



**Solicitation Information  
February 19, 2016**

**RFP# 7550316**

**TITLE: Online High School Equivalency Diploma & Transcript Service**

**Submission Deadline: March 18, 2016 at 2:30 PM (ET)**

Questions concerning this solicitation must be received by the Division of Purchases at [gail.walsh@purchasing.ri.gov](mailto:gail.walsh@purchasing.ri.gov) no later than **Monday, February 29, 2016 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: No**

**BOND REQUIRED: No**

Gail Walsh  
Chief Buyer

Applicants must register on-line at the State Purchasing Website at [www.purchasing.ri.gov](http://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**

***Request for Proposals (RFP)***  
*(Online High School Equivalency Diploma and Transcript Service Provider)*

The Rhode Island Department of Administration, Division of Purchases, on behalf of the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) is requesting Proposals from qualified vendors to provide an Online High School Equivalency Diploma and Transcript service, in accordance with the terms of this solicitation and the State of Rhode Island's General Conditions of Purchase, which may be obtained at the Rhode Island Division of Purchases website at [www.purchasing.ri.gov](http://www.purchasing.ri.gov).

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 BIDDERS:**

Potential offerors are advised to review all sections of this solicitation 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 procurement are solicited. However, proposals 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.

Proposals 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.

All pricing submitted will be considered to be firm and fixed unless otherwise indicated herein.

Proposals 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. PROPOSALS EMAILED OR FAXED TO THE DIVISION OF PURCHASES WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED. The "Official" time clock is in the reception area of the Division of Purchases.

It is intended that an award pursuant to this Request for Proposals will be made to prime contractor(s) who will assume responsibility for all aspects of the work. Joint ventures shall be considered, so long as the contractor's duties and responsibilities are

clearly articulated in such form as acceptable to the State. Subcontractors are permitted, provided their use is clearly indicated in the offeror's proposal and the subcontractor(s) to be used are identified in the proposal.

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](http://www.purchasing.ri.gov) .

The purchase of services under an award made pursuant to this RFP will be contingent on the availability of funds.

In accordance with Title 7, Chapter 1.2 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, no foreign corporation 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 will be a requirement only of the successful bidder (s).*

Offerors are advised that all materials submitted to the State of Rhode Island for consideration in response to this Request for Proposals will be considered to be public records, as defined in Title 38 Chapter 2 of the Rhode Island General Laws, without exception, and will be released for inspection immediately upon request, once an award has been made.

Also, Submitters should be aware of the State's MBE requirements, which addresses the State's goal of ten per cent (10%) participation by MBE's in all State procurements. For further information, contact the State MBE Administrator at (401) 574-8670 or [Dorinda.keene@doa.ri.gov](mailto:Dorinda.keene@doa.ri.gov). Visit the website <http://www.mbe.ri.gov> .

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 RFP.

Equal Employment Opportunity (RIGL 28-5.1)

§ 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 in all areas where the state dollar is spent, in employment, public service, grants and financial assistance, and in state licensing and regulation. For further information, contact the Rhode Island Equal Employment Opportunity Office, at 222-3090 or via email [raymond.lambert@doa.ri.gov](mailto:raymond.lambert@doa.ri.gov) .

## **BACKGROUND/OVERVIEW**

“The Rhode Island High School Equivalency Program enables Rhode Island adults and out-of-school youth to gain personal satisfaction, career opportunities and increased academic possibilities by earning a high school equivalency diploma from the State of Rhode Island” (Regulations, June 5, 2015). RIDE seeks a vendor that will maintain a secure database of high school equivalency test scores and a user-friendly self-service website which can be securely accessed by test takers, the state adult education office, RI testing centers, third party agencies, and RI adult education centers. The vendor will provide a mailing system to deliver Rhode Island High School Equivalency Diplomas and corresponding transcripts to test takers who have passed all sections of the test. The vendor will provide a help desk to assist test takers. The vendor will provide training on the entire system to the state office and to adult education providers. The test records in the database will belong to RIDE if the test taker has taken one or more tests in Rhode Island.

