

Teachers' Retirement System of the State of Illinois



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL TO PURCHASE AND IMPLEMENT MICROSOFT DYNAMICS 365

Issued: November 13, 2017

Responses due by 2:00 p.m. CST, on December 11, 2017

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I. Introduction

The Teachers' Retirement System of the State of Illinois (the System or TRS) is requesting proposals to purchase and implement Microsoft Dynamics 365 for the replacement and enhancement of existing TRS systems, including Accounting, Financial Management, and Human Resource Management. The objective of this Request for Proposal is to solicit competitive proposals from qualified vendors in sufficient detail to permit objective evaluation of all proposals which may result in a contract to purchase, license, configure and implement Microsoft Dynamics 365 Finance and Operations and Talent for the Teachers' Retirement System.

TRS is committed to increasing racial, ethnic, and gender diversity in all aspects of its utilization of vendors to provide goods and services to the System, to the greatest extent feasible, and within the bounds of financial and fiduciary prudence. To that end, the System strongly encourages qualified minority, female, disabled, and veteran-owned vendors to submit proposals to this RFP.

A proposer's preparation and submittal of a proposal or subsequent participation in presentations or contract negotiations creates no obligation on the System to award a contract or to pay any associated costs. All proposals and related materials will be retained by the System and will be subject to disclosure as required in accordance with the Illinois Freedom of Information Act.

II. Summary Description of TRS

The General Assembly created the Teachers' Retirement System of the State of Illinois (TRS or the System) in 1939. TRS administers a multiple-employer public pension plan to provide its members with retirement, disability, and death benefits. Membership is mandatory for all full-time, part-time, and substitute Illinois public school personnel employed outside the city of Chicago in positions requiring certification by the Illinois State Board of Education. Persons employed at certain state agencies relating to education are also TRS members. The System serves 406,855 members and had over \$48.6 billion in assets held in trust for its membership as of June 30, 2017.

The retirement system is administered as a qualified plan under the Internal Revenue Code. TRS benefits and investments are governed by Articles 1, 16, and 20 of the Illinois Pension Code, 40 ILCS 5. Funding comes from member contributions, contributions by TRS-covered employers, the state of Illinois, and investment income. The System's most recent Comprehensive Annual Financial Report as well as a variety of other information about TRS is available on the TRS Web site at <https://www.trsil.org>.

A thirteen-member Board of Trustees (the Board) is responsible for the general administration of the System, including the duties granted to it under Article 16 of the Illinois Pension Code, 40 ILCS 5/16. Under the direction of the Executive Director employed by the Board, the day-to-day administration of the System is delegated to the System's staff. TRS currently employs approximately 194 employees in two physical locations. The main office is in Springfield, Illinois with an additional location in Lisle, Illinois.

A. Transition to Scrum/Agile Methodology

To improve software quality, coordination of work, team collaboration, and communication, TRS recently underwent a transition from the traditional Waterfall software development methodology to an Agile development framework. To support this, a majority of the 194 employees have been trained in Scrum, and a significant number have already been certified as Scrum Masters and/or Product Owners, including end users. TRS has successfully completed projects using Scrum and are currently implementing a long-term Scrum approach for all Information Technology (IT) projects and day-to-day operation of business application systems. Additional consideration will be given to vendors that incorporate Agile in their approach.

B. Current Systems

TRS currently uses an internally developed software application for accounting, financial management and human resource (HR) management functions. Accounting functions are performed in Great Plains Dynamics software. System information is as follows:

System	Description	Software	Database	OS
EMS	Financial management of budgets, purchases, fixed assets, vouchers, vendor information, accounts payable	Visual Basic 6.0	SQL Server 2016	Windows Server 2012 R2
Personnel	HR management of employee information, time and attendance, position information, salary information, and employee performance management	Visual Basic 6.0	SQL Server 2016	Windows Server 2012 R2
ERS	Employee portal to the ERS system for employees to enter time off requests. The maintenance of actual time off is performed inside the ERS system	Visual Basic 6.0	SQL Server 2016	Windows Server 2012 R2
Dynamics Great Plains	Accounting management of General Ledger and accounting reports, and financial statements	Great Plains Dynamics 6.00g5	SQL Server 2008 R2	Windows Server 2012 R2

