



Solicitation Information

June 12, 2012

RFI # 7457802

TITLE: K-2 Summative Assessment System – RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Submission Deadline: July 10, 2012 at 10:30 AM (ET)

Questions concerning this solicitation must be received by the Division of Purchases at questions@purchasing.ri.gov no later than **June 27, 2012 at 12 Noon**. Questions should be submitted in a *Microsoft Word attachment*. Please reference the RFI # on all correspondence. Questions received, if any, will be posted on the Internet as an addendum to this solicitation. It is the responsibility of all interested parties to download this information.

SURETY REQUIRED: No

BOND REQUIRED: No

**Gail Walsh
Buyer II**

Vendors must register on-line at the State Purchasing Website at www.purchasing.ri.gov

THIS PAGE IS NOT A BIDDER CERTIFICATION FORM

Request for Information (RFI)
K-2 Summative Assessment System

The Rhode Island Department of Administration/Division of Purchases, on behalf of the Rhode Island Department of Education is soliciting responses from qualified entities to determine capabilities with respect to assessment for students in kindergarten through second grade. This RFI is being issued in collaboration with several other states including Arizona, Arkansas, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Tennessee. Participation in the RFI does not indicate that the states are committed to any type of procurement.

This is a Request for Information (RFI). No award will be made as a result of this solicitation. This RFI outlines the type of information being solicited from potential respondents and includes guidelines for content and format of responses.

INSTRUCTIONS AND NOTIFICATIONS TO OFFERORS:

- Potential respondents are advised to review all sections of this Request carefully, and to follow instructions completely, as failure to make a complete submission as described elsewhere herein may result in rejection of the proposal.
- Alternative approaches and/or methodologies to accomplish the desired or intended results of this request are solicited. However, responses which depart from or materially alter the terms, requirements, or scope of work defined by this Request will be rejected as being non-responsive.
- All costs associated with developing or submitting a proposal in response to this Request, or to provide oral or written clarification of its content, shall be borne by the offeror. The State assumes no responsibility for these costs.
- Responses are considered to be irrevocable for a period of not less than sixty (60) days following the opening date, and may not be withdrawn, except with the express written permission of the State Purchasing Agent.
- Responses misdirected to other State locations or which are otherwise not present in the Division of Purchases at the time of opening for any cause will be determined to be late and may not be considered. The “Official” time clock is in the reception area of the Division of Purchases.
- Interested parties are instructed to peruse the Division of Purchases web site on a regular basis, as additional information relating to this solicitation may be released in the form of an addendum to this RFI.

I. Introduction

Research confirms what teachers already know: academic learning in the content areas during the early grades is critical to students' success in middle and high school. To support and promote the great work of teachers and students in the early grades, RIDE is seeking information on existing and emerging assessment solutions.

Rhode Island and other states have a strong interest in innovation in assessment of early learning. Currently, a dilemma exists in early childhood grades K-2. To understand the trajectory of student learning, teachers must have access and the ability to administer an informative, developmentally appropriate assessment. At the same time, the assessment must be reliable and valid for understanding teacher contribution to student learning. Achieving this delicate balance will require a breakthrough in assessment of learning in the early grades.

Formative assessment has been a valuable part of teaching and learning in grades K-2 for many years. Assessments support teachers' understanding of student academic growth and learning needs in these important foundational years. However, these formative assessments, often administered by the teachers themselves, are not designed to provide reliable data for evaluating the effectiveness of programs, teachers, and schools. Ideally, summative assessments should also support teachers' understanding of their students' yearly progress and mastery of critical foundational skills, but will likely look different from current commonly used K-2 assessments in order to balance the need for valid and reliable (non-subjective) information about student learning growth with developmental appropriateness. Innovative approaches would embed summative assessment into the classroom environment so that they would flow seamlessly with and inform instruction without being intrusive.

Recognizing these needs, Rhode Island is seeking information on contemporary research and data regarding current best practices and emerging innovations in K-2 assessment. The intent of this RFI is to explore the spectrum of assessment solutions and capabilities that currently exist and new innovations that may be developed in the future. This process is part of the information-gathering phase of our project. Because multiple states are interested in developmentally appropriate summative assessment in the early grades, the information from this process will be shared with other states. The information garnered from the RFI process may enhance future procurement(s).

This RFI is exploratory in nature. It is being conducted to solicit information about best practices, ideas, tools, and recommendations from interested parties concerning assessments in the early grades (K-2).

