



**Solicitation Information
February 10, 2015**

RFP #7549334

TITLE: Request for Proposals for Administration of the Computer-Based National Institute of State Boards of Cosmetology Examination for Hairdressers/Cosmetologists, Barbers, Manicurists, Estheticians, and Electrologists

Submission Deadline: Tuesday, March 10, 2015 at 2:30 PM (Eastern Time)

Questions concerning this solicitation must be received by the Division of Purchases at gail.walsh@purchasing.ri.gov no later than **Friday, February 20, 2015 at 5:00 PM (ET)**. Questions should be submitted in a Microsoft Word attachment. Please reference the RFP# 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: None

BOND REQUIRED: None

**GAIL WALSH
CHIEF BUYER**

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

Note to Applicants:

Offers received without the entire completed three-page RIVIP Generated Bidder Certification Form attached may result in disqualification.

THIS PAGE IS NOT A BIDDER CERTIFICATION FORM

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The Rhode Island Department of Administration/Division of Purchases, on behalf of the Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH), is soliciting proposals from qualified firms to provide Administration of the Computer-Based (Online) Version of the National Institute of State Boards of Cosmetology Written Examination for qualified applicants for licensure as Hairdressers/Cosmetologists, Barbers, Manicurists, Estheticians, Instructors and Electrologists in accordance with the terms of this Request for Proposals and the State's General Conditions of Purchase, which may be obtained at the Rhode Island Division of Purchases Home Page by Internet at www.purchasing.ri.gov.

Namely, this refers to the National-Interstate Council of State Boards of Cosmetology Written Examination ("NIC Exam"). Under the requirements of Chapter 5-10 Barbers, Hairdressers, Cosmeticians, Manicurists and Estheticians and Chapter 5-32 Electrolysis, HEALTH is required to define the minimum standards for the training, competency evaluation, testing, and registration of hairdressers/ cosmetologists, barbers, manicurists, estheticians, electrologists and instructors in order to ensure safe and adequate services are rendered to individuals receiving cosmetic services in Rhode Island.

HEALTH no longer has the resources to administer the paper version of the written exam and is seeking to outsource the written portion of the exam in an online web-based format. The initial contract period will begin approximately April 1, 2015 for one 12-month period. Contracts may be renewed for up to four additional 12-month periods based on vendor performance and the availability of funds.

This is essentially a "\$0.00 contract" in that while HEALTH is seeking to designate a specified vendor to administer the examination, all examination fees and other costs will be paid by the examinees (i.e., the license applicants). HEALTH is outsourcing these services to a vendor to include collection of examination fees to be billed directly to the applicant/examinee. HEALTH will not be providing funds or providing reimbursement for any costs associated with the scope of work outlined in this proposal.

This is a Request for Proposals, not an Invitation for Bid. Responses will be evaluated on the basis of the relative merits of the proposal, in addition to price; there will be no public opening and reading of responses received by the Division of Purchases pursuant to this Request, other than to name those offerors who have submitted proposals.

INSTRUCTIONS AND NOTIFICATIONS TO OFFERORS:

1. Potential vendors are advised to review all sections of this RFP carefully and to follow instructions completely, as failure to make a complete submission as described elsewhere herein may result in rejection of the proposal.
2. Alternative approaches and/or methodologies to accomplish the desired or intended results of this procurement are solicited. However, proposals which depart from or materially alter the terms, requirements, or scope of work defined by this RFP will be rejected as being non-responsive.
3. All costs associated with developing or submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, or to provide oral or written clarification of its content shall be borne by the vendor. The State assumes no responsibility for these costs.

