          | 4             |
|                                                                        | Approach to long-term financial and operational sustainability planning                                                           | 4             |
|                                                                        | Development of reusable tools, templates, guidance, and implementation resources for OHE and participating communities            | 3             |
|                                                                        | Strategy for identifying and sharing promising practices and lessons learned across communities                                   | 3             |
|                                                                        |                                                                                                                                   | <b>15</b>     |
| <b>4. Project Management, Performance Monitoring, and Reporting</b>    |                                                                                                                                   |               |
| <b>5. Budget and Cost Proposal</b>                                     | Clear work plan, implementation timeline, milestones, and deliverables                                                            | 4             |
|                                                                        | Approach to tracking community progress, technical assistance activities, and performance measures                                | 4             |
|                                                                        | Quality and feasibility of progress-reporting methodology, including support for OHE's statutory reporting requirements           | 4             |
|                                                                        | Communication, collaboration, issue escalation, and ongoing coordination with OHE                                                 | 3             |
|                                                                        |                                                                                                                                   | <b>10</b>     |
| <b>5. Budget and Cost Proposal</b>                                     | Clarity and completeness of proposed budget and cost structure                                                                    | 4             |
|                                                                        | Reasonableness of costs in relation to proposed services, staffing, and deliverables                                              | 3             |
|                                                                        | Cost-effectiveness and demonstrated efficient use of State resources                                                              | 3             |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                                           |                                                                                                                                   | <b>100</b>    |

**5. Proposer Selection.** Upon completing its evaluation of proposals, the Review Committee will submit the rankings of all proposals to the Commissioner. The final selection of a successful proposer is at the discretion of the Commissioner. Any

proposer selected will be notified and awarded an opportunity to negotiate a contract with the Agency. Such negotiations may, but will not automatically, result in a contract. Any resulting contract will be posted on the State Contracting Portal. All unsuccessful proposers will be notified by e-mail about the outcome of the evaluation and proposer selection process. The Agency reserves the right to decline to award contracts for activities in which the Commissioner considers there are not adequate respondents.

- 6. Debriefing.** Within ten (10) days of receiving notification from the Agency, unsuccessful proposers may contact the Official Contact and request information about the evaluation and proposer selection process. The e-mail sent date will be considered “day one” of the ten (10) days. The Agency will not change, alter, or modify the outcome of the evaluation or selection process as a result of any debriefing meeting.
- 7. Appeal Process.** Proposers may appeal any aspect the Agency’s competitive procurement, including the evaluation and proposer selection process. Any such appeal must be submitted to the Commissioner. A proposer may file an appeal at any time after the proposal due date, but not later than thirty (30) days after an agency notifies unsuccessful proposers about the outcome of the evaluation and proposer selection process. The e-mail sent date will be considered “day one” of the thirty (30) days. The filing of an appeal shall not be deemed sufficient reason for the Agency to delay, suspend, cancel, or terminate the procurement process or execution of a contract. More detailed information about filing an appeal may be obtained from the Official Contact.
- 8. Contract Execution.** Any contract developed and executed as a result of this RFP is subject to the Agency’s contracting procedures, which may include approval by the Office of the Attorney General. Fully executed and approved contracts will be posted on State Contracting Portal and the Agency website.

## IV. REQUIRED PROPOSAL SUBMISSION OUTLINE AND REQUIREMENTS

### Submission Outline

#### A. Cover Sheet

#### B. Table of Contents

#### C. Executive Summary

#### D. Main Proposal

#### E. Attachments (clearly referenced to summary and main proposal where applicable)

#### F. Declaration of Confidential Information

#### G. Conflict of Interest - Disclosure Statement

#### H. Statement of Assurances

### Cover Sheet

The Respondent must use a Cover Sheet in this RFP.

Legal Name is defined as the name of provider, vendor, CT State agency, or municipality submitting the proposal. Contact Person is defined as the individual who can provide additional information about the proposal or who has immediate responsibility for the proposal. Authorized Official is defined as the individual empowered to submit a binding offer on behalf of the proposer to provide services in accordance with the terms and provisions described in this RFP and any amendments or attachments hereto.

### Table of Contents

Respondents must include a Table of Contents that lists sections and subsections with page numbers that follow the organization outline and sequence for this proposal.

