

Response to Questions on the Maine Community College System Market Research RFP Issued November 9, 2021

Contact: Joshua Howe jhowe@mccs.me.edu

MCCS wishes to thank potential bidders who have asked questions regarding this RFP.

Question	MCCS Response
Is there any preference given in the review process to Maine-based firms?	No, there is not a preference given to Maine-based firms. Scoring will be based on the firm's ability to meet the RFP requirements, experience, expertise, and cost. No preference is given to the location of the firm.
Has MCCS worked with a market research partner in the past few years? If so, can you share an overview of that work, including the type of research that was done and the firm(s) MCCS worked with?	Yes. The MCCS worked with Digital Research: Critical Insights to conduct focus groups and surveys.
Does MCCS have any preference on the survey methodology or are you looking to the selected firm to simply propose their recommended approach?	No, MCCS does not have a specific preference on the survey methodology. MCCS will work with the selected firm to identify the best strategy for gathering information and surveying employers to meet the needs of the project.
Would you consider taking a different approach to the first phase/qualitative portion?	Yes, MCCS is open to alternative approaches.
Is it MCCS' expectation that the selected vendor will conduct one focus group with up to 15 employers, or multiple focus groups?	MCCS is open to recommendations from bidders as to the best approach which meets the needs of the project.
May the focus groups and surveys be conducted from a remote environment or is an in person meeting required?	Yes, focus groups may be conducted in person or remotely.
Will the selected firm be expected to recruit focus group participants or does MCCS have a network of employer partners who you would like included in the focus groups?	MCCS does have a network of employers which we work with and can be tapped for this research, however the selected firm may need to make connections with additional employers to complete this work. MCCS will assist with notifying partners for this research.

<p>Will the Alford Center assist in the research, through notifying business partners of the research, for example?</p>	<p>Yes, M CCS will assist in the research, including notifying business partners.</p>
<p>Will M CCS provide the selected vendor with a list of employers and contact information to participate in the focus group(s) and survey? Or is the selected vendor expected to rely on their own networks in Maine to identify the employers?</p>	<p>M CCS will provide assistance with connecting with employers. It's unclear at this point whether we're able to provide a complete list to the vendor or whether the M CCS would do the outreach directly.</p>
<p>Does the M CCS have an existing list of business contacts to include in surveys and focus groups or should the selected bidder include this service and cost?</p>	<p>M CCS will provide assistance with connecting with employers. It's unclear at this point whether we're able to provide a complete list to the vendor or whether the M CCS would do the outreach directly.</p>
<p>Can you confirm that the anticipated end date is January 15, 2022? Can you tell us if there is any flexibility in the timing?</p>	<p>Yes, the anticipated end date is January 15, 2022. M CCS understands that the timeline is a challenge. There is some flexibility to the timeline, but the majority of the work must be completed by the end of January 2022.</p>
<p>Would any employer qualify to take part in the research, or are you trying to learn from specific types of organizations?</p>	<p>No, not every employer's feedback is going to be relevant to this project. The initial project focuses on remote work so we would be targeting businesses and occupations who have experience in working remotely or are interested in making the transition to remote work.</p>
<p>Regarding Qualifications #4 on page 2, is M CCS looking for proposers to submit their response in letter format or is the letter mentioned in #4 to serve as a Letter of Interest? If Letter of Interest, when do proposers need to submit it by?</p>	<p>The letter identified in #4 page 2 should be submitted as part of proposal package along with any disclosure of actual or potential conflict.</p>
<p>Given the Thanksgiving holiday and scope of the proposal response required, we are requesting a deadline extension for the stated due date. Please advise if this is possible.</p>	<p>No, M CCS is unable to extend the proposal deadline at this time.</p>
<p>How many surveys does the M CCS anticipate conducting annually under this contract?</p>	<p>M CCS has not determined how many surveys will anticipate annually.</p>

<p>Noting the 15 business initial focus group, can you provide a range of anticipated survey sample sizes anticipated under this contract?</p>	<p>The remote work survey sample will be approximately 100 employers. Future projects have not yet been determined.</p>
<p>Has MCCS determined a budget for the initial Remote Work for ME survey initiative? If so, can you share the anticipated budget?</p>	<p>No, MCCS has not defined a specific budget for this research. The budget will be determined by the proposals.</p>
<p>Should bidders provide access to digital surveying tools or does the MCCS have an existing tool license that must be leveraged?</p>	<p>No, MCCS does not have survey tool licenses other than freely available tools. If bidder should include the cost of any proposed tools in their proposal.</p>
<p>Can you please provide a list of insurance that is required under this contract?</p>	<p>The MCCS requires liability insurance of \$1,000,000. See Standard Agreement to Purchase Services, Rider A below.</p>

MAINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

STANDARD AGREEMENT TO PURCHASE SERVICES

I. PARTIES

This Agreement (“Agreement”) is by and between the Maine Community College System and/or one of its colleges or centers (“MCCS”) and the following entity (“Provider”):

Name: _____
Employer Identification Number: _____
Mailing Address: _____

Telephone: _____ or _____
Email: _____ or _____

II. DATES OF SERVICES TO BE PERFORMED

The services to be performed under this Agreement shall commence no later than _____ and be completed no later than _____.

III. DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES TO BE PERFORMED

The services to be performed under this Agreement are described as follows:

IV. PAYMENT AMOUNT AND SCHEDULE

The total Agreement Amount is \$ _____ to be paid as follows:

V. AGREEMENT ADMINISTRATORS

The Administrator of this Agreement for MCCS shall be:

Name: _____ Title: _____
Address: _____ Telephone: _____
Email: _____

The Administrator of this Agreement for Provider shall be:

Name: _____ Title: _____
Address: _____ Telephone: _____
Email: _____

V. AGREEMENT DOCUMENTS AND THEIR PRIORITY

This Agreement consists of the following documents which are hereby incorporated into this Agreement and made part of it by this reference. In the event of any conflicting interpretation(s), such documents shall be construed to apply and control in the following priority:

- First: MCCS Standard Agreement to Purchase Services;
- Second: MCCS Standard General Provisions, Rider "A";
- Third: MCCS RFP or other solicitation terms or conditions;
- Fourth: Provider's Response to MCCS RFP or other solicitation terms or conditions; and
- Fifth: Other (list specifically, if any):

VI. SIGNATURES

In consideration of the foregoing agreements made by MCCS, Provider agrees to furnish all qualified personnel, facilities, materials and services in performing the services, study and/or projects under the terms of this Agreement. Signed as follows by the Parties authorized representatives:

For MCCS:

By: _____ Date _____
Printed Name: _____
Position: _____

For Provider:

By: _____ Date _____
Printed Name: _____
Position: _____

RIDER A

MCCS STANDARD GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. INVOICES AND PAYMENTS

Payments are subject to the Provider's compliance with all items set forth in this Agreement and subject to the availability of funds. MCCS will process approved payments within 30 days.

2. INDEPENDENT CAPACITY

In the performance of this Agreement, the parties hereto agree that the Provider, and any agents and employees of the Provider shall act in the capacity of an independent contractor and not as officers or employees or agents of MCCS.

3. BENEFITS AND DEDUCTIONS

If the Provider is an individual, the Provider understands and agrees that he/she is an independent contractor for whom no Federal or State Income Tax will be deducted by MCCS, and for whom no retirement benefits, survivor benefit insurance, group life insurance, vacation and sick leave, and similar benefits available to MCCS employees will accrue. The Provider further understands that annual information returns, as required by the Internal Revenue Code or State of Maine Income Tax Law, will be filed by MCCS with the Internal Revenue Service and the State of Maine Bureau of Revenue Services, copies of which will be furnished to the Provider for his/her Income Tax records.

4. AGREEMENT ADMINISTRATOR

The MCCS representative is the Agreement Administrator for this Agreement. The Agreement Administrator has authority to curtail services if necessary to ensure proper execution. The Agreement Administrator shall certify to MCCS when payments under the Agreement are due and the amounts to be paid. The Agreement Administrator shall make decisions on all claims of the Provider, subject to the approval of the President of the MCCS. All progress reports, correspondence and related submissions from the Provider shall be submitted to the Agreement Administrator.

5. CHANGES IN THE WORK

The Agreement Administrator may order changes in the work, the Agreement Amount being adjusted accordingly. Any monetary adjustment or any substantive change in the work shall be in the form of an amendment, signed by both parties. Any such amendments must be effective prior to execution of the work.

6. SUB-AGREEMENTS

Unless provided for in this Agreement, no arrangement shall be made by the Provider with any other party for furnishing any of the services herein contracted for without the consent and approval of the Agreement Administrator. Any sub-agreement hereunder entered into subsequent to the execution of this Agreement must be annotated "approved" by the Agreement Administrator before it is reimbursable hereunder. This provision will not be taken as requiring the approval of contracts of employment between the Provider and its employees assigned for services there under.

