

Request for Proposal (RFP)
RFP ALSDE 2024-08
ALABAMA LEARNING EXCHANGE WEBSITE REDESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT
Alabama State Department of Education,
Educational Technology

This is a compilation of responses to questions received for
RFP ALSDE 2024-08

ALSDE responses appear in red font below each question.

1. Is ALSDE open to moving the deadlines?
After careful consideration, we must adhere to the established timeline for many reasons.
2. Is ALSDE interested in replacing your current ALEX LOR solution?
The ALSDE will update the ALEX LOR, not replace it. Our goals, objectives, and strategies are focused on improving the overall appearance and functionality of the LOR.
3. Can you please clarify if ALSDE expects to own the LOR solution, as stated in this provision: "All ownership rights to the programming and application development services for both the new and existing ALEX LOR in accordance with the awarded contract and identified herein shall remain solely with ALSDE"?
The libraries, code, code modifications, scripts, apps, platform changes, data, or software written to create, support, update, modify, or maintain the new site are the exclusive property of the ALSDE.
4. How is a mobile ALEX LOR expected to be utilized? Could you please describe a use case? Is the intention to search for content, use content, or both?
A desired improvement to the ALEX LOR is a mobile-friendly interface ensuring that the platform is accessible and user-friendly across all devices and operating systems.
5. Concerning personalization features "that allow educators to customize resources to suit their teaching styles and students' needs," what personalization features should be available, and how would teachers want to personalize resources?
The personalization features added to the Resource Builder will allow teachers to curate and develop high-quality, standards-based learning activities, lessons, and unit plans aligned to the Alabama content standards. These features include:
 - *Creating a collaborative environment for content authoring, approval workflows, and publishing learning objects.*
 - *Adding a "suggesting/commenting" mode to the resource development workflow.*
 - *Enabling a "remix" option to select and update content created by other users.*
6. Roughly what percentage of teachers submit materials for review today?
Resources are accepted for review during organized professional development opportunities offered by ALEX or an ALEX-sponsored event. An ALEX event may receive up to 150 resources during a two-week period.

Request for Proposal (RFP)
RFP ALSDE 2024-08
ALABAMA LEARNING EXCHANGE WEBSITE REDESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT
Alabama State Department of Education,
Educational Technology

7. Timeframe for support:

- a. The RFP envisions three releases in two years followed by an up to three-year extension for updates, support and maintenance. When will ALSDE seek to take over primary support and maintenance responsibility and what level of knowledge transfer is required?

If awarded, ALSDE will discuss this in depth in the contract. Please refer to the “Contract

ALSDE anticipates the redesign of the existing ALEX repository will be conducted over a period of two years. The awarded vendor will establish a post-launch support plan that includes monitoring the platform for issues, addressing user feedback, and providing ongoing support to ensure the smooth operation of the new repository.

The libraries, code, code modifications, scripts, apps, platform changes, data, or software written to create, support, update, modify, or maintain the new site are the exclusive property of the ALSDE.

- b. Will ALSDE provide end user training during and after transition, or will the selected vendor need to provide options for end user training. If it is a “Train the trainer” approach, what training materials and support are expected?

Please consult the RFP documentation, specifically *Section 2.1: Scope of Vendor’s Work and Responsibilities*, to review the expectations for each phase of the proposed solution. The awarded vendor will be required to provide training to the ALSDE staff regarding the operation and management of the LOR. A “train the trainer” approach will be utilized for the ALSDE to conduct end-user training during and after the transition. Additionally, the awarded vendor must guarantee the provision of thorough training materials for both platform administrators and end-users.

8. Hosting:

- a. Where is ALEX hosted and who maintains it today? The RFP states it is hosted at the ALSDE. Will the current maintainers be available to work with us on all aspects of the work from current state analysis to content, user and access migration?

Please refer to the current website specs on page 5 of the RFP documentation. The current website is hosted and maintained by ALSDE utilizing a Drupal CMS. The ALEX Team and ALSDE staff will work collaboratively with the awarded vendor to transfer existing data and content to meet the project objectives outlined in the RFP.

