National Center and State Collaborative

National Center and State Collaborative GSEG Project
Assessment Technology System
RFP #2013-03-01 with Amendment No.1 (issued May 24, 2013)

NOTE: The "Intent to Bid Form" can be found under the Procurement Tab on the www.ncscpartners.org website. Two-thirds of the way down the page will be a sentence "Organizations interested in bidding should indicate their intent by April 10, 2013, by completing this form." The actual form can be found by clicking on the link.

Question Received April 10, 2013

Question 1: **Sec. 4.4.4 (o), Vendor Activity, Page 50-51. Text of Passage being questioned: "No activity is to be executed in an off shore facility, either by a subcontracted firm or a foreign office or division of the Vendor. The Vendor must attest to the fact that no activity will take place outside of the United States in its transmittal letter. Failure to adhere to this requirement is cause for elimination from future consideration." Question:** Can NCSC confirm that the following is considered to be in compliance with Section 4.4.4 subparagraph **o. Vendor Activity** which prohibits offshore activity:

100% development by Vendor for this NCSC program will be executed solely onshore, with leveraging of open source platforms that have been developed globally and will continue to be managed globally. Vendor will not use NCSC funds under any circumstances for off shore development but instead will execute all development onshore and simultaneously, contribute not only to an evolving open source core platform but also to the open source community.

Response: *A vendor's use of open source software will not violate Section RFP Sec. 4.4.4 (o) as it concerns off shore activities, as long as the vendor's performance under the contract takes place in the United States.*

Question Received April 17, 2013

Question 2: **Sec. 3.2.7, Certification, Training and Support, Page 23. Text of Passage being questioned: The Vendor should also propose training initiatives and resources to ensure that the system administrators and users are knowledgeable in the use of the system. This should involve resources available through the portal (e.g. documents, demonstrations, pre-tests, and instructional videos). A comprehensive training program should also involve interactive training such as webinars. The Vendor**

should propose the timing and nature of certification and training activities to insure successful implementation of all aspects of the system. Question: How many people should we estimate for training across the national centers and states? For the live webinars can we train a certain number of people per state that would then conduct their own training to other end users? Would NCSC prefer the contractor train UKY who would turnkey the training we provide to them? Does NCSC require reporting on who attended a training session? Does NCSC require reporting on who accessed training documents/videos that are posted online?

Response: *At this time, the project does not have precise figures for the number of educators and leaders that need to be trained. At a high level, NCSC estimates we serve approximately 100,000 students. With an estimated 5:1 student to teacher ratio there would be 20,000 teachers across all the project's states and entities that may interact with the system. This is likely a conservative estimate and the respondent is advised to plan for flexibility and scalability in the proposal.*

NCSC is open to proposals for the most efficient and effective manner to train all system users based on the Vendor's experience and expertise, leveraging the work NCSC has done related to PD delivery, referenced in the architecture plan, section 3.2.5, for professional development. We expect this will involve a combination of training modes and resources. It is reasonable to assume that end users could access training in a variety of ways (e.g., in-person or via live Webinar or archived, on-demand Webinar). Training will occur with content and procedural oversight by project staff at UKY, but with leadership from each state planning for and ensuring that all teachers make use of the systems. However, the Vendor should ensure that all system users will have adequate access to ongoing supports and resources during the contract period (e.g. phone support, documents, training modules/ videos etc.)

NCSC requires a system to certify that users are trained. The project is open to the respondent's most effective and efficient proposal for how to accomplish this, which may include reporting on who attended sessions or accessed training materials or may include other approaches to meet this requirement. Again, vendors should plan to work closely with our UKY partner considering how to leverage our NCSC system for delivering PD through WIKI and LMS platforms.

Questions Received April 23, 2013

Question 3: **NCSC Architecture and Technology System Requirements, Page 57. Text of Passage being questioned: Usage/Utilization. Question:** The utilization model, yearlong, explicit the total number of expected users. Could NCSC estimate the average total concurrent users expected at peak times?

Response: *At this time, NCSC is not able to provide more precise information regarding system utilization than is found on p. 57 of the NCSC Architecture and Technology System Requirements. Respondents are encouraged to propose a scalable solution that includes methods to monitor capacity and adjust as needed to ensure the system operates without disruption.*

Question 4: **Sec. 3.2.3, Evidence Capture and Scoring, Page 19. Text of Passage being questioned: Distributed Scoring. Question:** Shall the solution support multiple grades by independent graders with a reconciliation of any conflicts in the grades process? Could NCSC provide information with a typical distributed scoring process?

Response: *The system should allow multiple independent scorers to provide a rating and process to audit, flag, and reconcile discordant ratings according to decision rules that will be established.*

Question 5: **Sec. 3.2.3, Interactive Flexible Sessions, Page 18. Text of Passage being questioned: Deliver assessment on Paper/Pen- PDF. Question:** Shall the system generate automatically from the electronic version, the pdf version? Please note that depending on the item template and interactions, some restrictions may apply or will the item creator provide a specific pdf version for those items?

