

**RFP 2015-0500-2693: Grant/Scholarship Servicing System  
Pre-Proposal Conference**

Date	Time	Teleconference
7/31/14	8:30 – 10:00 am	800-315-6338, 67401#
<b>WebEx</b>		
<a href="https://alaskadvantage.webex.com/alaskadvantage/j.php?ED=316050932&amp;UID=480815427&amp;RT=MIMz">https://alaskadvantage.webex.com/alaskadvantage/j.php?ED=316050932&amp;UID=480815427&amp;RT=MIMz</a>		

<b>Attendees</b>
<p><b>ACPE:</b> Cindee Brown-Mills, Project Director, Fred Tolbert, Financial Aid Supervisor, Paula Osborn, Business Analyst, Cheryl Sams, Procurement Officer, Stephan Felkl, Network Administrator  <b>External participants:</b> Tony Angle and Jim Berlin (Fenwick Technologies), Yvonne Whitaker, Michael Alto and David Chasse (GBPI), Dennis Blaine and Rebecca Graham (5280), Erik Schmidt (Sockeye Business Solution), Ariel Gibson (RDI).</p>

Each of the attendees introduced themselves and Project Manager Cindee Brown-Mills presented an overview of the project and RFP, using a PowerPoint, via teleconference and WebEx. Ms. Brown-Mills also informed the group the transcript of the discussion, questions and answers will be posted on the public notice site by close of business Monday, August 4<sup>th</sup>.

At the end of the presentation participants asked if there were questions. The following questions were asked:

Q1. RFP Section 1.17, Offers certification. What does ACPE require in regards to ADA compliance?
A1. The State of Alaska requires their websites to be ADA compliant. The State is most familiar with the Website Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WACG 2.0) however any framework can be used as long as current ADA standards are met.
Q2. You stated that approximately 5,000 students are currently awarded, how many applications do you receive?
A2. Approximately 32,000 each year. The FAFSA is the application for the current state grant/scholarship programs. ACPE loads a record for every Alaskan who fills out a FAFSA and anyone who indicates an Alaskan school as their primary school on the FAFSA.
Q3. Please clarify the RFP timeline. You mention that the Alaska Education Grant must be ready for awarding by April 30, 2014 but what about the Alaska Performance Scholarship?
A3. RFP section 5.01 project timeline states:  ACPE would like the system to be fully implemented prior to April 30, 2015. If full implementation cannot be achieved, the system must have all required transactional functionality for the grant program to begin making awards no later than April 30, 2015. This means the scholarship functionality may be delayed until June 20, 2015 if necessary. <u>Preference will be given to offerors with the ability to fully implement the system for both the grant and scholarship prior to the specified date.</u> Upon notice of intent to award, ACPE shall negotiate a detailed implementation schedule with the successful Offeror.
Q4. If it can't be by April 30, the deadline would be June 20?
A4. Yes, the scholarship implementation may be delayed until June 20, 2015. Our preference is to

have both fully functional on April 30, 2015.
Q5. Can you explain the changes that were made to the Alaska Education Grant as a result of SB195?
A5. The Alaska Education Grant is a needs based grant. The changes precipitated by SB195 include moving away from a complicated cost of attendance calculation to one based on the students Expected Family Contribution as noted on the FAFSA. Eligibility is determined using the following criteria: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An Expected Family Contribution of \$0 as noted on the FAFSA.</li> <li>2. Previous award recipient who meets their school's Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements.</li> <li>3. Full-time (or greater) attendance.</li> <li>4. Date of FAFSA filing.</li> </ol> <p>A grant recipient could get additional funds if they are enrolled in 15 or more credits for the term, graduated from a district with less than 800 students or graduated from a state run school.</p>
Q6. What are the chances that the legislature will make changes that will require changes to the grant/scholarship system?
A6. There is always the possibility that legislation will be enacted that requires changes to the system. Additionally, it is possible that new programs may be created and current ones phased out. This is why it is very important to create a system that is dynamic and flexible.
Q7. RFP Section 5, item 1.2.3.2, talks about reconciliation reports and the last part of the sentence states, "along with the associated updating of student accounts". Would you explain what this means?
A7. At the end of each program year we require schools to reconcile the amount of money received with the amount paid to each student. Once the schools have completed the reconciliation process, the system must close out the year by removing any pending funds associated with a student.
Q8. RFP Section 5, item 1.9.3.4 under the features for student portal. Are these public relation releases something the student can opt-out of?
A8. We want to have the ability for students to log into their account and indicate they do not want their names released. Would this be needed to take their names off any canned reports? No, ACPE needs the ability to run a report of those who have indicated they do not want their name released.
Q9. RFP Section 5, item 1.9.4. Web Access. Is this item saying that you want the ability to post notices, such as network outages, to the portal yourself?
A9. Yes
Q10. Is MyAlaska also used to authenticate school financial aid office users and agency users?
A10. No, not currently
Q11. RFP Section 5, item 1.10.1, talks about modeling. How would historical program data feed into the modeling feature?

