



MDRC announced a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking qualified entities to provide digital, adaptive math products that complement core teacher-led instruction and support elementary school students with unfinished learning to “catch up” to grade-level content. The selected providers will participate in a large-scale, [national evaluation project](#) funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (“ED”) and conducted by MDRC and its partners at RAND Corporation, Westat, Digital Promise, and Public Strategies (“the study team”). The study will be implemented during the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years. The RFP is available on MDRC’s [website](#). Proposals are due on **July 8, 2022**.

This document provides responses to questions about the RFP that were submitted by interested providers.

1. Product Design

1.1. General question. State standards alignment. Which state math standards must the content be aligned to? How/when will the “key standards” be defined? (i.e., CCSS major work of the grade?)

Districts will be recruited during the 2022-2023 school year and so we currently do not know which states will be represented in the study. Providers should discuss if the product is currently aligned with the Common Core and/or other state standards. Providers can discuss in their proposals how they usually work with districts to align the product to state’s standards when necessary.

1.2. Would you provide more explanatory detail around your term 'lesson' and its relationship as well as difference from skill learning with adaptive digital technology?

We use the terms “activities and lessons” to generally describe what students will be doing to build skills and content knowledge when using the product.

1.3. Regarding Just in Time Skill Building, are there any parameters in terms of the time a student spends on pre-grade skills? Is there a maximum amount of instructional time students can spend on pre-grade skills? Can they go as far back as necessary, or no more than one grade-level back? Does the Broad Foundation Skill Building approach have any such parameters?

There are no specific parameters around the time spent on prerequisite skills from earlier grades for the Focused Just-In-Time Skill Building approach. Providers should meet the intent of the approach which is to start with the current grade-level topic being taught during full-class instruction and only provide students with the prerequisite content needed to support students’ mastery of that current topic. As long as the material follows the learning progression for the current topic, the product can go back as far as needed to support students in their mastery of the current topic. For both approaches, providers need to describe and justify their methods and parameters for determining prerequisite skills and content.

1.4. C.5. Technical Proposal Review Criteria, p. 27. “C.5 indicates that we should describe how the core components adhere to A.2.4. Should we describe how the product adheres to all four components in Exhibit A.2 or should we only address Exhibit A.2.4 (Progress Monitoring Systems)?

The reference to “Exhibit A.2.4” is a typo. The sentence should read: “Providers must submit proposals describing how their products adhere to the core components detailed in Exhibit A.2.” Adherence to all four core components should be discussed. The RFP has been updated with this edit to page 27 and reposted.

2. Study Design

2.1. On page 25 to 26 Support student-level randomization. “The provider shall assign students to either the Broad Foundation or Focused Just-In-Time approach based on the results of student-level randomization and maintain those assignments for the duration of implementation for the study.” The study is dependent on teacher assigned materials in the Focused Just In Time, what if the student is in Broad one year and Focused the next year? We can accommodate that but it might be a challenge for teachers if they have students in both approaches. In year 2, will the schools be able to schedule students in classes with the same approach as year 1?

The student-level randomization will be within classroom which means that all teachers will have students in their classrooms assigned to both approaches. While we understand that the Focused Just-In-Time Skill Building approach requires some teacher input, providers should consider ways that the product can automate these processes so that the teacher does not need to assign lessons and activities to specific students. Instead, the expectation is that teachers will input the current topic being taught during full-class instruction, and the product will provide material related to that topic for the students assigned to the Focused Just-In-Time approach. Providers whose products do not currently have this automation could use some of the time and funding allotted during the 2022-23 school year to modify their products to meet this particular need of the study. Given that the students are assigned individually to the approach, that assignment will follow fourth-grade students into their fifth-grade classrooms.

2.2. Study duration/length?

The project will run from Fall 2022 through Spring 2025. During the first year, the 2022-2023 school year, providers will have time to modify products if needed to meet the project goals (i.e., to build or modify one or both approaches). During this same year, the study team will be recruiting districts to participate and the providers will support this recruitment effort as discussed under Task 2 of Section B. Schools selected to participate will implement the products and the study team will collect data on implementation and outcomes during the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years. Data analyses and report writing will occur during 2025-26 with an expected first report released in 2025. The study team will brief providers on the study findings when the report is released.

2.3. A.3. Start-Up, Training, Monitoring and Support, Conduct trainings, p. 10. Please clarify how classrooms that do not adhere fully to the implementation guidance will be treated in the efficacy research design.

