

STATE OF ALASKA

Department of Education and Early Development
Division of Finance and Support Services



Statewide Through Year Assessment Services

RFP 200000085

Amendment Two

May 29, 2020

Amendment Two (A02) is being issued to respond to questions received, summarize the Educational and Pre-Proposal Conference, and to make changes to the RFP as identified herein.

Important Note to Offerors: Only the RFP terms and conditions referenced in this amendment are being changed. All other terms and conditions of the RFP remain the same. **The offeror must acknowledge receipt of A02 on page 1 of Submittal Form A – Offeror Information in the *Addenda Acknowledgement* section.**

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Questions submitted by potential offerors and responses from the state:

Question 1: Please clarify what constitutes test irregularities. Please clarify what specific data needs to be collected at the item, student, and aggregate level.

Section Page/# Sec 2.03(a), Page 17

Requirement/Text Contractor must provide a system capable of decreasing the likelihood of technology test irregularities. Contractor must provide system that collects data at item, student, and aggregate levels to analyze the impacts of the technology irregularities or interruptions.

Response 1: The testing system must be able to maintain integrity and security of student assessment data through irregularities that may include but are not limited to: student or test administrator log-in issues, local device failure, local network disruption, wide area network disruption, or internet connectivity interruption. Resolution of local issues, such as log-in problems and local device failure, must be least disruptive to secure and standardized test administration.

In addition to assessment data such as item responses, individual student scores, aggregated school scores, aggregated district scores, and aggregated state-wide scores, the system must collect information such as connectivity and functionality statistics, telemetry data, test and test item response times, student device usage, and provided student accommodations.

Question 2: Given that the new Through-Year Assessment will commence in 2022, will DEED be requesting a standard setting to validate the cut scores for federal accountability purposes in the summer of 2022?

Section Amendment 01, Question 3

Page 3

Response 2: The Offeror must provide a standard setting the year after summative assessment is implemented.

Question 3: Given that the Pre-Proposal conference has been rescheduled to the end of the day May 27, only eight days before the due date, and given the amount of important information that may still be provided then (or after) based on questions and answers, would the state consider extending the submission deadline to June 9?

Section General

Response 3: The Deadline for Receipt of Proposals has been extended to 2:00 pm Alaska Time on Tuesday, June 9, 2020. Section 1.03 *Deadline for Receipt of Proposals* and Section 1.05 *RFP Schedule* have been updated as described herein.

Question 4: **Text:** The interested party must confirm telephone conversations in writing.
Per a phone conversation on May 22, 2020 with the procurement officer regarding the deadline to submit questions, we understood that questions may be submitted until the proposal deadline.
Please confirm.
Section Section 1.08 Questions Prior to Deadline for Receipt of Proposals
Page pg. 6

Response 4: Questions may be submitted until the proposal deadline.

Question 5: Contractor assumes that the State's answers to these questions and Contractor's response to this RFP will be incorporated into any final Agreement between the parties. If this is not correct, please explain.
Section Section 1.08 Questions Prior to Deadline for Receipt of Proposals
Page pg. 6

Response 5: Yes, the State may incorporate part or all of this RFP into the contract resulting from the solicitation. Section 7.03 Proposal as a Part of the Contract states, in part:
"Part or all of this RFP and the successful proposal may be incorporated into the contract."

Question 6: "The purpose of this Request is to examine **options** that would provide schools and districts with a through-year assessment that produces interim assessment **options** with data available throughout the year that can drive instruction." Is the Through-Year Assessment System a requirement for all Alaska schools or an option for them to participate in? If an option, will PEAK summative assessments (not part of this contract) remain the touchstone for accountability during this contract?
Section 2.02(b)
Page pg.13

Response 6: The first year will be a pilot year for the Through-Year Assessment System provided by the Offeror. Offeror must provide a through-year assessment as the assessment system for all school districts in Alaska. Performance Evaluation for Alaska Schools (PEAKS) will be given in the spring of 2021 in order to make the transition to the successful Offeror. Once the successful Offeror has the interim and summative system in place, this successful Offeror must provide new system as the basis for district and school accountability.