Response: *It is expected that items will be developed in order to render appropriately with paper-based presentation. The project appreciates the implications of certain item design and presentation decisions and will work with both the item developer and the provider of the NCSC technology system to minimize such restrictions.*

Question 6: **Sec. 3.2.3, User Interface, Page 18. Text of Passage being questioned: Mobile Devices. Question:** Is there any more fine grained requirements in terms of the used platforms (IOS, Android, Blackerry, Windows?) and/or used web browsers? What is the standard for mobiles in the target states?

Response: *The respondent is asked to propose a solution that meets the minimum hardware and software requirements presented in the NCSC Architecture and Technology System Requirements (p.69). The project does not have additional information to provide at this time.*

Question 7: **Sec. 6, Paragraph 1, Page 60. Question:** Does NCSC have an anticipated budget for this work or a not-to-exceed price?

Response: *Our NCSC GSEG project was funded for just under $45 million to develop a comprehensive system of curriculum, instruction, assessment and professional development for 18 states. The states and staff partners provide the conceptual*

underpinnings of the entire system, and NCSC GSEG works in partnership with each of our vendors to provide the leadership as the pieces of the system are being built. A full-time NCSC project manager ensures smooth and timely communication between NCSC state and staff persons, and between the vendors doing particular tasks. Given this, we believe that vendors will be well served by demonstrating through the RFP process how they can leverage and operationalize the considerable conceptual work done by the NCSC partners, with their best and most reasonable pricing structures.

Question 8: **Sec. 3.2.9, Paragraph 3, Page 25. Text of Passage being questioned: The vendor releases ownership rights to the system or any data within the System.**
Question: The RFP requires an open source solution. Is the NCSC willing to consider alternative licensing/modification/distribution scenarios in which a vendor does not have to relinquish full ownership of the system (as described in this section) and all intellectual property associated with it?

Response: *NCSC requirements for an open-source system are provided in section 3.2.9 of the RFP. Proposers may also propose other cost-effective solutions that meet the intent of the NCSC project. Any alternatives to these specifications/ requirements should be clearly noted in the proposal along with a budget for purposes of allowing budget comparisons.*

Amendment No. 1 was issued May 24, 2013. The amendment is available at www.ncscpartners.org/procurement.

Questions Received May 29, 2013

Question 9: **Sec. 2.2., ID 2, Page 13. Schedule for Major Milestones, Major Milestones for Technology System Development. Text of Passage being questioned: Completion of all required components of technology platform for user acceptance testing.**
Question: Regarding the November 15, 2013 requirement for "Completion of all required components of technology platform for user acceptance testing" - what exactly is NCSC wanting to see on that date? What does NCSC anticipate the 'user acceptance testing' to include? Is there any flexibility in the completion date?

Response: *NCSC intends to begin testing the components that will be required to complete the spring 2014 pilot test on November 15, 2013. Those components critical to completion of the pilot will be the focus of this UAT. NCSC will entertain proposals of alternative dates provided the solution provides adequate time for UAT and positions the project to successfully complete pilot testing.*

Questions Received June 5, 2013

Question 10: Amendment No. 1 section 3.2.9 and RFP section 4.4.4, Page 50. Ownership and Licensing O. Vendor Activity. Text of Passage being questioned: No activity is to be executed in an off shore facility, either by a subcontracted firm or a foreign office or division of the Vendor. The Vendor must attest to the fact that no activity will take place outside of the United States in its transmittal letter. Failure to adhere to this requirement is cause for elimination from future consideration. Question: Based on the new information that various ownership and licensing arrangements can be proposed, will bidders still need to adhere to the requirement that no activity will take place outside of the United States?

Response: *See Question 1 above. The vendor's performance under the contract must take place in the United States.*

Question 11: Amendment 1. Text of Passage being questioned: NCSC welcomes new respondents to submit proposals or offerors who previously submitted proposals to review (if desired) and resubmit proposals. Question: Will offerors who previously submitted proposals have to resubmit their entire submission or will a transmittal letter and revisions to proposed pricing, licensing and ownership described in a revised Price Proposal suffice?

Response: *An Offeror who has previously submitted a proposal does not need to resubmit its entire submission. The offeror can submit a transmittal letter that clearly details the changes or revisions to its proposal, if any, along with the revised sections, proposed pricing, licensing and ownership, acknowledgment of and agreement to Amendment No. 1, and any other changes or revisions. The transmittal letter and revised proposal sections must be submitted in compliance with the submission requirements in section 4.2.2, page 36. See Question 12 below.*

Question 12: Amendment 1. Text of Passage being questioned: NCSC welcomes new respondents to submit proposals or offerors who previously submitted proposals to review (if desired) and resubmit proposals. Question: Will offerors who previously submitted proposals be able to submit revised documents via email?