The analysis will be conducted using an intent-to-treat design which means that all schools and classrooms will be included in the study regardless of implementation level and dosage. In an effort to produce a strong test of the two approaches, the study team will work to ensure that implementation is

as strong as possible across all schools and classrooms. The study team will monitor usage, drawing on the usage reports provided by the provider (see pg. 20 of the RFP), and problem solve to support implementation with fidelity throughout the study as needed. We recognize that there will inevitably be some schools and classrooms that do not meet expected levels of implementation. Study reports will include information about any deviations from intended implementation (fidelity) and potentially examine sensitivity of results accordingly.

2.4. If during the study, one of the approaches (either Broad Foundation or Focused Just-in-Time) is performing significantly better than the other, or if one of the approaches is having significantly negative effects, will research protocol be adjusted in any way?

There are different hypotheses about the potential benefits of these different approaches for children and when these benefits might be realized. Some benefits may be immediate while others may take longer to manifest. The effects of the approaches may also differ across outcome measures. As such, it is not anticipated that a complete understanding of the effects of the approaches will be clear prior to the end of the study in the spring of 2025. As with all research on human subjects, this study will be monitored by an institutional review board.

2.5. Could you clarify the requirement to provide product licenses to second grade students? Our product can serve students starting in grade 4; does that mean we are not eligible to apply, or would it be possible to provide licenses to another subset of students in higher grades as part of this requirement?

While all products considered must serve fourth and fifth grades (and provide students in these grades with the needed prerequisite material from earlier grades), not serving second grade-students does not necessarily exclude the product from eligibility. The second-grade licenses are meant to act as consolation to the schools not assigned to receive the product in their fourth and fifth grades. We would like to provide some consolation to these schools but are open to other options. If a product that does not serve second grade students is chosen to participate, the study team will work with that product to figure out the best option for providing some consolation to these schools. For the purposes of the proposal budget, the provider should assume the product licenses will be offered to all students across one grade at the control schools (using the assumptions for number of students and classes provided).

2.6. Overview of Request for Proposals (RFP), p. 1. May vendors offer other school-wide product options to control group schools at no additional cost that differ from the product being used in the study?

Providers may consider offering unrelated school-wide products to control schools at no additional cost, but no products should be offered to control schools as part of this study that could interfere with the evaluation. For instance, providing control schools with an additional school-wide product focused on math skill building could be problematic as that additional product, even if not a digital adaptive product, could change the school's approach to math education causing math to be taught differently than would have happened if the school did not participate in the study.

2.7. B.2. Roles and Responsibilities, p. 26. Provision of data to the study team. Please clarify whether providers should be prepared to provide consultative support on provider’s data structure and interpretations.

Yes, providers should assume that some explanation of the data provided to the study team will be necessary to ensure proper analysis. The study team will have experienced data professionals on staff to collect, process, and analyze these data so support time should be minimal.

3. Start-Up, Training, Monitoring, and Support

3.1. Rostering – Will all districts have SSO and automated rostering available?

The study team will work with the providers early in the recruitment phase to identify the base technical capacity that schools/districts will need to implement the product during class time. Providers should not assume that districts will have single sign-on (SSO) or automated rostering currently available. Upon recruitment, the study team will work with participating districts and providers to assess district-specific capacities and needs with regards to product integration including issues related to rostering. Providers must plan to work with all districts and schools to support the integration of the platform into the districts’ systems including supporting districts and schools with adoption of SSO or automated rostering if needed.

3.2. Technical support – Will selected districts have a designated IT person that will prioritize IT support issues so that they may be expedited?

Districts will be asked to name a point of contact for IT related issues and support upon finalizing their agreement to participate in the study. The study team will facilitate an introduction of the providers to these district points of contact.

3.3. A.3. Start-Up, Training, Monitoring and Support, p. 9. What notice will providers be given of the states/localities that districts/schools are in to be able to support local regulations for product usage in schools? How will vendors be notified if there are approved list or RFPs that need to be completed?

The study team is responsible for recruiting districts into the study and will give notice to providers as to whether additional steps are needed for providers to be on approved lists in support of state or local regulations. The study team will work with the provider and the recruited district to obtain approval if necessary.