## **SCOPE OF WORK**

### **Required Tasks:**

1. Physically collect all Rhode Island statewide paper-based and computer-based files of previous high school equivalency (HSE) test results. Paper-based materials include, but are not limited to: Binders at RIDE and all Test centers, Woonsocket Binder, Warwick Card File, Providence Adult Education Folders, Military Applications, Blue Cards, Diploma Lists, all test center binders from 2002 change over, Files in the RIDE basement Card File.
2. Maintain the storage of all historical test records for any media (paper, binders, card files, microfiche / film, ledger, and cd) and any databases. RIDE maintains ownership of these records and maintains the right to access these records.
3. Using all historical test records, build and maintain a secure Rhode Island test record database for all HSE test publishers’ records for all test series.
4. Maintain strict security and confidentiality of all test records.
5. Download new RI HSE test results from the high school equivalency test publishers regularly into the database – vendor must explain how often this will occur.
6. Provide a self-service website for test takers to view scores, diplomas, and transcripts, at no cost to the test taker.
7. Describe the process for verifying test taker identity and maintaining confidentiality of test records.
8. Distribute one hard copy of the RIDE-approved diploma and transcript mailed to the test taker's preferred address (or to the testing center if requested) free of charge.
9. Distribute duplicate or replacement diplomas and transcripts by mail, email, fax, or overnight delivery, to be paid by the test taker at an affordable fee, to be agreed upon by RIDE and the vendor.

10. Create a financial mechanism to allow duplicate diploma and transcript fees to be paid by test takers via credit card, debit card, money order, or cashier's check.
11. Provide online ordering or phone ordering, in English and in Spanish.
12. Provide an explanation to the test taker if the person's record cannot be found and provide information on how to follow up with their request (e.g., provide detailed testing information, proof of RI residency during testing, military testing, etc.).
13. Provide third party agency verification of test taker results at no charge or at a minimal charge to be explained and agreed upon by RIDE and vendor.
14. Provide website access to RIDE-approved HSE testing centers, RIDE-funded adult education centers, RIDE, the Department of Corrections and the RI Training School to search and retrieve Rhode Island test taker records.
15. Provide a mailing system in which RIDE or the Department of Corrections or the RI Training School can group the distribution of diplomas and transcripts with a restricted address or addresses.
16. Provide test taker customer service and help desk support in English and in Spanish through chat, phone or email, including support for Rhode Island testing centers, adult education centers, RIDE, the Department of Corrections and the RI Training School.
17. Provide quarterly reports to RIDE containing, but not limited to, the following data: the number of test taker requests for first-time transcripts and diplomas, the number of requests for duplicate transcripts and diplomas, the number of new test taker records downloaded from HSE company databases, and other data points to be determined by RIDE and the vendor.
18. Provide training on the functionalities of the entire system for state office staff, testing center staff, and adult education center staff.

#### Project Schedule:

Upon issuance of a state purchase order, the vendor will begin the collection of all existing statewide paper-based and computer-based files of high school equivalency test records. Within six weeks, the vendor will build and maintain an online database system that will be available to be accessed by test takers and the above-mentioned state offices and providers. By the end of six weeks, the vendor will be positioned to deliver Rhode Island diplomas and transcripts to test takers. RIDE will maintain access to test record databases during the six weeks to avoid a lapse in delivery of diplomas and transcripts.

#### Deliverables:

The vendor will develop a Work Plan and Timeline of deliverables that will include the following:

- The collection of all existing Rhode Island statewide paper-based HSE test records and HSE databases and the storage of historical RI HSE test records of any media.