7. SUBLETTING, ASSIGNMENT OR TRANSFER

The Provider shall not sublet, sell, transfer, assign or otherwise dispose of this Agreement or any portion thereof, or of its right, title or interest therein, without written request to and written consent of the Agreement Administrator. No subcontracts or transfer of agreement shall in any case release the Provider of its liability under this Agreement.

8. EMPLOYMENT AND PERSONNEL

The Provider shall not employ or otherwise engage any person who is a current or former employee or director of MCCS without the prior written consent of the Agreement Administrator. The Provider shall cause the foregoing provision to be inserted in any subcontract for any work covered by this Agreement so that such provision is binding upon each subcontractor, provided that the foregoing provision shall not apply to contracts or subcontracts for standard commercial supplies or raw materials.

9. WARRANTY

The Provider warrants that it has not employed or contracted with any company or person, other than for assistance with the normal study and preparation of a proposal, to solicit or secure this Agreement and that it has not paid, or agreed to pay, any company or person, other than a bona fide employee working solely for the Provider, any fee, commission, percentage, brokerage fee, gifts, or any other consideration, contingent upon, or resulting from the award for making this Agreement. For breach or violation of this warranty, MCCS shall have the right to annul this Agreement without liability or, in its discretion to otherwise recover the full amount of such fee, commission, percentage, brokerage fee, gift, or contingent fee.

10. ACCESS TO RECORDS

The Provider shall maintain all books, documents, payrolls, papers, accounting records and other evidence pertaining to this Agreement and make such materials available at its offices at all reasonable times during the period of this Agreement and for such subsequent period as specified under Maine Uniform Accounting and Auditing Practices for Community Agencies (MAAP) rules. The Provider shall allow inspection of pertinent documents by MCCS or any authorized representative of the State of Maine or Federal Government, and shall furnish copies thereof, if requested.

11. TERMINATION

The performance of work under the Agreement may be terminated by MCCS in whole, or in part, whenever for any reason the Agreement Administrator shall determine that such termination is in the best interest of MCCS. Any such termination shall be effected by delivery to the Provider of a Notice of Termination specifying the extent to which performance of the work under the Agreement is terminated and the date on which such termination becomes effective. The Agreement shall be equitably adjusted to compensate for such termination, and modified accordingly.

12. MCCS AND GOVERNMENTAL REQUIREMENTS

The Provider warrants and represents that it will comply with all MCCS policies and governmental ordinances, laws and regulations.

13. GOVERNING LAW

This Agreement shall be governed in all respects by the laws, statutes, and regulations of the United States of America and of the State of Maine. Any legal proceeding against the State regarding this Agreement shall be brought in State of Maine administrative or judicial forums. The Provider consents to personal jurisdiction in the State of Maine.

14. MCCS HELD HARMLESS

The Provider agrees to indemnify, defend and save harmless MCCS, its officers, agents and employees from any and all claims, costs, expenses, injuries, liabilities, losses and damages of every kind and description (hereinafter in this paragraph referred to as "claims") resulting from or arising out of the performance of this Agreement by the Provider, its employees, agents, or subcontractors. Claims to which this indemnification applies include, but without limitation, the following: (i) claims suffered or incurred by any contractor, subcontractor, material man, laborer and any other person, firm, corporation or other legal entity (hereinafter in this paragraph referred to as "person") providing work, services, materials, equipment or supplies in connection with the performance of this Agreement; (ii) claims arising out of a violation or infringement of any proprietary right, copyright, trademark, right of privacy or other right arising out of publication, translation, development, reproduction, delivery, use, or disposition of any data, information or other matter furnished or used in connection with this Agreement; (iii) claims arising out of a libelous or other unlawful matter used or developed in connection with this Agreement; (iv) claims suffered or incurred by any person who may be otherwise injured or damaged in the performance of this Agreement; and (v) all legal costs and other expenses of defense against any asserted claims to which this indemnification applies. This indemnification does not extend to a claim that results solely and directly from MCCS's negligence or unlawful act, or action by the Provider taken in reasonable reliance upon an instruction or direction given by an authorized person acting on behalf of MCCS in accordance with this Agreement.

