Request for Proposal

Neurodivergent Learners Curriculum Development

March 27, 2020
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Issued by: 826 National

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1. Introduction & Background

826 National invites you to respond to this Request for Proposal (RFP) to develop training curriculum and materials for working with neurodivergent learners ages 6 to 18. The project will span April 2020 through January 2021. We are interested in enhancing our current writing program to be more inclusive of neurodivergent learners by training and supporting our staff members and volunteer tutors. Training curriculum and materials will also be made available to educators around the world via our online platform, 826 Digital. By better equipping staff members and volunteers, 826 chapters will be able to support even more students in becoming strong and creative writers, thinkers, and leaders.

Background

Neurodivergent learners can benefit tremendously from thoughtful, strengths-based individualized attention, like that received at 826 chapters around the country. Writing, and providing students with a platform and opportunity to tell their own stories, is the cornerstone to 826’s work. In addition to building confidence and self-esteem, strong writing skills are crucial to academic success. Youth who cannot effectively convey thoughts and ideas through writing are more likely to receive lower grades, especially in classes where learning is assessed through projects and tests requiring written responses.
While 826 does not currently have a specific program for working with neurodivergent learners, it does have a commitment to finding ways to effectively teach writing to all children, and we are often called to support inclusive classrooms that by definition include neurodivergent learners. Teachers will sometimes provide 826 with advance notice regarding their classroom dynamics, but often our staff and volunteers lack specific training for supporting those learners who most need the specialized support. In addition, 826 prioritizes partnerships with the most under-resourced schools, where at least 51%—and often far more—of the student population receive free or reduced-price lunch. Not surprisingly, these schools are often disproportionately impacted by government budget reductions and most in need of additional teaching assistance.

Chapter affiliates are eager for ways to best meet the diverse needs of their students, and a network-wide need for professional development in this area has been established and expressed. In order to provide the most comprehensive support for neurodivergent learners, the 826 Network is seeking an expert consultant to present best practices for supporting these students and engage in training affiliate staff members and volunteer writing tutors. The free resources offered by the 826 Network will not only support neurodivergent learners directly, but can also provide tools for educators and schools via 826 Digital.

About 826 National

826 is the largest youth writing network in the country. 826 was founded in 2002 by author Dave Eggers and educator Ninive Calegari. Rooted in the belief that strong writing skills are essential for academic and lifelong success, the 826 Network now serves close to 80,000 students ages 6 to 18 in under-resourced communities each year, thanks to the support of almost 5,000 volunteers. Currently, 826 has chapters in nine major U.S. cities: Boston, Chicago, Detroit/Ann Arbor, Los Angeles, Minneapolis/St. Paul, New Orleans, New York City, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. There are an additional 50 826-inspired organizations around the world serving over 150,000 students.

Each chapter offers five core programs: After-School Tutoring, Field Trips, Workshops, Young Authors' Book Project, and In-School programs — all free of charge — for students, classes, and schools. 826 also reaches classrooms worldwide through 826 Digital, an online platform that makes 826’s inventive writing resources to educators everywhere for free.

Contact for this RFP

All correspondence regarding this RFP should be directed to Laura Brief and Kait Steele.

Laura Brief                  Kait Steele
CEO                        Director of Field Operations
826 National               826 National
laura@826national.org      kait@826national.org

2. Submission Guidelines & Requirements

The following submission guidelines & requirements apply to this Request for Proposal:

1. A proposal must be provided that is not more than 10 pages. This proposal must provide an overview of the project plan as well as resumes of all key personnel performing the work. In addition, the proposal should provide a proposed schedule and milestones, as applicable.
2. A price proposal must be provided that is not more than 3 pages. This price proposal should indicate the overall fixed price for the project as well as hourly rates and an estimated total number of hours, should 826 National decide to award a contract on an hourly rate basis.

3. Bidders must list at least 3 projects that are substantially similar to this project as part of their response, including references for each. Examples or links to past work should be provided as well.

4. Proposals must be signed by a representative that is authorized to commit bidder’s organization.

5. If you have a standard set of terms and conditions, please submit them with your proposal. All terms and conditions will be subject to negotiation. Proposals must be received prior to April 17, 2020 to be considered.

6. 826 National reserves the right to alter or amend the scope of work and/or the requirements, including the right to terminate or discontinue this RFP.