Response: *The submission requirements in section 4.2.2, page 36, still apply. Therefore, an offeror who previously submitted a proposal must submit all documents related to changes and revisions with 5 paper copies and 3 electronic copies on USB drives. In addition, an electronic copy must also be submitted via email to Dr. Martha Thurlow.*

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Questions Received June 7, 2013

Question 13: Amendment 1. General Question: Is it possible to get an extension on the proposal due date of June 19, 2013?

Response: *The due date is firm as written in Amendment No. 1 – June 19, 2013.*

Question 14: **Sec. 2.1.3.4, Paragraph #1, Point 7, Page 12. Text of Passage being questioned: "Produce student and summative reports – summer 2015". Question:** Is the data warehousing and reporting capability needed before this summer 2015 date?

Response: *NCSC does not plan to report student or summary results for the spring 2014 pilot. However, the system must support administration, scoring, and storage /transfer of data files to the project for research purposes following the pilot test. The full reporting component must be functional prior to the spring 2015 census field test and respondents may propose a schedule for development, review, and testing of all required reporting features to support successful implementation in spring 2015. It is critically important that respondents factor-in adequate time for review and testing by project leadership prior to spring 2015.*

Question 15: **Sec. 3.2.3, Paragraph #4, Page 18. Text of Passage being questioned: "Given NCSC's plans to produce a state-adaptive summative assessment, the delivery and scoring component must facilitate selection of subtests, based upon the test taker responses in earlier sections. It is not the Vendor's responsibility to develop the scoring rules or algorithm to support subtest selection. Rather, NCSC will provide the decision rules, which the System must accommodate." Question:** Does NCSC want to have stage-adaptive testing for the pilot and/or census field test? Is NCSC just planning stage adaptive testing at some later point in time or is NCSC expecting the System to have that capability? When should the System have the capability for stage-adaptive testing?

Response: *NCSC intends to administer intact forms as part of the 2014 pilot test, which may be based on stage-adaptive administration. Accordingly, this functionality must be ready for the 2014 pilot. As currently conceived, the stage adaptive plan involves two sessions or stages. In the first session, ALL students receive the same form. Depending on the outcome of the first session (NCSC will provide the decision rule), one of two or three pre-built, intact forms would be delivered.*

Question 16: Sec. 3.2.3, Paragraph #5, Point 3, Page 18. Text of Passage being questioned: "The examiner must have the ability to deliver all or part of the test in paper-based format (e.g. facilitate printing a PDF of item(s)). The examiner must be

able to enable or disable selected access features, accommodations, tools, etc. for specific sessions, specific item, and specific students." Question: Does this passage refer to PNP capability or something else?

Response: *NCSC envisions the PNP as likely the primary mechanism to address presentation features for items. However, the system should be designed to allow flexibility for examiners to configure presentation, which may take place outside of the PNP. NCSC invites proposals that address how this flexibility is best achieved.*

Question 17: Sec. 3.2.3, Paragraph #10, Page 19. Text of Passage being questioned: "The System envisioned by NCSC GSEG includes automated (machine) scoring for selected response items, captures a human scorer's (examiner) rating on some constructed response items, and permits evidence capture to record and transmit responses for a small number of other constructed response items. Student responses of the constructed response items and performance tasks may be in the form of documents, audio, photos, video and other such sources of evidence. The system must be designed to capture and handle the transfer of these types of data." Question: Will the System actually need to score the assessments with automated scoring or will the System just collect the assessment data to be scored by a separate system? Does the System need to accommodate a separate system, yet to be named, that will perform the actual automated scoring function? Will there be a separate RFP released for the scoring requirement and if so, when?

Response: *The only automated scoring the project envisions is for selected response (i.e. multiple choice) items scored as correct or incorrect. Constructed response items will be scored either by the examiner during the session or by transmitting evidence to human scorers for evaluation.*

Question 18: **Sec. 4.4.1, General Information, Paragraph a, Page 44. Text of Passage being questioned: The term of the contract between the successful bidder and edCount Management shall be for one year with two one year options through 2015. Question:** The RFP provides for a one year contract with two possible one year extension. The RFP also requires that services and deliverables be provided through 2015. Should vendors price for and expect a contract from 2013 through 2015 or 2013 through 2016?

Response: *Vendors should price for and expect a contract from 2013 through 2015.*

Question 19: **Sec. 6.3, Paragraph 1, Page 61. Text of Passage being questioned: Vendors are required to submit a proposed payment that is tied to specific dates and deliverables and which identifies the estimated amounts of invoices and the**

approximate dates on which these invoices might be generated. Question: Will NCSC provide a template for vendors to present price by deliverable or is the vendor expected to create their own template?

Response: *NCSC will not provide a template – vendors should create their own template for providing this information.*