



Solicitation Information
9 May 06

LOI # B06301

TITLE: GED Test Scoring Services

Submission Deadline: 24 May 06 @ 2:00 PM (EDT)

Questions concerning this solicitation may be e-mailed to the Division of Purchases at questions@purchasing.state.ri.us no later than **17 May 06 at 12:00 Noon (EDT)**. Questions should be submitted in a *Microsoft Word attachment*. Please reference the RFP / LOI # 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

Jerome D. Moynihan, C.P.M., CPPO
Administrator of Purchasing Systems

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

Note to Vendors:

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

THIS PAGE IS NOT A BIDDER CERTIFICATION FORM

**REQUEST for LETTERS of INTEREST
GED TEST SCORING SERVICES**

The Rhode Island Department of Administration, Office of Purchases, on behalf of the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) is requesting Letters of Interest (LOI) from qualified individuals to provide GED TEST SCORING SERVICES in accordance with the terms of this solicitation, and the State's General Conditions of Purchase (available at www.purchasing.ri.gov).

INSTRUCTIONS AND NOTIFICATIONS TO OFFERORS:

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.

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.

The state reserves the right to award to one or more offerors.

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considered to be irrevocable for a period of not less than sixty (60) days following the opening date, and may not be withdrawn, except with the express written permission of the State Purchasing Agent.

Proposals misdirected to other State locations or which are otherwise not present in the Office of Purchases at the time of opening for any cause will be determined to be late and will not be considered.

In accordance with Title 7, Chapter 1.1 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).

Bidders are advised that all materials submitted to the State of Rhode Island for consideration in response to this Letter of Interest 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.

The State of Rhode Island has a goal of ten per cent (10%) participation by MBE's in all State procurements. For further information, visit the web site www.rimbe.org. To speak with an M.B.E. Officer, call (401) 222-6253.

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 / LOI

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

Background

The Office of Adult Education, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) and its program affiliates provide educational services to adults who:

Have attained 16 years of age;

Are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in high school under State law;

Lack sufficient mastery of basic educational skills to enable them to function effectively in society;

Do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and have not achieved an equivalent level of education; and

Are unable to speak, read, or write the English language.

According to data from the 2000 U.S. Census, there are over 177,000 adults that make up the target population above. Of these adults, nearly 142,000 have no high school diploma, approximately 24,900 lack a high school credential and, in addition, are limited English proficient, and over 10,400 adults possess at least a high school diploma but who are limited English proficient.

One means to help this population is the General Educational Development (GED) credential, which is a recognized equivalent of a secondary school diploma. It consists of five tests: mathematics, writing, language arts, social studies, and science. The American Council on Education, a private, non-profit association of colleges and universities, established the GED testing program nearly sixty years ago. Its purpose was to provide adults who left school a fair and cost-effective means of documenting that they have achieved high school level academic skills and knowledge.

The Office of Adult Education is responsible for administering, scoring, and confidentially distributing GED tests' results to examinees. In 2005, 2,022 adults completed all five tests, and 1,804 GEDs were awarded. The contract that will be awarded as a result of this LOI will score, maintain test data, and report on GED test results in Rhode Island.

SCOPE OF THE WORK

It is intended that the contract begin July 1, 2006 and terminate June 30, 2011. A six-month ramp-up and transition period will begin July 1, 2006 and terminate with a successful transition of services from the current vendor on December 31, 2006. The vendor shall meet with Office of Adult Education, RIDE representatives and the current vendor during this period to ensure the inclusion of appropriate data elements, reporting capabilities, and MIS compatibility and that a smooth, uninterrupted transition of services is achieved, and a fully executed data migration from the current vendor to the selected bidders is accomplished.

Once this six-month period has expired, the bidder will be expected to follow all rules, protocols, and requirements of the GED Testing Service (GEDTS) in scoring GED tests and reporting on test results in accordance with the technical specifications found in Appendix B. The bidder must also provide all training and updates to the testing procedure; develop materials; and store data in accordance with Appendix B.

The testing and scoring services will be provided on an on-going and as-needed basis, with approximately 3,500 English and 650 Spanish tests scored per year.