Question 7: In this portion of the Background information, the RFP indicates that the current statewide summative assessment is taken on paper by approximately 20% of students. However, this is not explicitly stated as a requirement for the through-year assessment which will become the summative assessment. Is paper-based administration of the through-year assessment required? If so, will this also be required during the initial pilot year?

Response 7: Offeror must provide paper options for the Through-Year Assessment System upon request for year two and beyond. The primary focus of the first-year pilot is the computer-based version of the assessment system.

Question 8: “Currently a majority of Alaska’s schools take a computer-based assessment. However, about 20% of students take a paper-based version of the assessment. Alaska faces challenges with technology in the most rural portions of the state that require expertise and creative problem solving. Districts across the state have widely varying access to both Internet connectivity and expertise to establish and maintain school technology systems.”

And Yet

“Provide a summative and series of interim assessment that are block or item adaptive.”

Does DEED anticipate that some of the most rural portions of the state will not be administered online adaptive assessments as part of the Through-Year Assessment System and that paper test forms must be produced by the vendor to accommodate the technological barriers to online testing in those schools?

Section 2.03(a) & 3.02(3), 3.03(f)

Page pg. 16 vs. pg. 18

Response 8: Offeror must provide paper options for the Through-Year Assessment System upon request for year two and beyond. DEED is moving toward an all-online testing platform. There may be certain instances where a paper-based assessment is necessary (accommodations, etc.). These challenges will be discussed further in the clarification phase.

Question 9: Will Alaska maintain ownership and/or access to the current summative assessment item bank?

Text

3. Provide a summative and series of interim assessments that are block or item adaptive.

a. Summative assessment items must be adaptive within each grade level

b. Interim assessment can be adaptive outside the grade level.

Section SEC.3.02 Goals and Objectives

Page 18

Response 9: Offeror must provide item bank. Currently, DEED leases items from the current vendor. Some State-owned items were created last year and were slated for field testing Spring 2020. Unfortunately, the cancellation of the statewide summative assessment did not allow for field testing. Offeror must include items, item leasing, and/or item development in its Cost Proposal.

Question 10: Please clarify the timeline and process for the Clarification Period as it relates to the RFP Schedule on page 5. In the middle of page 36, the RFP describes a kickoff meeting to be scheduled by the potential best-value offeror, at which the offeror will present its implementation plan. How much time will the potential best-value offeror have to prepare this plan and presentation? How does the process and timeline unfold after the kickoff meeting and initial presentation?

Section 5.15 Clarification Period

Page pg. 35

Response 10: Note that the RFP Schedule in Section 1.05 represents the state's best estimate of the schedule that will be followed. While the RFP Schedule is flexible, at any time during the clarification period, if the state is not satisfied with the progress being made by the invited offeror, the offeror fails to provide the information in a timely manner, fails to negotiate in good faith, or if the offeror and the state fail to agree to terms or fail to execute a contract, the state may terminate the clarification period activities and then commence or resume a new clarification period with an alternative offeror per allowances in Section 5.15.

Question 11: Does the State agree that the Bidder will have an opportunity, upon award, to negotiate any additional standard terms and conditions or any other special clauses not included in the RFP if incorporated into the awarded contract? If not, please explain.

Section 7.04, Additional Terms and Conditions

Page pg. 40

Response 11: Per section 7.04, the state reserves the right to add terms and conditions during contract negotiations. These terms and conditions will be within the scope of the RFP and will not affect the proposal evaluations. The state anticipates any terms and conditions of the offeror to be provided during the Clarification Period.

Offerors have been provided the Standard Contract Provisions referenced in Section 7.02 which include the state's Standard Agreement Form for Professional Services Contracts. The contractor must comply with the contract provisions set out in the attachment. No alteration of these provisions will be permitted without prior written approval from the Department of Law. Any requests to change language in this document (adjust, modify, add, delete, etc.), must be set out in the offeror's proposal in a separate document.