15. NOTICE OF CLAIMS

The Provider shall give the Agreement Administrator immediate notice in writing of any legal action or suit filed related in any way to the Agreement or which may affect the performance of duties under the Agreement, and prompt notice of any claim made against the Provider by any subcontractor which may result in litigation related in any way to the Agreement or which may affect the performance of duties under the Agreement.

16. LIABILITY INSURANCE

The Provider shall keep in force a liability policy issued by a company fully licensed or designated as an eligible surplus line insurer to do business in this State by the Maine Department of Professional & Financial Regulation, Bureau of Insurance, which policy includes the activity to be covered by this Agreement with adequate liability coverage to protect itself and MCCS from suits. Providers insured through a "risk retention group" insurer prior to July 1, 1991 may continue under that arrangement. Prior to or upon execution of this Agreement, the Provider shall furnish MCCS with written or photocopied verification of the existence of such liability insurance policy.

17. SEVERABILITY

The invalidity or unenforceability of any particular provision or part thereof of this Agreement shall not affect the remainder of said provision or any other provisions, and this Agreement shall be construed in all respects as if such invalid or unenforceable provision or part thereof had been omitted.

18. FORCE MAJEURE

MCCS may, at its discretion, excuse the performance of an obligation by a party under this Agreement in the event that performance of that obligation by that party is prevented by an act of God, act of war, riot, fire, explosion, flood or other catastrophe, sabotage, severe shortage of fuel, power or raw materials, change in law, court order, national defense requirement, or strike or labor dispute, provided that any such event and the delay caused thereby is beyond the control of, and could not reasonably be avoided by, that party. MCCS may, at its discretion, extend the time period for performance of the obligation excused under this section by the period of the excused delay together with a reasonable period to reinstate compliance with the terms of this Agreement.

19. SET-OFF RIGHTS

MCCS shall have all of its common law, equitable and statutory rights of set-off. These rights shall include, but not be limited to, MCCS's option to withhold for the purposes of set-off any monies due to the Provider under this Agreement up to any amounts due and owing to MCCS with regard to this Agreement, any other Agreement with MCCS, including any Agreement for a term commencing prior to the term of this Agreement, plus any amounts due and owing to MCCS for any other reason including, without limitation, tax delinquencies, fee delinquencies or monetary penalties relative thereto. MCCS shall exercise its set-off rights in accordance with normal MCCS practices including, in cases of set-off pursuant to an audit, the finalization of such audit by MCCS or its representatives.

20. ENTIRE AGREEMENT

This document contains the entire Agreement of the parties, and neither party shall be bound by any statement or representation not contained herein. No waiver shall be deemed to have been made by any of the parties unless expressed in writing and signed by the waiving party. The parties expressly agree that they shall not assert in any action relating to the Agreement that any implied waiver occurred between the parties which is not expressed in writing. The failure of any party to insist in any one or more instances upon strict performance of any of the terms or provisions of the Agreement, or to exercise an option or election under the Agreement, shall not be construed as a waiver or relinquishment for the future of such terms, provisions, option or election, but the same shall continue in full force and effect, and no waiver by any party of any one or more of its rights or remedies under the Agreement shall be deemed to be a waiver of any prior or subsequent rights or remedy under the Agreement or at law.

21. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

During the performance of this Agreement, the Provider agrees as follows:

- a. The Provider shall not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment relating to this Agreement because of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, national origin, ancestry, age, physical or mental disability, or veteran status unless related to a bona fide occupational qualification. The Provider shall take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed and employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, age, national origin, physical or mental disability, or veteran status. MCCS encourages the employment of individuals with disabilities.

Such action shall include but not be limited to the following: employment, upgrading, demotions, or transfers; recruitment or recruitment advertising; layoffs or terminations; rates of pay or other forms of compensation; and selection for training including apprenticeship. The Provider agrees to post in conspicuous places available to employees and applicants for employment notices setting forth the provisions of this nondiscrimination clause.