### Executive Summary

The page limitation for this section is 2 pages briefly describing how the Respondent meets the eligibility and qualification criteria outlined in the Proposal Overview and a brief overview of why the Respondent should be selected for the activities highlighted in the scope of services.

### Main Proposal

Submission Requirements To Submit a Responsive Proposal:

- ☐ Consultant Experience, Qualifications, and Organizational Capacity
- ☐ Approach to Promise Program Development & Implementation
- ☐ Technical Assistance, Sustainability, and Knowledge Transfer
- ☐ Project Management, Performance Monitoring, and Reporting

☐ Budget and Cost Proposal

**Attachments**

Attachments other than the required attachments identified are not permitted and will not be evaluated. Further, the required attachments must not be altered or used to extend, enhance, or replace any component required by this RFP. Failure to abide by these instructions may result in disqualification.

**Declaration of Confidential Information**

If a proposer deems that certain information required by this RFP is confidential, the proposer must label such information as CONFIDENTIAL prior to submission. The proposer must reference where the information labeled CONFIDENTIAL is located in the proposal. EXAMPLE: Section G.1.a. For each subsection so referenced, the proposer must provide a convincing explanation and rationale sufficient to justify an exemption of the information from release under the FOIA. The explanation and rationale must be stated in terms of (a) the prospective harm to the competitive position of the proposer that would result if the identified information were to be released and (b) the reasons why the information is legally exempt from release pursuant to C.G.S. § 1-210(b).

**Conflict of Interest – Disclosure Statement**

Proposers must include a disclosure statement concerning any current business relationships (within the last three (3) years) that pose a conflict of interest, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-85. A conflict of interest exists when a relationship exists between the proposer and a public official (including an elected official) or State employee that may interfere with fair competition or may be adverse to the interests of the State. The existence of a conflict of interest is not, in and of itself, evidence of wrongdoing. A conflict of interest may, however, become a legal matter if a proposer tries to influence, or succeeds in influencing, the outcome of an official decision for their personal or corporate benefit. In the absence of any conflict of interest, a proposer must affirm such in the disclosure statement. Example: “[name of proposer] has no current business relationship (within the last three (3) years) that poses a conflict of interest, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-85.”

**Statement of Assurances**

Sign and return. Place after Conflict of Interest-Disclosure Statement.

## V. MANDATORY PROVISIONS

### TERMS AND CONDITIONS

*By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, a proposer implicitly agrees to comply with the following terms and conditions:*

- 1. Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action.** The State is an Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action employer and does not discriminate in its hiring, employment, or business practices. The State is committed to complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and does not discriminate on the basis of disability in admission to, access to, or operation of its programs, services, or activities.
- 2. Preparation Expenses.** Neither the State nor the Agency shall assume any liability for expenses incurred by a proposer in preparing, submitting, or clarifying any proposal submitted in response to this RFP.
- 3. Exclusion of Taxes.** The Agency is exempt from the payment of excise and sales taxes imposed by the federal government and the State. Proposers are liable for any other applicable taxes.
- 4. Proposed Costs.** No cost submissions that are contingent upon a State action will be accepted. All proposed costs must be fixed through the entire term of the contract.
- 5. Changes to Proposal.** No additions or changes to the original proposal will be allowed after submission. While changes are not permitted, the Agency may request and authorize proposers to submit written clarification of their proposals, in a manner or format prescribed by the Agency, and at the proposer's expense.
- 6. Supplemental Information.** Supplemental information will not be considered after the deadline submission of proposals, unless specifically requested by the Agency. The Agency may ask a proposer to give demonstrations, interviews, oral presentations or further explanations to clarify information contained in a proposal. Any such demonstration, interview, or oral presentation will be at a time selected and in a place provided by the Agency. At its sole discretion, the Agency may limit the number of proposers invited to make such a demonstration, interview, or oral presentation and may limit the number of attendees per proposer.
- 7. Presentation of Supporting Evidence.** If requested by the Agency, a proposer must be prepared to present evidence of experience, ability, data reporting capabilities, financial standing, or other information necessary to satisfactorily meet the requirements set forth or implied in this RFP. The Agency may make onsite visits

to an operational facility or facilities of a proposer to evaluate further the proposer's capability to perform the duties required by this RFP. At its discretion, the Agency may also check or contact any reference provided by the proposer.

