

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

For

Employee Assistance Program



Nebraska State
College System

CHADRON | PERU | WAYNE

The Nebraska State College System
1327 H Street, Suite 200
Lincoln NE, 68508

Release Date:	January 24, 2023
Vender Questions Due:	February 7, 2023
Response to Questions:	February 17, 2023
Proposals Must be Received By:	March 1, 2023 2:00 pm Central Time (not public opening)
Finalists Presentations (if necessary):	March 13-17, 2023
Contract Award Date:	April 3, 2023
Effective Date:	July 1, 2023

All documents pertinent to this Request for Proposal will be posted on the Nebraska State College System website (<http://www.nscs.edu/>). It is the Vendor's responsibility to periodically check the website for the most current information.

Nebraska State College System

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the Nebraska State College System (NSCS) will accept Proposals for an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) until 2:00 p.m. Central Time on **Wednesday, March 1, 2023**.

All Proposals shall be clearly identified as *EAP Proposal for the Nebraska State College System*. One (1) hard copy marked as Original and one (1) digital copy (on flash drive) of your Proposal should be forwarded to the NSCS at the following address:

**Nebraska State College System
Attn: Kristin Divel
1327 H Street, Suite 200
Lincoln, NE 68508**

There will not be a formal opening of the proposals, but proposals will be opened at 2:00 p.m. Central Time on **Wednesday, March 1, 2023**.

Proposals received after 2:00 p.m. Central Time on **March 1, 2023**, will not be considered and will be returned unopened. Any proprietary information submitted with your proposal must be in a sealed envelope marked "Proprietary." Digital copies of proprietary information should NOT be provided. Information not marked as Proprietary will be subject to re-release pursuant to future public record requests. Proprietary information may only include specific parts of the proposal that are not subject to the Nebraska Public Records Act such as private company financial information.

Proposals will be evaluated and the successful Vendor(s) will be determined and approved by the NSCS. The NSCS reserves the right to reject any or all Proposals, waive formalities and to select the Vendor, benefits and services that best meet the needs of the NSCS and its employees. The NSCS reserves the right to select and terminate any servicing agent, agency, company or administrator.

Inquiries, clarification, or requests for Proposal forms and questionnaires by electronic mail should be directed by telephone or e-mail to the following contact:

**Kristin Divel
General Counsel and Vice Chancellor for Employee Relations
402-471-2505
Email: kdivel@nscs.edu**

BACKGROUND AND GENERAL INFORMATION

The Nebraska State College System (NSCS) is seeking proposals for an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The purpose of this Request for Proposals is to gather information from your organization relative to the NSCS required scope of service and key selection criteria. Organizations selected as finalists may be expected to address more detailed issues regarding financial and other specifics of their organization and operations. These same finalists may be expected to participate in interviews with the NSCS System Office staff and College representatives.

The NSCS has offered an EAP to its employees since July 1, 2007. The current employer paid EAP program includes individual counseling for the employee and qualified dependents and provides 24-hour telephone coverage for crisis situations in addition to a number of other services.

The NSCS is especially interested in obtaining the following services as part of the EAP:

- Mediation services between employees and supervisors
- Assistance with relationship management services
- Job coaching and professional development training
- Assistance with chemical dependency and substance abuse
- Assistance with depression management

The NSCS's objective is to maintain an efficient, healthy workforce by offering an employer paid EAP program, as part of its comprehensive benefit package, to its employees and their qualified dependents.

The EAP is offered to regular NSCS employees and their eligible dependents. The NSCS will determine eligibility for employee participation in the EAP. The total number of employees eligible to participate in the EAP is 842. The Nebraska State College System is made up of three Colleges and a System office. Location of benefit eligible employees is as follows:

Chadron, Nebraska	282 employees
Peru, Nebraska	172 employees
Wayne, Nebraska	373 employees
Lincoln, Nebraska	15 employees

A file listing zip codes of eligible employees is available upon request.

The NSCS invites proposals from qualified organizations to administer an Employee Assistance Program. Applicants are required to have a minimum of five (5) years of experience in administering this type of service. Experience in offering an EAP to public entities (especially in Nebraska) is also desirable.