3.4. A.3. Start-Up, Training, Monitoring and Support, Conduct trainings, p. 10. Are vendors required to provide only the exact number of days/hours of professional development detailed in the RFP for each grade level, or is this a minimum requirement?

For the purposes of the technical and business proposals, providers should assume a maximum of two total days of teacher training activities per school year. Providers can choose to distribute the allotted time as two full days of consecutive training or shorter distributed training activities. The total training time proposed can also be shorter than two full days. If the provider believes that more than two days of training per year is necessary, the provider should make a case for the need for additional training time in the proposal including an explanation of the purpose of the additional time and whether this amount of training time is typical for this product’s start-up in a new district or school.

3.5. In many instances, the RFP refers to manuals. Will virtual manuals with links to videos and/or pdfs satisfy the manual requirement?

Yes. The RFP states that the training must be guided by a comprehensive training manual that covers all facets of the product and best practice usage of the product (pg. 10). The RFP does not specify the format of this manual and virtual manuals are acceptable.

3.6. If selected, we will offer a regular series of live training (15 to 20 minute) webinars to support best practices and answer FAQs; will the participating districts support teacher attendance?

As noted in the response to 3.4, providers should assume a maximum of two days of teacher training, but providers can propose different ways to structure and distribute this training time including with short live training sessions. While the RFP anticipates that trainings will occur in the summer before the start of each school year, providers can propose and justify other timelines for the training including a regular series throughout the school year. Teacher attendance in the trainings is expected and communication of this expectation will be part of the recruitment effort by the study team. Also, funding will be allocated as part of the study to compensate teachers for their attendance and participation in all training sessions. As noted in the response to 3.4, if the provider believes that more than two days of training is necessary for successful implementation, than the provider should make a case in the proposal for additional training time above and beyond the two-day maximum.

3.7. C.6. Proposal Review Process, p. 29. Please confirm that vendors would not provide professional development/training services to the control group of second-grade classrooms.

This is correct. The provider does not need to provide training to the second-grade classrooms in schools assigned to the business-as-usual condition. This also applies to other consolation products that may be offered, as discussed in the responses to 2.5 and 2.6.

3.8. Overview of Request for Proposals (RFP), p. 3. Please clarify whether the provider will be permitted, even if not required, to provide training and implementation support to the second grade classrooms in the control schools.

The provider is permitted, but not required, to offer training and implementation support for use of the product by second-grade classroom teachers in schools assigned to continue with their normal math instruction. The study, however, will not cover the additional costs of any training for teachers in the second-grade classrooms of these control schools. Providers that end up providing additional professional development and training to second-grade teachers in these schools must report this activity to the study team and restrict any training to second-grade teachers only.

4. District and School Recruitment

4.1. A.4. Impact Evaluation Design, p. 11. Recruitment. Please clarify if vendors will have input for recruitment purposes, based on potential contractual obligations (current or future).

Yes, as discussed on page 16, the study team will be recruiting districts and schools that are interested in the selected products, but not consistently using the provider's product in upper elementary-grade classrooms. To support this recruitment effort, the study team will request information from the provider about any current usage of its product in districts identified for recruitment. In addition, as appropriate and where needed, the study team will ask providers to supply answers to substantive product questions asked by prospective districts or participate in recruitment calls to answer questions

about products as needed. As noted in task 2 (page 16), for budgeting purposes, providers should estimate that an assigned staff member will participate in up to 15 recruitment calls of approximately 60 minutes each. Final decisions about participation of interested districts and schools will be made by the U.S. Department of Education.

4.2. B.2. Roles and Responsibilities, p. 24. Support for district selection of products. Please clarify whether the study team will support participating schools and districts to identify and stop use of redundant assessments or instructional tools during the study to create time for the new program’s implementation.

During recruitment, the study team will be asking districts and schools about their digital product usage and their assessment practices, and this information will be taken into account when deciding on fit for the study. Districts and schools that consistently use similar digital adaptive math products during class time in upper elementary grades will not be eligible for participation. As part of their agreement to participate in the study, districts and schools will commit to making time for the use of the study product during math instructional time. During the study, if a school is not meeting the usage goals for the study product, the study team will work with the school and provider to address. Finally, the study team will work with participating districts and providers to learn about assessment practices and identify potential options for streamlining to avoid over testing.

5. Proposals and Awards

5.1. C.2. Intent to Bid and Questions, p. 27. The RFP has a significant gap between the answers to questions and submission deadline. Will vendors be allowed to submit additional questions after answers to questions on June 6?

