



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND  
**OFFICE OF GOVERNOR DANIEL J. MCKEE**

September 14, 2021

The Honorable K. Joseph Shekarchi  
Speaker of the House  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI 02903

The Honorable Dominick Ruggiero  
Senate President  
Rhode Island Senate  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Speaker Shekarchi and Senate President Ruggiero:

As of last week, every school district in the State of Rhode Island officially opened in-person for the 2021-2022 school year. After more than a year of virtual or hybrid learning due to COVID-19, one of my top priorities was to ensure that our teachers and students could safely return to in-person learning. As the school year continues, it is our priority to keep schools safe, support our students in overcoming the learning interruptions of the last 19 months, and ensure we have the resources to address any challenges that Delta or other COVID-19 variants could present in our schools.

To put Rhode Island in the best position to achieve these goals, my Administration issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking a qualified organization to work closely with the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) and the Governor's Office to oversee and coordinate school-related recovery activities.

The Division of Purchases within the Department of Administration conducted a competitive proposal process. Five proposals were received and the top two scorers, ILO Group and WestEd, were selected under a Master Price Agreement to complete two separate scopes of work – one addressing K-12 and the other addressing higher education. Both contracts are funded with dollars from the federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief III (ESSER III) Fund. I am enclosing a detailed Technical Evaluation Memo from May of this year prepared by the Technical Evaluation Committee that reviewed the proposals, which outlines the process. The selection process for the contract was well-documented and the procedures set forth and conducted by the Division of Purchases were followed.

I would like to take this opportunity to address a few important facts about one of the firms competitively chosen for this project and the work they are contracted to do.

ILO is a women-owned company that currently works with large-scale and small-scale school districts throughout the country. While ILO is newly organized as a Rhode Island-based business, its team members have worked together for years and have an extensive background working in

Rhode Island and throughout the country on education consulting projects. Their Managing Partner resides in Cranston.

One of ILO's initial tasks under the contract was the critical work of a safe reopening, but the scope of the contract goes far beyond that. As further detailed in the scope of work memo enclosed here, ILO was engaged by the State for several different components. In component one, ILO is supporting project management, coordination, and design for school reopening based on best practices developed through projects with districts across the country. Component two (use of Federal Funds to address pandemic-related learning loss) includes the design, implementation, and support for use of a federal spending tool. Components three and four include ILO's support for the program design of Municipal Learning Programs, Out of School Time Programs, and ongoing Summer Catch Up Programs.

ILO's initial charge from the State was to work with the communities that have the lowest vaccination rates. In addition, ILO's consulting services have been used by districts, including Providence. ILO worked with RIDOH to analyze the districts with vaccine rates below the state average and with high COVID-19 transmission. The team targeted the ILO capacity there to ensure effective use of the consulting hours.

ILO has provided daily capacity building and consolidated project planning support to RIDOH, RIDE and the Governor's Office to ensure effective implementation of overall reopening supports, which include targeted and overall outreach capacity to support all LEA reopening efforts by the State including individual letter outreach to each district and phone call supports. As the State manages the Providence Public School District, we have closely engaged ILO as a resource to ensure a safe and effective reopening. Attached is a detailed memo summarizing ILO's work to-date.

Additionally, to avoid unnecessary spending, the contract is to be billed hourly up to the amount of \$5.1 million instead of a fixed retainer fee. Based on ILO's billable hours for work performed since the beginning of July 2021 when the contract began, we expect to remain far below this cap. The cap was set to ensure enough money was budgeted to provide the highest level of support for RIDE, RIDOH and interested districts to open and operate schools in the face of COVID-19 and subsequent variants. As Governor, it is my job to maximize the value that Rhode Island receives from this contract.

It is also important to note the factual reason for the gap between ILO and WestEd's original pricing proposals. As stated in the technical evaluation memo, the initial competitive proposal process included a vague scope which led to different scope and pricing proposals from respondents. Accordingly, it is important to address such issues directly with the responding respondents. When the State gave further guidance on the number of hours necessary, ILO provided updated anticipated work hours of 28,669 and WestEd of 27,135, and subsequent negotiation across the work streams resulted in ILO Group at 22,695 hours. ILO's revised project rate was similar (and less) than MGT Consulting, the original third place respondent (23,650 hours). This is outlined in the Technical Evaluation Memo.

Finally, it is important to provide one additional correction to some accounts of this contract. Michael Magee worked with me on education during my time as Mayor of Cumberland. Together, we took on the status quo on behalf of local children and families to create new learning options for young people in our community. Contrary to certain accounts, Michael Magee has no past or current financial interest or management role in ILO Group.

There are three critical priorities that I am focused on right now: fighting the COVID-19 Delta variant by getting as many Rhode Islanders vaccinated as possible, ensuring our economy continues to recover fully and equitably, and keeping our students safely in the classroom while addressing the impacts of interrupted learning over the last 19 months. I know you both share those priorities and I thank you for being strong partners in the effort to ensure Rhode Island comes out of this once-in-a-century pandemic stronger than we went in.

Should you have any questions, my team and I are available to meet with you. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Governor Daniel J. McKee

CC: House Oversight Committee Chairwoman Patricia Serpa  
Senate Oversight Committee Chairman Louis DiPalma