

DETERMINATION AND FINDING FOR A SOLE SOURCE PROCUREMENT

Agency: DC Public Schools (DCPS), IMPACT, Office of Instructional Practice
RFI Number: GAGA-16-R-0089
Proposed Contractor: Tripod Education
Caption: Student Perception Survey

FINDINGS

1. **AUTHORIZATION:** DC Official Code 2-354.04, 27 DCMR Sections 1304 and 1701.

2. **MINIMUM NEED:**

DCPS requires a student perception survey vendor to support the district-wide administration of a student survey of instructional practice. In 2016, over 40,000 students are expected to take the survey across DCPS and the results will be used to calculate high-stakes IMPACT evaluation ratings for approximately 2,000 DCPS teachers. Because the surveys will be used in a performance evaluation context, the survey must be externally validated, research-based, and assess measurable teaching behaviors.

The student survey vendor not only must be reputable in the marketplace (cited in the Gates Foundation MET report), but must have significant existing and local support staff to meet the needs of DCPS. The vendor shall be able to satisfy the core goods and services that are critical to DCPS, as set forth in Sections 5.

Like all districts that use student surveys for the purposes of evaluation, DCPS requires a survey vendor that can provide a secure online administration platform, data security protocols and assurances, and robust data quality checks. However, the high stakes of IMPACT and unique needs of DCPS drive additional quality requirements for the student survey vendor.

3. **ESTIMATED COST:**

The estimated cost is \$130,000.00 for a period of one-year from date of award.

4. **BACKGROUND AND HISTORY:**

DCPS began exploring the inclusion of student surveys in IMPACT over two years ago. This process began with a review of the Gates Foundation's Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) report, which established that not only are student surveys appropriate for inclusion in teacher evaluation, but also that they are often as (or more) accurate than other common metrics used in teacher evaluation systems. DCPS found this compelling and committed significant capacity to a robust research phase in which the district: 1) reviewed technical reports and materials of the student survey vendors named in the report as high quality (6 total), 2) liaised with other states and districts already using student surveys, 3) began communicating with the vendors named in the MET report to explore a student survey pilot for DCPS, and 4) published a Request For Information (RFI).

The decision for this sole source contract to Tripod Education is based on the result of two years research, pilot test that was conducted with 1) Tripod Education and My Student Survey, interview, feedback, and information gathering and analysis from participants in the pilot test, clearly favored Tripod Education to be vendor of the choice.

5. FACTS WHICH JUSTIFY A SOLE SOURCE PROCUREMENT:

After completion of the research and pilot test, DCPS published a Request for information (RFI) that was forwarded to all six (6) vendors named in the MET study. Four (4) vendors responded (Tripod Education, My Student Survey, Corwin, and Panorama). Each of these responses were reviewed by the DCPS IMPACT team and evaluated according to a set of defined criteria. As set forth in the summary below, Tripod Education emerged as the vendor that best met these criteria and was determined to be the vendor who can best satisfy this critical need.

Criteria	My Student Survey	Panorama	Tripod Education	Corwin
1. A robust (1,000,000+ student data points annually) national data set, a significant portion of which includes large urban district students (districts with 50,000+ students)			X	
2. A survey instrument with strong psychometric reliability and validity evidence, and the ability to differentiate the quality of instructional practice.	X	X	X	
3. A large customer service team that may provide: logistics support to central office leading up to survey administration, consultation services in developing a data treatment methodology and translation protocol, extensive data quality management processes, ability to work within tight timelines, and local customer service support for school-based staff members.			X	
4. Experience partnering with DCPS and a working understanding of district policies and practices.	X		X	
5. An existing, research-based data treatment that includes student and classroom-level control variables to account for construct-irrelevant variance in the data.			X	
6. A student survey instrument with a consistent Likert scale across items.	X		X	X

The Proposed Vendor's Qualifications:

While there are other vendors that provide student perception surveys, Tripod Education provides additional values that are unique to Tripod (offeror), and are necessary for successful implementation of student surveys in DCPS.

