

**Mississippi State University
Request for Proposals (RFP) 25-26
Travel and Expense Management Platform**

ISSUE DATE: March 7, 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 1, 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:

Caleb Alford
Office of Procurement and Contracts, (Same address above)
calford@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 25-26. 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

MSU seeks a cloud-based Travel Expense Management system to enhance efficiency in processing, tracking, and reporting travel-related expenses. The system should streamline workflows, ensure compliance with institutional policies, and improve overall user experience for travelers, approvers, and administrators. The platform must support travel request submissions, expense reporting, receipt management, and automated approvals while integrating with financial systems to facilitate reimbursements. Additionally, the system should provide real-time visibility into travel expenses, ensure secure data storage, and offer customizable reporting tools to support decision-making and compliance monitoring.

3. SCOPE OF SERVICES REQUIRED

MSU seeks a comprehensive, scalable, and secure Travel Expense Management system that meets the institution's operational, financial, and compliance requirements. The selected solution must seamlessly integrate with MSU's existing systems, provide robust user access controls via desktop and mobile device with native mobile app access, and deliver intuitive reporting and expense management functionalities. Additionally, the system must support cloud-based deployment, ensuring accessibility, security, and reliability.

To ensure a successful implementation, the proposed system must meet MSU's absolute minimum technical requirements. Vendors must provide a detailed response demonstrating how their solution fulfills each requirement outlined in this section. Proposals that fail to meet these minimum standards will be removed from consideration.

The following subsections define MSU's specific expectations for technical requirements, user access management, reporting capabilities, core system functions, and ongoing maintenance and support.

a) Technical Requirements

The following requirements are the absolute minimum standards that a vendor and their proposed system must meet. Proposals that fail to meet these requirements will be removed from consideration. Vendors must provide a detailed description of how their system meets each requirement.

To ensure compatibility, security, and efficiency, the system must include the following:

- **Ellucian Banner Integration** – The system must integrate seamlessly with MSU’s existing Ellucian Banner system and have real-time integration options available.
- **Cross-Browser Support** – The platform must support major web browsers, including Microsoft Edge, Firefox, Safari, and Chrome.
- **Credit Card Feed Integration** – The system must support the integration of credit card feeds, including travel cards, company cards, ghost account cards, and virtual cards. Transactions should be automatically imported, recorded within the system, and available for inclusion in expense reports to ensure efficient expense management.
 1. The system must accept files from Regions and Visa to import travel card charges (.pgp file format).
- **Cloud-Based SaaS Solution** – The system must be a hosted, Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) solution to ensure scalability, accessibility, and reliability.
- **Authentication, Single Sign-On (SSO), and Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) Support** – The system must integrate with MSU’s authentication system, supporting CAS or Shibboleth for secure and seamless access. It must also support Single Sign-On (SSO) functionality and be fully compatible with MSU’s Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) requirements to enhance security and streamline user access.

b) Users & Access Management

There should be no restrictions on the number of users, and at a minimum, the system must be able to accommodate MSU’s estimated staff and student population of 30,000 or more. User permissions and access to system functions must be role-based, allowing individuals to be assigned multiple roles as needed. These role-based permissions will govern each user’s ability to add, edit, and view information within the system.

To ensure effective user access management, the system must meet the following requirements:

- **Role-Based Access Control** – The system must define role-based access for Travelers, Travel Managers, Approvers, Request Delegates, Expense Delegates, Arrangers, and Administrators.

- **User-Friendly Interface** – The platform must provide an intuitive interface that enables users to submit travel requests and expense reports easily, with approval workflows that users can update to route approvals to the appropriate personnel via desktop computer, and mobile device with native mobile app access.
- **Receipt & Documentation Management** – Users must be able to upload and store receipts via both desktop and mobile interfaces. The system should incorporate Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology to extract relevant data automatically, minimizing manual entry. This mobile receipt upload functionality must also be available offline when the user is not connected to the internet.
- **Submission Tracking & Notifications** – Users must have the ability to track the status of their submissions and receive real-time notifications throughout the approval and reimbursement process.
- **AI-Driven Training & Onboarding** – The system must embed AI-driven training tools to enhance user adoption and streamline onboarding processes.

c) **Reporting/Forms, Custom Fields, Files**

The system must provide robust reporting capabilities, customizable fields, and comprehensive file management to support MSU’s data analysis and compliance needs. Vendors must describe in detail how their system meets the following requirements:

- **Multi-Format Reporting** – Reports must be available in multiple formats. Most reports should be viewable on-screen with options to download in Excel, PDF, CSV, DOC/RTF, or access via API.
- **Custom Field Creation** – The system must allow select users and system administrators to create custom fields. If this functionality is restricted, the vendor must provide technical support personnel to implement custom fields as needed.
- **Detailed Reporting Functionality** – The bidder must provide a comprehensive explanation of the system’s reporting capabilities, including customization options, filtering, and data visualization tools.
- **Advanced Monitoring & Aggregation** – The system must allow for monitoring and reporting based on multiple factors, enabling individualized tracking as well as aggregated and summarized reporting.
- **File & Document Uploads** – Users must be able to upload documents and images in multiple formats, including but not limited to .png, .jpg, .jpeg, .pdf, .tif, and .tiff.
- **Vendor-Supported Report Development and Assistance**– The vendor must provide a dedicated consultant for custom report writing and custom dashboard creation. This dedicated reporting consultant would schedule and burst reports to various university populations on a recurring basis, as needed.
- **AI/ML Anomaly Detection** – The system must incorporate artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) capabilities to detect irregularities in expense reporting.

