Study of Feedback for Teachers Based on Classroom Videos
Questions from Offerors and Responses
11/28/16

Q1. Can for profit entities respond to the RFP?

A: Yes, for profit entities can respond to the Request for Proposals (RFP).

Q2. What is the total budgeted amount available for the intervention portion of the RFP?

A: The current contract allocates $4.38 million for the selected provider to implement the tasks described in the RFP. The offeror should note that selection of the provider is in a competitive environment.

Q3. Is the $4.38 million max for the entire work or just for the provider work?

A: The current contract allocates $4.38 million for the coaching provider. Mathematica's study activities (and those of its subcontractors) are allocated separate funding within a contract with the U.S. Department of Education (ED).

Q4. Is the $4.38 million maximum figure mentioned on p.35 the allocation for the subcontracted coaching component, or for the full study, including this contract to the coaching provider?

A: Please see response for Q3.

Q5. Is cost plus 10% an acceptable budget format for the bid?

A: Proposals must have a realistic budget and should be within the $4.38 million allocated for the subcontracted work. The anticipated subcontract will be structured as a firm fixed price subcontract, except for travel expenses which will be reimbursed at cost. The proposed prices will be evaluated for congruence with the proposed work. The RFP requires offerors to submit an itemized budget, by task, subtask, and by budget period, to reflect their detailed understanding of the personnel and other resources necessary to complete the requirements specified in the Statement of Work.

The RFP is not intended to provide guidance on profit/fee. Offerors wishing to include a fee must justify the need for a fee given organization type and must demonstrate that such a fee is consistent with prior contracts or projects. However, the offeror should note that selection of the provider is in a competitive environment. In addition, offerors that include profit/fee must reflect it in a discrete budget line, which indicates the proposed percentage and calculated amounts for each task and aggregated total.

Q6. Can you clarify that only one contract for intervention will be awarded?

A: As noted in the RFP, we plan to select one provider's program for inclusion in the study through a subcontract issued by Mathematica. The selected provider must have a sufficient number of coaches who are trained on the provider's observation instrument and trained to provide feedback and coaching to a minimum of 200 teachers during the 2017-2018 school year and 100 teachers during the 2018-2019 school year across approximately 10 districts geographically dispersed across the U.S. If a provider does not have a sufficient number of coaches currently available to provide feedback and coaching on this scale, the provider must explain how it will hire and train enough coaches between February 2017 (when a provider is selected) and July 2017 (when summer orientations begin).

Although our preference is to select one provider, if an offeror does not have the capacity to provide feedback and coaching to 200 teachers in approximately 10 districts by July 2017, the provider may still submit a proposal. Preferably, under this circumstance, the provider will partner with another provider to submit a single proposal for providing coaching and feedback for the study (i.e. the two partnering providers would submit a single proposal). The proposal must describe how the providers will work together to implement a consistent approach to feedback and coaching across the study districts. If partnering with another provider is not feasible, a provider may submit an individual proposal, however, the provider must (1) clearly describe the number of teachers for whom they will be able to provide feedback and coaching by July 2017, and (2) explain how its program could be combined with another provider in order to provide coaching to all teachers in the study.

Q7. Will there only be one provider for this study or will the work be split among a number of providers?

A: See response to Q6.

Q8. Will any limitations be placed on the IP used within the intervention i.e. will Mathematica and/or USDOE have any ownership rights to the intervention and/or the documentation produced within the intervention?

A: Issues related to intellectual property rights are governed by the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) clause 52.227-17, which is titled "Rights in Data—Special Works" (found here: https://www.acquisition.gov/far/current/html/52_227.html) and Mathematica Subcontract Terms And Conditions General Provisions, Section 1. Copyright (RFP, Attachment B). The substantive work to be conducted by the selected provider will involve the use of pre-existing materials that will not be delivered to ED, and thus, will not be subject to the terms specified in the clause. Therefore, this clause will be excluded from the subcontract awarded to the selected provider.

Q9. Could the funding proposal include training coaches in our model?

A: Yes, offerors must describe their plans for hiring coaches and training them to provide feedback and coaching in Task 4 of the RFP. The costs for hiring and training coaches must be included in Task 4 of the itemized budget.

Q10. Is the funding multi-year? Is it secured or renewed annually? That is, can Congress discontinue the study in progress?