Question 12: What does the State mean by this request? Can the State give examples to clarify the request?

Section Submittal Form A – Offeror Information

Page 4

Response 12: If there are any federal requirements that may apply to this project including the proposal, proposal evaluation, or contract, the offeror is required to provide information and citations regarding those requirements. An example might be applicable Alaska Statutes, such as AS 14.

Question 13: Contractor presumes that the resulting contract will contain good cause termination rights for the successful bidder, such as: if the Agency fails to meet its payment obligations under the resulting contract, or if contract scope or requirements change drastically alters the viability of the contract for the Contractor. Is this correct?

Section Article 5, Termination

Page App A

Response 13: Offerors have been provided the Standard Contract Provisions referenced in Section 7.02 which include the state's Standard Agreement Form for Professional Services Contracts. The contractor must comply with the contract provisions set out in the attachment. No alteration of these provisions will be permitted without prior written approval from the Department of Law. Any requests to change language in this document (adjust, modify, add, delete, etc.), must be set out in the offeror's proposal in a separate document.

Question 14: Contractor assumes that the State is not claiming ownership of Contractor's pre-existing intellectual property or derivative works of that Intellectual Property that may be used during the completion of Contract Activities. Is this correct? If not, please explain.

Section Article 10, Ownership of Documents

Page App A

Response 14: Offerors have been provided the Standard Contract Provisions referenced in Section 7.02 which include the state's Standard Agreement Form for Professional Services Contracts. The contractor must comply with the contract provisions set out in the attachment. No alteration of these provisions will be permitted without prior written approval from the Department of Law. Any requests to change language in this document (adjust, modify, add, delete, etc.), must be set out in the offeror's proposal in a separate document.

Note that per section 7.04, the state reserves the right to add terms and conditions during contract negotiations. These terms and conditions will be within the scope of the RFP and will not affect the proposal evaluations. The state anticipates any terms and conditions of the offeror to be provided during the Clarification Period.

Question 15: Bidder presumes the State will update the period of performance and the renewal options to reflect the Statewide Through-Year Assessment Services Best Value RFP 200000085.

Section Item 10, Article 3, Period of Performance

Page App A

Response 15: Yes, the State will update the period of performance and the renewal options in the Standard Agreement Form for Professional Services for a contract resulting from this solicitation.

Question 16: Is it correct that Form B does not require the bidder to omit any names that can be used to identify who the offeror is?

Form B: SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS (parts 1 through 4): This Submittal Form must not identify the offeror's proposed costs and must not exceed two pages (reference RFP section 4.02).

Form B: SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS (parts 5 through 6): SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: This Submittal Form must not identify the offeror's proposed costs and must not exceed five pages (reference RFP section 4.02).

RFP p. 26 SEC 4.04; SPECIAL NOTE:

.....This Submittal Form shall be kept anonymous and must not contain any names that can be used to identify who the offeror is and cannot exceed the page limit (as described in Section 4.02).

Section Submittal Form B and SEC 4.04

Page Submittal Forms

Response 16: A Submittal Form that is identified in Section 4.04 as an *Anonymous Document* must not contain any names that can be used to identify who the offeror is (such as company names, offeror name, company letterhead, personnel names, project names, subconsultant names, manufacturer or supplier names, or product names).

The Submittal Forms have been updated for clarification and are uploaded to the Online Public Notices (OPN).

Question 17: Is it correct that only part 2 requires that the bidder not include any names that can be used to identify the offeror?

Form C: SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS (Part 1): This Submittal Form must not identify the offeror's proposed costs and must not exceed two pages (reference RFP section 4.02).

Form C: SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS (Part 2): This Submittal Form must not contain any names that can be used to identify the offeror, must not identify the offeror's proposed costs, and must not exceed two pages (reference RFP section 4.02).