A detailed description of the technical requirements and tasks, schedules, and deliverables associated with the requested bid for GED Tests Scoring Services can be found in Appendix B: Technical Appendix.

TERMS OF THE CONTRACT

The Contract will begin **July 1, 2006** and end **June 30, 2011**. 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** with additional funding if available, if the level of work is expanded by mutual written consent, and notwithstanding any policies or regulations to the contrary.

COST PROPOSAL/TERMS OF PAYMENT

The Bidder must prepare a cost proposal reflecting the hourly rate or other fee structure proposed for this scope of services using the Cost Proposal Forms contained in Appendix A. The total cost of the contract is not to exceed **\$68,000**. Cost proposals must fall within the range below for each period as follows:

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FY07	Up to \$ 8,000
FY08	Up to \$15,000
FY09	Up to \$15,000
FY10	Up to \$15,000
FY11	Up to \$15,000

Proposal Submission

Questions concerning this solicitation may be e-mailed to the Division of Purchases at questions@purchasing.state.ri.us no later than the date & time listed on the cover sheet of this solicitation. **Send your questions in Microsoft Word format.** Please reference the LOI # on all correspondence. Questions received, if any, will be posted and answered on the Internet as an addendum to this solicitation. It is the responsibility of all interested parties to download this information. For computer technical assistance, call the helpdesk at 401-222-2142, ext: 134.

Letters of Interest to provide the services covered by this request must be received by the Division of Purchases **on or before the date & time indicated on page one of this solicitation.**

Proposals (an original plus 3 copies) should include the following:

A completed and signed three-page RIVIP Bidder Certification Cover Form, available at www.purchasing.state.ri.us.

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A Cost Proposal as described above.

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A *separate* Technical Proposal (see below) describing the qualifications and background of the applicant and experience with similar programs, as well as the work plan or approach proposed for this requirement.

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A completed and signed W-9 (taxpayer identification number and certification). Form is downloadable at www.purchasing.state.ri.us.

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Deliver to: Department of Administration
Office of Purchases
One Capitol Hill
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

Bidder assumes all responsibilities for proposals submitted by mail or commercial delivery service. Proposals misdirected to other state locations or which are otherwise not present in the Office of Purchases at the time of opening, for any cause, will be determined to be late and may not be considered. Faxed, or emailed, responses will not be considered.

Technical Proposal Required Elements

All bids will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Bidder Understanding of the Issues (10 points)
- Work Plan* (20 points)
- Capacity of the Agency Effectively to Administer the Project and Produce Required Deliverables, including a portfolio of sample reports and materials and three letters of reference from current users of the Bidder's GED test scoring services (35 points)
- Quality of Key Personnel (including Curriculum vitae), including a single point of contact person for all issues related to this contract (15 points)
- Cost Proposal (20 points)

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*** ADDITIONAL BID REQUIREMENTS**

As part of the bid, the prospective vendor shall submit a comprehensive management work plan of services with timeline and a trend analysis evaluation proposal. Only vendors that are an approved GEDTS official scoring entity may bid on this contract. The work plan shall also include a disaster recovery plan in case of server downtime, etc.

Following bid submission, there will be a bid conference scheduled at RIDOE within 15 days to clarify bid elements. Bidders shall submit a revised work plan, if necessary, providing all additional information determined as needed at the bid conference.

APPENDIX A

The Bidder estimates that its budget for work to be performed under this Agreement is as follows:

<u>Expense Category</u>	<u>Estimated Expenditures</u>					
	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY10	FY11	Total
1. Personnel	0	0	0	0	0	0
2. Fringe Benefits	0	0	0	0	0	0
3. Consultant	0	0	0	0	0	0
4. In-State Travel	0	0	0	0	0	0
5. Out-of-State Travel	0	0	0	0	0	0
6. Printing	0	0	0	0	0	0
7. Office Expense	0	0	0	0	0	0
8. Telephone	0	0	0	0	0	0
9. Educational Materials	0	0	0	0	0	0
10. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0	0
11. Data Processing	0	0	0	0	0	0
12. Rental	0	0	0	0	0	0
13. Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
14.	0	0	0	0	0	0
15.	0	0	0	0	0	0
16.	0	0	0	0	0	0
17.	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indirect Cost	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	0	0	0