4. Proposals are considered to be irrevocable for a period of not less than 120 days following the opening date, and may not be withdrawn, except with the express written permission of the State Purchasing Agent.
5. All pricing submitted will be considered to be firm and fixed unless otherwise indicated herein.
6. Proposals misdirected to other state locations, or which are otherwise not present in the Division at the time of opening for any cause will be determined to be late and will not be considered. For the purposes of this requirement, the official time and date shall be that of the time clock in the reception area of the Division.
7. It is intended that an award pursuant to this RFP will be made to a prime vendor, or prime vendors in the various categories, who will assume responsibility for all aspects of the work. Joint venture and cooperative proposals will not be considered. Subcontracts are permitted, provided that their use is clearly indicated in the vendor's proposal and the subcontractor(s) to be used is identified in the proposal.
8. All proposals should include the vendor's FEIN or Social Security number as evidenced by a W9, downloadable from the Division's website at www.purchasing.ri.gov.
9. The purchase of services under an award made pursuant to this RFP will be contingent on the availability of funds.
10. Vendors are advised that all materials submitted to the State for consideration in response to this RFP will be considered to be Public Records as defined in Title 38, Chapter 2 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, without exception, and will be released for inspection immediately upon request once an award has been made.
11. Interested parties are instructed to peruse the Division of Purchases website on a regular basis, as additional information relating to this solicitation may be released in the form of an addendum to this RFP.
12. Equal Employment Opportunity (G.L. 1956 § 28-5.1-1, et seq.) – § 28-5.1-1 Declaration of policy – (a) Equal opportunity and affirmative action toward its achievement is the policy of all units of Rhode Island state government, including all public and quasi-public agencies, commissions, boards and authorities, and in the classified, unclassified, and non-classified services of state employment. This policy applies to all areas where State dollars are spent, in employment, public services, grants and financial assistance, and in state licensing and regulation. For further information, contact the Rhode Island Equal Employment Opportunity Office, at (401) 222-3090 or via email at Raymond.lambert@doa.ri.gov.
13. In accordance with Title 7, Chapter 1.2 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, no foreign corporation, a corporation without a Rhode Island business address, shall have the right to transact business in the State until it shall have procured a Certificate of Authority to do so from the Rhode Island Secretary of State (401-222-3040). *This is a requirement only of the successful vendor(s).*

14. The vendor should be aware of the State's Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) requirements, which address the State's goal of ten percent (10%) participation by MBE's in all State procurements. For further information visit the website www.mbe.ri.gov or contact the MBE Administrator at (401) 574-8253 or Charles.newton@doa.ri.gov.
15. Under HIPAA, a "business associate" is a person or entity, other than a member of the workforce of a HIPAA covered entity, who performs functions or activities on behalf of, or provides certain services to, a HIPAA covered entity that involves access by the business associate to HIPAA protected health information. A "business associate" also is a subcontractor that creates, receives, maintains, or transmits HIPAA protected health information on behalf of another business associate. The HIPAA rules generally require that HIPAA covered entities and business associates enter into contracts with their business associates to ensure that the business associates will appropriately safeguard HIPAA protected health information. Therefore, if a Contractor qualifies as a business associate, it will be required to sign a HIPAA business associate agreement.

SECTION 2: BACKGROUND

The Rhode Island Department of Health holds written cosmetology examinations for approximately two-hundred-fifty (250) applicants annually. The Department no longer has the staffing nor funding to support the scheduling, administration and proctoring of the written examination for hairdressers (cosmetologists), barbers, estheticians, manicurists, instructors, and electrologists. The Department is seeking a vendor to schedule, administer, and proctor the written examination of the NIC (National Interstate Council of State Boards of Cosmetology) on a regular and ongoing basis to applicants for cosmetology licensure by the State of Rhode Island.

Authority to Provide Cosmetology Examination.

Cosmetology

Under § 5-10-6 of the Rhode Island General Laws ("...Time and notice of examinations"):

- "The board shall hold each year, at any times and places within the state that it designates, at least two (2) public examinations for the various classes of licenses that it is empowered to issue..."

Electrology

Under § 5-32-6 of the Rhode Island General Laws ("...Examination of applicants)

- "Expiration and renewal of certificates. – (a) Examination of applicants for certificates shall be held at least twice a year in the city of Providence and may be held elsewhere at the discretion of the division of professional regulation of the department of health..."

SECTION 3: SCOPE OF WORK

General Scope of Work

The vendor's responsibilities shall include but not be limited to:

- billing and processing applicant examination fees for the test

- securing the testing sites for the written component of the examination
- administering the NIC exam
- managing all aspects of the re-testing process;
- notifying HEALTH and the applicant of examination results in a timely, confidential manner
- arranging all logistics at the testing sites, including the staffing of appropriate personnel and maintaining a secure testing environment
- any and all computer and related resources required for vendor
- office space, equipment and support personnel and other supplies
- any travel, whether instate or out of state
- the supervision and performance of any subcontractor(s)

This is a no-cost \$0.00 RFP. All examination fees will be paid by the examination applicants themselves directly to the vendor.

