

Mississippi State University
Request for Proposals
(RFP) 25-38
Career Services Management Software for
Mississippi State University

ISSUE DATE: April 3, 2025

ISSUING AGENCY: Office of Procurement and Contracts

Mississippi State University
610 McArthur Hall
245 Barr Avenue
Mississippi State, MS 39762

Sealed Proposals, subject to the conditions made a part hereof, will be received **April 29, 2025 at 2:00 PM in the MSU Office of Procurement and Contracts, same address above**, for furnishing services and potentially, optional services as described herein.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Indicate firm name, and RFP number on the front of each sealed proposal envelope or package.

All inquiries concerning this RFP should be directed to:

Jay Rester
Office of Procurement and Contracts, (Same address above)
jrester@procurement.msstate.edu
662-325-2550

Any addendum associated with this RFP will be posted at <http://www.procurement.msstate.edu/procurement/bids/index.php> located under RFP 25-38. It is the respondent's responsibility to assure that all addenda have been reviewed and if applicable, signed and returned.

1. UNIVERSITY OVERVIEW

Mississippi State University (MSU) is a comprehensive land grant university of 21,500+ students and approximately 5,000 faculty and staff. The main campus is located adjacent to the community of Starkville in northeast Mississippi, with a remote campus located in Meridian with an enrollment of around 700 students. Additionally, the university operates several remote agricultural experiment stations and has an Extension office located in each of the eighty-two Mississippi counties.

Additional information about MSU can be found at our website www.msstate.edu.

2. INVITATION TO SUBMIT PROPOSAL ON RFP

The Mississippi State University Career Center seeks a career services management platform that will enable the Career Center and its partners to maximize effort by incorporating institution/administration, student/alumni, employer, and faculty for facilitating, monitoring, and reporting of various recruiting activities and reports.

The system should be flexible and customizable in a way that allows the Career Center to monitor ongoing efforts.

The system should improve coordination and collaboration among the Career Center and its partners by storing and monitoring all data and requests submitted through the system, allowing data to be sent by any partner, but allow for it to be accessed by any partner with appropriate authorization, so that authorized users may be able to review or approve any requests submitted through the system.

Once implemented, the system will act as a platform in order to manage the activities of the Career Center and the various categories of users.

3. SCOPE OF SERVICES REQUIRED

a) Technical Requirements

Platform/System should support a minimum of:

- Provide applicable certifications such as SOC2 documentation
- Be secure and meet all local, state, and federal data security standards
- Provide PCI compliant credit card processing
- Integrate with MSU Nelnet Campus Commerce/QuikPay for credit card payment of fees as appropriate
- Provide a statement that you company is PCI-DSS compliant

- Provide a statement stating whether your company is compliant with FERPA, GLBA, NACH, and Red Flag Regulation requirements
- Provide a completed Higher Education Cloud Vendor Assessment Tool (HECVAT) (lite version available at: <https://www.ren-isac.net/public-resources/hecvat.html>)
- Provide product interfaces that are compliant with WCAG 2.0 AA
- Support single sign-on (CAS, Shibboleth, or SAML)

The proposal should include responses to the following: Does the system support two-factor authentication? If so, describe solution options.

b) Users

There should be no restrictions on the number of users.

User permissions and accesses to various system functions should be role based with users allowed in multiple roles. Role-based permissions govern each user's rights to add, edit, and view information within the system. There should be capability to accommodate tiered access based on roles.

c) Desired high-level system capabilities/features

a. Vendor Qualifications:

- i.** Demonstrated record of successfully serving higher education clients in the experiential learning and career space. Provide, as requested, a list of both university and employer clients/users with specific references.
- ii.** Financially secure with appropriate investments/revenues to assure long-term viability.
- iii.** Appropriate resources and staffing to address client needs and demands.
- iv.** Appropriate data security and data handling protocols.
- v.** Secure server/storage environment with appropriate backup and disaster recovery capabilities and services.
- vi.** Ability/willingness to provide full data access and support interfaces with other university and third-party systems (e.g. Banner, Canvas).
- vii.** Demonstrated commitment to innovation and product improvement based on client feedback and evolving market conditions.
- viii.** Demonstrated commitment to provide appropriate levels of implementation and on-going service support.