Specifically, this RFI seeks to:

1. Identify the range and types of services vendors (interested parties) can offer;
2. Facilitate understanding of the available or emerging tools, strategies, and practices;
3. Identify the purpose for which the emerging tools have been validated;
4. Solicit research and data on best practices and successful approaches to early learning and assessment of early learning;

5. Ascertain key requirements and issues states must define and/or consider when developing an approach to assessing learning in the early grades;
6. Determine the benefits states can realistically expect to achieve in both the short- and long-term; and,
7. Increase understanding of the compensation mechanisms used by companies that offer such services.

II. Purpose

On behalf of several states, RIDE is seeking information on statewide, developmentally appropriate solution to assessing student learning and growth (either directly or in conjunction with a student learning outcome) in kindergarten through second grade that also provides comparable, valid and reliable information for evaluating the effectiveness of programs, teachers, and schools. The system would be operational as early as the 2013-14 school year and would benefit from the most current thinking in measurement and assessment approaches for this unique group of students. Scores would be used for, among other things, instructional improvement and teacher / principal evaluation.

The objectives of implementing a K-2 Assessment System may include the ability to:

- Evaluate pre-K students for their readiness to enter kindergarten
- Improve student instruction from kindergarten through second grade including both academic and developmental goals across the content areas
- Inform teacher and principal evaluations and serve as input data to states' growth / value added models, or as input data to a student learning outcomes process.
- Identify the linkage and trajectory for students moving from 2nd grade to 3rd grade. Trajectory should also be established for those students that are in full day K, half day K or no K at all.
- Accommodations for students in special populations such as ELL, SPED and advanced should be considered and identified

More specific key principles that are guiding RIDE's thinking on this topic including the following:

- Assessments must be developmentally appropriate and take into account the most contemporary research on learning and assessment in the early grades. Alternatives to the standard paper-and-pencil multiple choice assessments are strongly encouraged.
- Assessments provide timely information to inform instruction. Traditional testing procedures in which score reports arrive at schools weeks or months later are not acceptable for this assessment program.
- Assessments are designed to measure the Common Core State Standards.
- We are particularly interested in assessments delivered by computer and that ideally harness the power of Web 2.0 / innovation / gaming technology to ensure that students remain engaged in the assessment and that students provide responses from which valid inferences can be made.
- Assessments have sufficient security and validity evidence to be used evaluation of educators, programs, and schools.
- Assessment must be developed to be efficient and cost-effective to ensure sustainability in states such as Rhode Island with limited state budgets for assessment.

- Assessment should be developed to ensure all (census) K-2 students within the state are assessed.
- Assessment system K-2 will need to align with U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant requirement for states to develop a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment.

Additional Requirements:

The responder shall summarize its experience in K-2 learning, assessment or equivalent field(s). An indication of the extent and scope of the experience should be provided, including:

- Length of time your organization has been researching, evaluating or providing K-2 assessment solutions
- Prior K-2 research, evaluation, assessment design or implementation work you have performed with other educational entities, including the dates of this work
- Contacts in educational entities that you have worked with
- The role of your organization in these engagements (e.g., primary or sub-contractor)
- The project phases in which your organization participated
- The environments in which the systems were implemented
- Any partnerships or alliances your organization has that would provide benefits to the project

Based on the experience outlined above, responders should identify the following:

- Lessons learned from past research, evaluation, development or implementations related to assessment of early learning.
- Information on innovative assessment delivery methods (i.e., methods other than traditional paper-and-pencil multiple choice) which is of special interest for the purposes of this RFI.
- General implementation time frames from previous efforts
- What your organization believes is its competitive advantage
- Administration training including the amount of time to train teachers, paraprofessionals or other staff to administer the test

Research or Product Information

Organization reports, other literature and/or brochures describing K-2 solutions may be included as part of the response. Including links to information on the Internet is allowed, however please take care in ensuring the links direct RIDE to the specific information requested in this RFI.

Product information should include:

- Overview of the K-2 assessment system.** Response should provide an overview of the assessment solution, including context / history of the product, common uses, market penetration, competitive advantage, implementation timeline (i.e., from signing of contract to first operational administration and milestones in between), planned development of new, innovative assessment solutions and timeline for development phases. The research on early learning and assessment of early learning that informed your product should be cited, as well as evidence of program efficacy and assessment validity.

- B. **Constructs measured by the assessment.** Responses could address the following: What construct or constructs does your assessment measure? How and why were these chosen? What additional constructs, if any, do you plan to assess in the future? If your chosen constructs differ from the prioritized focus areas listed below, please explain why and if your organization will be able to address the identified priority areas.

Responses should include comments on RIDE's current thinking on the constructs to be measured as indicated below.