A: The subcontract awarded under this RFP will have three discrete periods of performance—the Base Period (from the date of subcontract award through 3/27/18), Option Period 1 (9/27/17 through 4/27/19), and Option Period 2 (9/27/18 through 4/27/20). Only the Base Period will be exercised and funded at the time of award. The Base Period (from the date of subcontract award through 3/27/18) is currently fully funded. Funding for Option Period 1 is in the FY17 acquisition plan and will be funded with existing FY16 appropriated funding. Any decision by Mathematica to exercise an option period in the subcontract will be predicated on the Government's requirement for continuation of the services and on satisfactory completion of work by the successful offeror. In the event of a change, including a discontinuation of the study, by the Government, Mathematica will modify the subcontract accordingly.

Q11. Has the money for the two-year study been guaranteed by OMB or was only the first year included in the DOE budget? Are there any concerns with the change in administration that this RFP will be cancelled?

A: See response to Q10.

Q12. What was IES' overall goal in the funding of this research project and how will the results be used?

A: As described in the RFP, the evaluation has two goals. The first goal is to provide rigorous evidence on the effectiveness of teacher feedback and coaching based on video recordings of classroom instruction. An additional goal of the evaluation is to inform teacher preparation and professional development programs by learning about practices that promote increases in student achievement and provide practical guidance to policymakers, states, and school districts. The study team will issue three reports. The first report will describe implementation of the feedback and coaching program in the 2017-2018 school year and the short-term impacts on novice teachers (first year teachers). The second report will describe implementation in the 2018-19 school year, short-term impacts on early career teachers (second-, third-, and fourth-year teachers), and longer-term impacts on novice teachers. The third report will synthesize the results from the first two reports and explore some additional issues to inform teacher preparation and support practices.

Q13.Would there be consideration for selecting a district where our program already exists?

A: The study is using an experimental approach to provide rigorous evidence on the impact of feedback and coaching. In the first year, we will randomly assign novice teachers to a treatment group that receives the full intervention, a treatment group that receives the less intensive intervention, or to a control group that is not offered either version of the feedback and coaching program. Therefore, we will prioritize districts where the current support provided to novice and early career teachers provides a sufficient contrast to the two versions of the interventions. If a provider is already implementing its program in a district, that district may be eligible for the study if the district expects to have at least 30 novice teachers and at least 20 early career teachers who are not at schools implementing the program in the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years.

Q14. Is the study design randomization within a district or among districts?

A: The study will randomly assign teachers within each district to the treatment or the control groups.

Q15. Is there a requirement that the observation and/or coaching system have a direct content (math, literacy, other core subjects) component or can it be directed at overall teaching practices and be content/curriculum neutral?

A: There is no requirement that the feedback and coaching have a direct content component. As noted in the RFP, the provider will provide feedback and coaching for elementary teachers in 4th and 5th grades on a set of targeted teaching practices that can be used across different subject areas. We are not seeking a provider that offers coaching focused on a specific subject area. The feedback and coaching provided for the study should be designed to improve teachers’ practices across subject areas.

Q16. Will the providers of the intervention be published in the study findings?

A: Mathematica will identify the name of the provider in the reports issued for the study.

Q17. Will any limitations be placed on the data obtained within the study? That is, will the grantee be able to see and use the observation and intervention data within the study for research review and/or program improvement, or will the grantee be kept blind to that information?

A: First, we want to clarify that this competition is for a firm fixed-price subcontract, not a grant. As described in section A.5.2. of the RFP, the selected provider shall provide the study team with data needed for the study, such as coaching logs to track feedback and coaching activities, and information on how many videos coaches received and reviewed for providing feedback. The provider can use these data that it collects for the study to inform program implementation during the course of the study. Also, as part of WestEd's role providing implementation support, it will review these data to monitor implementation and assist the provider in addressing any implementation issues. Data collected as part of the evaluation effort are collected and safeguarded consistent with required government security policies. These data are solely for measuring the implementation and impacts of the feedback and coaching. After the study reports are published, a restricted-use data file will be available to qualified applicants through the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) for use by researchers seeking to replicate our analyses or explore other issues related to the effectiveness of providing feedback and coaching to teachers. Interested researchers must apply to IES in order to access the data, and their use of it is governed by formal agreements to protect the confidentiality of the data. The study team will share study findings with the selected provider prior to the release of each study report.

Q18. What is the timing and plan for the dissemination of the intervention results? Will the grantee be able to disseminate any results prior to the end of the research study by Mathematica and WestEd? What is the estimated time for the dissemination of the results?