C. TRS Metrics and Related Details

The general metrics and related details for the current TRS environment are as follows:

Description / Metric	Details / Notes
# of TRS IT Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 42
# of Team Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 194 Business 10 Managers/Supervisors
# of Power Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 Accounting Admin 1 Admin Services (Purchasing) 4 HR Admin 4 Investment Admin
# Activity Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 16
# of Journal Entries per day/week/month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80-90 Custodial Bank entries per month 60-90 Retiree Payroll entries per month 150 closing entries per year 25-30 opening entries per year

Description / Metric	Details / Notes
# of G/L Accounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 320 active accounts • 24 inactive accounts
# of Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 87
# Interfaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 (Retiree Payroll Import, Commercial Voucher Export, Composite Working Trial Balance Import)
# of GL Import posting transactions from Pension Payroll	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 batches per month with 10-15 accounts per batch
# of Export voucher transactions to State Comptroller	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4+ schedules of 20 vouchers per week • 10 voucher files per month (of 4+ schedule w/20 vouchers)
# Expenditures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 117
# of Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 406,855
Total TRS Asset Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$48.6 Billion Net

III. Services Required

TRS is seeking proposals to purchase, license and implement Microsoft Dynamics 365 to replace the current TRS accounting, financial management and human resource management systems. The solution must sufficiently replace and enhance the functionality of these systems.

The TRS vision is to implement a new modern ERP solution that will result in increased accuracy, efficiencies, and access with greater visibility to financial and human capital transactions for all stakeholders. The successful vendor must demonstrate their ability to provide such a solution in a cost effective and timely way. The successful vendor will be one that can implement a solution that meets the requirements of TRS, including all the services, processes, functions, data, reporting and special features described in this RFP and appendices.

A. Challenges to be Addressed

The following challenges are present with the current system. These challenges should be addressed in the proposal submitted in response to this RFP:

1. Processing is mostly manual with limited automation and too many manual handoffs between departments. Examples include:
 - No accounts payable workflow
 - Signing off on receiving items
 - Re-authorizing changes
 - Following up with budget coordinators during the budget setup process
 - Tracking changes from year to year for increases or changes needed for the next fiscal year budget
 - Upload from the TRS master trust to the general ledger
2. The existing system is not integrated with the Great Plains Dynamics software, so data is manually kept in sync by user entry.
3. A high volume of reports are required simply for viewing information in the system.
4. There is no ad hoc query capability. Data must be extracted and manually manipulated in Microsoft Excel and/or queries must be requested from IT.
5. Receiving of Request for Expenditure Approvals (RFEA) is not flexible.

6. It is difficult to change RFEAs with a property record attached after items have been received and posted.
7. It is difficult to correct RFEAs/Vouchers with a property record attached after items have been received and posted.
8. It is difficult to update historical records to allow for deletion of property that was initially input as one item.
9. Property records are permanently deleted rather than being made inactive or archived, which requires IT recovery.
10. Users are not able to close a budget to prevent users from posting to the wrong budget year.
11. Users are not able to edit purchase order details.
12. There is no asset tag history available (i.e. no property location history or tag deletion history).
13. Users are not able to track investment expense with a specific cost – administrative to transfer to investment expense.
14. Limited Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) tracking (i.e. employees with multiple days and leaves).
15. Limited Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) reporting (i.e. lots of manual tallying).
16. Limited Secretary of State agency workforce reporting.

B. Mandatory Services

The successful vendor will be required to provide the following services:

1. Accounting and Financial Management Functionality

The vendor will provide accounting and financial management functions, which includes the software modules and configuration that permit TRS to perform all operations, including General Ledger, Accounts Payable, Financial Statements, Fixed Assets, Expenditures/Purchases, Vouchers, Vendors, and Budgets. At a minimum, the following high-level functions are required of the software.