- b. Will ALSDE or the selected vendor host and manage the operational infrastructure of the replacement system?

The vendor can propose a solution that aligns most effectively with the project objectives outlined in the RFP. Prospective suppliers may choose to submit proposals which indicate more than one hosting solution option along with details and pricing for each option. If more than one option is submitted, each option must be clearly defined and the price clearly indicated for each solution. The intent is for the ALSDE to manage the repository once the redesign is complete.

- c. If ALSDE seeks to host and manage the operational infrastructure:

- i. What are the operational and system constraints and requirements (e.g. is this on prem, MS Azure, AWS, Google Cloud or some other

Request for Proposal (RFP)
RFP ALSDE 2024-08
ALABAMA LEARNING EXCHANGE WEBSITE REDESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT
Alabama State Department of Education,
Educational Technology

cloud service infrastructure? Do you require a specific database, language and system configuration components?)

If awarded, we would discuss this in depth in the contract.

- ii. Will the selected vendor have direct system access to deploy the releases and provide support and maintenance during the contract term?

If awarded, we would discuss this in depth in the contract.

- d. If ALSDE seeks to have the selected vendor operate the solution as fully managed service (SaaS), do you have a preferred approach to production infrastructure (a specific cloud provider vs on-prem)?

The vendor can propose a solution that aligns most effectively with the project objectives outlined in the RFP. The intent is for the ALSDE to manage the repository once the redesign is complete.

9. Additional context:

- a. Is there a functional specification for ALEX you can share?

*Please consult the RFP documentation, specifically *Section 2.1: Scope of Vendor's Work and Responsibilities*, to review the functional specifications for the proposed solution.*

- b. What are the capabilities for data and content to be exported from ALEX today?

You may view the current website specs on page 5 of the RFP and the website located at <https://alex.alsde.edu>.

- c. It appears the content is entirely metadata with links to externally hosted resources (e.g. Web links). Is there any content hosted as files in the current ALEX Repository?

Please refer to page 5 to review the Current Website specs and visit <https://alex.alsde.edu>.

- d. For the Phase 2 Resource Builder, do you envision editor users building and hosting file-based resources such as documents, media, presentations and interactives, or continuing with entirely externally hosted web resources?

Version 1, file-based resources were hosted internally. Version 2, file-based resources are externally hosted. If awarded, we would discuss this in depth in the contract.

- e. How are users provisioned and given role-based access? What are the state SSO integration requirements? What monitoring and mediation is needed for the community and end user contributions?

Please refer to Section 2.1 for required features of the ALEX LOR, specifically pages 13-14 of the RFP document. The SSO platform has not been determined, though the state uses ALSDE Identity Management (AIM) portal. A Learning Resource Review Portal will be needed/used to monitor community and end-user contributions.

10. Is ALSDE open to utilizing existing technology in the work-for-hire solution delivery?

The vendor can propose a solution that aligns most effectively with the project objectives outlined in the RFP.

Specifically:

- a. Can the solution leverage Google Drive and Workspace infrastructure in the delivered solution?

Request for Proposal (RFP)
RFP ALSDE 2024-08
ALABAMA LEARNING EXCHANGE WEBSITE REDESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT
Alabama State Department of Education,
Educational Technology

The vendor can propose a solution that aligns most effectively with the project objectives outlined in the RFP.