- 8. RFP Is Not An Offer.** Neither this RFP nor any subsequent discussions shall give rise to any commitment on the part of the State or the Agency or confer any rights on any proposer unless and until a contract is fully executed by the necessary parties. The contract document will represent the entire agreement between the proposer and the Agency and will supersede all prior negotiations, representations or agreements, alleged or made, between the parties. The State shall assume no liability for costs incurred by the proposer or for payment of services under the terms of the contract until the successful proposer is notified that the contract has been accepted and approved by the Agency and, if required, by the Attorney General's Office.

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## **RIGHTS RESERVED TO THE STATE**

*By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, a proposer implicitly accepts that the following rights are reserved to the State:*

- 1. Timing Sequence.** The timing and sequence of events associated with this RFP shall ultimately be determined by the Agency.
- 2. Amending or Canceling RFP.** The Agency reserves the right to amend or cancel this RFP on any date and at any time, if the Agency deems it to be necessary, appropriate, or otherwise in the best interests of the State.
- 3. No Acceptable Proposals.** In the event that no acceptable proposals are submitted in response to this RFP, the Agency may reopen the procurement process, if it is determined to be in the best interests of the State.
- 4. Award and Rejection of Proposals.** The Agency reserves the right to award in part, to reject any and all proposals in whole or in part, for misrepresentation or if the proposal limits or modifies any of the terms, conditions, or specifications of this RFP. The Agency may waive minor technical defects, irregularities, or omissions, if in its judgment the best interests of the State will be served. The Agency reserves the right to reject the proposal of any proposer who submits a proposal after the submission date and time.
- 5. Sole Property of the State.** All proposals submitted in response to this RFP are to be the sole property of the State. Any product, whether acceptable or unacceptable, developed under a contract awarded as a result of this RFP shall be the sole property of the State, unless stated otherwise in this RFP or subsequent contract. The right to publish, distribute, or disseminate any and all information or reports, or part thereof, shall accrue to the State without recourse.

- 6. Contract Negotiation.** The Agency reserves the right to negotiate or contract for all or any portion of the services contained in this RFP. The Agency further reserves the right to contract with one or more proposer for such services. After reviewing the scored criteria, the Agency may seek Best and Final Offers (BFO) on cost from proposers. The Agency may set parameters on any BFOs received.
- 7. Clerical Errors in Award.** The Agency reserves the right to correct inaccurate awards resulting from its clerical errors. This may include, in extreme circumstances, revoking the awarding of a contract already made to a proposer and subsequently awarding the contract to another proposer. Such action on the part of the State shall not constitute a breach of contract on the part of the State since the contract with the initial proposer is deemed to be void *ab initio* and of no effect as if no contract ever existed between the State and the proposer.
- 8. Key Personnel.** When the Agency is the sole funder of a purchased service, the Agency reserves the right to approve any additions, deletions, or changes in key personnel, with the exception of key personnel who have terminated employment. The Agency also reserves the right to approve replacements for key personnel who have terminated employment. The Agency further reserves the right to require the removal and replacement of any of the proposer's key personnel who do not perform adequately, regardless of whether they were previously approved by the Agency.

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## STATUTORY AND REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

*By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, the proposer implicitly agrees to comply with all applicable State and federal laws and regulations, including, but not limited to, the following:*

- 1. Freedom of Information, C.G.S. § 1-210(b).** The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) generally requires the disclosure of documents in the possession of the State upon request of any citizen, unless the content of the document falls within certain categories of exemption, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-210(b). Proposers are generally advised not to include in their proposals any confidential information. If the proposer indicates that certain documentation, as required by this RFP, is submitted in confidence, the State will endeavor to keep said information confidential to the extent permitted by law. The State has no obligation to initiate, prosecute, or defend any legal proceeding or to seek a protective order or other similar relief to prevent disclosure of any information pursuant to a FOIA request. The proposer has the burden of establishing the availability of any FOIA exemption in any proceeding where it is an issue. While a proposer may claim an exemption to the State's FOIA, the final administrative authority to release or exempt any or all material so identified rests with the State. In no event shall the State or any of its employees have any liability for disclosure of documents or information in the possession of the

State and which the State or its employees believe(s) to be required pursuant to the FOIA or other requirements of law.