- Maintain budget types
- Maintain budgets
- Maintain budget transfers
- Maintain expenditures (code and description, GL mapped to, major expenditure assigned to, 1099 reportable or not, comments, etc.)
- Maintain Request for Expenditure Approvals (RFEA)
- Maintain RFEA approval rates
- Maintain purchase orders
- Manage the purchase receiving process
- Maintain RFEA line items (RLI)
- Maintain fixed assets (location, depreciation, asset tags, serial numbers, manufacturer, status, etc.)
- Maintain physical locations by code
- Maintain asset class codes

- Maintain depreciation rules (category, life years, dollar threshold, etc.)
- Maintain license and maintenance agreements (beginning date, end date, renewal needed, contract required, credit card required, number of licenses, etc.)
- Maintain vendor (budget type restrictions, business type, EFT information, certification, etc.)
- Maintain vouchers (type, budget, RFEA, vendor, etc.)
- Batch execution of vouchers
- Generate voucher file for comptroller
- Transmit voucher batches to comptroller
- Maintain voucher types (description, appropriation code, GL account, voucher prefix, processing type, GAAP code, budget, etc.)
- Perform journal entries
- Maintain ledger accounts
- Maintain payable accounts
- Generate GL posting batches
- Maintain investment consultant reimbursements
- Produce CAFR financial reports
- Produce GAAP reports
- Produce compliance reports for external auditors
- Produce monthly, quarterly, and annual financial statements
- Produce CEM/Special reports

The successful vendor will implement configured software to specifically meet the business needs of TRS. Whether through base functionality, configuration, or enhancement, the software should be able to handle all the existing TRS processes and reporting, in addition to increasing accuracy, efficiencies, and access with greater workflow, ad hoc query, and ad hoc reporting capabilities. For example, it is the expectation of TRS that most of the existing reports, including financial statement processes, would be enhanced or replaced with software's reporting and query capabilities. The vendor will work with TRS to assess all the existing processes and reporting against the software's features to determine and implement the best final solution.

2. **HR Functionality**

The vendor will provide a proposal for HR functions, which include time and attendance, leave accruals, leave maintenance, employee and contacts, position, salary, employee leave requests, employee performance management, and talent management. The following high-level functions are required of the software.

- Maintain employee data (demographics)
- Maintain employee information (position, salary history, hire date)
- Maintain position information (position, org structure, salary grade/range)
- Manage leave request/approval
- Maintain leave accruals
- Manage leaves
- Employee attendance reporting

- Employee timekeeping
- Support employee performance management
- Maintain employee compensation
- HR reporting
- Employee self service
 - View and request leave of absences/time off
 - Maintain employee demographic information
 - View available leave banks (sick leave, personal time, vacation and compensatory time)
- Manager self service
 - View and approve/deny employee leave requests
 - View available leave banks (sick leave, personal time, vacation and compensatory time)

Appendices E and F describe the TRS business process, special requirements and data elements of which the vendor must address in the implemented software.

3. **Software**

The vendor will configure, customize, and implement Microsoft Dynamics 365 software. Vendors are required to propose only Microsoft Azure (corporate cloud) implementations. We understand that hosted and on-premise implementations are options, but they will not be considered for this proposal.

4. **Approach**

TRS is committed to be an Agile organization. Strong consideration will be given to vendors that propose and Agile delivery. For vendors that have pre-defined delivery approach, additional consideration will be given to vendors that can do the following:

- Break up the work plan into Sprints, preferably two-week or four-week Sprints.
- Identification of work tasks and deliverables at the beginning of each Sprint.
- Review of work tasks and deliverables completed at the end of each Sprint.
Daily stand-up calls (15 minutes or less) with key team members to identify work tasks for the day.
- Emphasis on working software over documentation.