- b. Can the solution leverage AWS, .Net/Azure or other proprietary cloud services?
The vendor can propose a solution that aligns most effectively with the project objectives outlined in the RFP.
- c. Can the solution leverage existing open source and/or proprietary components that are licensed but not considered work-for-hire? Specifically, we have an existing set of LOR and editorial tools we have developed over several years and use for large scale curriculum development projects with clients. Our existing and proprietary “Curriculum Hub” may well meet many of your design and functional goals. Similarly, we have integrated with and customized a number of Open-source CMS and LOR platforms in past engagements, but those platforms often utilize “Share alike” licenses that require release of enhancements and modifications to the code. Is that acceptable?
Curriculum resources (learning activities, lessons, units) developed, created, and vetted by ALEX are openly licensed under Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International. Please provide a detailed plan on how ALSDE will maintain ownership of items produced as “Work for Hire” within the response. If awarded, ALSDE will clarify the sharing of code ownership within the contract.
- d. Can final deliverables be released under an open source licensed for others to use and improve?
Curriculum resources developed, created, and vetted by ALEX are openly licensed.
11. In the envisioned future system, who is being paid and for what? Please elaborate Phase 2 scope references to “Add a review and payment portal” and describe if there is an ecommerce or invoicing and payment processing requirement related to this payment.
The Author/Reviewer Payment Tracking feature is only intended to keep track of when payments have been requested and issued by program personnel. Payments will not be issued/processed directly via the ALEX site. There is no ecommerce or invoicing/payment processing requirement.
12. In Phase 3 of the future system the RFP states the solution needs to “Utilize 1Edtech standards to ensure the digital curriculum products and tools offered through the ALEX repository function seamlessly with other ALSDE digital learning tools, ensuring a more cohesive and effective digital learning ecosystem.” Is there a set of LMS tools or other platforms that need to work seamlessly with the new LOR. Are there specific 1EdTech specification versions that have been successfully used to achieve interoperability between systems in AL for Common Cartridge, LTI, CASE and/or LTI Resource search?
Alabama academic standards (AL Course of Study Standards) are coded in machine-readable **CASE format** and available at alabamastandards.org. 1EdTech specifications have not been utilized between systems at the state level in Alabama. Various LMS platforms are used by AL LEAs, and the ALSDE currently provides PowerSchool and Schoology platforms for use by LEAs.
13. Will you email announcements to us for any changes or addenda published for this solicitation, and specifically the answers to these and other’s questions?
The answers to these and other questions will be publicly accessible on the ALSDE website at <https://www.alabamaachieves.org/>.

Request for Proposal (RFP)
RFP ALSDE 2024-08
ALABAMA LEARNING EXCHANGE WEBSITE REDESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT
Alabama State Department of Education,
Educational Technology

14. Page 5 – The department has mentioned that the current Drupal CMS was determined to be not conducive to the desired user experience.
- a. Would the department consider an upgrade from the current Drupal 9 to Drupal 10 or if the department would consider Drupal based PaaS (Acquia) ?
The current website design does not appear to support upgrading from Drupal 9 to 10.
 - b. If Drupal is not up for consideration then which CMS is the department foreseeing for this website?
The vendor can offer a CMS that aligns most effectively with the project objectives outlined in the RFP.
15. Page 4 – Under strategy 3 the department has mentioned “Create a “one-stop” shop for ALSDE instructional resources.”
- a. Could you please provide more information on this?
The ALEX LOR will host instructional resources created/developed by the ALSDE’s Office of Student Learning to support student achievement. The <https://alabamaachieves.org> site can provide an overview of the ALSDE organization and instructional resources available for teachers.
16. On Page 13 of the bid, under the sub–heading Required Features of the ALEX LOR there is a bullet point for Author/Reviewer Payment Tracking.
We want to confirm that this feature involves keeping track of the hours that authors/reviewers spend working on ALEX content, and possibly keeping track of when payments have been requested and when payments have been issued; but that you are **not** asking for payments to be issued directly via the ALEX site. Can you confirm our understanding or provide additional context for this item?
Yes, the Author/Reviewer Payment Tracking feature is only intended to keep track of when payments have been requested and issued. Payments will not be issued/processed directly via the ALEX site.
17. Regarding the “Ownership and Copyrights” section on page 16: The system we would develop with ALSDE to support the ALEX site would be based on our own proprietary code base, which we use with many other partners already, and which we will continue to use with new partners. We will be happy to grant ownership rights to ALSDE for the specific system we would develop with ALSDE for ALEX site, including the right to use and adapt the code however ALSDE might see fit after our involvement in the project is finished. However, our contract for the work would need to specify that we are also free to use the code in service of our other partners. We have deployed such contract language with several of our other partners, with whom we have the same arrangement. Can you confirm that this intent and/or language above can be added to the RFP to clarify the Ownership and Copyrights section?
Please include the explanation above to grant ownership rights to ALSDE for the items produced as “Work for Hire” within the RFP response. If awarded, ALSDE will clarify the sharing of code ownership within the contract.
18. Is it possible to extend the submission deadline by 2 weeks in order to prepare a complete response?
After careful consideration, we must adhere to the established timeline for many reasons.
19. If you are unable to extend the deadline would you consider email submission to maximize the time available to vendors?