SCOPE OF SERVICE

The organization selected will provide the following services effective July 1, 2023:

1. Vendor will consult with the NSCS to publicize the EAP to employees (e.g. supervisors, employees and their eligible dependents). Vendor will assist with employee education efforts.
2. Vendor will provide specific assistance to the NSCS employees and their eligible dependents who have been referred to EAP or who request such services of their own volition. Vendor and the NSCS will adopt safeguards to ensure that EAP services are conducted in a manner that will preserve the privacy of NSCS employees and their families. Communications between EAP personnel and NSCS employees shall remain confidential, except as specifically waived in writing by the individual employee.
3. Vendor will counsel and encourage NSCS employees to proceed with a course of assistance by referring the individual to clinical or support organizations and medical professionals when additional services are needed. The Vendor will ensure that providers available in the employee's health insurance plan are among those recommended and that the employee knows which providers are most cost effective to the employee. The Vendor will strive to provide short-term counseling where feasible, and not simply act as a clearinghouse.
4. Vendor will remain cognizant of the NSCS insurance benefits program in order that it can advise employees as to the possible coverage of services by such organizations or professionals. Vendor will examine the accreditation of the organizations and professionals to which it refers employees so as to ensure, as much as possible, medical expense reimbursement under health or medical insurance policies, as well as the NSCS health flexible spending account plan.
5. Vendor will provide such follow-up procedures as are necessary to monitor referred employees' adherence to the agreed course of treatment. Vendor will make progress reports to the NSCS, including individual colleges, on employees directly referred to the EAP by the NSCS, but such reports will respect the employees' rights to confidentiality, and will be limited to reporting as to whether or not the employee is cooperating with the treatment program.
6. Vendor will periodically prepare reports on the caseload activities of the provider, but such reports shall not jeopardize the rights of confidentiality of the employees or their families.
7. Vendor will supply employer with all brochures and literature regarding the EAP program as part of the cost of administering the program.

8. The EAP program shall include the following services:
 - a) Diagnostic, evaluation and referral services for employees, their family members and significant others. Face-to-face counseling sessions for the purpose of assessment, short-term counseling and referral. Provide 24-hour coverage for crisis situations.
 - b) Unlimited phone and video counseling and unlimited access to web and online services and information.
 - c) Training Sessions or Customized Workshops as needed. Three (3) training sessions or workshops shall be made available at each site per year without charge. Additional training sessions or workshops may be purchased from the Vendor. Training or workshop topics may include, but are not limited to:
 - New employee orientation sessions
 - Luncheon educational seminars
 - Others of special interest to the NSCS
 - d) Nebraska state-wide network of professional EAP counselors. Telephones staffed by master's level counselors and personally answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
 - e) Mediation services between employees or between employees and supervisors at the request of Human Resources.
 - f) Job coaching services to assist employees on an individualized basis with professional development needs.
 - g) Organizational development assessment and planning for specific departments at the request of Human Resources.
 - h) As requested, monthly articles for NSCS publications for general NSCS or employee use. Articles may vary in length and scope.
 - i) Annual meeting with appropriate NSCS staff to discuss and evaluate EAP program.
 - j) Direct link from the NSCS and individual College intranet sites to the website of the selected Vendor.
 - k) Quarterly utilization reports and annual employee surveys for purposes of ongoing evaluation of the program.
 - l) Quarterly employee communications to promote the EAP services.
 - m) On-site assistance in the event of a catastrophic event or employee or student death.

9. With respect to inquiries regarding the NSCS policies and procedures, the Vendor shall act only in the designated role of counselor/mediator/trainer/job coach and not provide legal advice to the employee.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

The NSCS will evaluate proposals based on the needs of the NSCS and its employees. The NSCS will choose the proposals that best fit its needs and the needs of its employees and their family members. The NSCS is not obligated to award the contract based on cost alone. The following criteria will be used in evaluating each of the Vendor responses:

1. Compliance with specifications.
2. Ability to offer a comprehensive set of core services and benefits.
3. Competitive fees.
4. Access to qualified, professional counselors/mediators/trainers/job coaches that are located within a specified mile radius of each College and the System Office.
5. Online access to information.
6. Compliance with applicable State and Federal laws and regulations.
7. Ability for Vendor to show compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Administrative Simplification Standards (including, but not limited to, a properly executed business associate agreement).
8. Financial position of Vendor.
9. Stability of rates and fees over time.
10. Ability to provide the NSCS with requested reports (including, but not limited to, utilization reports and employee surveys and results).
11. Ability to refer employees and their family members to additional qualified and specialized resources/services in a seamless and efficient manner.
12. The ability to customize an employee assistance program that will meet the needs of the NSCS and its employees.
13. Other criteria identified by the NSCS as important in the evaluation of submitted proposals.