- b. The Provider shall, in all solicitations or advertising for employees placed by or on behalf of the Provider relating to this Agreement, state that all qualified applicants shall receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religious creed, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation.
- c. The Provider shall send to each labor union or representative of the workers with which it has a collective bargaining agreement, or other agreement or understanding, whereby it is furnished with labor for the performance of this Agreement a notice to be provided by the contracting agency, advising the said labor union or workers' representative of the Provider's commitment under this section and shall post copies of the notice in conspicuous places available to employees and applicants for employment.
- d. The Provider shall immediately inform the MCCS Agreement Administrator of any discrimination complaints brought to an external regulatory body (Maine Human Rights Commission, EEOC, Office of Civil Rights) against their agency by any individual as well as any lawsuit regarding alleged discriminatory practice.
- e. The Provider shall comply with all aspects of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in employment and in the provision of service to include accessibility and reasonable accommodations for employees and clients.
- f. Contractors and subcontractors with contracts in excess of \$50,000 shall also pursue in good faith affirmative action programs.
- g. The Provider shall cause the foregoing provisions to be inserted in any subcontract for any work covered by this Agreement so that such provisions shall be binding upon each subcontractor, provided that the foregoing provisions shall not apply to contracts or subcontracts for standard commercial supplies or raw materials.

22. EMPLOYMENT AND PERSONNEL

The Provider shall not engage any person in the employ of any State Department or Agency in a position that would constitute a violation of 17 MRSA § 3104 or MCCS policies on Nepotism and Conflict of Interest. The Provider shall not engage on a full-time, part-time or other basis during the period of this Agreement, any other personnel who are or have been at any time during the period of this Agreement in the employ of any college or other component part of MCCS, except regularly retired employees, without the written consent of the college or system president as appropriate. Further, the Provider shall not engage on this project on a full-time, part-time or other basis during the period of this Agreement any retired employee of MCCS who has not been retired for at least one year, without the same written consent. The Provider shall cause the foregoing provisions to be inserted in any subcontract for any work covered by this Agreement so that such provisions shall be binding upon each subcontractor, provided that the foregoing provisions shall not apply to contracts or subcontracts for standard commercial supplies or raw materials.

23. MCCS EMPLOYEES NOT TO BENEFIT

No individual employed by MCCS at the time this Agreement is executed or any time thereafter shall be admitted to any share or part of this Agreement or to any benefit that might arise therefrom directly or indirectly that would constitute a violation of 17 MRSA § 3104 or MCCS policies on Nepotism and Conflict of Interest. No other individual employed by MCCS at the time this Agreement is executed or any time thereafter shall be admitted to any share or part of this Agreement or to any benefit that might arise therefrom directly or indirectly due to his employment by or financial interest in the Provider or any affiliate of the Provider, without the written consent of the college or system president as appropriate. The Provider shall cause the foregoing provisions to be inserted in any subcontract for any work covered by this Agreement so that such provisions shall be binding upon each subcontractor, provided that the foregoing provisions shall not apply to contracts or subcontracts for standard commercial supplies or raw materials.

24. UNILATERAL CHANGES

Provider is not authorized to change unilaterally any term or condition relating to this Agreement.

25. TRADE SECRETS

Provider agrees to defend, indemnify and hold harmless MCCS in any and all legal actions that seek to compel MCCS to disclose under Maine's Freedom of Access Act any information that Provider has given to MCCS as part of soliciting or executing this Agreement that Provider has designated as entitled to "trade secret" exemption from disclosure under law. Provider will designate for MCCS any such information prior to executing this Agreement, and Provider's failure to so designate any such information will authorize MCCS to conclude that no portions are so exempt.

26. NON-APPROPRIATION

Notwithstanding any other provision of this Agreement, if MCCS does not receive sufficient funds to fund this Agreement and its other obligations, if funds are de-appropriated, or if MCCS does not receive legal authority to expend funds from the Maine State Legislature or Maine courts, then MCCS is not obligated to future payments for work not yet performed under this Agreement.

27. INTERPRETATION

Provider agrees that, in all matters relating to or arising from this Agreement, MCCS does not agree to: provide any defense, hold harmless or indemnity; waive any statutory or constitutional immunity; apply the law of any jurisdiction other than the State of Maine; procure any type or amount of insurance beyond that MCCS already maintains; waive any right of insurance subrogation; add any entity as an additional insured to MCCS policies of insurance; pay any attorneys' fees, litigation costs and expenses or liquidated damages; promise confidentiality in a manner contrary to Maine's Freedom of Access Act; permit any automatic renewal for term(s) greater than month-to-month; limit MCCS' recovery of lawful damages incurred as a result of Provider's breach of the contract; limit the time period under which claims can be made or actions brought arising from the contract; or provide precedence to Provider's terms over MCCS' standard terms and conditions, including addenda.

28. APPROVAL

This Agreement must have the approval of an authorized M CCS administrator and must comply with the M CCS policy on Contracts before it can be considered a valid, enforceable document.