3. Confidentiality Statement
The recipient of this RFP agrees to treat as confidential all information disclosed herein. The recipient further agrees not to disclose this proprietary information to any person or party without the prior written consent of 826 National. This agreement is effective between the recipient and 826 National regardless of whether the parties enter into a contract for services which is the subject matter for this request for proposal.

4. Project Scope
The scope of the project entails:
1. Submit a project plan for developing and piloting the training curriculum.

2. Research industry best practices in supporting neurodivergent learners.

3. Conduct a needs assessment through reviewing volunteer training materials and 826 methodology, program observation, and/or focus group(s) of 826 Network staff.

4. Develop three prototypes in time for new staff and volunteer orientations at two pilot sites (as early as August 3, 2020)
   a. an in-person training for staff,
   b. a webinar series for staff and volunteers, and
   c. a “one-sheet” handout for volunteers.

5. Incorporate feedback and refine training tools/materials.

6. Develop an educator-facing training module and/or lessons for distribution to classrooms at-large via the 826 Digital platform.


The criteria set forth below should be met to achieve successful completion of the project:
1. Training materials for staff should provide concrete tools and frameworks for space, program, and curriculum design, as well as language to use with families, volunteers, teachers, and students.
2. Training materials for volunteers should be shareable as a video clip as well as a "one-sheet" format.

3. Developed materials should clearly define terms and scope, including:
   a. Who do we mean by neurodivergent students?
   b. What does neurodivergence look like in different groups of students?
   c. How can 826 scaffold and execute existing and emerging programming to ensure it is inclusive of all learners?

4. Developed materials should reflect 826’s unique needs and services, including:
   a. wide range of program frequency (1-session field trips to year-long, daily After-School Tutoring),
   b. wide age range of students served (ages 6-18),
   c. little context of student needs from teachers and family ahead of program, and
   d. student population primarily from under-resourced schools and communities.

5. Staff should understand key questions to ask partner teachers, families, and volunteers to determine how best to support students.

6. The ideal candidate has:
   a. experience in creating professional development curriculum and implementing training for working with neurodivergent learners,
   b. an intersectional approach to working with neurodivergent learners affected by systems of oppression,
   c. direct classroom experience, and
   d. a dual arts- and special education background.

5. RFP & Project Timelines

826 National has engaged the following steps to manage this RFP process. To be considered, please respond via email to information@826national.org by April 17, 2020 with your intent to participate in this RFP. Please review the following timeline for other deadlines.

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<th>RFP Timeline Highlights</th>
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<tr>
<td>March 27, 2020</td>
<td>RFP distributed</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 17, 2020</td>
<td>Notification of candidate selection</td>
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<td>April - June 2020</td>
<td>Research &amp; focus groups</td>
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<td>June - August 2020</td>
<td>Prototype developed in time for new volunteer orientations at pilot sites (as early as August 3, 2020)</td>
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<td>August - October 2020</td>
<td>Pilot/test; develop communications/launch plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>November - December 2020</td>
<td>Refine/finalize training tools/materials for solid January 2021 launch</td>
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All costs associated with responding to this RFP are the responsibility of the candidate.

6. Evaluation Factors
826 National will rate proposals based on the following factors, with cost being the most important factor:
   1. Responsiveness to the requirements set forth in this Request for Proposal
   2. Relevant past performance/experience
3. Samples of work
4. Cost, including an assessment of total cost of project
5. Technical expertise/experience of bidder and bidder’s staff

826 National reserves the right to award to the bidder that presents the best value to 826 National as determined solely by 826 National in its absolute discretion.

7. Service Delivery
Briefly describe the services included in your pricing for this RFP.

List the names of all members of the proposed curriculum development team and the specific services they will provide for the project. Please include key qualifications and credentials of team members who will handle specific areas of the project.

8. Quality Assurance
Describe your organization’s approach to quality assurance.

● What performance standards and metrics do you have in place?

● How do you assess participant satisfaction during and after a pilot? Whom do you survey and how frequently?

● Describe your organization’s approach to incorporating feedback into existing training materials.

9. References
826 National reserves the right to contact references at any point during this RFP process. Please provide two references as identified below.

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10. **Additional Information**
Is there additional information about your organization, products, or services that would assist our organization in understanding your ability to meet requirements and serve as curriculum developers for 826 National?