The vendor will provide an online website where license applicants/examinees may apply for and take the appropriate written (theory) exam from the following selection:

1. Barber
2. Cosmetology
3. Electrology
4. Esthetics
5. Instructor
6. Nail Technology

The vendor must follow all of the testing rules and requirements of the National Interstate Council of State Boards of Cosmetology ("NIC") as laid out in the NIC examiner handbook at all times. The vendor must follow all NIC guidelines in administering the examinations, including but not limited to proctoring, examination length, and seating arrangements.

However, this Request for Proposal does not include Inmate Barber Apprentices, who will continue to take the written examination on the premises of the Department of Corrections. The Department of Health will continue to purchase examination booklets for Inmate Barber Apprentices only. All other exam candidates will use the computer-based testing facilities through the selected vendor.

The vendor shall offer written examinations in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Korean consistent with NIC guidelines and standards. The vendor shall all provisions contained within the NIC examination guidelines.

The qualified firm shall enter into an agreement with HEALTH to provide access to the above-specified written examination on an on-going basis to qualified examination applicants in secure ADA-compliant environments accessible to Rhode Island residents. The vendor shall hold the examination applicants responsible for all examination fees. The vendor shall provide results to individual examination applicants and to HEALTH using the methods specified below.

The vendor shall be responsible for offering the written examination no less than six times a year and preferably as frequently as possible. The vendor shall secure an adequate number of regional testing sites to accommodate all applicants who present to test according to the testing schedule required

above. The physical environment shall contain all necessary equipment and resources to administer the written (theory) examination in an online web-based format

The vendor will provide at least one (1) testing center within the State of Rhode Island in the Greater Providence vicinity where examinees may sit for an online web-based version of the exam. Consideration will be given to vendors who provide additional testing locations throughout Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts and Connecticut. It shall be the vendor's responsibility to match a test applicant with a preferred testing site. Ideally the exam should be offered whenever the exam center is open. The center shall provide ample free and secure parking for all examination applicants whenever the testing center(s) is/are open for business.

The vendor shall offer a web-based application processing system so applicants may apply to take the examination online. The vendor shall also provide a practice or model site where exam applicants can become familiar with the log-in process, the website format, and sample exam questions, either remotely or at the testing center. The vendor shall manage all details related to the re-testing process such as processing of application and matching applicant with the preferred testing site.

An adequate number of well-maintained restrooms shall be available to all examinees. The vendor shall ensure that a no smoking policy is enforced in the testing areas. Examinees shall not be permitted to leave the testing area in order to smoke.

Within three (3) days of receipt of the test application, vendors shall schedule the examination and shall send a letter to applicants indicating the time, date and location of the scheduled examination and include any details such as what to bring to the examination, how to dress, etc.

HEALTH requires that the vendor be fully compliant with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and NIC guidelines in providing special accommodations for learning-disabled applicants. Reasonable accommodations must be provided for examinees with documentation of impairments that substantially limits a major life activity at no additional charge to HEALTH. For persons with disabilities, the vendor must assure that the testing process accurately determines the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the examinee.

The vendor must provide exam results to the Department of Health within ten (10) days in the following formats:

1. By E-mail to designated HEALTH staff using the unique identifier that HEALTH has provided to the vendor to easily identify the applicant results.
2. By text file sent to an sFTP site determined by the HEALTH using the unique identifier that HEALTH has provided to the vendor to easily identify the applicant results. Upon award, HEALTH will determine and provide exact detailed file layout and specifications to chosen vendor for the custom export, including but not limited transfer method and credentials, delimiter type, included fields, field names, field types, field lengths. File will be developed and provided at no additional charge to HEALTH.
3. By secure website where HEALTH staff may log in and use the unique identifier provided by HEALTH to easily identify the applicant results.

The vendor must provide exam results to individual examinees in the following formats:

1. By E-mail to the individual examinee
2. By secure website where individual examinee may log in
3. By US mail using a paper print-out of examination results to individual examinee

The report of examination results should include areas where the examinee is deficient.

All prudent measures shall be taken to maintain the confidentiality of test results. Examination results shall not be given out over the telephone under any circumstances.