We are unable to post additional questions and answers. If questions arise, providers can note the issue and discuss their assumptions in the proposal.

5.2. Are for-profit companies allowed to submit proposals and is there any advantage given to nonprofit organizations or educational institutions?

For-profit companies, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions are all invited and welcome to submit proposals. There is no advantage given depending on the type of organization. Although product selection is primarily based on the technical merits of the proposal and product features, cost is also a factor.

5.3 Are international companies eligible for this contract?

International companies may be eligible to apply, provided the offeror is able to certify its compliance with the conditions outlined in the RFP in Appendix A, to include, but not limited to:

- FAR 52.209-10 Prohibition on Contracting with Inverted Domestic Corporations;
- FAR 52.222-54 Employment Eligibility Verification;
- Information Technology and Information Security Requirements in Appendix A;
- EDAR 3452.239-72 (2020-01) Department Security Requirements (Deviation);
 - Staff with access to PII/sensitive data (including staff involved with training or IT installation) or in a designated role identified in section (e) of this clause (page 50) must be able to obtain a moderate (5C) public trust security clearance.

- Only U.S. citizens will be eligible for employment on contracts requiring a Moderate Risk/Public Trust designation (see section (g), page 50). An approved waiver is required for any exception (see section (i), page 50).

6. Benefits of Participation

6.1. What benefits can the study participants (companies and products) derive from the results of the study?

Winning providers may benefit from the public announcement that their products were chosen through a competitive process for an important federally funded study. The participating providers may also benefit from exposure to new districts and schools where their product might not otherwise have been implemented. The participating providers also can benefit from an independent evaluation of their products in several ways. In addition to the study providing information about the effects of using a digital adaptive math product to support students with unfinished learning in upper elementary grades, it will provide rich information about the effectiveness of the differing approaches. The study will look at immediate outcomes (such as engagement and skill building) as well as improvement on state assessments after one and two years, with the potential to look even longer term. The study will look at the effects for differing types of students and their exposure to and engagement with the product. Analyses using implementation information can inform future product development.

7. Budget

7.1. C.6. Proposal Review Process, p. 28. Budget and contract period. Please confirm that each vendor will have a budget of \$250,000 for the base period (9/1/2022 to 7/31/2023) and \$750,000 for the option period (5/1/2023 to 6/30/2025).

What funding budget amount ranges/limits will be available for product modifications, upgrades? Amount of funding for research provided?

The anticipated maximum funding amount per provider is \$1,000,000. This includes up to \$250,000 per provider to support refinement of the product and training materials as well as any support from the provider to the study team to help with school district recruitment during the base period from fall 2022 to summer 2023. It also includes up to \$750,000 per provider to support two years of product implementation (the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years) including product licenses, start-up, training, and monitoring and support. Note that while these are anticipated maximum amounts, they should be taken as guidelines. Providers should budget what they think it will take to do the work they propose and justify the costs. While the RFP specifies some tasks, such as data provision, which directly support the research and which the provider should include in their budgets, the evaluation will be conducted by the study team and is funded separately from the work discussed in this RFP.

7.2. C.8. Contract Structure and Budget, p. 29. Please clarify if vendors may account for price increases in the renewal year(s).

The resultant agreement issued will be firm fixed price, therefore your cost proposal should account for all necessary costs to complete the project (including any anticipated price increases during the option period).

7.3. E.2 Required Information for the Business Proposal, p. 38. Cost line items. “Please clarify that vendors are not required to provide the cost line items on p. 38 if vendors do not charge for time and materials.”

If the provider’s budget/proposed price includes any of the cost elements identified in the “Required Information” section, these costs must be detailed in the budget and narrative submitted as part of your Business Proposal. If a cost is not necessary for the provider to complete the project, then it would not be included in the proposed budget.

Changes to RFP

Two changes were made to the RFP since the time of original posting, that are reflected in the current posted version (posted on June 7, 2022).

- On page 27, the reference to “Exhibit A.2.4” was replaced with the correct reference, “Exhibit A.2.” The sentence now reads: “Providers must submit proposals describing how their products adhere to the core components detailed in Exhibit A.2.”
- On page 36 under “D.2.11. Appendices,” the following sentence was added to Appendix B: “Should also include a guest or trial login or similar information that would allow reviewers to access and test the product.”