- **Role-Based Report Access** – Report access must be clearly defined based on user roles, such as Business Author, Consumer, and Manager, ensuring appropriate data visibility.
- **Annual System Configuration Review** – The system must include an annual review of its configuration to ensure optimal performance and alignment with institutional needs.

d) **Functions**

The Travel Expense Management system must include the following core functions:

- **Expense Submission & Approval** – Users should be able to submit travel requests and expense reports through an intuitive web-based interface via their desktop, and mobile device with native mobile app access. The system should support approval workflows that can be updated by the user, ensuring a streamlined process for users and approvers.
- **Receipt & Documentation Management** – The system must allow users to upload receipts and supporting documents via desktop and mobile devices with native mobile app access even when user is offline and not connected to the internet. Optical Character Recognition (OCR) should be incorporated to extract relevant data automatically, reducing manual entry. Users should also be able to attach additional documentation as needed. OCR should also be available via desktop, and mobile device with native mobile app access even when user is offline and not connected to the internet.
- **Policy Compliance & Audit Support** – Built-in compliance controls should help enforce institutional travel policies, flagging potential violations and maintaining detailed audit logs for tracking and review. AI-driven analysis should be used to maintain detailed audit logs, providing real-time tracking and intelligent insights to support audits more efficiently.
- **Integration & Reporting** – The platform must integrate with financial and accounting systems to enable real-time tracking, automated reimbursements, and reconciliation. Robust reporting tools should allow administrators to generate and customize reports and dashboards for financial oversight and decision-making.

The system should use a tiered structure that allows authorized users to access data and reports for analysis or approval, while allowing any user to be able to submit documents. The system will need to be able to allow authorized users to monitor and approve/deny requests and offer commentary or feedback that is viewable by the requestee. This functionality must be available when working via desktop, and mobile device with native mobile app access.

Documents and files submitted through the application should be easily downloadable by any user with required authorization. The system will allow for users to track reports and requests, monitor progress, and stay up-to-date on compliance and reporting requirements.

MSU currently utilizes SAP Concur for travel expense management and reimbursement. Any proposed software solution must include pricing for the seamless migration of all data from SAP Concur to the new platform, ensuring that no data is lost during the transition.

e) System Maintenance and Support

MSU requires a robust and reliable system maintenance and support structure to ensure seamless operation, security, and ongoing functionality of the system. The selected vendor must provide comprehensive installation, configuration, and training support to facilitate smooth implementation and effective long-term use. A train-the-trainer model is preferred, where designated MSU staff members receive in-depth training to enable them to educate end users across the institution.

To meet MSU's expectations for system maintenance and support, the vendor must address the following key areas:

- **Cloud-Based Infrastructure & Security** – The system must be cloud-based, with a strong data security and backup plan. Vendors should provide applicable security certifications, such as SOC2 and HECVAT Lite, to ensure compliance with industry standards.
- **Accessibility Standards** – Vendors should provide a completed Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) that covers all software user interfaces.
- **Software Updates & Upgrade Flexibility** – While the vendor is responsible for implementing system updates, MSU must have the ability to apply upgrades on its own timeline to align with institutional needs. Vendor must provide release notes and communicate upcoming changes to administrators, allowing MSU to prepare for new features and any necessary adjustments.
- **Training & User Support** – Initial training must be provided, with options for additional training as needed to support ongoing system use.
- **Comprehensive Support Structure** – The vendor must offer email and phone support, along with a trouble ticket system. A dedicated ticket or case management system should ensure timely issue resolution and effective tracking.
- **Maintenance & Problem Escalation Procedures** – The vendor must clearly define the procedures for system maintenance, technical support, and problem escalation to facilitate prompt and effective issue resolution.
- **Regulatory Compliance** – The system must meet all applicable local, state, and federal data security standards to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements.
- **Implementation Plan** – The vendor must provide a detailed implementation plan outlining the process, timeline, and key milestones for system deployment.

The initial contract is expected to span 36 months, covering system implementation, maintenance, and ongoing support. Vendors must provide details regarding licensing requirements, recurring costs, and any additional fees associated with continued technical support and system upkeep.