The vendor shall secure the appropriate number of persons to staff all testing sites. Selection of testing site personnel shall be in compliance with the Rules and Regulations for the Registration for the Licensure of Barbers, Hairdresser/Cosmetologists, Manicurists, Estheticians and Instructors and The Rules and Regulations Related to the Practice of Electrolysis as well as all applicable federal and state statutes and regulations. The vendor shall validate that credentials are current and in good standing for any licensed professional personnel at the testing sites.

Test results for all examinees shall be maintained in paper and electronic form by the vendor for a minimum of ten (10) years after the test date, at which time they may be destroyed.

The vendor shall ensure that any and all security measures required by the NIC be in place at all testing sites.

The examinee shall present two forms of identification prior to sitting for the written examination. One of these forms of identification must be a current photo, such as a driver's license or a passport. One form of identification must also include the examinee's signature. No examinee shall be permitted to leave the testing site with test materials. No examinee shall have access to textbooks, study materials, notes, or translators during the examination. There shall be no eating or drinking while the examination is being administered.

The vendor must provide client technical support by telephone and by E-mail for Department of Health staff during customary business hours (8:30am-4:30pm Monday – Friday) and customer technical support for exam applicants during the exam center's hours of operation.

The vendor shall prepare a contingency plan for the rescheduling of examinations or changes in testing dates due to emergencies or severe weather conditions.

SECTION 4: TECHNICAL PROPOSAL

The technical proposal must address specifically each of the required elements outlined below. Examples below demonstrate the criteria by which the vendors will be scored in Section 6 (Evaluation and Selection).

1. Customer Service, Convenience, and user-friendliness, including but not limited to number and accessibility of testing locations and hours.
2. A live person available by telephone Monday – Friday 8:30am – 4:30pm to address problems and questions for both Department of Health staff and student examinees.
3. A customer service E-mail address available to Department of Health staff and student examinees with a maximum two (2) business day response time.

4. Frequently-asked questions (FAQs) published on the vendor's website.
5. At least one (1) testing center in the Providence vicinity with other locations throughout Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts and Connecticut.
6. Testing center hours of operation will be a minimum of Monday – Friday 8:30am – 4:30pm with some evenings and weekends available.

Demonstration of full compliance with National Interstate Council examination administration rules and Americans with Disabilities Act

1. Attestation of assurance that National Interstate Council (NIC) examination administration rules will be followed.
2. Specific examples of how the vendor will respond to NIC rules using quotations from the NIC guidance literature
3. Attestation of assurance that all Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines will be followed.
4. Assurance that all accommodations provided under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) will be made for qualifying applicants at no charge to the Department of Health.

Demonstration of all required methods of test result reporting via secure methods

1. Assurance that all data transfer methods for reporting examination results to the Department and to examinees outlined in the Scope of Work (Section 3) are available at no charge to the Department or the examinees.

SECTION 5: COST PROPOSAL

HEALTH intends to issue a single contract to a successful vendor. A successful vendor may propose to subcontract portions of the work and HEALTH may consider and approve the use of subcontracts if HEALTH, in its sole discretion, adjudges that such will be in the best interests of the discharge of HEALTH's responsibilities under Chapter 5-10 and Chapter 5-32 of the Rhode Island General Laws, as amended.

Any contract that results from this Request for Proposal will have an initial term of one, with an option to renew for four additional 12-month periods with the selected vendor, with an approximate start date of April 1, 2015. This request is for a \$0.00 contract and all costs and fees incurred for the written examination registration process will be paid by the applicants/examinees.

It is the desire of the Department of Health to ensure affordable and reasonable pricing for examination applicants. Therefore, vendors shall be evaluated based on the cost per examination to the applicant and any other costs incurred by the applicants.

SECTION 6: EVALUATION AND SELECTION

This is a zero-dollar (\$0.00) proposal as far as the State of Rhode Island is concerned. However, the vendor will be scored based on the pricing per examination that it can offer to the student examinees.

Proposals will be reviewed by a Technical Review Committee composed of staff from state agencies. To advance to the Cost Evaluation phase, the Technical Proposal must receive a minimum of 60 (85.7%) out

of a maximum of 70 technical points. Any technical proposals scoring less than 60 points will not have the cost component opened and evaluated. The proposal will be dropped from further consideration.

Proposals scoring 60 technical points or higher will be evaluated for cost and assigned up to a maximum of 30 points in cost category, bringing the potential maximum score to 100 points.