RFP p.27 SEC.4.05; This Submittal Form shall be kept anonymous and must not contain any names that can be used to identify who the offeror is and cannot exceed the page limit (as described in Section 4.02).

Section Submittal Form C and Section 4.05

Response 17: A Submittal Form that is identified in Section 4.04 as an *Anonymous Document* must not contain any names that can be used to identify who the offeror is (such as company names, offeror name, company letterhead, personnel names, project names, subconsultant names, manufacturer or supplier names, or product names).

The Submittal Forms have been updated for clarification and are uploaded to the Online Public Notices (OPN).

Question 18: Regarding item development: How many items does DEED expect to be developed throughout the entire contract?

Response 18: Currently, DEED leases items from the current vendor. The successful Offeror must provide items, provide lease items, and/or provide item development and necessary process for a valid and reliable assessment system. Costs for items, leased items, and/or item development must be included in Offeror's cost proposal. Details will be discussed in the clarification phase.

Question 19: Where will items come from for the spring 2021 pilot test?

Response 19: The State of Alaska does not currently own any field-tested items. Offeror must provide items or develop items with the State. The successful Offeror must provide items for the school year 2020/2021 pilot test(s). This will be discussed during the Clarification phase.

Question 20: Is there any discussion regarding an extension in the submission deadline given the bidders conference scheduled today rather than 5/25?

Response 20: The Deadline for Receipt of Proposals has been extended to 2:00 pm Alaska Time on Tuesday, June 9, 2020. Section 1.03 *Deadline for Receipt of Proposals* and Section 1.05 *RFP Schedule* have been updated as described herein.

Question 21: How long have you been using this best value method and is it ever challenging to judge the restricted page counts?

Response 21: Because the Department has an exemption to the Procurement Code for this solicitation under AS 36.30.850(b)(47), this solicitation has been derived as a best value method based on best practices from several sources. This method requires limited page counts for the technical proposal to encourage clear and concise responses that will identify the dominant vendor(s). Page limits will reduce the burden on both the vendor and the State when crafting and evaluating proposals.

Question 22: My question was about Braille / large print quantities. What is the expected n-count or percentage needed?

Response 22: The 2019 administration of Performance Evaluation of Alaska Schools (PEAKS) required 2 Braille books and 30 Large Print books. In Alaska, there are approximately 10,000 students per grade

assessed each year. These numbers of Braille and Large Print books were consistent for the 2017, 2018, and 2019 administrations of PEAKS.

Question 23: The RFP mentions a successful pilot being the decision point for a Summative Test in 2022. Have these criteria been established?

Response 23: Criteria to determine successful pilot have not been established. Criteria will be established in partnership with the successful Offeror and the State during clarification.

Question 24: We understand that per the directions on page 6, the technical and cost proposals should be submitted as separate files when emailing the proposal submission. For the technical proposal, should Form A (which is not anonymous) be separated from Forms B-D (which are anonymous)?

Response 24: Submittal Form A may be provided as a separate document in an offeror's proposal submission. Note that it is not a requirement to provide Submittal Form A as a separate document.

Question 25: Should full resumes be included as part of Form A for the identified Key Staff?

Response 25: Resumes may be provided in support of Section 1.04 Prior Experience through Minimum Experience Requirement Certifications in Submittal Form A.

Question 26: The State has indicated that the current program has approximately 20% of students who receive a paper form. What is the State's expectation or anticipation of paper requirements for this project both for summative and the interim?

Response 26: Connectivity in rural communities continues to improve. In the past, the State has had almost 100% of students taking an assessment online. The State's goal for both summative and interim assessments is to have 100% of students taking assessments online, but if there are accessibility issues then the successful Offeror must provide accommodation for those students.

Question 27: According to the Test Coordinators Manual, you do provide accommodation materials. Can you give any indication of the percentage counts of students?

Response 27: There are three accommodations: Braille books (2-5), Large Print Books (approximately 30), and audio CDs (approximately 40). The counts included are approximate numbers based on 2017, 2018, and 2019 data.

