

# STATE EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER (SERC)

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

**SERC RFP Number: EASIERATWEB102022**

**State Education Resource Center (SERC)**

**Contact Person: Michelle Weaver**

**Proposal Schedule:**

Release of RFP by electronic means on the SERC website at <a href="https://ctserc.org/rfpeasiersme">https://ctserc.org/rfpeasiersme</a> and CTSource	Friday, October 21, 2022 by 4:00 pm EDT
Receipt of questions via email to Michelle Weaver, <a href="mailto:weaver@ctserc.org">weaver@ctserc.org</a>	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 of 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)**.

**This RFP is to facilitate the development of a website that will be populated with information for users of high-tech assistive technology devices so that questions and challenges can be addressed in a prompt and succinct manner.** The user's need(s) are addressed through the provision of resources (self-driven), points of contact to gain access to professional consultative supports (professional driven), and immediate answers through "pop up" consults (expert driven).

## COMPONENTS AND DELIVERABLES

### DELIVERABLES

The selected developer will create a website that meets all Site Criteria listed in this RFP. The selected developer will be available for site updates, maintenance, and improvements from the date of agreement through June 30, 2024. The developer will work collaboratively with the State Education Resource Center in the site's creation, and with the site's Content Writer/Editor in populating the site's initial content.

### SITE CRITERIA

The selected developer will build a website that meets the following criteria:

1. Utilizes a modern Content Management System (CMS), either open source or commercial.
2. Presents a modern and appealing user interface.
3. Is built using a fully responsive framework so that all features are available on all screen sizes including mobile devices.
4. Meets or exceeds all standards for Accessibility as defined by the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI). All public-facing pages of the site must meet WCAG 2.2 (draft guidelines, tentatively enacted in December 2022) at the AA or AAA level. Documentation of accessibility testing results via automated testing tool or other means will be required prior to the site going live.
5. Provides clear and understandable user experience through well-structured site navigation.
6. Provides for user-level permissions such that users may be granted access to edit individual pages without having access to edit the entire website.
7. Provides a mechanism for two-way asynchronous conversation between site visitors and site staff (e.g., message board, comment system, or email form).
8. Provides a mechanism for scheduling appointments.
9. Includes necessary licensing for any CMS, Plugins, Themes, or Multimedia Assets (all will be transferred to SERC upon completion of the website).

10. Is initially populated with the site's static content organized according to a specified sitemap. A draft sitemap is available in this RFP document.

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## HOSTING

1. The website will be hosted on a server operated by the State Education Resource Center (SERC). Hosting will be provided by SERC during development, or the site may be transferred to SERC's server when it's ready to go live (if the developer prefers to work in their own development environment).
2. If the website is developed using a Software as a Service CMS/Webhost (i.e., cannot be hosted on a SERC web server), SERC will retain access to the root administrative account credentials once the site is made live.
3. The site's domain name and SSL certificate will be obtained and administered by SERC. Necessary changes/additions (e.g., subdomains, zone file changes, etc.) will be made by SERC IT staff upon request.

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## SITE CONTENT

1. While an example sitemap is available, site content will be under development concurrently with the development of the website specified by this RFP. "Placeholder" content may be substituted for site content for the sake of meeting development criteria. Draft content will be made available to the site developer as soon as it is available.

## EXAMPLE 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 within the site. The site developer will be responsible for creating initial pages with draft content as it becomes available, and placeholder content where draft content is not available. This outline 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 function 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 developer’s experience, expertise, capacity, and availability to undertake this project.
  - b. Outline of the planned methodology for site development, including:
    - i. Proposed CMS, including any needed plugins/additional CMS extensions
    - ii. Hosting Requirements
    - iii. Method for Accessibility Compliance Testing
    - iv. Timeline for completion of scope of work and deliverables
    - v. Itemized budget
  - c. Examples of previous work
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: 10, 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](mailto:weaver@ctserc.org).

The responding firm may be requested to make an oral presentation as part of this RFP’s selection process.

## PROPOSAL SCHEDULE

### 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.

<b>Criteria for Evaluation of Proposals</b>	<b>Percent of Score</b>
<b>1. Demonstrated capacity and expertise.</b> a. Proposer has provided a detailed description of the organization’s capacity for this project. b. Proposer has documented a clear explanation of methodology for developing this project. c. Proposer clearly demonstrates staff capacity and availability to manage project.	<b>35%</b>
	0-10 points
	0-10 points
	0-15 points
<b>2. Understanding of project via specifications of bid.</b> a. Proposer has submitted detailed description of the planned methodology, including a timeline for completing scope of work and deliverables. b. Proposer demonstrates a thorough understanding of expectations and willingness to collaborate with SERC on design. c. Proposer has articulated a purposeful and thoughtful plan for site development.	<b>45%</b>
	0-15 points
	0-15 points
	0-15 points
<b>3. Reasonability of cost related to expected products and services.</b> a. Cost considered reasonable in light of limited funding available (up to \$70,000). b. Deliverables are itemized separately from total cost.	<b>20%</b>
	0-10 points
	0-10 points
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

**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](mailto:weaver@ctserc.org).

**II. General Instructions**

- 1) Failure to comply with the requirements of this RFP may result in SERC's rejection of a Proposal.
- 2) SERC is under no obligation to select auditors as a result of this RFP and has the right to withdraw the RFP at any time.
- 3) SERC shall not be liable for any pre-contract costs incurred by any organization participating in the selection process.
- 4) 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.
- 5) 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.
- 6) 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, 2024. 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]