- A database of HSE test records that RIDE, the Department of Corrections, the RI Training School, testing centers, third party agencies, and adult education centers can access to search and retrieve RI HSE test records.
- A self-service secure website for test takers to view scores, diplomas, and transcripts at no cost.
- A mailing system for the distribution of one first-time RIDE-approved paper diploma and transcript to test takers at no cost, and the distribution of all duplicate RIDE-approved diplomas and transcripts at a reasonable cost to test takers.
- A system for third party agency verification of test taker results.
- A schedule of database updates and maintenance throughout the duration of the contract.
- Quarterly reports with data on the numbers of transcripts and diplomas issued.

### **ADDITIONAL CONTRACTOR REQUIREMENTS/QUALIFICATIONS**

- Bidders must submit a letter of transmittal signed by an owner, officer, or other authorized agent.
- Bidders must submit relevant organizational information, a list of similar projects undertaken and/or clients served, agency expertise relative to the services requested, and a statement of existing workload as it impacts the performance of the project.
- Bidders must provide a list of key personnel assigned to the project including education, job title, role, and prior experience.
- Bidders must disclose any work to be sub-contracted including the specific work to be performed and staffing, organizational structure, and business background of the sub-contractor.

### **TERMS OF THE CONTRACT**

The contract will begin during fiscal year **upon issuance of a state purchase order (estimate April 2016)** and end **June 30, 2019**. The scope of the work may be modified by RIDE prior to beginning work on a given task. RIDE retains the option of granting a time extension of up to two years if the level of work is expanded by mutual written consent. If necessary, deficiencies in performance of services and/or failure to supply deliverables in a complete and timely manner will be documented in writing by RIDE. Should a pattern of substantial dissatisfaction become apparent, RIDE reserves the right to terminate the contract at any time.

### **COST PROPOSAL/TERMS OF PAYMENT**

The contractor must prepare a cost proposal reflecting the fee structure that will be charged to test takers for the services provided, and indicated which services will be provided at no cost. **There will be no cost to RIDE for these services.**



## **TECHNICAL PROPOSAL/REQUIRED ELEMENTS**

1. Contractor understanding of the issues (15 points)
2. Work Plan and Time Line (30 points)
3. Capacity of the agency to administer the project effectively and perform all required tasks and deliverables (30 points)
4. Quality of key personnel (include curriculum vitae) and past experience (15 points)
5. Cost proposal (10 points)\*

*\*NOTE: **There should be no cost to RIDE from the vendor.** However, vendors must describe the fees to be charged to the test takers for the services provided, **and** describe which services are provided at no cost to the test takers.*

The technical proposal should be no more than 10-20 pages in length and respond to each area of the required elements listed above. Supplemental information may be appended to the technical proposal.

A Selection Committee will evaluate submitted proposals on the basis of the above criteria items. Consultant Teams may be invited to appear before the Committee for in-person presentations. The Committee will then make a qualifications-based recommendation for final selection to the Rhode Island State Purchasing Agent, or her designee, who will make the final award decision.

To advance to the cost evaluation phase, the technical proposal must receive a minimum of 70 out of a maximum of 90 technical points. Any technical proposals scoring less than 70 points will not have the cost proposals evaluated. The proposal will be dropped from further consideration.

Proposals scoring 70 technical points or higher will be evaluated for cost and assigned up to a maximum of 10 points in the cost category, bringing the potential maximum score to 100 points.

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 responses, and to award in its best interest.

Responses found to be technically or substantially non-responsive at any point in the evaluation process will be rejected and not considered further. The State reserves the right to reject any or all responses submitted and to waive any informality in any vendor's submission.

A notice of bid protest pursuant to R.I. General Law 37-2-52 must be filed with the chief purchasing officer by the protestor in accordance with the guidelines provided in Section 1.6 of the State of Rhode Island Procurement Regulations, which can be accessed at the following link:

<http://www.purchasing.ri.gov/RIVIP/publicdocuments/RULES2011/SEC1.pdf>

The contract agreement resulting from this award will include all provisions outlined in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 2, Appendix II to Part 200. These provisions can be accessed at the following link: [www.ecfr.gov](http://www.ecfr.gov).