- a) **A robust national data set (1,000,000+ student data points annually), a significant portion of which includes large urban district students (districts with 50,000+ students).** Tripod has the largest presence in the national marketplace and thus the most robust national data set at over 1,000,000 student data points per year. This allows DCPS to compare the instructional practice of DCPS teachers to similar teachers at an unparalleled degree of specificity (e.g., physical education teachers of fifth grade students with a class size of 32 in a high-poverty school). Research indicates that comparing teachers to their peers in the most specific way possible yields the most accurate student survey data.
- b) **A survey instrument with strong psychometric reliability and validity evidence, and the ability to differentiate the quality of instructional practice.** While the student survey vendors that responded to the previous RFI presented strong validity evidence and were mentioned in the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) report, Tripod was the only student survey vendor actually used in the study. Tripod is, therefore, the soundest choice for inclusion in DCPS' IMPACT performance evaluation system.
- c) **A large and knowledgeable customer service team that may provide: logistics support to central office leading up to survey administration, consultation services in developing a data treatment methodology and translation protocol, extensive data quality management processes, ability to work within tight timelines, and local customer service support for school-based staff members.** As the largest student perception survey vendor nationwide, Tripod Education has the largest support staff with the most diverse set of expertise.
 - First, Tripod Education will provide a lead research team and regional implementation team to support DCPS central office staff and conduct in-person meetings and training materials as needed. This requirement is especially important given limited capacity on the central office IMPACT team and the need to execute the project quickly and effectively.
 - Second, Tripod Education also has an extensive technical support staff to liaise with schools leading up to and during the student survey administration window. In other words, Tripod can provide services and supports that the DCPS central office cannot independently provide and that are essential to the success of the project.
- d) **Experience partnering with DCPS and a working understanding of district policies and practices.** Due to timing constraints on timely incorporating this data into IMPACT, any delay will have a measureable negative impact on teachers' evaluation and the resultant data if DCPS contracts this requirement with other vendor(s) who do not possess partnering experience and working understanding of District policies and practices. Tripod possesses this institutional knowledge based on a student survey pilot jointly conducted between Tripod and DCPS in the 2015-2016 school year.
- e) **An existing, research-based data treatment that includes student and classroom-level control variables to account for construct-irrelevant variance in the data.** Tripod Education is the only vendor that responded to the RFI and has a robust, existing, research-based data

treatment readily available. Tripod developed this data treatment through extensive research, and it includes control variables at weights established by the research to be proportionate to the effect of the variable. Any vendor other than Tripod would have to develop such a model, meaning this data treatment would not be available in year one of the project (should DCPS move forward with a data treatment for survey data that includes control variables). Tripod Education uses their current model with comparable states and districts across the nation including Pittsburgh, Tulsa, and the state of Hawaii.

- f) **A student survey instrument with a consistent Likert scale across items.** After the student survey pilot, DCPS teachers provided feedback indicating that consistency of the response options was essential for students to comprehend and accurately respond to the survey. In response to this feedback, DCPS seeks a vendor with a validated item set that includes the same Likert scale responses across the survey; Tripod offers such a survey.

While many vendors provide a student perception survey, Tripod is the only vendor that provides ALL of the following:

- A secure online administration
- Satisfactory data security protocols and assurances
- Demonstrated ability to link students to teachers within the platform
- A national data set including 1,000,000 student data points annually
- A large and knowledgeable customer service team, including local personnel from the leadership team
- Extensive validity evidence and significant differentiation of the data
- An established, research-based data treatment
- Experience working with DCPS
- Consistently scaled items

Contracting with a vendor other than Tripod Education introduces all or some combination of the following risks:

- Delayed survey administration window
- Inaccurate survey data
- Inability to pursue appropriate data treatments
- Insufficient implementation support
- Inability to assess practice relative to comparable settings

In light of the above findings, a contract with Tripod Education is in the best interest of DCPS to provide a valid and reliable student survey metric in the IMPACT evaluation system. A sole source award is the most efficient and cost-effective procurement method to fulfill this DCPS requirement.

CERTIFICATION BY THE DCPS PROGRAM

I hereby certify that the above findings are correct and the anticipated cost to DCPS is fair and reasonable.

Date

DCPS Representative

CERTIFICATION AND DETERMINATION

Based on the above findings in accordance with the above cited authority, I hereby determine that it is not feasible or practical to invoke the competitive bidding process under Section 402 or 403 of the District of Columbia Procurement Practices Reform Act of 2010 (D.C. Law 18-371; DC Code 2-354 and 27 DCMR 1304 and 1701

Date

Contracting Officer