To ensure uninterrupted system performance, maintenance services must include access to product updates, patches, and security hotfixes at no additional cost beyond the agreed-upon maintenance fees. After the initial three-year period, support and maintenance costs will be reviewed annually and renewed based on performance and institutional needs.

As a valued customer, MSU requires an expedited process for high-priority issues, ensuring prompt response times and swift resolution of critical concerns. The support system should provide real-time status updates, comprehensive case tracking, and seamless communication with vendor support teams to minimize disruptions and maintain operational efficiency.

4. INQUIRIES ABOUT RFP

Prospective respondents may make written inquiries concerning this request for proposal to obtain clarification of requirements. **Questions should be submitted either via a Word document or plainly typed in the email itself.** Responses to these inquiries may be made by addendum to the Request for Proposal (RFP). Please send your inquiries to Caleb Alford via electronic mail at calford@procurement.msstate.edu.

All inquiries should be marked “URGENT INQUIRY. MSU RFP 25-26”

5. 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 **March 7, 2025**

Questions from Vendors Due **March 18, 2025**

MSU Q&A Response Due	March 25, 2025
Proposal Submission Deadline – 2:00 p.m.	April 1, 2025
Award Date (Estimated)	May 1, 2025
Contract Effective Date (Estimated)	May 1, 2025

6. 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 software/items/service (including all preparation, installation, rollout, training and first year maintenance and support)
- Annual Maintenance Costs and any license or software fees per year after initial purchase.

7. 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 – 10 pts
- Operation Plan/Ease of Use/Services Offered – 60 pts
- Fees – 30 pts.

8. 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 1, 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.

9. 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 solution (NelNet Business Solutions – Commerce Manager), because all hardware, software and back end processing have been vetted and credit/debit card payments are automatically posted to Banner.
- **Option 2** – Use alternative third-party solution. Use a different MSU Merchant ID but same bank account.

- Work with members of MSU’s PCI Council and third-party PCI Compliance consultant to review business needs and proposed solution.
 - Ensure card transactions processed by university personnel are performed using a PCI-validated point to point encrypted (P2PE) solution. The solution must be listed on the PCI council’s website (<https://www.pcisecuritystandards.org>), must not be expired, and devices to be used with the solution must have a PIN transaction security (PTS) expiration date at least 3 years past the date of installation.
 - Obtain the following solution information
 - Attestation of compliance (AoC) from all parties involved in handling or that affect the security of cardholder data.
 - Verify that all devices have a current PTS certification and have an expiration date at least 3 years past the installation date of the solution.
 - Obtain a data flow diagram showing where payment card data will be introduced to the proposed solution and all steps/hops it will take until payment information is delivered to the merchant processing bank. This will determine all of the service providers that must provide an AoC.
 - Require specific reporting requirements and interfaces to support Banner integration and automatic posting of credit/debit card payments to the ERP. The exact file layout will be provided upon request.
- **Option 3** – Use alternative third-party solution. Use vendor’s Merchant ID.
 - Work with members of MSU’s PCI Council and third-party PCI Compliance consultant to review the solution.
 - Ensure card transactions processed by university personnel are performed using a PCI-validated point to point encrypted (P2PE) solution. The solution must be listed on the PCI council’s website (<https://www.pcisecuritystandards.org>), must not be expired, and devices to be used with the solution must have a PIN transaction security (PTS) expiration date at least 3 years past the date of installation.
 - Obtain the following solution information
 - Attestation of compliance (AoC) from all parties involved in handling or that affect the security of cardholder data.
 - Verify that all devices have a current PTS certification and have an expiration date at least 3 years past the installation date of the solution.
 - Obtain a data flow diagram showing where payment card data will be introduced to the proposed solution and all steps/hops it will take until payment information is delivered to the merchant processing bank. This will determine all of the service providers that must provide an AoC.

- Payments due MSU will be remitted on a predetermined basis, net of all applicable fees and merchant discounts. Banner integration not required.

10. 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.

11. TERM OF CONTRACT

It is MSU's intention to enter into a three (3) year contract, estimated to begin May 1, 2025.

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.

12. ACCEPTANCE TIME

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

13. 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.

14. 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.

15. DISCLOSURE OF PROPOSAL CONTENTS

Proposals will be kept confidential until evaluations and award are completed by MSU. At that time, all proposals and documents pertaining to the proposals will be open to the public, except for material that is clearly marked proprietary or confidential.

IMPORTANT! The offeror/proposer should mark any and all pages of the proposal considered to be proprietary information which may remain confidential in accordance with Mississippi Code Annotated 25-61-9 and 79-23 1 (1972, as amended). Each page of the proposal that the proposer considers trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information should be on a different color paper than non-confidential pages and be marked in the upper right hand corner with the word "CONFIDENTIAL."

Failure to clearly identify trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information will result in that information being released subject to a public records request.

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 8.
- 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 7.

APPENDIX A: SIGNATURE PAGE

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

Name of Firm: _____

Complete Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Authorized Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Title: _____