5. **Integration**

TRS currently integrates using various forms, such as API, flat file, and online reports. Unless required by external systems, TRS prefers to utilize web services for integration (i.e. integration with the TRS pension administration system STAR). Existing interface details are described in Appendix L. At a minimum, the software must be integrated with the following external systems:

- General Ledger posting of retiree payroll transactions from the STAR Pension Administration System.
- General Ledger posting working trial balance report from Custodial Bank (currently State Street).

- Vouchers transaction file export to the State Comptroller's Office for TRS warrant and direct deposit payments.

6. Data Conversion

TRS will provide subject matter expertise and data analysts to support data analysis, mapping, and extraction of data from the TRS system. The vendor must provide data import templates, support TRS with the mapping of data, load data into the software, validate loaded data, and provide reporting of results and coordination with TRS data analysts to resolve data issues. Existing database details are described in Appendix J.

7. Training

The vendor will provide training on the software. TRS prefers that training be an integrated part of the delivery process, such that training on the software would not be limited to just a post-testing classroom event. The use of a train-the-trainer approach is an acceptable approach.

8. Support and Maintenance

The vendor will provide a proposal for post implementation support in addition to Microsoft support. A fee proposal (Appendix C) for support should be made for five years and include cost escalation, level of support, and amount of support. Additional support and maintenance will be authorized at TRS' discretion.

9. Laserfiche Imaging Integration

The vendor will provide a proposal for additional integration (not specified above) between Microsoft Dynamics 365 and the TRS Document Management System, Laserfiche. TRS currently uses Laserfiche for document imaging and workflow. It is a central repository for electronic content. Laserfiche is not currently integrated with Great Plains Dynamics or EMS but TRS is interested in assessing integration options with the new software. Laserfiche integration will be authorized at TRS' discretion.

IV. Pre-Proposal Questions

To protect the integrity of the RFP process, interested proposers are expected to respond to this RFP as written to the best of their understanding. Questions about this RFP **should be submitted only if the proposer deems necessary after full and careful reading of this RFP**. Questions must be submitted in writing (no phone calls) on or before 4:30 pm on November 20, 2017 to the TRS Purchasing Officer, at the following email address: Purchasing@trsil.org. Responses to these vendor questions will be posted on the TRS website on or before 4:30 pm on November 27, 2017.

The System will not respond individually to a submitted question. If a response is deemed necessary or appropriate in the System's discretion, the System will post an answer along with the question submitted (without identifying the proposer) on the System's website in the same area as this RFP. Proposers are responsible for monitoring the TRS website.

V. Proposal Content

TRS is expecting concise vendor proposals. To ensure conciseness, TRS only requires the following information in vendor proposals. Within each section, please only respond to the content requested and, when referenced, use appendices for specific formatting. If supplemental materials (i.e. standard marketing materials) are needed, they should be provided as a separate attachment to the proposal. For ease of review, each section below should be addressed in a separate section preceded by an index tab to identify the subject of the section. The proposal should be formatted on consecutively numbered pages and include a table of contents. Failure to provide information in the prescribed format may result in rejection of the proposal. All responses will be subject to verification for accuracy. **Proposals containing false or misleading information will be rejected.**

A. Cover Letter

A cover letter, which will be considered an integral part of the proposal package, in the form of a standard business letter, must be signed by an individual authorized to bind the proposer contractually. This cover letter must indicate the signer is so authorized, and must indicate the signer's title or position. An unsigned proposal will be rejected. The cover letter must also include:

