

STATE EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER (SERC)

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) FOR WEBSITE CONTENT AUTHORING AND EDITING:
ESSER & ARP FOR STUDENTS IDENTIFIED FOR ENABLED RECOVERY THROUGH ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY
(EASIER THROUGH AT) PROJECT

SERC RFP Number: EASIERATSME102022

State Education Resource Center (SERC)

Contact Person: Michelle Weaver, weaver@ctserc.org

Proposal Schedule:

Release of RFP by electronic means on the SERC website at https://ctserc.org/rfpeasiersme and CTSOURCE	Friday, October 21, 2022 by 4:00 pm EDT
Receipt of questions via email to Michelle Weaver, weaver@ctserc.org	Friday, November 4, 2022 by 4:00 pm EDT
Answers to questions will be posted as an Addendum to this RFP on the SERC website and CTSOURCE	Tuesday, November 8, 2022 by 4:00 pm EST
Proposal Due Date	Friday, November 18, 2022 by 4:00 pm EST
Oral Presentations (via Zoom, by invitation to select respondents)	Tuesday, November 29 – Thursday, December 1
Award Announcement	Friday, December 2 by 4:00 pm EST

The State Education Resource Center (SERC) is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons. SERC does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of race, color, religious creed, sex, age, national origin, ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or expression, disability (including, but not limited to, intellectual disability, past or present history of mental disorder, physical disability or learning disability), genetic information, or any other basis prohibited by Connecticut state and/or federal nondiscrimination laws. SERC does not unlawfully discriminate in employment against qualified persons with a prior criminal conviction. Inquiries regarding SERC’s nondiscrimination policies should be directed to:

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The State Education Resource Center (SERC) was established over 50 years ago as a “focal point of action and communication for special education personnel from throughout the state” of Connecticut (CT State Department of Education newsletter, October 1969). We have served local school districts, state-level policymakers, families, community agencies, and other stakeholders by facilitating professional learning, including technical assistance and training; providing resources, in part through a centralized library; and leading a range of other activities and supports over our five decades in operation.

As we evolved, SERC was statutorily tasked to serve the CT State Board of Education and led the ongoing effort to integrate special and general education, historically divided systems, into a unified approach to education that promotes equitable policies, culturally relevant practices, and accessible structures that develop successful learning communities within schools. We became a state quasi-public agency in 2014, recognizing our unique position to work closely with communities across Connecticut.

All the agency’s efforts are designed to address educational equity and opportunity gaps. SERC’s consultants and staff, in collaboration with our partners, build the capacity of educators, service providers, and families to meet the diverse needs of our student population.

SERC recognizes that to be effective in facilitating change that is systemic, results-based, and enduring, all stakeholders must be included in the change process. Through partnerships with us, education systems shape their own transformation while SERC facilitates the process and customizes application of research and new thinking. SERC maintains many ongoing, years-long relationships with local education agencies and organizations and offers continued support to foster and sustain systemic change.

Through this work, SERC is committed to its vision of equity, excellence, and education.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) need helpful resources that will have an immediate impact to address delayed, interrupted, suspended, or inaccessible learning opportunities and provide Individualized Education Program (IEP) supports through educational recovery for students with and without disabilities due to the COVID-19 disruptions.

Many educational recovery initiatives have already been funded with one-time federal and state resources and have helped develop supports for all students, which includes access to educational technology through high-tech devices (laptop, computer, personal device, tablet, etc.). Ensuring that high-tech devices are user friendly, school ready, and aligned with a student's needs is as critical as access to the device(s) themselves. One approach that aligns and gives students an immediate impact and potential educational gain/recovery is through the calculated use of educational applications (Apps) associated with **Assistive Technology (AT) and Accessible Educational Material (AEM)**.

A new statewide website is being developed to provide information and resources for users of high-tech devices in both the General and Special Education areas. **This RFP is for a Subject Matter Expert (SME) to author a comprehensive set of resources in the areas of Assistive Technology and Accessible Educational Materials in Connecticut.** These resources will be available to help users from diverse backgrounds (including but not limited to parents, family members, school-based personnel) understand the basics of Assistive Technology, including regulations, guidelines, and best practices.

COMPONENTS AND DELIVERABLES

DELIVERABLES

The selected Subject Matter Expert will deliver web page content that meets all authoring criteria (listed in this RFP) and will be available for revisions and additional content requests through June 30, 2023.

Content will be authored and delivered via electronic means based on an agreed-upon outline of required website content. An example outline of the website to be developed is included in this RFP. Each authored page will be delivered as an individual document, and up to two rounds of edits and two rounds of future revisions per document will be included in the price.

The SME will have input in the site outline and will be encouraged to take an active role in creating the best comprehensive resource on assistive technology in Connecticut schools. The SME will be responsible for communicating with certain stakeholders (NEAT, RESC personnel, others) to develop content for individual pages related to those stakeholders.