b. Product Features:

- i.** Manager, student/alumni, employer, and faculty interfaces that allow access to shared information (e.g., job postings/applications, interviews, evaluations).
- ii.** Capability to upload documents in multiple formats including but not limited to Excel (.xlsx, .xls), Word (.docx, .rtf), PDF, text, CSV formats, or API support.
- iii.** Flexibility for partners to upload and monitor multiple reports regarding data or compliance.

c. Manager Interface

- i.** Data management of employer information, contacts, and activities (e.g. recruiting, hiring) including the capability to accommodate non-U.S. company data information (e.g. country, international phone numbers, and mailing information).
- ii.** Data management of student information and activities (e.g. applications, interviews, experiential learning assignments).
- iii.** Communication capabilities, including email, to different categories/configurations of system users (e.g. students, employers) and targeted audiences (e.g., eligible students based on selection criteria, active experiential learning students, or employers).
- iv.** Verification of valid employers and job postings, and ability to reject employers and postings deemed fraudulent.
- v.** Assignment of user rights for multiple tiers within user categories.
- vi.** Responsibility assignments to different categories/configurations of system users, including both employer organizations and individual contacts within those organizations.
- vii.** On-campus recruiting activity management.
- viii.** Career fair management.
- ix.** Event advertising, registration, and management.
- x.** Systems usage analytics.
- xi.** Robust reporting capabilities that include custom reports and data visualization. Most, if not all, reports should be viewable on screen with options for download in Excel, PDF, CSV, Word, or API access.
- xii.** The system should have the ability to create custom fields by select users and system administrators.
- xiii.** The bidder should explain in detail the reporting function of the system.
- xiv.** The bidder should explain in detail additional modules and the flexibility and ease with which the Career Center can integrate modules as needed. Any additional cost for modules should be clearly articulated.

- xv. Capability to isolate monitoring/reporting by multiple factors for individualized monitoring as well as aggregating and summarizing monitoring activities.
- xvi. Open API for on-demand data access and transfer.
- xvii. Use of single sign-on consistent with university standards.
- xviii. Ability to manage system high traffic periods and large user communities.
- xix. User training/instructional support and materials.

d. Student/Alumni Interface:

- i. Easy, intuitive and attractive student interface and navigation.
- ii. Document storage and retrieval (i.e. résumés, cover letters, etc.)
- iii. Individual student profile feature that is searchable by managers and employers with student control over employer access.
- iv. Robust jobs database with search, sort, and application capabilities with ability to save search filters feature and ability to search across multiple circumstances (e.g. co-op and/or full-time) and periods (e.g. Spring Semester, Summer Semester, Fall Semester).
- v. Reporting capabilities for experiential learning/employment.
- vi. Co-op work experience evaluation by the student – evaluation form customizable by student academic discipline/group/course; ability to alert students to form completion deadlines with partial completion/save feature.
- vii. Seamless interface with student guided self-reflection feedback process.
- viii. User-specific training/instructional support and materials.

e. Employer Interface:

- i.** Easy, intuitive, and attractive employer interface and navigation.
- ii.** Self-service job posting capabilities.
- iii.** Ability to schedule/organize on-campus recruiting activities.
- iv.** Career fair registration and logistics.
- v.** Co-op work experience evaluation by the employer – easy access to evaluation forms specific to student academic discipline/group/course; ability to alert employers to form completion deadlines with partial completion/save feature.
- vi.** User-specific training/instructional support and materials.

f. Faculty Interface:

- i.** View and use/share job posting capabilities.
- ii.** View and use/share event capabilities.\
- iii.** User-specific training/instructional support and materials.

g. Additional Features:

- i.** Mobile and desktop versions.
- ii.** Machine learning based job recommendation engine.
- iii.** Embedded third party services – e.g. CareerShift, CareerEco, GoinGlobal
- iv.** Capability to conduct mock interviews.

d) System Maintenance and Support

The MSU Career Center requests the bidder to provide installation, setup, and configuration training. The MSU Career Center requests a train-the-trainer approach where the bidder will be asked to train MSU Career Center staff who will then train partners.