2. **Contract Compliance, C.G.S. § 4a-60 and Regulations of CT State Agencies § 46a-68j-21 thru 43, inclusive.** CT statute and regulations impose certain obligations on State agencies (as well as contractors and subcontractors doing business with the State) to ensure that State agencies do not enter into contracts with organizations or businesses that discriminate against protected class persons.
  
3. **Consulting Agreements Representation, C.G.S. § 4a-81.** Pursuant to C.G.S. §§ 4a-81 the successful contracting party shall certify that it has not entered into any consulting agreements in connection with this Contract, except for the agreements listed below. "Consulting agreement" means any written or oral agreement to retain the services, for a fee, of a consultant for the purposes of (A) providing counsel to a contractor, vendor, consultant or other entity seeking to conduct, or conducting, business with the State, (B) contacting, whether in writing or orally, any executive, judicial, or administrative office of the State, including any department, institution, bureau, board, commission, authority, official or employee for the purpose of solicitation, dispute resolution, introduction, requests for information, or (C) any other similar activity related to such contracts. "Consulting agreement" does not include any agreements entered into with a consultant who is registered under the provisions of chapter 10 of the Connecticut General Statutes as of the date such contract is executed in accordance with the provisions of section 4a-81 of the Connecticut General Statutes. Such representation shall be sworn as true to the best knowledge and belief of the person signing the resulting contract and shall be subject to the penalties of false statement.
  
4. **Campaign Contribution Restriction, C.G.S. § 9-612.** For all State contracts, defined in section 9-612 of the Connecticut General Statutes as having a value in a calendar year of \$50,000 or more, or a combination or series of such agreements or contracts having a value of \$100,000 or more, the authorized signatory to the resulting contract must represent that they have received the State Elections Enforcement Commission's notice advising state contractors of state campaign contribution and solicitation prohibitions, and will inform its principals of the contents of the notice, as set forth in "Notice to Executive Branch State Contractors and Prospective State Contractors of Campaign Contribution and Solicitation Limitations." Such notice is available at [https://seec.ct.gov/Portal/data/forms/ContrForms/seec\\_form\\_11\\_notice\\_only.pdf](https://seec.ct.gov/Portal/data/forms/ContrForms/seec_form_11_notice_only.pdf)
  
5. **Gifts, C.G.S. § 4-252.** Pursuant to section 4-252 of the Connecticut General Statutes and Acting Governor Susan Bysiewicz's Executive Order No. 21-2, the Contractor, for itself and on behalf of all of its principals or key personnel who submitted a bid or proposal, represents:

- (1) That no gifts were made by (A) the Contractor, (B) any principals and key personnel of the Contractor, who participate substantially in preparing bids, proposals or negotiating State contracts, or (C) any agent of the Contractor or principals and key personnel, who participates substantially in preparing bids, proposals or negotiating State contracts, to (i) any public official or State employee of the State agency or quasi- public agency soliciting bids or proposals for State contracts, who participates substantially in the preparation of bid solicitations or requests for proposals for State contracts or the negotiation or award of State contracts, or (ii) any public official or State employee of any other State agency, who has supervisory or appointing authority over such State agency or quasi-public agency;
- (2) That no such principals and key personnel of the Contractor, or agent of the Contractor or of such principals and key personnel, knows of any action by the Contractor to circumvent such prohibition on gifts by providing for any other principals and key personnel, official, employee or agent of the Contractor to provide a gift to any such public official or State employee; and
- (3) That the Contractor is submitting bids or proposals without fraud or collusion with any person.

Any bidder or proposer that does not agree to the representations required under this section shall be rejected and the State agency or quasi-public agency shall award the contract to the next highest ranked proposer or the next lowest responsible qualified bidder or seek new bids or proposals.