Question 28: Who will be responsible for travel costs for District Test Coordinator (DTC) trainings?

Response 28: The successful Offeror is responsible for travel costs. All direct and indirect costs, including travel, must be included in the fully burdened firm fixed fee Cost Proposal.

Question 29: May attachments be included in the submission?

Response 29: If the attachments are in support of Section 1.04 Prior Experience and Submittal Form A Minimum Experience Requirement Certifications, then they may be included in your proposal submission. Technical and Cost Proposal information must be submitted using the Submittal Forms.

Question 30: Is the recording going to be posted on the website?

Response 30: No, but a summary of questions received during the Pre-Proposal Conference will be posted as an amendment to the solicitation.

Question 31: Will the PowerPoint be posted?

Response 31: Yes, the PowerPoint is posted to the Online Public Notices (OPN) website (<http://notice.alaska.gov/198215>) as *Educational Meeting Slides 5-27-2020*.

Question 32: When will answers submitted via email be provided?

Response 32: Questions submitted via email along with the questions received during the Educational and Pre-Proposal Conference will be posted by the end of the week.

Question 33: Is there a cutoff time for questions?

Response 33: There is no strict cutoff time for questions.

Question 34: For Submittal Form A, Minimum Experience Requirement Certifications, what kind of “evidence” must vendors provide to demonstrate we meet the requirements of 1a and 2a.

Response 34: Submittal Form A, Minimum Experience Requirement Certifications items 1b and 2b contain information regarding the evidence required to meet the Minimum Experience Requirement Certification. For 2b response, it is noted that resumes will also be accepted for evidence of experience for 2a.

Question 35: For Submittal Form A, Minimum Experience Requirement Certifications, how many letters of recommendation are required?

Response 35: Offeror must submit a minimum of one letter of recommendation for item 1b as evidence of Minimum Experience listed in item 1a. Offeror must submit a minimum of one letter of recommendation for item 2b as evidence of Minimum Experience listed in item 2a.

Question 36: The RFP describes a new through-year assessment model, which we are not aware of having received peer review approval. Would the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) consider assessment designs other than block or item adaptive?

Response 36: DEED may consider assessment designs other than block or item adaptive. However, proposed design must be similar to the through-year model (a system that includes both interim and summative assessment data). Additionally, the successful Offeror must provide an assessment system that passes peer review, or the successful offeror must provide flexibility in the assessment design to meet the requirements of peer review in the event it does not pass.

Changes to the RFP:

Change 1: SEC. 1.03 Deadline for Receipt of Proposals is hereby amended and replaced in full to read:

“Proposals must be received no later than **2:00 p.m.**, Alaska Time, on ~~Thursday June 4~~, **Tuesday June 9, 2020**. Late proposals or amendments will be disqualified and not opened or accepted for evaluation.”

Change 2: Table in SEC. 1.05 RFP Schedule is hereby amended and replaced in full to read:

“

ACTIVITY	TIME	DATE
Issue Date / RFP Released		5/14/2020
Educational Meeting and Pre-Proposal Conference	2:00 pm	5/25/2020
Deadline for Receipt of Proposals / Proposal Due Date	2:00 pm	6/9/2020
Proposal Evaluations		6/16/2020
Shortlisting (optional)		6/17/2020
Interviews	TBD	6/22/2020-6/26/2020
Clarification Period Begins		7/13/2020
Notice of Intent to Award		8/10/2020
Contract Issued		8/21/2020

”

Change 3: Educational Meeting Slides 5-27-2020 are provided on the OPN

Educational Meeting Slides 5-27-2020 from the Educational and Pre-Proposal Conference on May 27th, 2020 at 2:00pm are provided on the State of Alaska Online Public Notices Website (<http://notice.alaska.gov/198215>).

Change 4: Attachment *Submittal Forms BV RFP 200000085 Statewide Through Year Assessment Services* are hereby amended and replaced as attached to the Online Public Notices website, hyperlinked [here](#) or available through <http://notice.alaska.gov/198215>.