

Minutes  
**Technology Task Force**  
**Classroom Technology Integration Subcommittee**

**Date:** September 12, 2011  
**Place:** WW55  
**Members:** Chair: Stefani Cook, Vice-Chair: Chuck Winder, Brent Lloyd, Heidi Rogers, Desiree Laughlin, George Boland, Wendy Horman  
Absent: Alan Millar

Louie Konkol, Chief Financial Officer for the State Department of Education, briefed the committee on the Request for Information (RFI) and Request for Proposal (RFP) documents. The RFI and RFP could be drafted simultaneously. The committee should give the vendor community enough time to develop their RFI.

Jacque Hyatt from the SDE stated that the committee will be looking for a state-wide professional development provider to handle training of all the classroom technology devices and one-to-one devices. Louie Konkol stated that the benefit to having a larger contract is that the districts can choose pieces of the professional development that would benefit the districts. A committee member suggested that two professional development RFIs may need to be developed – one for the classroom technology device training and one for the one-to-one device training.

A committee member asked about the capacity builder data coaches and the funding. Jacque Hyatt stated that the funding is not formula driven. The SDE staff will meet with Troy Wheeler, Chief Information Officer at the SDE, to get further clarification on funding for data coaches.

The committee discussed SchoolNet and whether it could be a portal for professional development. The portal will be a large repository where teachers and administrators can go to get professional development. A district can pick and choose to customize their needs at a class level, school level, and/or district level.

Warren Danforth, Senior Enterprise Architect at the SDE, explained the capabilities of SchoolNet to the committee in regards to the professional development portal. SchoolNet is set up to be a phased roll-out to the schools in the next three years. There is professional development money available in the SchoolNet grant and districts can opt out of using SchoolNet.

Mr. Danforth explained that a professional development portal will not be available in SchoolNet until August of next year. SchoolNet has a program called SchoolNet University. It is a blackboard for teachers and houses a series of video clips that teachers can view. SchoolNet can come and give a demonstration.

Mr. Danforth explained that not all the capabilities that the committee envisions are readily available in SchoolNet at this time. It may be three years before the entire state would have access to the professional development portal in

SchoolNet. There is a SchoolNet Powerpoint that Warren Danforth will send to the committee.

The committee noted that they would want SchoolNet to submit an RFI. Rob Sauer and Jacque Hyatt will be meeting with SchoolNet on Friday, September 16<sup>th</sup>.

The next item the committee addressed was a memo that would be sent to all the schools in the state. It would explain the technology task force funding and the timeline for disbursements. The committee decided that a sentence in paragraph two needed to be eliminated and that the definition of classroom technology integration should be added. The SDE staff will make these changes before distribution.

A committee member asked if the professional development money would be used for instructional coaches. Would each district get an instructional coach? What is the percentage of the funds? Would the money distributed be per student? The SDE staff will find out more details and report back to the committee regarding instructional coaches.

The committee discussed items that they would like to see in the RFI and the need to develop a plan on how the funding would be used in the RFI.

A committee member asked if a district does not use the monies, can they use it the next year? The SDE staff will research the information and report back to the committee.

The Committee adjourned at 4:35 p.m.



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# Crafting a Request for Information (RFI)



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❖ RFIs help an organization better understand who the players are, what products or services are available and where the industry related to the product or service is headed. The organization may have a vision that is totally different from what the industry or suppliers can provide and the RFI can assist in understanding this.



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- ❖ Generally, the bulk of information provided to potential suppliers in an RFI is contextual. It frames a problem without a solution, concentrating on “what” not “how,” and shows the intent by the organization to resolve it. Moreover, it allows the organization to articulate its needs and constraints to the supplier community to help frame potential responses.



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- ❖ Often RFIs are utilized to gather specific knowledge about potential solutions. Information can then be used to formulate an RFP or other procurement instruments.



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# Helpful hints in crafting an RFI:

- Potential respondents / vendors can't participate or influence in the crafting of the document
  - “Playing” in the front end of the proposal MAY exclude suppliers from playing on the back end.
  - Vendors are good at spotting the influence of rival suppliers in RFP/RFI specifications.



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# Helpful hints in crafting an RFI : cont.

➤ State your goals up front

- What are you trying to achieve?
- What problem are you trying to solve?
- What are the constraints or absolute requirements that a solution must address?
- The document should encourage creative responses in terms of solutions and costs without industry or vendor marketing material.



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# Helpful hints in crafting an RFI : cont.

- If you send a vague and fuzzy RFI, expect a similar response. Provide as much background as possible so the vendor can formulate an educated solution within the context.
- Notify vendors that references may be pursued and that demonstrations may be requested.



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# Helpful hints in crafting an RFI : cont.

## ➤ Pricing

- Provide a broad view of the projects overall budget, if known. Be careful not to commit to a budget for the specific RFI. Use the budget to help the vendor understand how large the project's scope is.
- Ask the vendor to provide pricing.



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# Helpful hints in crafting an RFI : cont.

- Consider asking for solutions that have already been developed. Discuss any need for intellectual ownership if relevant.
- Identify information that takes the risk out of the RFI response. (ie. How many teachers? How often? What delivery methods?) Include any known technical specification without stifling the response or pointing to a bias.
- Ask for targeted responses. “Describe how you will...”
- Consider limiting response to a finite number of pages.



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# Helpful hints in crafting an RFI : cont.

- The process is formal. While not as formal as an RFP and other procurement instruments, the RFI requires consistent messaging and metered responses while allowing the vendor community to be creative.
  - Create an internal timeline and state the milestone timeline in the document.



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# Helpful hints in crafting an RFI : cont.

- Typical timelines for planning purposes:
  - Internal planning and RFI development (2-4 weeks)
  - Release RFI
  - Vendor review and question period (2 weeks)
  - Committee response period (1 week)
  - Final response period (2 weeks)
  - Get feedback from reviewer (2 weeks)
  - Compile results and report findings



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# Helpful hints in crafting an RFI : cont.

- Communicate to one, communicate to all.
  - No side bar discussions with vendors as the perception of biases will taint the process and may kill the effort.
  - All vendor questions are documented, answered and posted for all potential vendors to see, ensuring openness and accountability.



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# Helpful hints in crafting an RFI : cont.

- Consider how the responses will be reviewed. What are the priorities, how are they aligned to the goals, what are “have to have” and what are the “nice to have” solutions?

❖ Watch out for traps



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# Helpful hints in crafting an RFI : cont.

- Don't paint yourself in a corner with narrow specifications.
- Don't be afraid to eliminate respondents as you move beyond the RFI. Since no official evaluation is conducted through this process, no result will be disclosed. However, information gathered through the process highlights those vendors that have viable solutions and adequate resources to achieve the stated goals.



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# Helpful hints in crafting an RFI : cont.

- Judge the proposal responses on merit not brand names or what you know about a company outside the proposal. Have an open mind.
- Refuse the thought that “because we already work with them” is the reason to advance a respondent through the process.



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# Helpful hints in crafting an RFI : cont.

- Since a contract will not result from the RFI responses, let the suppliers know they can mark their entire response a trade secret, but let them know they will have to defend any challenges to requests for copies.



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