**6. Iran Energy Investment Certification C.G.S. § 4-252(a).** Pursuant to C.G.S. § 4-252(a), the successful contracting party shall certify the following: (a) that it has not made a direct investment of twenty million dollars or more in the energy sector of Iran on or after October 1, 2013, as described in Section 202 of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Divestment Act of 2010, and has not increased or renewed such investment on or after said date. (b) If the Contractor makes a good faith effort to determine whether it has made an investment described in subsection (a) of this section it shall not be subject to the penalties of false statement pursuant to section 4-252a of the Connecticut General Statutes. A "good faith effort" for purposes of this subsection includes a determination that the Contractor is not on the list of persons who engage in certain investment activities in Iran created by the Department of General Services of the State of California pursuant to Division 2, Chapter 2.7 of the California Public Contract Code. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to impair the ability of the State agency or quasi-public agency to pursue a breach of contract action for any violation of the provisions of the resulting contract.

**7. Nondiscrimination Certification, C.G.S. § 4a-60 and 4a-60a.** If a bidder is awarded an opportunity to negotiate a contract, the proposer must provide the State agency with *written representation* in the resulting contract that certifies the bidder

complies with the State's nondiscrimination agreements and warranties. This nondiscrimination certification is required for all State contracts – regardless of type, term, cost, or value. Municipalities and CT State agencies are exempt from this requirement. The authorized signatory of the contract shall demonstrate his or her understanding of this obligation by either (A) initialing the nondiscrimination affirmation provision in the body of the resulting contract, or (B) providing an affirmative response in the required online bid or response to a proposal question, if applicable, which asks if the contractor understands its obligations. If a bidder or vendor refuses to agree to this representation, such bidder or vendor shall be rejected and the State agency or quasi-public agency shall award the contract to the next highest ranked vendor or the next lowest responsible qualified bidder or seek new bids or proposals.

- 8. Access to Data for State Auditors.** The Contractor shall provide to OPM access to any data, as defined in C.G.S. § 4e-1, concerning the resulting contract that are in the possession or control of the Contractor upon demand and shall provide the data to OPM in a format prescribed by OPM [or the Client Agency] and the State Auditors of Public Accounts at no additional cost.

## VI. APPENDIX

### A. ABBREVIATIONS / ACRONYMS / DEFINITIONS

|        |                                                 |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------|
| BFO    | Best and Final Offer                            |
| C.G.S. | Connecticut General Statutes                    |
| CHRO   | Commission on Human Rights and Opportunity (CT) |
| CT     | Connecticut                                     |
| DAS    | Department of Administrative Services (CT)      |
| FOIA   | Freedom of Information Act (CT)                 |
| IRS    | Internal Revenue Service (US)                   |
| LOI    | Letter of Intent                                |
| OAG    | Office of the Attorney General                  |
| OHE    | Office of Higher Education                      |
| OPM    | Office of Policy and Management (CT)            |
| OSC    | Office of the State Comptroller (CT)            |
| PSA    | Personal Service Agreement                      |
| P.A.   | Public Act (CT)                                 |
| RFP    | Request For Proposal                            |
| SEEC   | State Elections Enforcement Commission (CT)     |
| U.S.   | United States                                   |

- contractor: a private provider organization, CT State agency, or municipality that enters into a POS contract with the Agency as a result of this RFP.
- proposer: a private provider organization, CT State agency, or municipality that has submitted a proposal to the Agency in response to this RFP. This term may be used interchangeably with respondent throughout the RFP.
- prospective proposer: a private provider organization, CT State agency, or municipality that may submit a proposal to the Agency in response to this RFP, but has not yet done so
- subcontractor: an individual (other than an employee of the contractor) or business entity hired by a contractor to provide a specific service as part of a PSA with the Agency as a result of this RFP

## **B. STATEMENT OF ASSURANCES**

Office of Higher Education

The undersigned Respondent affirms and declares that:

### **1) General**

- a. This proposal is executed and signed with full knowledge and acceptance of the RFP CONDITIONS stated in the RFP.
- b. The Respondent will deliver services to the Agency the cost proposed in the RFP and within the timeframes therein.
- c. The Respondent will seek prior approval from the Agency before making any changes to the location of services.
- d. Neither the Respondent or any official of the organization nor any subcontractor or the Respondent or any official of the subcontractor organization has received any notices of debarment or suspension from contracting with the State of CT or the Federal Government.
- e. Neither the Respondent or any official of the organization nor any subcontractor or the Respondent or any official of the subcontractor's organization has received any notices of debarment or suspension from contracting with other states within the United States.