Request for Proposal (RFP)
RFP ALSDE 2024-08
ALABAMA LEARNING EXCHANGE WEBSITE REDESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT
Alabama State Department of Education,
Educational Technology

Faxed or e-mailed proposals will not be accepted.

20. Who developed the current ALEX LOR?
Please refer to the Current Website specs on page 5 of the RFP.
21. How much data/content is there to be migrated in the current site?
You may view the content of the site at <https://alex.alsde.edu>. There are approximately 6000 resources aligned to the Alabama Course of Study Standards.
22. How much of the current content is not aligned to CASE-based identifiers? Will it be the vendors responsibility to bring this content into alignment?
Resources on the current ALEX site are correlated to Alabama content standards through unique identifiers, not the CASE-based identifiers. The vendor will be responsible for utilizing APIs to retrieve CASE-formatted academic standards from the alabamastandards.org CASE publishing tool to allow tagging of resources to Alabama content standards.
23. Is ALSDE opposed to a Drupal-based solution going forward, if the desired improvements and enhancements are met?
The vendor can offer a CMS that aligns most effectively with the project objectives outlined in the RFP.
24. How many, and which LMS' do you anticipate integrating with the new platform?
Alabama LEAs use various LMS platforms, in addition to the ALSDE provided PowerSchool (SIS) and Schoology (LMS) platforms.
25. Is there a particular Single Sign On platform being considered (e.g. Active Directory)?
A Single Sign-On platform has not been determined, though the state has the ALSDE Identity Management (AIM) portal.
26. Where is the current solution hosted? Can the future platform be hosted with a commercial cloud provider in the future?
The current solution is hosted by ALSDE. The vendor can offer a solution that aligns most effectively with the project objectives outlined in the RFP.
27. Can you share a budget range for this project that ALSDE hopes to work within?
Vendors should provide a technically sound and cost-effective cost proposal to meet the project objectives outlined in the RFP.
28. Who is the current (or most recent) vendor that helped with the development of the site?
Please refer to the current website specs on page 5 of the RFP documentation. The current website is hosted and maintained by ALSDE.
29. Is there an incumbent for the contract? If so, can you please provide the incumbent name, current contract number, duration, historical level of effort, and value of the contract?
We do not have a current contract. The current ALEX website is hosted and maintained by ALSDE.
30. What are the major pain points with your current site?
Please refer to the "Background" section pages 3-6 of the RFP document for more information about the existing site and desired improvements.

Request for Proposal (RFP)
RFP ALSDE 2024-08
ALABAMA LEARNING EXCHANGE WEBSITE REDESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT
Alabama State Department of Education,
Educational Technology

