



Request for Proposals

The Rhode Island Foundation is a proactive community and philanthropic leader dedicated to meeting the needs of the people of Rhode Island. In 2014, the Foundation distributed a record \$34.8 million to more than 1,400 community organizations. Our current strategic priorities are economic security, education, health, and inspiring philanthropy. For more information, visit www.rifoundation.org.

The Rhode Island Foundation requests the services of a research consulting firm to study the prospect of developing a statewide teacher's contract for the State of Rhode Island.

Background

Recently, Rhode Island leaders from multiple sectors have conveyed a common interest in exploring the possibility of establishing a statewide teachers' contract. The Rhode Island Foundation recognizes the unique opportunities – and risks – associated with such an endeavor, and seeks to contribute to this conversation **by grounding the discussion in research and evidence**. Specifically, we seek to commission an independent study that is primarily designed to answer whether and how a statewide teacher's contract can realize efficiencies across school districts and advance student achievement statewide.

Study design

We anticipate that a study will generally consist of four parts, including (1) a discussion of the structure and process of negotiating a statewide teachers' contract, (2) a discussion of specific provisions including pay, benefits and working conditions, (3) a discussion of potential cost savings, and (4) an overview of other relevant topics. For illustrative purposes, a list of sample topics is included below. A final report should also include a sample contract and/or draft legislation for discussion purposes

I. Negotiating Structure & Processes

- Who are the negotiating parties to a statewide teachers' contract?
 - Would the Rhode Island General Assembly need to take action in order to allow for a negotiation to take place?
 - Do restrictions to developing a statewide teachers' contract exist in the Rhode Island State Constitution, in state law, or in individual municipal charters?
- Would a statewide contract preclude locally negotiated collective bargaining agreements?
- Would local districts be able to provide pay and benefits over the levels agreed upon in a statewide contract?
- In a statewide negotiating process, what tools could be used to resolve impasse?
 - What roles would mediation and arbitration play?
 - How would grievances be adjudicated?
- Would charter schools and/or Mayoral Academies be included in a statewide teachers' contract?
- How would a proposed agreement be ratified?

- Would education support professionals such as teachers' aides and non-certified staff be covered by a statewide agreement?
 - Would building or central office administrators be covered?
- How can parents and the community be a part of the process of developing a statewide teachers' contract?

II. Contract provisions

- What is an ideal salary and benefit structure, in Rhode Island's context, to recruit and maintain excellent educators at different points in their career?
- Are there alternative models of compensation and professional advancement to automatic step increases based on credentials and longevity, and are they preferable?
- What types of career ladders should be reflected in a statewide teachers' contract?
 - Are there positions such as Master Teacher or Instructional Coach that could be created to keep high performing, experienced teachers in classroom roles?
- Are there ways for a statewide teachers' contract to allow teachers to earn more money faster in their career?
- What are the best examples of using pay as a tool to recruit highly qualified educators for hard to staff positions?
 - Should there be differentiated pay for teaching positions that require educators to possess certifications and skills that command significant market value in the private sector (i.e. advanced placement chemistry teachers)?
 - Should there be differentiated pay for teachers who obtain certain credentials, like National Board Certification?
- What is the appropriate role, if any, of performance pay?
- What types of vacation and leave policies attract and maintain excellent educators?
- What are the best ways to structure the school year and school day to reflect the needs of today's learners?
- Are there benefits for Rhode Island to maintain a single school calendar, with common vacation and/or professional development days? If so, what would that calendar look like?
- What systems and structures should exist contractually to support Rhode Island's teacher evaluation system?
- What are the best practices and policies for compensated professional development, and how should they be reflected in a statewide teachers' contract?
- What types of factors should be considered in layoffs?
- How can a statewide teacher's contract enable high performing teachers to transfer between schools and school districts?
- What are the fairest and most effective practices for exiting low performing teachers from the system?
- Should maximum class sizes be reflected in a teacher's contract?
 - Should maximum caseloads be established for counselors, special educators and others?
- How should a statewide contract account for differences in working conditions between urban, urban ring, suburban and rural communities?

III. Financial efficiencies

- Could a statewide teacher's contract save Rhode Island municipalities money? How, and how much?
 - What is the current landscape of health plans offered to Rhode Island teachers, and are there benefits associated with consolidation?

- How would a statewide contract accommodate districts that provide social security coverage to local employees?
- How would a statewide contract deal with OPEB liabilities?
- How would a statewide contract deal with general obligation debt from school construction?

IV. Other issues

- Can a statewide teachers' contract simplify existing contracts into a set of expectations that is easy to understand for parents, teachers and administrators?
- How else can human resource policy be leveraged as a tool for improving student outcomes?

Instructions

Please submit a proposal outlining your services, cost, proposed timeline and workplan, references, and qualifications no later than 5:00 PM on Friday, June 12, 2015.

Please direct any questions or responses to:

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