CONTENT AUTHORING CRITERIA

The selected Subject Matter Expert will author content for publication on the EASIER Through AT website that meets the following criteria:

1. Is suitable to a wide variety of audiences, including but not limited to: parents, family members, and caregivers of students with special needs, and school-based personnel in all roles.
2. Teaches basic concepts of Assistive Technology in language understandable by all users.
3. Explains current Connecticut AT guidelines and regulations in plain language.

4. Explains navigating the Planning and Placement Team and utilizing AT in the IEP to enhance student access to the curriculum.
5. Gives definitions/examples of various specific disabilities and possible AT-based accommodations and modifications that may be utilized.
6. Discusses Distance Learning in the public-school environment and provides best practices and working examples for both teachers and students.
7. Writes using style and tone that are conducive to web-based content.

DRAFT SITEMAP

This outline of the site's structure is a draft of anticipated content that will be developed and is provided for example purposes only. Each line item represents a separate page or subsection of a page within the site. SME will be responsible for authoring content in sections A, B, and C of this outline, and for developing a template of standard information that will be used by individual RESC authors (section D).

This outline is not finalized and is subject to change.

- I. Public Facing
 - a. About
 - i. About this site/Using this site instructions/What this site is/Who this site is for...
 - ii. Disclaimers
 - iii. Copyright
 - iv. Contact info
 - b. Content for School-Based Audiences (Teachers, PPT members) and Parent/Family/Caregiver Audiences
 - i. AT Guidelines / Other formal State Documents
 - ii. Tutorials / Guidance Documents
 - iii. Guidance for specific disability categories
 1. Reading
 - a. Definition/Examples of Reading Disabilities
 - b. App resources for Reading
 2. Math
 - a. Definition/Examples of Math Disabilities
 - b. App Resources for Math
 3. AEM
 - a. Definition/Examples
 - b. App Resources
 - iv. AT in the IEP
 1. Tutorials
 2. Examples
 - v. Distance Learning for All Students
 1. Strategies/Best Practices
 2. Special Ed guidance
 - c. Borrowing/Trying new AT
 - i. Description
 - ii. Links:
 1. NEAT Lending Library
 2. CT Tech Act

3. SERC AT Corner
 - iii. Links to related Agencies & Service Providers
 1. Libraries
 - a. SERC
 - b. Other local libraries
 - c. CT Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
 - d. RESC Sub-pages – Each page’s content will be managed by personnel from a Regional Educational Service Center (RESC). Each page will have a vehicle to contact/request more information from the RESC (e.g., form mailer, comment widget, etc.)
 - i. About page/Find Your RESC
 1. CREC
 2. LEARN
 3. ACES
 4. EDAdvance
 5. EastCONN
 6. CES
 - e. POP-UP AT Consult Area – Page for site users to schedule and receive remote meeting access to AT consultative services provided by NEAT
 - i. About/Instructions page
 - ii. Schedule meeting form

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

1. Cover page must include:
 - a. Organization Name and address
 - b. Contact name, Phone, email
2. All proposals must include the following required information as outlined. Failure to include the required information will result in disqualification of proposal from being read/scored:
 - a. Description of the Subject Matter Expert's experience in the area of school-based Assistive Technology.
 - b. Description of the Subject Matter Expert's experience in writing descriptive/explanatory content and content for the web (if applicable).
 - c. Examples of previous relevant work
 - d. Anticipated timelines for completing written work
 - e. A comprehensive pricing schedule
3. All proposals must follow the required format below. Failure to follow the required format will result in disqualification of proposal from being read/scored:
 - a. All pages must be numbered.
 - b. Page Limit: 6, including cover page
 - c. Page Size: 8 ½ x 11, portrait
 - d. Font Size: 12
 - e. Double-spaced (except tables)
 - f. Margins: .5" minimum on the top, bottom, and sides of all pages
 - g. Do not include attachments other than those requested or required by this RFP.
 - h. Email a single pdf with file name of organization (e.g., Easier Through AT – "Organization Name") to Michelle Weaver, at weaver@ctserc.org.
4. The responding individual/firm may be requested to make an oral presentation as part of this RFP's selection process.

PROPOSAL SCHEDULE

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SELECTION CRITERIA

All proposals will be blinded, double-scored (e.g., not met, somewhat met, fully met), and averaged. If the average score is equal to or within one point of another proposal, both proposals will be triple-scored and the average of the highest two scores will be used. Selections for each component will be based on highest-ranked proposals with scores above 50.