Legal Name of Organization:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Authorized Signatory

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## C. Evaluation Plan

### Promise Program Development & Implementation Consultant Review & Evaluation Committee Membership

|                    |                        |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Facilitator</b> | Scott Ciecko, MBA      |
| <b>Members:</b>    | Jeffrey Barry, EdD     |
|                    | Jacqueline Lucier, MBA |
|                    | Sean Seepersad, PhD    |
|                    |                        |
|                    |                        |
|                    |                        |
|                    |                        |

### Proposal Receipt

1. The Official Agency Contact for the RFP is Scott Ciecko.
2. No proposal will be accepted after 5:00PM on **November 16, 2026**.
3. Any proposal received electronically after the timeframe specified in #2 will be automatically rejected by the Official Agency Contact, with an email to the sender notifying them of the rejection. The Director of DCM shall be copied on this email.
4. Electronic Submission Requirements: If the RFP requires or allows for electronic submission of proposals, proposals will be accepted electronically solely to:  
**scott.ciecko@ct.gov.**
  - The Official Agency Contact will monitor this email address for proposal submissions on a daily basis until after the closing of the RFP.
  - Proposals submitted to this email address will be opened by the Official Agency Contact as they are received.
  - Both the email and the proposal attachment will be saved in the official RFP Master File (G:Drive / RFPs / SFY / RFP Folder / Proposal Submission), named by Applicant and Area Submitted for.
  - The Official Agency Contact will respond to each proposal received with the following email: **Your proposal has been received and will be reviewed for sufficiency as part of OHE's Technical Review once the deadline for submission of proposals has passed. This is not an acknowledgement of acceptance of your proposal, which is subject to the Technical (Level 1) and Level 2 review process for this RFP. This is merely acknowledgement of receipt of your proposal.**
5. The Master Proposal Log will be updated with final submissions and sent to the Facilitator.

## Technical Review

1. Prior to release of the RFP, the Official Agency Contact will develop a specified Level 1 Technical Review Sheet for the RFP. The Review Sheet will be based on the Master Template saved on (G:Drive / RFPs / AA Master RFP Documents / Level 1 Master Technical Review Sheet), but will be specific to the requirements of the current RFP. This Review Sheet will be saved in the Master File for the RFP.
2. Proposals will not be opened until the performance of the Technical Review. The Technical Review will be performed on or after: **November 16, 2026, 5:00PM.**
3. The Technical Review will be completed by Scott Ciecko.
4. The Technical Review will be performed utilizing the Technical Review Sheet. No factors other than those delineated on the Level 1 Master Technical Review Sheet will be considered during this review.
5. Every proposal received prior to the deadline for submission of proposals will be subject to the Technical Review.
6. Any proposal receiving a 'No' or a 'Partial' in any category of the Technical Review will be forwarded to the Commissioner for final determination on denial of the proposal for failure to meet minimum submission requirements.
7. If denied for further review in the RFP process, the Commissioner will notify the applicant of their disqualification and the reasonings for such via email, with a copy of such correspondence maintained by the Official Agency Contact in the Master RFP file.
8. A Technical Review Sheet shall be completed for every proposal received prior to the deadline and saved in the RFP's Master File.
9. A copy of the Technical Review Sheet will be included for every proposal disseminated to the Review & Evaluation Committee for scoring.

## Evaluation Scoresheets

1. Every proposal passing the Level 1 Technical Review will be forwarded to the Review & Evaluation Team(s) for Level 2 Review and Evaluation.
2. The major criteria and assigned weights for scoring of proposals for this RFP are:

| Criterion                                                          | Points |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Consultant Experience, Qualifications, and Organizational Capacity | 25     |
| Approach to Promise Program Development & Implementation           | 30     |
| Technical Assistance, Sustainability, and Knowledge Transfer       | 20     |
| Project Management, Performance Monitoring, and Reporting          | 15     |
| Budget and Cost Proposal                                           | 10     |
| Total                                                              | 100    |

3. The final Evaluation Scoresheet for this RFP is made part of this document as Attachment 1.
4. Once this Evaluation Plan is approved, no modification may be made to the Evaluation Scoresheet without prior approval of the Commissioner.
5. The approved Evaluation Scoresheet will be utilized by every Review & Evaluation Committee member to score every proposal passed on for Level 2 Review.
6. The Review & Evaluation Team facilitator will be responsible for collecting a signed Evaluation Scoresheet for every proposal, from every Review & Evaluation Team member upon completion of scoring. Each scoresheet will be given to the Official Agency Contact and saved in the Master RFP File.

