



NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Robyn Burke, President
Members of the School Board

THROUGH: David Vadiveloo, Chief School Administrator ^{DV}_{DV}

FROM: Dr. Bobby Bolen, Director of Human Resources ^{BB}_{BB}

DATE: October 31, 2022

SUBJECT: **Contracts Over \$10,000 –
Jobs Connect USA Staffing Solutions LLC
Law Offices of Nicolas Caraquel PLLC**

Memo No. SB23-066
(Action Item)

NSBSD Strategic Plan Goal:

3.0 Staff Success: Strengthen the recruitment and retention of highly effective staff and inspire more Iñupiaq teachers and administrators.

3.1 Hiring & Recruiting: Improve the hiring and onboarding process for all employees.

NSBSD Policy Manual:

BP 3311, Bids: The district shall purchase equipment, supplies, and services on a competitive bidding basis when required by law and whenever it appears to be in the best interest of the district to do so.

BP 3312, Contracts: The Superintendent or designee may enter into contracts and memoranda of agreement (MOA's) on behalf of the District. All contracts and MOA's with a dollar value of \$10,000 or greater must be approved by the School Board.

Issue Summary:

Nationwide, there is a shortage of over 200,000 teachers and Alaska is experiencing this shortage in a particularly critical way due to our remoteness and high teacher turnover. Our region, including Northwest Arctic Borough School District, is one of the worst affected areas, with each District currently struggling to cover more than 30 certified teacher vacancies each. This is having a severe impact on staffing in our village schools in particular. In response many Alaskan Districts (and Districts nation wide) are turning to overseas teacher recruiting.

At the May 10, 2022 Regular Meeting, the Board of Education approved Human Resources to recruit teachers through the J1 Visa Program through a placement agency called *I Teach America*. However, due to the unexpected demand nationwide and some restrictions placed on Agencies placing J1 teachers in rural Alaska, we were unable to secure any J1 Visa candidates this year. In an attempt to find an alternate pathway to secure the required number of overseas teachers, the District identified the H1-B Visa category as a possible alternate pathway. Employers wishing to utilize the H1-B visa category must satisfy a number of State Department legal requirements to achieve "cap-exempt status" before they can bring overseas employees into the US. Bringing any overseas candidate into any District under either the J1 program or H1-B program comes at a cost in the multiple thousands per teachers to the Districts. Because the H1-B pathway requires Districts to prove their cap-exempt status, the Administration decided to launch a test case to demonstrate to the State Department that we qualified for this cap-exempt status. Our test-case application has finally been approved and last week, the test case teacher was scheduled for a US Embassy interview on November 4, 2022.

With our test-case approved, the Administration now wishes to apply for H1-B visas for up to 25 overseas teaching candidates. To process these applications the District wishes to utilize two contractor agencies that successfully processed our test case. Those agencies are a recruiting agency called Jobs Connect USA Staffing Solutions, LLC and a legal firm called Law Offices of Nicolas Caraquel PLLC.

Jobs Connect USA Staffing Solutions, LLC will: identify the teacher; assess certifications; support the interview process; support the teacher by securing local permissions including consulate interviews and an OEC certificate from the Philippines; meet the candidates in the U.S. and assist their transition.

Law Offices of Nicolas Caraquel PLLC will: process all legal documentations; manage the H1B Visa process; and support the State Department with inquiries and follow-up.

Compliance with BP 3311:

Three bids were received from different companies who provide the same service of bringing teachers to the U.S, these companies are International Alliance Group (IAG), Cascadia Law Firm, and Jobs Connect.

For a J-1 visa candidate, the *International Alliance Group* charge between 20-25% of the salary of each teacher every year for up to four years and would represent a cost to the District of approximately \$50,000-\$60,000 per teacher over four years or \$13,000-\$15,000 per year, per teacher.

Cascadia Law Firm is an H1B processing firm whose mini-rfp bid was reasonable but did not include the following charges which we know are required: the cost of processing educational qualifications and verifications, the cost of the firm's time to process requests for further evidence from the State Department; the cost of supporting the teachers to receive consulate interviews. In addition the Cascadia firm does not provide service support in the Philippines and do not factor in the cost of the Overseas Employment Certificate from the Phillipino government, which is a required certificate to leave the country for employment. Adding these cost estimates to the Cascadia law bid we estimated the cost to the District would be between \$12-14,000 per candidate but we would not receive the benefit of vital Phillipines based support like Overseas Employment Certificate processing support and support for candidates at both the Embassy interview and upon arrival in the US.

Jobs Connect is an H1B agency that utilizes the Law Offices of Nicolas Caraquel PLLC to process legal documents with an approximate cost of \$8,560 per candidate in year one, then an additional \$4000 per candidate in year two if the teacher remains and renews their certificates for a total cost of \$12,560 per teacher over two years. *Jobs Connect* and Nicolas Caraquel PLLC successfully processed the Districts test-case. Their collective fee includes every charge for support to the District and teacher candidate, including processing educational qualifications and verifications, processing requests for further evidence from the State Department, supporting the teachers to receive consulate interviews, support in the Philippines with the Overseas Employment Certificate and support upon arrival in the US. In addition, they do not process their agency fee until the candidate has landed in the US and is placed in the District.

In consideration of the number of overseas teachers the District is seeking to bring to the US, the comparative costings and the level of support provided to candidates, the Administration believes Jobs Connect and the Law Offices of Nicolas Caraquel PLLC represent the best option for us to process the H1-B visa candidates required to staff our schools.

Length of Contract:

The contracts will commence upon approval by the Board through June 30, 2024

Jobs Connect USA Staffing Solutions, LLC:

Law Offices of Nicolas Caraquel PLLC:

Grant Funding:

These contracts will be grant funded under ESSER II: 277.200..350.000.410

Available Budget:

\$274,555.11

Funding Source and Contract Amount:

ESSER II: 277.200.350.000.410

Jobs Connect USA Staffing Solutions, LLC: \$92,750

Law Offices of Nicolas Caraquel PLLC: \$126,500

Total: \$219,250

Proposed Motion:

“I move that the NSBSD Board of Education approve the above \$10,000 and greater proposals and related contracts for Jobs Connect USA Staffing Solutions, LLC and Law Offices of Nicolas Caraquel, PLLC, in the amount not to exceed \$219,250 as described in this memo and related attachments.”

Moved by: _____ Seconded by: _____

Advisory Vote: _____ Vote: _____

Signature: David Vadiveloo
David Vadiveloo (Oct 31, 2022 10:11 AKDT)

Email: david.vadiveloo@nsbsd.org

Signature: Bobby Bolen
Bobby Bolen (Oct 31, 2022 10:01 AKDT)

Email: Bobby.Bolen@nsbsd.org