Criteria for Evaluation of Proposals	Percent of Score
Demonstrated capacity and expertise.	35%
Proposer has provided a detailed description of the organization's capacity for this project.	0-10 points
Proposer has documented a clear explanation of methodology for developing this project.	0-10 points
Proposer clearly demonstrates staff capacity and availability to manage and collaborate on this project.	0-15 points
Understanding of project via specifications of bid.	45%
Proposer has submitted detailed description of the planned methodology, including a timeline for completing scope of work and deliverables.	0-15 points
Proposer demonstrates a thorough understanding of expectations and willingness to collaborate with SERC and other relevant parties on content.	0-15 points
Proposer has articulated a purposeful and thoughtful plan for authoring resources.	0-15 points
Reasonability of cost related to expected products and services.	20%
Cost considered reasonable in light of limited funding available (up to \$20,000).	0-10 points
Deliverables are itemized separately from total cost.	0-10 points
TOTAL	100%

I. Contact Limitation

During the period from the organization's/individual's receipt of this RFP until the Award Announcement is made and a contract is awarded, the organization/individual shall not contact any employee of SERC for additional information except in writing directed to Michelle Weaver, General Counsel, at weaver@ctserc.org.

II. General Instructions

- 1) Additional information about SERC may be found at www.ctserc.org.
- 2) Failure to comply with the requirements of this RFP may result in SERC's rejection of a Proposal.
- 3) SERC is under no obligation to select a Proposer as a result of this RFP and has the right to withdraw the RFP at any time.
- 4) SERC shall not be liable for any pre-contract costs incurred by any organization participating in the selection process.
- 5) All matters set forth in a Proposal shall become the property of SERC and may be disclosed by SERC after the awarding of the contract. The contents of each Proposal will be available for public inspection after the awarding of a contract.
- 6) SERC is exempt from the payment of excise and sales taxes imposed by the Federal Government and/or the State. Proposers remain liable, however, for any other applicable taxes.
- 7) SERC is not obligated to: accept a Proposal based upon the lowest fee schedule; accept a Proposal based on considerations other than costs; and/or waive or modify any irregularities or informalities in Proposals received. SERC reserves the right to: reject any and all Proposals received in response to this request; negotiate the fees and charges contained in any Proposal; award contracts in any manner necessary to serve the best interest of SERC; and request additional information as determined necessary.

GENERAL INFORMATION

I. Contract Period

The contract period shall begin on the day of approval through June 30, 2023. SERC reserves the right to extend this contract.

II. Contract Award

SERC reserves the right to award the contract in a manner deemed to be in the best interests of SERC to meet its legislative requirement.

III. Stability of Proposed Prices

Any price offerings from proposers must be valid for a period of 30 days from the due date of the proposals.

IV. Amendment or Cancellation of the RFP

SERC reserves the right to cancel, amend, modify, or otherwise change this RFP at any time if it deems it to be in the best interests of SERC to meet its legislative requirement.

V. Proposal Modifications

No additions or changes to any proposal will be allowed after the proposal due date, unless such modification is specifically requested by SERC. SERC, at its option, may seek proposer retraction and clarification of any discrepancy or contradiction found during its review of proposals.

VI. Proposer Presentation of Supporting Evidence

Proposers must be prepared to provide any evidence of expertise, experience, performance, ability, and/or financial surety that SERC deems to be necessary or appropriate to fully establish the qualifications represented in the proposal.

VII. Proposer Demonstration of Proposed Services and/or Products

Proposers must be able to confirm their ability to provide all proposed services.

VIII. Erroneous Awards

SERC reserves the right to correct inaccurate awards. This includes revoking the awarding of a contract to a proposer and subsequently awarding the contract to a different proposer.

Such action shall not constitute a breach of contract on the part of SERC because the contract with the initial proposer will be deemed voided as if no contract were ever in place.

IX. Proposal Expenses

Proposers are responsible for all costs and expenses incurred in the preparation of proposals and for any subsequent work on the proposal that is required.

X. Ownership of Proposals

All proposals shall become the property of SERC.

XI. Ownership of Subsequent Products

Any product, whether acceptable or unacceptable, developed under a contract awarded as a result of this RFP shall be the sole property of SERC unless otherwise stated in the contract.

XII. Oral Agreement or Arrangements

Any alleged oral agreements or arrangements made by proposers with SERC will be disregarded in any proposal evaluation or associated award.

XIII. Not a Contract

This RFP is not a contract and, alone, shall not be interpreted as such. Rather, this RFP serves only as the instrument through which proposals are solicited. SERC will pursue negotiations with the highest-scoring proposal. If, for some reason, SERC and the initial proposer fail to reach consensus on the issues relative to a contract, then SERC may commence contract negotiations with other proposers. SERC may decide at any time to start the RFP process again.

The selected proposer will be required to sign a formal contract. The contract may include a liquidated damages clause at the discretion of SERC, in addition to other relevant clauses.

XIV. Subcontractors

SERC prohibits the use of any subcontractors by the successful proposer. Proposers acknowledge by the act of submitting a proposal that any work provided under the contract is work conducted by the proposer on behalf of SERC.

XV. Accounting Procedures

Generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) or another acceptable accounting method must be utilized.

[END OF RFP]