Required constructs:

1. **Build on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)** domains of English Language Arts & Literacy and Mathematics.
2. **Selection of assessment indicators** aligned to the CCSS that scaffold to, and are predictive of, achievement in meeting third grade Common Core standards.
3. These assessments, in order to be both unobtrusive and provide valuable information, should focus strongly on measuring the priority concepts in literacy and math:
 - In literacy, the assessment should evaluate students'
 - Decoding skills
 - Fluency
 - Vocabulary (research-based selection of critical words)
 - Comprehension (including read aloud where appropriate) aligned with the standards
 - Phonics/ Word identification
 - Writing
 - In mathematics, the assessment should evaluate students' fluency, application of skills, and conceptual understanding in
 - Counting and cardinality
 - Place value
 - Addition and subtraction

Desirable Constructs:

- Assessment of science and social studies constructs that are age-and grade appropriate.
- An option to select separate “add-on” modules to measure other constructs such as executive functioning and study skills as well as socio-emotional development, to be used for the purpose of classroom instruction only. RIDE is very interested in knowing about the full range of domains that are commonly measured for K-2 and how these domains contribute to instructional improvement.
- Connections to pre-kindergarten and below and grades 3 and above. To what degree does your assessment system “connect to” curriculum and assessment from birth to pre-kindergarten and from grade three and up? For example, are there assessments available for these grades? Do these assessments predict performance in later grades?

- C. **Format of the assessment.** Responses should address the following: How is the assessment administered (including frequency, length/duration of assessment and method of administration)? What are the administration requirements (including technology requirements if applicable)? In what way(s) is this method appropriate for this age group? How many assessment items and what types of items are necessary to measure key concepts in each grade level? What unique assessment delivery methods (if any) will be used to maximize the value of assessment? In math, how does (or how can) the method, format, or technology enable fluency to be assessed? In what ways does it (or can it) objectively and inexpensively capture and score student work? Are there manipulatives needed to perform the assessment?

Additionally, please comment on RIDE's current thinking on this topic.

Required components:

- Standardized assessment using developmentally appropriate methods of direct assessment, (e.g., performance-based tasks)
- Meets recognized psychometric standards for the assessment of young children in terms of test construction (i.e., reliability and validity), fairness in testing, and comparability across forms.
- Provides accommodations for English Language Learners and for children with disabilities.

Desirable components:

- Innovative approaches to assessment such as performance-based, portfolio, technology-enabled or observational assessment.
- Integration of multi-method assessment approaches into design.
- Use of computer adaptive testing or multi-stage / leveled assessments to effectively and efficiently measure student achievement as an integral part of K-2 assessment.
- Leverages game-based technologies in educational assessment that is engaging to students of this age group. (Assessment is ideally woven into computer-game-like experience in which the student may not even realize that he/she is being tested, but nonetheless yields valid inferences about student achievement.)

- D. **Requirements for growth / value-added modeling.** Responses could address the following: How has / will your system be used in conjunction with a state growth / value-added model (e.g., the Colorado Growth Model, EVAAS). Alternatively, how has / will your system be used in conjunction with a student learning outcomes process.

Additionally, please comment on RIDE's current thinking on this topic.

Required components:

- Structured to meet growth requirements of scaling for existing state models (data from assessments should have properties to meet value added growth requirements and continuous scaling)

- Develop training for teachers or other appropriate personnel on how to interpret the assessment information for instructional purposes.
- Develop training for principals, district, and state officials on how to use assessment information for teacher evaluation/accountability purposes

Desirable components:

- Must yield inferences about student progress/growth over the course of the academic year. Investigate formative assessment models that can be used to effectively modify instruction
- Administration options could include pre- and posttests each year or growth being estimated based on the previous years' score(s).

- E. **Associated professional development and test administration training.** Responses should address the following: What additional support (e.g., products, services) could be provided that either aid in training test administrators on how to properly administer the assessment, or that aid teachers in understanding how the resulting test scores are actionable in the classroom for instructional improvement purposes.

Additionally, please comment on RIDE's current thinking on this topic.

Required components:

- Develop training for teachers or other appropriate personnel on how to administer the assessments

Desirable components:

- Development of a train-the-trainer model for state officials and districts on administration and use of assessment results.
- Development of a resource bank of classroom interventions based on assessment results (to fit Response to Intervention (RtI) strategies) and professional development for accommodations, ELLs and students with disabilities.

- F. **Reporting of results.** Responses could address the following: How are results reported? What do sample score reports / screenshots look like? What types of inferences can be made from scores, and how do reporting processes reinforce these inferences? What additional information is connected to scores that teachers can use to help students improve?

Additionally, please comment on RIDE's current thinking on this topic.

Required components:

- Report results at individual student level.
- Development of customized student reports to inform instruction (e.g., provide options at various achievement levels for intervention strategies to meet learning objectives.)