31. Could you share a budget or range of acceptable costs for this project? (e.g under \$50,000, \$50,000-\$100,000, \$100,000-\$250,000, \$250,000+)
- Vendors should provide a technically sound and cost-effective cost proposal to meet the project objectives outlined in the RFP.
32. What is driving your team to seek a new agency partner to provide these services at this time?
- Please refer to the RFP, specifically *Section 1.1 Purpose and Background*.
33. How much time/effort or resources have been expended developing the current site?
- The ALEX application was originally developed and launched in the early 2000s. Many of the components on which ALEX was developed were quickly reaching end-of-life including the database version, the PHP source code version, and many of its libraries. In September 2021, the ALEX application was transitioned to a Drupal CMS in an attempt to expand its features, add additional data sources, and implement new functionalities. Although all current LOR data is stored in the Drupal CMS, it was determined that this platform was not conducive to the desired user experience for the ALEX LOR.
34. If the current site could be customized to meet your goals, would you be open to retaining your current investment while utilizing additional programming and tools to enhance the functionality and user experience?
- The vendor can propose a solution that aligns most effectively with the project objectives outlined in the RFP.
35. Can the deadline be extended by 2 weeks?
- After careful consideration, we must adhere to the established timeline for many reasons.
36. When would you like to complete phase 1? Phase 2? Are there any factors impacting these dates?
- ALSDE anticipates the redesign of the existing ALEX repository may be conducted over a period of two years. It is anticipated that during Year 1, the vendor will work with the ALEX Leadership Team to conduct a comprehensive audit of the existing content strategy and information architecture on the current repository, design and develop the new repository, and deploy the redesigned application for use by the target audience. Then, the vendor will add interoperability features to integrate with LMS and other ALSDE educational products ensuring a more cohesive and effective digital learning ecosystem in Year 2. The awarded vendor will be expected to develop a maintenance plan with documentation for the ALSDE to manage all aspects of the repository as stated in *Section 2.1: Scope of Vendor's Work and Responsibilities* of the RFP. If awarded, ALSDE will discuss this in depth in the contract. Please refer to the "Contract Terms" section on page 9 of the RFP.
37. When would you like to launch the new site?
- Please consult page 15, "Project Timeline" in the RFP documentation.
38. What internal or external factors will impact the project timeline?
- As stated in the "Contract Terms" section on page 9 of the RFP, the initial contract for this RFP may be for two years and may be renewable for up to three (3) additional years pending written agreement of the vendor and the ALSDE, dependent upon required state approvals, availability of funds, performance evaluations of the project, at the full discretion of the ALSDE. The contract will commence pending CPO signature, Legislative Review Committee approval and Governor's signature.

Request for Proposal (RFP)
RFP ALSDE 2024-08
ALABAMA LEARNING EXCHANGE WEBSITE REDESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT
Alabama State Department of Education,
Educational Technology

39. What is the site's current (monthly) traffic?
The site is available for access by all Alabama educators.
40. What is the expected traffic of the site?
Visit <https://alex.alsde.edu> for more information. This is a state level project with traffic from other educators throughout the US.
41. Who will be evaluating the RFP responses?
The ALSDE RFP team will evaluate the responses.
42. Who are the major stakeholders that will be involved in the project during development?
Refer to Section 2.2 Scope of ALSDE's Work and Responsibilities located on page 16 of the RFP document.
43. Do you expect to have an interview round before award?
No
44. Would you like the pricing to be an all inclusive not to exceed or broken down with optional items that can be flexed in/out?
Please refer to Section 3.1 Requirements of Proposal, specifically "Part IV: Cost Proposal" located on page 18 of the RFP document.
45. How many hours of (monthly) support do you anticipate needing post launch?
The vendor can propose a Post-Launch Support Plan to include support after the website is launched, including bug fixes and updates. Proposals may include options for varying support if details for each option are explained/identified and prices correspond with each option.
46. Do you have a preferred technology stack?
The vendor can propose a technology stack that aligns most effectively with the project objectives outlined in the RFP.
47. Do you have a preferred hosting platform?
The vendor can propose a CMS that aligns most effectively with the project objectives outlined in the RFP.
48. Are you open to utilizing cloud hosting to maximize performance?
The vendor can propose a solution that aligns most effectively with the project objectives outlined in the RFP.
49. Should hosting costs be factored into our price?
Please submit a detailed, comprehensive cost proposal outlining **all** project-related expenses, potential additional costs, and optional services.
50. Are there any requirements or goals for small business inclusion? Minority, women, or Veteran owned businesses?
The ALSDE follows fiscal and procurement guidance of the Alabama Department of Finance, Division of Procurement <http://www.purchasing.alabama.gov> and any other required applicable procurement regulations.