CONDITIONS AND STIPULATIONS

You are invited to submit your Proposal for EAP services based on the information contained in this Request for Proposal. Unless a specific note is made to the contrary, we will assume that your Proposal conforms to the NSCS Specifications.

You are invited to ask questions during the proposal process and to seek additional information, if needed. We want this to be an interactive process and will make every effort to provide sufficient data for your response. All questions should be submitted in writing to Kristin Divel, General Counsel and Vice Chancellor for Employee Relations at the address or email address noted on the Request for Proposal Notice. Questions must be received no later than February 7, 2023. A written response to all questions will be provided on the NSCS web page on February 17, 2023.

Any proprietary information submitted with your Proposal must be in a sealed envelope marked “Proprietary.” Generally, responses are considered public information and can only be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law.

The NSCS will look to contract with a Vendor to provide the most comprehensive set of core benefits to the NSCS and its employees. The services provided should address the wide range of unique needs among NSCS employees.

Counselors should have at least a master’s degree in psychology, as well as clinical experience. In addition, all counselors must be licensed in the State of Nebraska.

Mediator, trainer, job coach qualifications should be identified as part of your Proposal.

The NSCS reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals and to waive formalities and select the carrier and benefit options that best meet the needs of the NSCS and its employees. The NSCS objective is to select a carrier who will provide the best possible service at the best possible cost while meeting the Request for Proposal specifications. The NSCS is not obligated to award the contract based on cost alone.

Any proposed deviations to any part of these Specifications must be submitted in writing as a part of the questionnaire, (question #1) and clearly identified in the appropriate section of the Proposal. Any deviation deemed to be significant by the NSCS will disqualify the Proposal.

Failure to identify any such deviation(s) shall not in the future accrue to the disadvantage of the NSCS or any qualified participant or dependent in any manner.

The Vendor awarded the business shall submit properly executed contracts to the NSCS no later than April 3, 2023.

The Vendor awarded the business shall be required to provide aggregate utilization reports on an annual basis for purposes of ongoing evaluation of the program.

The Vendor shall work with the NSCS to conduct employee/participant surveys on an annual basis.

Employees (and their dependents) that terminate their employment for any reason must be given the option to continue EAP services per state mandates and federal COBRA regulations. Such coverage shall not be contingent upon the NSCS coverage continuing with the EAP Vendor.

All Providers must be in full compliance with Nebraska and Federal requirements relating to the requested coverage or administration of such benefits, including, but not limited to:

- State and Federal privacy requirements
- Drug Free Workplace
- Nondiscrimination/Fair Labor Standards
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- E-Verify

The NSCS will work closely with the selected Vendor to promote the EAP to employees and their family members.

An account representative must be available to the NSCS on an on-going basis.

The NSCS will determine eligibility for participation and access to the EAP.

With respect to inquiries regarding the NSCS policies and procedures, the EAP Vendor shall act only in the role of counselor/mediator/trainer/job coach and not provide legal advice to the employee. The selected Vendor shall refer any inquiries relating to potential legal claims against the NSCS to the NSCS General Counsel and Vice Chancellor for Employee Relations.

The NSCS reserves the right to negotiate with the selected Vendor to obtain other related services not specifically covered herein. Further, the NSCS reserves the right to enter into negotiations with the selected Vendor even though these negotiations may result in changes to the NSCS specifications and/or to the Vendor's Proposal.

The Vendor will remain an independent contractor, not an employee of the NSCS, and is not entitled to unemployment or worker's compensation insurance benefits from the NSCS as a result of any contract.

This Request for Proposal does not obligate the NSCS to the eventual contract for any items described or implied until confirmed by written contract and may be terminated by the NSCS without penalty or obligation at any time prior to the signing of a contract.