1. A statement that the proposal meets all requirements of this RFP, and that the offer tendered by the proposal will remain in full force and effect until, and may be accepted by the Teachers' Retirement System of the State of Illinois, at any time prior to June 30, 2018.
2. A statement certifying that the proposer either: (a) it is not required to register or (b) it is registered as a business entity with the State Board of Elections pursuant to the Procurement Code, 30 ILCS 500/20-160 and acknowledges a continuing duty to update such registration pursuant to the Procurement Code; and that proposer acknowledges that any Agreement awarded as a result of this RFP is voidable under Section 50-60 of the Procurement Code if the proposer fails to comply with the business entity registration requirements. 30 ILCS 500/20-160; 30 ILCS 500/50-60.
3. A statement that the proposal is being made without fraud or collusion; that the proposer has not offered or received any finder's fees, inducements, or any other form of remuneration, monetary or non-monetary, from any individual or entity; and that the proposer has not conferred or promised to confer, on any individual or entity, any payment, loan, advance, services, or any other form of remuneration in connection with the award of this engagement.
4. A disclosure of any current business relationship or any current negotiations for prospective business with TRS, or with any member of the Board of Trustees or TRS staff, or any party currently rendering services to TRS. Provide a statement explaining why such relationships do not constitute a conflict of interest.

5. **A statement that the proposer is willing to enter into an agreement in the form attached to the RFP as Appendix D including all certifications and representations contained therein, and that the proposer acknowledges and understands that certain general provisions in the sample agreement mandated by Illinois state law to be included in contracts with agencies of the State of Illinois are not subject to negotiation.**
6. A statement that the proposer acknowledges that all documents submitted in response to this RFP may be subject to disclosure under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act, 5 ILCS 140, and the Illinois Open Meetings Act, 5 ILCS 120.
7. An attestation by the signer that the information provided in the Proposal is true and accurate, and that the signer is aware that pursuant to the Illinois Pension Code, 40 ILCS 5/1-135, any person who knowingly makes any false statement or falsifies or permits to be falsified any record of a retirement system or pension fund created under this Code (i.e., the System) in an attempt to defraud the retirement system or pension fund is guilty of a Class 3 felony.

B. Minimum Qualifications

The proposal must include a statement, including brief examples, that the vendor meets the following experience, requirements and qualifications.

1. At least three installations of the proposed software (365, AX or GP) for similar clients within the past five years.
2. Experience loading data from legacy systems into the proposed software.
3. Experience integrating external systems to the proposed software (flat files and web services).

C. Vendor Information

The proposal must include a historical overview of the company's services, including ownership. Additionally, the vendor must complete the Vendor Information Form contained in Appendix B.

D. Client References

The proposal must include the following client reference information.

1. Provide details for three customers for reference. References should be for customers with requirements like those of TRS, preferably within the past five years. Please include any government clients.
2. References should include information about the scope of work, the dates of work, and the name, address, phone, and email information of the client contact person (client's project manager or other senior staff members who are familiar with the project).
3. TRS reserves the right to contact these references and to discuss the client's level of satisfaction with the provider and its services.

Additionally, the vendor must complete Reference Authorization Letter in Appendix A for each reference.

E. Services Questionnaire

The proposal must include a response to each of the mandatory and optional services described in Section III. Services Required. The vendor must clearly describe how the service will be provided using examples based on work completed for clients similar to TRS. In addition, please complete the Services Questionnaire in Appendix N.

F. Staffing

The proposal must include information on all staff that are being proposed to work on the project. The staffing proposal must include the team member names, roles, responsibilities, percent allocated to the project, onsite time at TRS, and related experience. Please indicate what Scrum roles (Product Owner, Scrum Master, etc.) that you plan to propose, if any, and why.

G. Fee Proposal

Vendors must complete the Fee Proposal in Appendix C. Any deviation from the prescribed format which in the opinion of TRS is material may result in the rejection of the proposal.

The proposed costs must include the implementing the solution including the services required in Section III. The fee proposal must include a **not-to-exceed** total project cost along with **hourly rates** for each labor category required for the completion of the project (identified in the proposed staffing) and should include all out-of-pocket expenses attributable to the performances of services, i.e. all travel expenses including but not limited to lodging, transportation, meals, telephone, facsimile, Internet, or other communication devices, postage, delivery, copying, clerical time, and overtime.