Bidders shall provide details on licensing requirements and all ongoing expenses for maintenance and support that cover a five year contract period. This includes product updates and hotfixes.

4. INQUIRIES ABOUT RFP

Prospective respondents may make written inquiries concerning this request for proposal to obtain clarification of requirements. Responses to these inquiries may be made by addendum to the Request for Proposal (RFP). Please send your inquiries to Jay Rester via electronic mail at jrester@procurement.msstate.edu.

All inquiries should be marked “URGENT INQUIRY. MSU RFP 25-38”

5. ADDENDUM OR SUPPLEMENT TO RFP

In the event it becomes necessary to revise any part of this RFP, an addendum to this RFP will be provided to each respondent who received the original RFP. Respondents shall not rely on any other interpretations, changes or corrections.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

a) Issuing Office

This RFP is issued by the following office:

Office of Procurement and Contracts
Mississippi State University
245 Barr Avenue, 610 McArthur Hall
Mississippi State, MS 39762

b) Schedule of Critical Dates

The following dates are for planning purposes only unless otherwise stated in this RFP progress towards their completion is at the sole discretion of the university.

RFP Posted	April 3, 2025
Questions from Vendors Due	April 15, 2025
MSU Q&A Response Due	April 22, 2025
Proposal Submission Deadline – 2:00 p.m.	April 29, 2025
Award Date (Estimated)	May 30, 2025
Contract Effective Date (Estimated)	July 1, 2025

7. PROPOSAL CONTENTS

This is a two-step RFP process. The technical proposals and the cost proposals are to be submitted in separate sealed envelopes. Indicate firm name, RFP# and word “Technical Proposal” on the front of the sealed technical proposal envelope or package. Indicate the firm name, RFP# and the word “Cost Proposal” on the front of the sealed proposal envelope or package.

At a minimum, the following items should be included in the contents of the Technical Proposal:

- Cover letter, indicating the scope of the proposal. The letter should include an overview of the services being offered. The letter should include a statement of exceptions to any of the terms and conditions outlined in this RFP. (Cover letter should be no more than 3 pages in length.)

- Corporate Structure and Credentials
 - Number of years of experience
 - Staffing levels and support proposed
 - Examples of similar previous work.

- Operations and Ability To Perform
 - Provide operation plan. This should include, but not be limited to, acknowledgement and agreement with all requirements as well as explanations, where applicable, of the intended plan to achieve the requirements.
 - Describe how services will be provided to MSU.

At a minimum, the following items should be included in the contents of the Cost Proposal:

- Fees for initial purchase of Tracking and Monitoring Tool (including all preparation, installation, rollout, training and first year maintenance and support)
- Annual Maintenance Costs after initial purchase.

8. DISCUSSIONS/EVALUATION CRITERIA/AWARD PROCESS

MSU reserves the right to conduct discussions with any or all respondents, or to make an award of a contract without such discussions based only on evaluation of the written proposals. MSU reserves the right to contact and interview anyone connected with any past or present projects with which the respondent has been associated. MSU likewise reserves the right to designate a review committee to evaluate the proposals according to the criteria set forth under this section. MSU may make a written determination showing the basis upon which the award was made and such determination shall be included in the procurement file.

MSU reserves the right to award this contract in whole or in part depending on what is in the best interest of MSU with MSU being the sole judge thereof.

The evaluation factors set forth in this section are described as follows:

- The Vendor’s ability to deliver an application meeting the overall objective and functions described in the RFP
- Competitive fees
- Availability and access technical support
- Vendor’s experience with similar systems
- Compliance with applicable State and Federal laws and regulations
- The committee may invite finalists for interviews and/or presentations

Failure to attend a requested interview presentation before the committee may result in a proposal not being considered.