All expenses for developing and presenting proposals shall be the entire responsibility of the Vendor and shall not be chargeable to the NSCS.

In the event of a dispute, the laws of the State of Nebraska shall prevail.

VENDOR ORGANIZATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Note: A complete response to this questionnaire must accompany all Requests for Proposals. A response such as “See Proposal” is **not** sufficient unless there is proper reference to the specific section of the proposal addressing the question. Please be specific in your answers.

Deviations

1. Does your Proposal contain **any** deviations from the benefits, general conditions, stipulations or other provisions of the Specifications? If yes, provide details in a separate cover letter. Otherwise, confirm that you have responded according to Proposal conditions.

Fees

1. Are the fees quoted in this Proposal firm and guaranteed for the term of the contract? The contract period is July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024 with the option to renew for five (5) additional one-year terms.
2. Provide the per employee per year cost to administer services described within the proposal.
3. Are additional services available beyond what is described within this RFP and/or your proposal? If so, what are the services and fees for these services?
4. Is this Proposal tied to any other benefit offer (e.g. the EAP is only available if the NSCS also purchases medical insurance through the Vendor)?

Implementation/Eligibility

1. Is participation guaranteed for employees and their family members? If no, please explain.
2. Are any employee orientation sessions included in the fees being proposed? If so, how many sessions are you recommending we conduct?

3. Will any information be mailed to the employees' home to help promote the availability of the EAP? If so, when? Please explain how you promote services to eligible dependent(s) of employees.
4. How much notice must the NSCS provide if they wish to terminate or not renew its contract through your company/organization? Describe your termination or non-renewal policy.

Administration and Member Services

1. Describe the range of both administrative and member services provided by your organization.
2. Complete the following exhibit:

	Chadron	Peru	Wayne	Lincoln
Number of providers in each community				
Number of providers within 25 miles				
Number of providers within 50 miles				
Number of providers within 100 miles				

3. Describe the training and employee communication strategy that would be used to educate NSCS employees about the services available.
4. Who will be responsible for assisting the NSCS with rolling out the services and marketing to employees and their family members?

Contact Name:

Contact Phone Number:

5. Who will assist the NSCS with ongoing administration (i.e. account management)?

Contact Name:

Contact Phone Number:

6. Who will assist the NSCS with ongoing questions or issues?

Contact Name:

Contact Phone Number:

7. Describe how you will handle, process and reply to employee inquiries. Include whether or not you provide a toll free number and if there is 24-hour access to counselors. Also, please provide the office locations and hours in which you will have counselors available by phone and online. Describe whether all services are provided by telephone or the circumstances under which counselors meet in person.
8. Are the individuals staffing the phones and online services at least master level counselors with a Nebraska license? If no, please explain.
9. Are background checks conducted on a regular basis on all counselors? Please describe.
10. Are counselors trained on any legal issues associated with employment? Please describe.
11. Does the plan comply with all State and Federal mandates, including COBRA and HIPAA? If no, please explain. Please provide copies of pertinent policies and procedures relating to these requirements.
12. Does your organization outsource administration for any of the services you provide? If so, please explain and identify the other Vendors that would be providing services to our employees.
13. In addition to the standard reports presented with your Proposal, do you provide any additional reports upon request? Is there a charge? If yes, please provide additional cost.
14. Are there any reports you will not provide to the NSCS? If so, please describe.
15. What education services (i.e. seminars, etc.) will you provide and at what charge?

Company Overview

1. What experience has your company had with public sector entities?

2. How long has your company been doing business in Nebraska?
3. Briefly indicate the main attributes that differentiate your company from your competitors.
4. Is your company a subsidiary or affiliate of another company? If yes, please explain and provide full disclosure of any direct or indirect ownership or control by any administrative service agency.
5. Describe any pending arrangements to merge or sell your company.
6. Provide the names and telephone numbers of five (5) clients in the State of Nebraska with whom you have had a working relationship, as a reference for the NSCS. Include the number of participants for each group. (Preferably, the references should be governmental or educational units.) Include two groups that recently terminated coverage.

Signature (Provider Representative)

Title

Company

Date

Telephone Number