A11. ACPE sees the system using the historical program data to become more and more accurate in forecasting funding needs.

For example, we know that there are typically students that begin school in the fall term but do not continue in spring; however funds are pending for those students. The system would be able to predict this and possibly over award funds for the fall in anticipation.

Q12. Does ACPE currently use any of the business intelligence (BI) platforms available for state use?

A12. ACPE currently uses Microsoft SQL Server Business Intelligence, which includes SQL Server Reporting Services. This software is relatively complex and difficult to use.

Q13. RFP Section 5, item 1.14.1, talks about a document library. Is this something you already have? If not, how are you currently storing documents? What types of documents do you expect to store? Do you expect the student to be able to see the documents?

A13. ACPE does not have a document library associated with a student account and are currently using a network-based folder system. Documents should be stored so they are accessible when viewing the student account. We do not expect the student or school users to have access to or view the documents. At a minimum the system should have the ability to store PDF documents. We also desire the ability to store Microsoft Office file types but this is not a requirement.

Q14. RFP Section 5, IV. Desired Technical Features asks for, “the ability to match students and schools to various geographic regions, including school districts, legislative districts, boroughs/census areas (county equivalents), etc., and generate reports on the same”. What do you mean by this?

A14. ACPE is often asked to generate reports by geographical location, school district, etc. The data elements are available for the system to create reports. ACPE currently does not have an easy way to create reports using these specific data elements but we would like the ability to do so.

Q15. If a statewide business intelligence tool were to be proposed, would ACPE be willing to looking into different options for reporting?

A15. ACPE currently uses Microsoft SQL Server Business Intelligence, which includes SQL Server Reporting Services. We would be open to any and all suggestions for report building options.

Q16. Would ACPE be interested in a cloud-based solution vs state hosting?

A16. The state is looking at the possibility of developing a cloud-based hosting solution but that is not currently available. ACPE is not interested in a privately held cloud-based solution.

Q17. Can ACPE share any process flow diagrams or other organizational process documentation to better understand the business requirements of the solution? For example, the review process for AEG and APS applications, Web portal processes for students and schools, or any other standard processes related to the AEG/APS programs.

A17. High-level AEG/APS program flows are attached.

Q18. Does any data need to be migrated from a previous system into the new system?

A18. Yes, Section V, item 1.1.3 of the RFP states, “The system must have ability to convert/import required records of current recipients and eligible students, to ensure that award rules are maintained to make new or continuing grant/scholarship awards. Rules may be term-specific, year-specific, program-specific, or student-specific; and they may be cumulative, carrying over from year to year”.

Q19. In RFP Section 5, item 1.2.1.1, you indicate that the system must be able to import ISIR data beginning on January 1<sup>st</sup>. Does this mean the system must be up and running for FAFSA/ISIR application imports at that date or can that data be held and imported at the April 30<sup>th</sup> Go-live target?

A19. The ISIR data can be held and imported on or before the April 30, 2015, deadline.