Desirable components:

- Reliable, instructionally-relevant subscores
- Report results at multiple levels (i.e., state, district, building, teacher, classroom, individual student, and disaggregated by subgroups).
- Parent reports with supports for families

G. **Technology-related specifications.** Only applicable to those assessments that are delivered by computer. Responses should address the following:

- Whether the product has the ability to integrate with existing data systems or whether the system functions stand-alone. If the product integrates – what are the requirements for integration?
- How the product protects student records and complies with relevant privacy laws and regulations.
- What are the hardware, software and bandwidth requirements for using the product?
- What is the current version of the product? Are any major releases currently planned?
- Is the product proprietary or open source?
- Is the product typically hosted by the vendor (or a third party) or installed in-house?

H. **Other broad specifications.** Responses could address any other considerations RIDE should keep in mind if/when future procurements are pursued.

Supporting Services (Applicable to Computer-Based Testing Only)

Include information about how you typically provide support after implementation. Include information on the following:

- Hosting
- Service Level Agreements
- Training
- Knowledge transfer
- Help Desk Services
- Software upgrades and maintenance

Describe options on how independent a customer is after implementation:

- What aspects of support of the product are expected to be covered by the user of your product’s functional and IT staff versus what is expected to be handled by your company?
- What are the business and IT resources required in our organization to support the product after implementation?

Pricing Model

Without indicating specific pricing, include information about your pricing model for the product. Response could address the following:

- Do you charge a licensing fee?
- Do you charge by test booklet, by student, by teacher, by school, by district?
- Do you negotiate state-wide agreements with state educational authorities?
- Do you offer a perpetual license agreement?
- How are ongoing maintenance charges assessed?
- Do you have additional charges that cover frequently-requested products and services, and if so, what are these products and services?
- How will the requirement that the test be secure impact pricing?

Tasks and Services

The following outline (and suggested page counts) is intended to minimize the effort of the respondent and structure the response for ease of analysis. Be sure to incorporate the above expectations for the consolidated system in your response.

Section 1: Organization/Partnership Profile and Capacity and Past Experience (2 pages)

Provide a brief description of the organization. Please describe any past experience with other governmental agencies and include those as references.

Section 2: Description of Proposal (2-3 pages)

Describe your proposed approach.

Section 3: Feasibility Assessment (2-3 pages)

Assess the feasibility of your proposed approach. Note the primary obstacles, including any potential legal impediments. Recommend any solutions to resolving those obstacles.

Section 4: Cost Estimates (no page limits)

Respondents may also wish to propose quantitative and/or qualitative measurements to be used as deliverables in a proposed RFP contract.

Finally, respondents should indicate whether performance incentives and penalties should be considered in the RFP.

Section 5: Additional Material (10 page maximum)

Definitions:

Department: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
 Division: Educator Excellence and Instructional Effectiveness
 Respondent: Any public or private entity that wishes to reply to this RFI may do so in the form of a single response from both the lead and any affiliates.

III. Approximate Cost of Engagement

The State has not determined when it intends to issue a formal Request for Proposals (RFP). However, respondents must provide the State with information about the vendor's pricing model for completing the work outlined in Section II as part of the RFI process.

IV. Vendor Requirements

All vendors interested in responding to this RFI should do so no later than the date and time indicated on page one of this solicitation.

All questions regarding this RFI must be in written form, pursuant to the terms & conditions expressed on page one of this solicitation.

Respondents desiring to reply to this RFI must do so, in writing, providing one (1) original and four (4) complete copies by the date & time indicated on page one of this solicitation. Submit responses to this RFI, marked **“RFI # 7457802: K-2 Summative Assessments (RIDE)”** to:

RI Department of Administration
Division of Purchases, 2nd Floor
One Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908-5855

Note: Responses received after the date and time listed on the cover page of this solicitation may not be considered. Responses misdirected to other State locations or which otherwise not presented in the Division of Purchases by the scheduled due date and time will be determined to be late and may not be considered. Responses faxed or emailed, to the Division of Purchases will not be considered. The “official” time clock for this solicitation is located in the Reception Area of the Division of Purchases.

In addition to the hard copies of the proposal, respondents are requested to provide their proposal in electronic format (CD Rom, Diskette, flash drive). Microsoft Word/Excel or PDF format is preferable. Only one electronic copy is requested. This CD or diskette should be included in the proposal marked “original”.

Disclaimer

This Request for Information is solely for information and planning purposes and does not constitute a Request for Proposal. All information received in response to the RFI and marked as “Proprietary” will be handled accordingly. Responses to the RFI cannot be accepted by the Government to form a binding contract. No award will be made as a result of this solicitation, and because no award will be made, proposals WILL NOT be in the public domain. Responses to the RFI will not be returned. Respondents are solely responsible for all expenses associated with replying to this RFI.

END