It is understood and agreed that the amounts indicated above for the several line items are estimates of expenditures to be incurred by the Bidder on behalf of this Agreement and to be claimed by the Bidder for reimbursement under this Agreement. It is further understood and agreed that actual expenditures may vary from the estimates set forth above and that such variations shall not in themselves be cause for disallowance of reimbursement by RIDE; provided, however, that the Bidder shall notify and obtain the approval of the contract officer, in writing, if expenditures to be claimed for reimbursement in any line item above shall begin to vary significantly from the estimate given above; and provided further that unless permission of the contract officer shall have been obtained in advance, no expenditure shall be claimed by the Bidder for reimbursement by RIDE under this Agreement if such expenditure shall have been incurred in a line item category not listed above. Transfer of funds is permitted between Expense Categories (1) (2) and (3) up to 10% or \$25,000, whichever is less; all other transfers require prior written approval by the Department of Education.

APPENDIX B

Technical Appendix

Bidder Responsibilities

In accordance with the policies for establishing a test scoring services site, the bidder must demonstrate approval as an official GEDTS (General Educational Development Testing Service) Scoring Site. It is the responsibility of the bidder to maintain and/or modify the GED Testing Service scoring requirements as identified. No institution, individual or other entity that stands to benefit directly from or has direct financial interest in the success of GED candidates can be established as an official GED scoring site. No person who scores tests, essays, or who has access to GED test scoring keys, essay training materials, answer booklets or scored tests may have an affiliation with an adult education program or any other commercial or non-commercial GED instruction program.

A GED scoring site is responsible to provide the following in accordance with the policies and procedures in the GED Administrators Manual, GED Examiner's Manual, and where appropriate, the Chief Reader Training Manual:

- The Bidder must be an approved GEDTS official scoring center.
- The Bidder must make provisions and verify that each essay reader is currently certified by GEDTS.
- The Bidder must follow scoring protocols, rubrics and security as specified by GEDTS.
- The Bidder must adhere to GEDTS policies and procedures and industry standards for information security and confidentiality of records.
- The Bidder must demonstrate a process for "challenging an existing score" in accordance with GEDTS standard requirements and for "requesting changes to data."

Scoring Site Responsibilities

A GED scoring site is responsible to provide the following in accordance with the policies and procedures in the GED Administrator's Manual, GED Examiner's Manual, and where appropriate, the Chief Reader Training Manual.

A scoring site must meet all standards established in the GED Examiner's Manual and Chief Reader Training Manual. A site may be closed at any time for failure to comply with any standard including any breach of security or confidentiality.

Scoring answer sheets, along with other general information sheets (i.e., demographic forms) are forwarded to the bidder's scoring site by multiple testing centers located in Rhode Island, where they are scanned in, scored, recorded, and maintained in a database. Some portions of the test cannot be computer scored, such as the Writing skills sub-test which contains an essay. The essay sub-test requires the reading and scoring of each individual essay in English and/or Spanish and scores must be manually entered. These scores and information are then made available to RIDOE and parties designated by RIDOE, via computer access for dissemination. (Additionally, the scoring site is responsible for the printing and dissemination of documents pertaining to scores, which include but are not limited to official transcripts, score reports, diplomas, and other pertinent information.)

- Establish electronic access to the IDB and provide accurate weekly electronic uploads to the GEDTS International Database.
- The Bidder must score all five tests within the GED Exam, including the English, Spanish, Large Print and Braille versions. These tests shall be administered at all approved Rhode Island GED Testing Centers, which are certified by contract between GEDTS and RIDOE.
- The Bidder must provide reading and holistic scoring of the essay portion of all answer sheets sent to them from all official Rhode Island GED Testing Centers in English, Spanish.
- The Bidder must prove certification by GEDTS in calibration and recalibration of scoring.
- The scoring site should also be able to produce reports at the request of the RIDOE.
- The scoring site should also be able to produce local program reports at the request of the RIDOE.
- All services are provided in a secure, timely, and efficient manner.
- The Bidder must make available to RIDOE clearly written and electronic monthly, quarterly and annual reports showing volumes of test administrations and related information including but not limited to: Ethnicity, gender adult education program, age, primary language for each testing center and the entire state.
- The Bidder must provide the option to optical scanning of GEDTS U.S. Demographic forms, if desired.
- The Bidder must conform reports to the following standards for report accuracy: 100% on Scores and Demographic cross-referencing of data.
- The Bidder must make available to RIDOE performance/error reports monthly, quarterly, and annually noting the type of errors that have been made.
- The Bidder will provide RIDOE with a monthly report of all students and categories of scores achieved. The report must include the candidates' mailing addresses, the test sites, and the candidates' total scores and if available, the GED test preparation sites.