The Department of Health reserves the exclusive right to select the individual(s) or firm (vendor) that it deems to be in its best interest to accomplish the project as specified herein; and conversely, reserves the right not to fund any proposal(s).

Proposals will be reviewed and scored based upon the following criteria:

Criteria	Possible Points
Customer Service, convenience, and user friendliness, including but not limited to number and accessibility of testing locations and hours	20
Demonstration of full compliance with National Interstate Council examination administration rules and American with Disability Act	30
Demonstration of all required methods of test results reporting via secure methods	20
Total Possible Technical Points	70
Cost calculated as lowest responsive cost proposal divided by (this cost proposal) times 30 points*	30
Total Possible Points	100

*The Low bidder will receive one hundred percent (100%) of the available points for cost. All other bidders will be awarded cost points based upon the following formula:

$(\text{low bid} / \text{vendors bid}) * \text{available points}$

For example: If the low bidder (Vendor A) bids \$65,000 and Vendor B bids \$100,000 for monthly cost and service fee and the total points available are Thirty (30), vendor B's cost points are calculated as follows:

$$\$65,000 / \$100,000 * 30 = 19.5$$

Points will be assigned based on the offeror's clear demonstration of his/her abilities to complete the work, apply appropriate methods to complete the work, create innovative solutions and quality of past performance in similar projects.

Applicants may be required to submit additional written information or be asked to make an oral presentation before the technical review committee to clarify statements made in their proposal.

SECTION 7: PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Questions concerning this solicitation may be e-mailed to the Division of Purchases at gail.walsh@purchasing.ri.gov no later than the date and time indicated on page one of this solicitation. Please reference **RFP #7549334** on all correspondence. Questions should be submitted in a Microsoft Word attachment. Answers to 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. If technical assistance is required to download, call the Help Desk at (401) 574-9709.

Offerors are encouraged to submit written questions to the Division of Purchases. **No other contact with State parties will be permitted.** Interested offerors may submit proposals to provide the services covered by this Request on or before the date and time listed on the cover page of this solicitation. Responses received after this date and time, as registered by the official time clock in the reception area of the Division of Purchases will not be considered.

Responses (**an original plus four (4) copies**) should be mailed or hand-delivered in a sealed envelope marked "**RFP# 7549334 – Cosmetology Exams**" to:

RI Dept. of Administration
Division of Purchases, 2nd floor
One Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908-5855

NOTE: Proposals received after the above-referenced due date and time will not be considered. Proposals misdirected to other State locations or those not presented to the Division of Purchases by the scheduled due date and time will be determined to be late and will not be considered. Proposals faxed, or emailed, to the Division of Purchases will not be considered. The official time clock is in the reception area of the Division of Purchases.

RESPONSE CONTENTS

Responses shall include the following:

1. A completed and signed three-page R.I.V.I.P generated bidder certification cover sheet downloaded from the RI Division of Purchases Internet home page at www.purchasing.ri.gov.
2. A completed and signed W-9 downloaded from the RI Division of Purchases Internet home page at www.purchasing.ri.gov. **Please include with original proposal only.**
3. A separate Technical Proposal responsive to the requirements listed in Section 4 – Technical Proposal. The Technical Proposal is limited to six (6) pages (this excludes any appendices). As appropriate, resumes of key staff that will provide services covered by this request.
4. A separate, signed and sealed Cost Proposal reflecting the cost per examination to the examination applicant in addition to any other fees that the examinees will be responsible for.

5. In addition to the multiple hard copies of proposals required, Respondents are requested to provide their proposal in **electronic format (CD-Rom, disc, or flash drive)**. Microsoft Word / Excel OR PDF format is preferable. Only 1 electronic copy is requested and it should be placed in the proposal marked "original".

CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

Notwithstanding the above, the State reserves the right not to award this contract or to award on the basis of cost alone, to accept or reject any or all proposals, and to award in its best interest.

Proposals found to be technically or substantially non-responsive at any point in the evaluation process will be rejected and not considered further.

The State may, at its sole option, elect to require presentation(s) by offerors clearly in consideration for award.

The State's General Conditions of Purchase contain the specific contract terms, stipulations and affirmations to be utilized for the contract awarded to the RFP. The State's General Conditions of Purchases/General Terms and Conditions can be found at the following URL:
<https://www.purchasing.ri.gov/RIVIP/publicdocuments/ATTA.pdf>