Upon award of contract(s), successful respondent(s) will be asked to provide a transition plan and timeline and obtain MSU’s input and concurrence before moving forward.

Proposals will be scored based on the following weights (100 points total):

- Corporate Structure/Years of Experience/References – 20 pts
- Operation Plan/Ease of Use/Services Offered – 60 pts
- Fees – 20 pts.

9. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Proposals shall be submitted in two packages (envelopes or boxes) as set forth in Section 7. Please make sure that the RFP number is clearly visible on the outside of the package.

Technical Proposal – One (1) original and one (1) electronic copy (of the complete technical proposal in one pdf file on a flash drive) of parts 7(b)(i) (Cover Letter), 7(b)(ii) (Corporate Structure and Credentials), and 7(b)(iii) (Operations and Ability to Perform) should be sealed in a package with “Technical Proposal” in the lower left hand corner. Each submitted package should be a complete copy. The original shall be marked on the first page “Original”.

Cost Proposal – One (1) original and one (1) electronic copy (of the complete cost proposal in one pdf file on a flash drive). Should be sealed in a package with “Cost Proposal” in the lower left-hand corner. Each submitted package should be a complete copy. The original shall be marked on the first page “Original”.

The proposal package must be received on or before **2:00 p.m. on April 29, 2025**. It is the responsibility of the respondent to ensure that the proposal package arrives in the Procurement and Contracts office on-time. The proposal package should be delivered or sent by mail to:

**Office of Procurement and Contracts
Mississippi State University
610 McArthur Hall
245 Barr Avenue
Mississippi State, MS 39762**

Your response must include the signature page included in this RFP (See Appendix A) and contain the signature of an authorized representative of the respondent's organization. The signature on the "Original" signature page should be in blue ink

MSU reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and to waive informalities and minor irregularities in proposals received and to accept any portion of a proposal or all items bid if deemed in the best interest of the University to do so.

Proposals received after the stated due date and time will be returned unopened. Submission via facsimile or other electronic means will not be accepted.

10. PCI COMPLIANCE ISSUES (IF APPLICABLE)

The vendor must provide a PCI compliant processing environment using one of the approved options below. If the vendor is unable to fully adhere to one of these options, the proposal will be removed from consideration.

- Option 1 – Integrate with MSU's existing third party, PCI validated payment solution (Nelnet Campus Commerce/QuikPay).
- Option 2 – Use vendor's payment processing functionality with a different MSU Merchant ID but same bank account. Additional requirements include:
 - Vendor must provide PCI compliance certification information, e.g. Attestation of Compliance (AOC) to ensure all hardware, software and back end processing are compliant.
 - Vendor must provide specific reporting requirements and interfaces to support Banner integration and automatic posting of credit/debit card payments to the ERP.
 - Card transactions processed by university personnel must be performed using hardware that is PCI-approved and point to point encrypted (P2PE).
- Option 3 – Use vendor's payment processing functionality with vendor's Merchant ID. Additional requirements include:

- Vendor must provide PCI compliance certification information, e.g. Attestation of Compliance (AOC) to ensure all hardware, software and back end processing are compliant.
- Payments due MSU will be remitted on a predetermined basis, net of all applicable fees and merchant discounts. Banner integration not required.
- Card transactions processed by university personnel must be performed using hardware that is PCI-approved and point to point encrypted (P2PE).

11. TWO-PHASE, BEST AND FINAL OFFER

If the initial proposals do not provide MSU with a clear and convincing solution, or if MSU feels it is appropriate to offer the potential providers an opportunity to submit revised proposals, MSU reserves the right to use a two-phase approach and/or invite Best and Final Offers (BAFO). Based on the information obtained through the proposal submittals (Phase-One), MSU may choose a specific business model, and potential providers may be asked to submit revised proposals based upon that specific model.

The evaluation committee may develop, for distribution to the top-ranked firms, refined written terms with specific information on what is being requested as a result of information obtained through initial RFP submittal process. Proposers may be asked to reduce cost or provide additional clarification to specific sections of the RFP. Selected proposers are not required to submit a BAFO and may submit a written response notifying the solicitation evaluation committee that their response remains as originally submitted.

