



OFFICE OF THE
ARIZONA STATE TREASURER

KIMBERLY YEE
TREASURER



**RFI 26A Empowerment Scholarship Account Financial Management Solutions
Questions and Answers**

Questions are listed in the order received. State's responses are in RED.

1. **Question:** Is ASTO seeking only a financial management solution or is the State open to a broader ESA operating platform that includes application processing, identity verification, eligibility determination, and customer support?

Response: ASTO is required to contract with a financial management solution to manage the Arizona Empowerment Scholarship Accounts. In light of the Arizona ESA program's expanding enrollment with no corresponding increases in operational funding, as well as technology's evolving capabilities, the state is seeking information pertaining to all aspects that pertain to and enhance available financial management solutions capabilities. If vendors offer additional financial management and operational services, they can include them in their responses for the state's awareness.

2. **Question:** Does ASTO have an interest in solutions that proactively prevent unauthorized purchases before they occur, rather than relying primarily on post-transaction reviews and fraud detection activities?

Response: The state is issuing this Request for Information (RFI) as a means of technical discovery and information gathering based on the information provided in the "General Scope of Information" in the RFI. We would like to receive all information regarding ESA financial management solutions, products, and services, which may include capabilities to prospectively identify and prevent unallowable purchases or reimbursement payments from being completed. This is not an RFP, so the State does not have a scope of work requirement.

3. **Question:** How important is the State's ability to restrict purchases to pre-approved educational goods and services at the point of sale?

Response: The state is issuing this RFI as a means of technical discovery and information gathering based on the information provided in the "General Scope of Information" in the RFI. We would like to receive all information regarding ESA financial management solutions, products and services. This is not an RFP, so the State does not have a scope of work requirement.

4. **Question:** Is the State interested in marketplace-based purchasing models that limit purchasing activity to approved vendors and approved products, thereby reducing opportunities for fraud, waste, and abuse?



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Response: The state is issuing this RFI as a means of technical discovery and information gathering based on the information provided in the “General Scope of Information” in the RFI. We would like to receive all information regarding ESA financial management solutions, products and services. This is not an RFP, so the State does not have a scope of work requirement. However, it should be noted that state law requires that account holders be reimbursed from their students’ empowerment scholarship accounts for any allowable purchases that they make out of pocket.

5. **Question:** Does ASTO have a preference regarding solutions that require parents to make purchases through third-party marketplaces versus solutions that keep users within a controlled educational purchasing environment?

Response: The state is issuing this RFI as a means of technical discovery and information gathering based on the information provided in the “General Scope of Information” in the RFI. We would like to receive all information regarding ESA financial management solutions, products and services. This is not an RFP, so the State does not have a scope of work requirement. However, it should be noted that state law requires that account holders be reimbursed from their students’ empowerment scholarship accounts for any allowable purchases that they make out of pocket.

6. **Question:** What level of importance does ASTO place on real-time transaction monitoring and intervention capabilities compared to traditional retrospective audit processes?

Response: Prospective determination of the allowability of a purchase or a reimbursement before state funds are extended is strongly preferred over retrospectively determining the allowability of a purchase or reimbursement and having to seek repayment for unallowable spending. The state is seeking to gain more knowledge on the various ways solutions provide audit capabilities across all payment methods the vendor offers for users. We would like to receive all information regarding ESA financial management solutions, products, and services, which may include real-time capabilities to prospectively identify and prevent unallowable purchases or reimbursement payments from being completed.

7. **Question:** What level of real-time visibility would ASTO and ADE like to have into transaction activity, purchasing trends, and potential compliance concerns?

Response: The State would like to see any options that vendors have regarding real-time visibility into transactions and purchasing trends. The vendor should also provide details on how potential compliance concerns are visible to the State through the system or dashboard.

8. **Question:** To what extent does ASTO expect a future vendor’s solution to automate operational functions that may otherwise require manual staffing, including transaction review, fraud prevention, compliance monitoring, reconciliation, reporting, and program support? Should



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respondents describe how automation, configurable rules, and real-time controls, can reduce manual review burden while preserving appropriate oversight?

Response: ASTO is required to contract with a financial management solution to manage the Arizona Empowerment Scholarship Accounts. In light of the Arizona ESA program's expanding enrollment with no corresponding increases in operational funding, as well as technology's evolving capabilities, the state is seeking information pertaining to all aspects that pertain to and enhance available financial management and operational solutions capabilities. Leveraging technology to increase productivity is a top priority. If vendors offer additional financial management and operational services, they can include them in their responses for the state's awareness.

9. **Question:** What level of operational support does ASTO anticipate requiring from a future vendor beyond software functionality?

Response: ASTO is required to contract with a financial management solution to manage the Arizona Empowerment Scholarship Accounts. In light of the Arizona ESA program's expanding enrollment with no corresponding increases in operational funding, as well as technology's evolving capabilities, the state is seeking information pertaining to all aspects that pertain to and enhance available financial management and operational solutions capabilities. If vendors offer additional financial management and operational services, they can include them in their responses for the state's awareness.

10. **Question:** Should respondents provide examples of prior ESA, scholarship, voucher, or public-benefit programs they have supported at scale, including number of students served, transaction volume, implementation timeline, and public-sector references?

Response: Responders should supply information that will provide ASTO and ADE with sufficient details and context regarding the vendors options surrounding the "Information Requested" section of the RFI that supports the growth the ESA program in the State of Arizona.

11. **Question:** Should respondents describe measurable outcomes from comparable programs, including fraud prevention, audit results, reconciliation accuracy, support performance, and reduction in manual administrative burden?

Response: Responders should supply information that will provide ASTO and ADE with sufficient details and context regarding the vendors options surrounding the "Information Requested" section of the RFI that supports the growth the ESA program in the State of Arizona.



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12. Question: Please provide the evaluation criteria and corresponding scoring methodology, including any weighted categories or scoring sheets, that the State intends to use when reviewing and assessing vendor responses to this RFI.

Response: There are no evaluation criteria for this RFI. As mentioned, This RFI is issued as a means of technical discovery and information gathering. Also, the RFI is not a formal solicitation for proposals. Responding to the RFI is not a prerequisite for participation in a future solicitation, nor will respondents be given preferential treatment in any future procurement.

13. Question: Will any portion of the response evaluation process involve the use of AI or automated scoring tools? If yes, please describe how AI will be used.

Response: See response to question #12. This RFI will not be evaluated.