If TRS does not consider the proposal price to be fair and reasonable, and it cannot negotiate and acceptable price, then TRS reserves the right to cancel the award and take the appropriate action to meet its needs. TRS will determine whether the cost is fair and reasonable by considering the proposal, including the offeror's qualifications, the price proposed, the project budget, and other relevant factors.

H. Assumptions

Please list any assumptions or constraints that you have factored into your proposal.

I. Contract

This Request for Proposal is neither a contract nor meant to serve as a contract. It is anticipated that one of the proposals submitted in response to this Request for Proposal may be selected as the basis for negotiation of a contract with the proposer. Such a contract is presently contemplated to contain, at a minimum, the terms and conditions set forth in the sample agreement included as Appendix D, but will also incorporate the terms of the proposal submitted, as finally negotiated and approved by the System. TRS reserves the right to negotiate additions, deletions, or modifications to the sample agreement and/or the terms of proposals submitted.

Certain provisions in the sample agreement are required by the State of Illinois and are therefore not subject to negotiation. **Thus, it is critically important that vendors submitting**

proposals clearly and thoroughly identify any and all contractual concerns in their written proposal. A proposer that waits until contract negotiation to object to TRS contract terms may be precluded from further consideration.

VI. Submission of Proposals

All proposals must be received at the address designated below **no later than 2:00 P.M. CST on December 11, 2017.** Submit two (2) hard copies of your proposal and one (1) copy on CD-ROM or thumb drive in a sealed package to:

Purchasing Officer
Teachers' Retirement System of the State of Illinois
2815 West Washington Street
Springfield, IL 62702

All hard copies must be submitted in one or more sealed envelope/package(s). One of the hard copies must be marked as the "Master Copy" and submitted in a loose-leaf, three-ringed binder which displays the proposer's name on the outside front cover. **Do not submit the Master Copy with spiral binding.**

Clearly identify the outside of each sealed proposal package with the proposer's name and return address in the upper left-hand corner and the statement "**SEALED PROPOSAL- DO NOT OPEN** - Response to Request for Proposals for Purchase and Implementation of Microsoft Dynamics 365, Issued November 13, 2017" Failure to clearly identify the outside of the proposal package may result in the rejection of the proposal. TRS is not responsible for receipt of any proposal which is improperly labeled.

TRS accepts no responsibility for lost and/or late delivery of proposals. Whether mailed, hand-delivered, or delivered by carrier, the proposer is responsible for timely delivery on or before the above date and time. **Proposals that arrive late for any reason whatsoever, including mail delay or any other cause beyond the control of the proposer, will not be considered and will be returned unopened.**

Except as specifically requested by TRS, submission of proposals or any portion thereof via facsimile transmission, electronic, or magnetic media will not be allowed.

The proposals become the property of TRS upon submission. All costs for developing proposals and attending presentations and/or interviews are entirely the responsibility of the proposer and shall not be chargeable to TRS.

Only one proposal from an individual, vendor, partnership, corporation, or combination thereof, will be considered for this assignment.

VII. Evaluation Process

A. Pre-Evaluation Review

Each proposal package will be date-stamped when received. Each proposal package will be inspected to ascertain that it is properly sealed and labeled. Proposals not passing this inspection may not be accepted. All proposals will be reviewed to determine if they contain all the required submittals specified in this RFP. Those not submitting all required information in the prescribed format will be rejected.

B. Proposal Evaluation

Proposals that pass the pre-evaluation review will undergo an evaluation process conducted by TRS staff. TRS will consider the following various elements in the decision process, ranked in no specific order, and will render a decision based on the perceived best value for the engagement. Cost will be one of the determining factors in this decision but will not be the primary determinative. Proposals will be evaluated based on criteria including:

- Proposed configuration of the software product fulfillment of TRS requirements
- Contractors understanding and ability to perform the services requested
- Degree to which the proposed vendor meets the minimum requirements
- Soundness of the approach and quality of the proposed services
- Demonstrated competence, knowledge, reputation, and qualifications of the contractor and of their professional staff
- Reasonableness of cost for proposed software and services
- **Conciseness of proposal:** use of bullet points, tables, and diagrams to provide response

During the evaluation process, proposers may be requested to provide additional information and/or clarify contents of their proposal. Other than information requested by TRS, no proposer will be allowed to alter the proposal or add new information after the filing date.