Pricelines (Guidelines for Pricing)

The Bidder will provide pricing on the following. Every pricing element listed below must be addressed to qualify for consideration:

- A cost per sub-test score in English, Spanish Large Print or Braille.
- A cost per essay test score in English, Spanish, Large Print, or Braille.
- A cost per re-test of essay or scanned sheet in English, Spanish, Large Print or Braille. A cost for challenging an existing score and rescoring (if applicable).

- A cost of scoring both the multiple-choice portion and essay.
- A cost of scoring the multiple-choice portion only.
- A cost per re-test of essay.
- A cost per re-test of one exam.
- A cost for per error by any GED candidate or GED Examiner (if applicable).
- A cost for requesting changes in data (if applicable).
- A cost for scanning and input of GEDTS demographic forms.
- A cost for scanning additional forms as may be required.
- Cost of reporting test scores to the appropriate test center as well as to the Rhode Island Department of Education.
- Cost of maintaining the required demographic data base and uploading the data for Rhode Island to the GED Testing Service on a weekly basis.
- Cost of preparing the required annual statistical report for both the State of Rhode Island and individual test centers.
- All related costs associated for scoring the GED exams.

Timeliness

- Turn-around time for scanned data and essay scores shall fall within 7 business days.

Training

- The Bidder shall travel to the RIDOE GED Office in Providence, Rhode Island, to demonstrate how to use any new software or technology, offering On-Site Training and Demonstrations of that technology, prior to the start of the new contract operations and especially when piloting new scoring formats of equipment. Participants of this training process will be at the RI DOE GED, as well as testing center staff, and will number approximately 15 - 20 people. The bidder will train personnel at all RIDE GED Testing Centers in the following areas:
 - Security of GED materials such as tests and answer sheets
 - Proper methods of mailing answer sheets to Bidder
 - Proper methods of record-keeping and reporting scores
 - Proper use of technology to coordinate scoring and reporting
- The Bidder shall design quality-training literature for lay persons (Administrators, Examiners, and GED operators in field). The training literature will clarify all aspects of documents preparation,

reporting, and related technology. These User Manuals will be furnished to RIDOE at least 30 days before target date for full scoring process application.

- The Bidder shall provide updates to any process improvement or change with notification of such changes and updates given to RIDOE prior to implementation.
- The Bidder shall provide updates to any process improvement or change with notification of such changes and updates given to RIDOE prior to implementation.
- The Bidder shall travel to the RIDOE office in Providence, Rhode Island, if necessary, to provide RIDOE staff with recurrent and initial training on software and technology should conditions arise, in the future, where as new key staff are assigned to the Rhode Island GED Testing Program.

Test Archiving

- The Bidder must store back-up of all data, which will be available to RIDE during the state's normal business hours for the duration of this contract.
- The Bidder shall save and store all answer sheets/bubble sheets, securely, for six months.
- The Bidder shall, at RIDOE's request, make available images of scanned answer sheets for review.
- The Bidder shall document their data and hard copy storage systems, so they will be able to provide reports to RIDOE, upon request, pertaining to storage procedures, security, or other related concerns.
- The Bidder shall have suitable secure storage facilities in place for ensuring backup and/or redundancy of record storage systems in an off site location.

Additional Services

- The Bidder shall propose any additional services related to GED Test Scoring deemed important based on prior experience.
- The Bidder shall create mailing instructions for GED Testing Centers.
- The Bidder shall create a GED answer sheet transmittal cover sheet.
- The Bidder shall accommodate requests for agreed upon additional report during the contract negotiation process.