A: The study team will issue three reports throughout the course of the study. The first report will describe implementation of the feedback and coaching program in the 2017-2018 school year and the short-term impacts on novice teachers. The expected public release date is summer 2020. The second report will describe implementation in the 2018-19 school year, short-term impacts on early career teachers, and longer-term impacts on novice teachers. The expected public release date is summer 2021. The third report will synthesize the results from the first two reports and explore some additional issues to inform teacher preparation and support practices. The expected release date is summer 2022. Each report will undergo a rigorous peer review process through the Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education. The provider will be notified in advance of the release of the three reports. The provider can share the results described in each of these reports as they are released, but may not disseminate other results in advance of these reports. See response to Q17 for more information.

Q19. Our model includes 2 years of training, does that fit within the grant timeline?

A: The study is designed to measure the impact of one year of feedback and coaching for novice teachers and early career teachers. However, we plan to also measure the impact of two years of coaching for a subset of teachers in the study. Half of the novice teachers receiving the full intervention in the 2017-2018 school year will be randomly selected to receive a second year of the intervention in the 2018-2019 school year.

Q20. Regarding Exhibit 1: Conceptual framework for teacher feedback and coaching. The identified elements of the framework are labeled starting with "B": B1. Full intervention and B.2 Less intensive intervention. Is there a component of the framework that begins with A?

A: This is a mistake in the conceptual framework. The first box in the conceptual framework should have started with "A." There is no component missing from the conceptual framework.

Q21. The RFP identifies 3 teaching practices for novice and for early career teachers. The RFP also states that the provider may revise the list but must provide a justification. If the framework that underlies the observation instrument is organized into different categories but yet still includes these practices, would that be an acceptable revision to the list?

A: As described in Section A.3.1. of the RFP, a key aspect of the intervention is its focus on a targeted set of teaching practices for novice and early career teachers. Any revisions to the recommended teaching practices should maintain the focus on a targeted set of practices. If a provider's observation instrument measures performance on a broad range of teaching practices, the provider should consider whether the feedback and coaching for the purposes of this study would focus on a subset of those practices that are most relevant for novice teachers.

Q22. If feedback is supposed to be based solely on the video, will the option of having coaches provide feedback in person confound the study of impact on teaching if the coach has multiple access points to the teacher?

A: The feedback and coaching provided for the study should be based solely on video recordings of teachers' instruction. Regardless of whether coaches provide feedback to teachers in-person or by phone or video call, their interactions should focus exclusively on providing feedback to teachers based on videos of the teacher's instruction. The point of the study is to learn about the effectiveness of systematic and replicable support for teachers.

Q23. The sections A.5.1 Study team responsibilities and A.5.2 Feedback and coaching provider responsibilities both mention monitoring implementation fidelity. Can you define the difference in responsibilities between the study team and provider?

A: The provider will have primary responsibility for monitoring implementation fidelity of the coaching and feedback. For example, the provider shall track whether coaches are reviewing videos, developing feedback, and holding feedback sessions with teachers. The role of the study team is to support the provider. Given that implementation is occurring in the context of an evaluation, it is important that any implementation issues are quickly addressed in order to ensure strong implementation and ensure a fair test of the feedback and coaching intervention. The study team will support the provider in two ways. First, the study team will monitor teacher participation and provider implementation of the agreed upon activities. The study team's role is to work collaboratively with the provider to quickly address any challenges. Second, the study team will work with the provider to ensure that implementation is consistent with the evaluation design and work collaboratively with the provider to address any challenges. Note that the study team will have a liaison for each district to assist the provider if issues arise.

Q24. How many coaching cycles are expected for this project and how many lessons are expected to be observed and reviewed PER coaching cycle?

A: The provider shall include at least seven feedback and coaching cycles during each school year. Providers can propose how to spread the feedback and coaching cycles over the course of the school year, from the beginning of the school year through the end of March, or when districts begin state student assessments (whichever is first). Each coaching cycle will be based on one video recorded lesson, for a total of at least seven coaching cycles.

Q25. The RFP states that the Mathematica study team will be responsible for taking the videos of the teacher's instruction. Given that the coaching process identifies specific lessons as the basis for feedback, how will the video collection be coordinated or scheduled to ensure that the appropriate lesson was captured? Or is there an assumption that lessons will be randomly recorded and that the coach will be sent the video and then provide feedback based on the instrument?

A: To the extent possible, the study team will coordinate with each teacher to schedule video recordings at times when the appropriate types of lessons are being conducted. For example, for each coaching cycle, the study team may provide a teacher a three-day window and ask the teacher to identify times when they will teach the type of lesson needed for their next feedback and coaching session. The lessons will not be recorded randomly. The study team will work with the selected provider to understand the types of lessons typically needed for the feedback and coaching sessions.