## Committee Orientation

1. After completion of the Level 1 Technical Review, the Review & Evaluation Team facilitator and the Official Agency Contact will schedule and facilitate a Review & Evaluation Committee Orientation.
2. Attendance at this Orientation will be mandatory for every scoring member of the Review & Evaluation Team.
3. The Committee Orientation will cover the following topics:
  - Overview of the program requested through the RFP
  - Responsibilities to Ethics & Confidentiality

- Suggested tips for review and independent scoring
  - Conduct and cadence of Team scoring meetings
4. The Orientation will include a review of all applicants who submitted a proposal in response to the RFP, followed by completion of the Ethics & Confidentiality Affidavit (G:Drive / RFPs / AA Master RFP Documents / Ethics & Confidentiality Affidavit).
  5. The Orientation will culminate with dissemination of proposals to each Committee member, along with their RFP packet, to include the Level 1 Technical Review for each proposal, a copy of the Questions & Answers from the RFP if applicable, and blank scoresheets for each Committee member.

### **Committee Scoring**

1. The Review & Evaluation Team facilitator will coordinate the meeting schedule for the Committee. This may be accomplished either virtually or in-person at the discretion of the Facilitator.
2. The expectation of each Committee member is that they have read and independently scored each proposal prior to the first team meeting.
3. The Facilitator will utilize the Consolidated Scoring Tool to record all individual and consolidated scores (located on G:Drive / RFPs / AA Master RFP Documents / Consolidated Scoring Tool).
4. The initial team meeting will include a first round scoring consolidation. Each member will be asked by the Facilitator to identify their independent initial score for each proposal being reviewed. This score will be recorded on the Consolidated Scoring Tool.
5. After collection of all individual, initial scores, the Facilitator will facilitate a conversation with the scoring members to identify the Strengths and Weaknesses of each proposal. Every scoring member shall be given the opportunity to identify their identified strengths and weaknesses for every proposal scored. The Facilitator will record these comments on the Consolidated Scoresheet.
6. Once each scoring member has identified their individual strengths and weaknesses for a proposal, the Facilitator will facilitate a group discussion to come to agreement on the final, whole Committee strengths and weaknesses. Once consensus has been gained, the final whole Committee strengths and weaknesses will be recorded on the Consolidated Scoresheet for that proposal.
7. Once consensus has been reached on strengths and weaknesses of the proposal, the Facilitator will poll each individual scoring member to provide an opportunity to revise their score of the proposal based on the whole Committee conversation. Members shall not be influenced to change their scores, but simply given an opportunity to do so based on the viewpoints of their fellow Committee members.

8. Once each member has verified their final score, the Facilitator shall record the final score on the Consolidated Scoring Tool, shall verify total score by each Committee member, and complete the Consolidated Scoresheet which shall include the average points for each scoring criteria, averaged by each scoring member, and the whole Committee strengths and weaknesses.
9. The Consolidated Scoresheet shall become the final controlling scoresheet for each proposal submitted.
10. The Facilitator will then collect each individual scoresheet and repeat the above process until all proposals have been scored by the Committee.

### **Consolidating Scores**

1. Once the Committee scoring process is complete, the Review & Evaluation Team facilitator will perform a final review of the Consolidated Scoring Tool to ensure that all scores consolidated properly.
2. The Facilitator will then ensure that a final consolidated scoresheet with Committee-approved strengths and weaknesses is completed for every proposal evaluated.
3. These documents will be submitted to the Official Agency Contact for the RFP, who will review the Consolidated Scoring Tool, identify the top 3 ranking proposals, pull copies of the top 3 ranking proposals and prepare a Cover Sheet for Commissioner review and will submit the Consolidated Scoresheets for the top 3 ranking proposals, with the Strengths & Weaknesses of the top 3 ranking proposals and copies of the top 3 ranking proposals to the Commissioner for review and award.
4. The Commissioner will only be provided with the top 3 ranking proposals for the RFP and will not be provided with a ranking of any other proposals received.

**This Evaluation Plan is APPROVED for implementation by my signature below:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Timothy Larson, Commissioner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date