VIII. Anticipated Timeline*

Date RFP Issued	November 13, 2017
Deadline for Submission of Questions	4:30 p.m. CST - November 20, 2017
Question Responses Posted on TRS Website	November 27, 2017
Deadline for Submitting RFP Response	2:00 p.m. CST – December 11, 2017
Proposal Evaluation & Vendor Interviews	December - January 2018
Contract Begins	January – February 2018

*Subject to change at TRS discretion

IX. General Conditions

A. Clarification of the RFP

To maintain the integrity of the RFP process, interested proposers are expected to respond to this RFP to the best of their understanding. Proposers must not contact TRS staff about this RFP. If a proposer discovers an error in this RFP, the proposer should immediately notify TRS of such error in writing to TRS Purchasing Officer at the following email address: Purchasing@trs.il.org. If deemed necessary or appropriate in the System's discretion, TRS may clarify or modify any part of this RFP by posting notice on the TRS Web site prior to the proposal deadline.

B. Restrictions on Communication

Proposers must not discuss or share the contents of their proposals with other potential proposers. TRS policy and the Illinois state ethics law strictly limit communication during the search process. **Any attempt to initiate contact with TRS staff or TRS Trustees, other than as specifically stated in this RFP, may disqualify the proposer from further consideration.**

C. Prior Deficiencies

A proposer that is or has been deficient in current or recent contract performance in dealing with TRS or other clients may be disqualified unless the deficiency is shown to have been beyond the reasonable control of the proposer. TRS may reject a proposal from any proposer that is in default on any debt owed to, or contract with, TRS or other clients, or that is in default as surety or otherwise, upon any obligation to TRS, or has failed to perform faithfully any previous contract with TRS. Proposers that are newly formed business concerns having substantially the same owners, officers, directors, or beneficiaries as a previously existing non-responsible proposer may be disqualified unless the new organization can prove it was not set up for the purpose of avoiding an earlier declaration of non-responsibility.

D. Reservation of Rights

TRS reserves the right to withdraw this RFP, to accept or reject any or all proposals submitted, and to waive any immaterial deviation, defect, or irregularity, whenever it would be in the best interest of TRS to do so. Waiver of an immaterial deviation shall in no way modify the Request for Proposal or excuse a proposer from full compliance with all RFP requirements.

Proposals that contain false or misleading statements or that provide references which do not support an attribute or condition claimed by the proposer will be rejected. Issuance of the Request for Proposal creates no obligation to award a contract or to pay any costs incurred in the preparation of a proposal. Nothing in this RFP or any resulting contract shall preclude TRS from procuring services similar to those described herein from other sources.

E. No Confidentiality

Proposals and all materials submitted in response to this RFP cannot be considered confidential except as provided below. All proposals and related materials will be retained by TRS and will be subject to disclosure as required in accordance with the Illinois Freedom of Information Act, 5 ILCS 140. Simply marking all or portions of the proposal as “Proprietary” or “Confidential” will not protect it from disclosure in the event that a public record request is received. If a proposer is submitting proprietary information or strategies with the proposal, the proposer should submit, along with the un-redacted proposal, a redacted copy that removes only that material considered to be a trade secret, competitively sensitive, proprietary, privileged, or confidential such that disclosure would cause competitive harm to the proposer.

F. Equal Opportunity

TRS does not discriminate because of race, color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, military status, certain unfavorable discharges from military service, political affiliation, citizenship, ancestry, national origin, physical or mental handicap or disability or any other characteristic protected by law. It is the System’s intent to comply with all state, federal, and local equal employment and opportunity laws and public policies.

G. Reference Checks

Reference checks may be conducted for each finalist. Please provide the required references in the format prescribed in Appendix A of this RFP.