Q26. In Task 5.3, there is a task to transfer video for early career beginning in July 2018 to October 2018 - is this a test as in the case of novice teachers in the previous year, or is this the transfer of actual videos?

A: Yes, this task begins in July 2018 to allow time for testing the transfer of video prior to the school year. The videos used for the feedback and coaching intervention will not be transferred until the beginning of the school year.

Q27. The RFP states on p.7 that you "are not seeking a provider that offers coaching focused on a specific subject area"- Is subject specific feedback explicitly not allowable as part of this project?

A: As noted in the RFP, the goal of this study is to evaluate feedback and coaching on teaching practices that are not specific to a subject. Coaches should provide feedback on teaching practices that can be used by elementary teachers across subjects. However, we recognize that coaches will develop feedback *in the context of* the subject being taught in the videos of teachers' instruction. In their proposals, providers should describe how coaches will focus on practices that can be used across subjects (such as math or reading), even though videos of teachers' instruction may focus on a particular subject. For example, if a coach is providing feedback on how to check for students' understanding during a lesson on fractions, the strategies to assess students' understanding should be relevant for the teachers' instruction in other subjects as well, even though the coach may describe specific strategies the teacher can implement in the context of understanding fractions.

-Could we add a teaching practice that focuses on something specifically related to content knowledge or building a content-specific vision of excellence?

A: A teaching practice focused solely on building teachers' content knowledge (e.g., techniques of teaching fractions) would not be consistent with the study's goals. The U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences has conducted studies focused on building the content knowledge that teachers need to teach in specific subject areas (see this brief for a summary), and the focus of this study is on improving teachers' more general practices through coaching (without an exclusive focus on building content knowledge). As noted in response to the first part of Q27, we recognize that coaches will view teachers' practices and provide feedback within the context of a lesson that covers a particular subject area.

-Even if it wasn't identified as a separate teaching practice, can we coach on things that matter related to content? (For example, in order to effectively check for understanding of concepts the teacher must have the exemplar in their mind to compare student answers to. Is it okay if we were to work with a teacher on how to develop exemplar student responses?)

A: See responses to the first two parts of Q27 above.

Q28. Clarify section A.3.5- Does the provider select the video platform used for both video transfer and teacher feedback?

A: Section A.3.5. explains that the selected provider must provide a way for teachers and coaches to view the videos of their teaching taken by the study team. A provider may choose to use a video platform for these purposes, but it is not required. If a provider does not use a video platform, it should explain how it will receive videos and facilitate the viewing of videos by teachers and coaches. Similarly, the provider is not required to use a video platform for sharing feedback with teachers, but may choose to do so. If a provider chooses to use a video platform for these purposes, it shall select the video platform it will use and describe the platform in the proposal.

Q29. What information will the provider receive about the participating teachers' performance in their teacher preparation program? Information from their application for district employment?

A: The study team will not provide information about the participating teachers' performance in their teacher preparation program or information from their application for district employment. If the provider thinks this or other information is important context for coaching teachers, the provider should include a plan for acquiring this type of information directly from the teachers as part of their proposal.

Q30. Will the provider's coaches have opportunities to interact with school leaders and/or mentor teachers who also support the novice teachers?

A: We plan to have coaches meet with the principals of study schools during each of the summer orientations. During this meeting, we expect coaches to discuss the feedback they will provide, learn about the other types of supports that study teachers will receive, and discuss the best times for scheduling feedback sessions with teachers. However, we expect coaches to communicate directly with study teachers to schedule and hold their coaching sessions, and coaches will not share information about teachers with the principals. We view this as important for building trust between the coach and teacher and to help ensure that teachers understand the feedback and coaching are designed to improve their teaching, not to evaluate their performance. The study team will have a liaison in each district who can work with the provider to respond to any questions or concerns raised by principals during the school year.

General RFP Clarifications

In addition to these questions and answers provided above, please note the following clarifications to the RFP:

- Please note that in Section C.1.5, on page 32 of the RFP, the deadline for submitting electronic versions of the technical and business proposals is described as Thursday, December 16, 2016. This date should read as Friday, December 16.

- The RFP notes on page 4 that the competition is open to both small and large businesses. We are clarifying that there is no limitation based on the size or category of business, for example, universities, university centers, and non-profit organizations are eligible to participate.