12. TERM OF CONTRACT

It is MSU's intention to enter into a five (5) year contract, estimated to begin July 1, 2025. Upon approval by both parties the contract may be renewed for an additional five (5) one-year terms for a total contract length of ten (10) years.

MSU reserves the right to terminate this agreement with thirty (30) days-notice, by the Director of Procurement and Contracts via certified mail to the address listed on the signature page of this RFP (See Appendix A) if any of the terms of the proposal and/or contract are violated.

In the event the contractor fails to carry out and comply with any of the conditions and agreements to be performed under the specifications, MSU will notify the contractor, in writing, of such failure or default. In the event the necessary corrective action has not been completed within a ten (10) day period, the contractor must submit, in writing, why such corrective action has not been performed. The University reserves the right to determine whether or not such noncompliance may be construed as a failure of performance of the contractor.

Termination of contract by contractor without cause can only occur with at least one-hundred and twenty (120) days-notice prior to the proposed termination of the contract.

In the event MSU employs attorneys or incurs other expenses it considers necessary to protect or enforce its rights under this contract, the contractor agrees to pay the attorney's fees and expenses so incurred by MSU.

13. ACCEPTANCE TIME

Proposal shall be valid for one-hundred and eighty (180) days following the proposal due date.

14. RFP CANCELLATION

This RFP in no manner obligates MSU to the eventual purchase of any services described, implied or which may be proposed until confirmed by a written contract. Progress towards this end is solely at the discretion of MSU and may be terminated without penalty or obligations at any time prior to the signing of a contract. MSU reserves the right to cancel this RFP at any time, for any reason, and to reject any or all proposals or any parts thereof.

15. INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR CLAUSE

The contractor shall acknowledge that an independent contractor relationship is established and that the employees of the contractor are not, nor shall they be deemed employees of MSU and that employees of MSU are not, nor shall they be deemed employees of the contractor.

16. OTHER CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS

Award Terms: This contract shall be awarded at the discretion of the University based on the capabilities and overall reputation of the Supplier, as well as the cost. Acceptance shall be confirmed by the issuance of a contract from the University.

Standard Contract: The awarded contractor(s) will be expected to enter into a contract that is in substantial compliance with MSU's standard contract http://www.procurement.msstate.edu/pdf/standard_rfp_contract.pdf. Proposal should include any desired changes to the standard contract. It should be noted that there are many clauses which the MSU cannot change (see Standard Addendum <http://www.procurement.msstate.edu/contracts/standardaddendum.pdf>) Significant changes to the standard contract may be cause for rejection of a proposal.

The Procurement Process: The following is a general description of the process by which a firm will be selected to fulfill this Request for Proposal.

- Request for Proposals (RFP) is issued to prospective suppliers.
- A deadline for written questions is set.

- Proposals will be received as set forth in Section 9.
- Unsigned proposals will not be considered.
- All proposals must be received by MSU no later than the date and time specified on the cover sheet of this RFP.
- At that date and time, the package containing the proposals from each responding firm will be opened publicly and the name of each respondent will be announced.
- Proposal evaluation: The University will review each proposal.
- At their option, the evaluators may request oral presentations or discussions for the purpose of clarification or to amplify the materials presented in the proposal
- Respondents are cautioned that this is a request for proposals, not a request to contract, and the MSU reserves the unqualified right to reject any and all proposals when such rejection is deemed to be in the best interest of the University.
- The proposals will be evaluated according to the criteria set forth in Section 8.

APPENDIX A: SIGNATURE PAGE

Provide information requested, affix signature and return this page with your proposal:

NAME OF FIRM: _____

COMPLETE ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____

AREA CODE/NUMBER

FACSIMILE NUMBER: _____

AREA CODE/NUMBER

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

AUTHORIZED
SIGNATURE: _____

PRINTED NAME: _____

TITLE: _____