



Request for Information

School Finance & Budgeting System



1 Request for Information (RFI)

We would like to notify you of an upcoming requirement, and by doing so we are keen to understand where the market stands in terms of our requirement below.

The contact person for this RFI is James Bennett, Procurement & Commercial Manager at Lancashire County Council. Contact details,

- Telephone Number: 01772 539970
- Email Address: digitalprocurement@lancashire.gov.uk

Please note the following general conditions:

- This RFI will help us to refine the requirements and make key decisions for the next stage of the procurement process, including whether the Authority continues via a third party framework, such as the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) G-Cloud 14 (RM1557.14) framework, or via an open tender.
- Nothing shall constitute a commitment to ordering and our intention is to undertake a future competition to ascertain the most advantageous tender.
- Any and all costs associated with the production of such a response to a RFI must be borne by the potential service provider. We will not contribute in any way to meeting production costs of any response.
- Information contained within this document is confidential and must not be revealed to any third party without prior written consent from us.
- No down-selection of potential service providers will take place as a consequence of any responses or interactions relating to this RFI.
- We expect that all responses to this RFI will be provided by potential service providers in good faith to the best of their ability in the light of information available at the time of their response.
- No information provided by a potential service provider in response to this RFI will be carried forward, used or acknowledged in any way for the purpose of evaluating the Potential Provider, in any subsequent formal procurement process.

Timetable

The following is indicative timetable for this RFI process

| Dates | Activity |
|---|--|
| 6 th May 2026 | Publication of RFI |
| 5 th June 2026 at 11am | Deadline for RFI submissions |
| 5 th June to 3 rd July 2026 | RFI analysis |
| 6 th July 2026 | Confirm next steps to RFI interested bidders |



Questions and clarifications

- Interested service providers may raise questions or seek clarification regarding any aspect of this RFI document at any time prior to the Response Deadline. Questions must be submitted via the general contact point above.
- To ensure that all potential service providers have equal access to information regarding this Procurement, responses to questions raised by any potential service providers may be published in a questions and answers document, which will be available via email.
- Responses to questions will not identify the originator of the question nor any confidential aspects of the question that may also identify the originator.



2 Background

1.1. Overview

Lancashire County Council ('LCC') is the fourth largest Local Authority in England and Wales and employs approximately 35,000 staff. It serves a population of 1.1 million which is rich in cultural diversity, and covers an area of 3,070 sq. km.

Further information about Lancashire County Council can be found at:

<http://www.lancashire.gov.uk>

This Request for Information (RFI) seeks information relating to LCC's intention to procure a future finance and budgeting system for schools in Lancashire. The Schools Finance Team offers a wide range of professional support services to assist schools in managing their budgets. Provided by experienced Finance Officers, the team enable each individual school access to a breadth of skills and knowledge to fit their needs. The team have developed strong working relationships with schools, helping to ensure improved financial management throughout the County's schools which are currently circa 482 schools.

1.2. Existing system

To support the teams work, LCC have utilised a specialist budgeting software tailored to educational establishments. The software, Access Education Budget (formerly HCSS Budgeting), is licensed and supported by The Access Group. The software is licenced on an annual basis per establishment with additional costs for support, training and the annual budget preparation services. This contract will expire on the 31st March 2027 with no further option to extend.

1.3. System capability

The system must support the Council and its maintained schools to manage finances efficiently, transparently and sustainably throughout the end-to-end school finance and budgeting lifecycle.

- Provide clear visibility of school-level and aggregated financial positions, including budget setting, monitoring and forecasting.
- Support value for money decision-making through timely and accurate financial information.
- Enable schools to manage budgets effectively within delegated funding arrangements.
- Support budget preparation, approval, monitoring, re-forecasting and year-end processes.



- Enable modelling of multiple funding streams, including delegated budgets, grants and reserves.
- Provide what-if scenario planning to support medium-term financial planning.
- Support payroll and staffing cost modelling, including teacher and support staff assumptions.
- Allow both school-level autonomy and local authority oversight, with appropriate controls.

The system must operate effectively within the Council's wider system and policy landscape.

- Integrate or align with:
 - Corporate finance or general ledger systems
 - Payroll and HR systems (where applicable)
 - Reporting and data tools used by the Council
- Support the Council's digital strategy and cloud direction, where relevant.
- Be adaptable to future changes, including:
 - Funding regime changes
 - Policy and statutory reform
 - Local government reorganisation or structural change

1.4. System capacity

The system must be scalable and resilient across the Council's maintained schools estate.

- Support use by all maintained schools, academies where applicable, and central local authority teams.
- Handle peak usage periods, such as budget setting and year-end, without performance degradation.
- Scale to accommodate:
 - Changes in the number of schools
 - Local government reorganisation or structural change
 - Changes in financial or statutory requirements
- Provide appropriate system availability and disaster recovery arrangements.

1.5. System compliance

The system must support compliance with statutory, regulatory and audit requirements.



- Support compliance with:
 - Local authority financial governance requirements
 - Education and school finance regulations
 - Audit and assurance requirements
- Provide clear audit trails for changes to budgets and forecasts.
- Support data protection by design, including UK GDPR compliance.
- Enable secure handling of financial and workforce-related data.

1.6. System controls

The system must provide robust governance, security and approval controls.

- Allow the Council to define roles, permissions and approval workflows.
- Enable clear separation of responsibilities between schools and the local authority.
- Support controls over:
 - Budget creation and amendment
 - Forecast revisions
 - Assumption changes
- Provide logging and reporting to support monitoring, assurance and escalation.

1.7. System user interface

The system must be easy to understand and use for a wide range of school users.

- Provide an intuitive user interface suitable for users with varying levels of financial expertise.
- Present financial information clearly using dashboards, visuals and structured reports.
- Support plain English terminology where possible, aligned to school finance contexts.
- Enable users to clearly understand:
 - Current financial position
 - Forecast risks and pressures
 - Variance against budget

1.8. Supplier competence and culture

The supplier must demonstrate the capability to deliver, support and evolve the future system.



- Demonstrate experience of providing school finance and budgeting systems within the public sector.
- Show understanding of local authority and maintained school environments.
- Provide an effective implementation and onboarding approach for both schools and central teams.
- Offer ongoing support, training and knowledge transfer to maintain capability over time.

The system and supplier must align with the Council's values and ways of working.

- Support a culture of transparency, accountability and collaboration between schools and the Council.
- Enable constructive engagement around financial sustainability and early identification of risk.
- Support accessibility and inclusion, ensuring the system is usable by a diverse range of users.
- Align with public sector values, including openness and ethical behaviour.

