

RFP 15-035: Continued Development, Administration, and Reporting of Teacher Certification Assessments for New York State Teachers and Educational Leaders as part of the New York State Certification Examinations (NYSTCE) Testing Program

Questions and Answers Summary

PLEASE NOTE: The Bid Form – Cost Proposal has been revised. Please ensure that the revised version is used when submitting the cost proposal. See questions #13 and #28 for more information.

1. The RFP states that “From time to time a candidate will request a Bilingual Education Assessment for a language that has not yet been identified by NYSED.” Could you please provide the number of such requests received during 2014 and 2015, and which languages the requests pertain to?
There were no new Bilingual Education Assessments developed during 2014 and 2015. Currently in 2016 a Bilingual Education Assessments in Turkish is under development.

2. What was the item rejection rate achieved in 2014 and 2015? Please break down this rejection rate for bias and for accuracy.
In 2014 -2015, the average rejection rate for NYSED initial review of items (prior to any committee review of items) runs approximately 4%. At Bias Committee Review the average rejection rate was about 2% and at Content Advisory Committee Review (accuracy and bias) the average rejection rate was about 5%.

3. What percentage of candidates were tested at one of the 114 New York State Institutions of Higher Education in 2014 and 2015? How many of those IHEs serve as testing centers?
We currently test at 18 vendor operated sites and at 63 independently operated sites. Of the independently operated sites, 25 are at a New York State Institute of Higher Learning, 7 are at BOCES Regional Centers, and 31 are at privately-owned testing centers. In 2014, 43.96% of candidates, and in 2015, 50.87% of candidates, tested at an independently operated site.

4. The RFP states that the average lead time for a testing appointment must not exceed 30 days. What was the average lead time for an appointment in 2014 and 2015?
Although the RFP requires that a candidate can find a testing site within 30 days of registering for a test, most candidates register much further out than that. The average lead time for candidates in 2014 was 68 days and in 2015 was 71 days.

5. The RFP requires full-length computer-based practice test for each high-incidence custom-designed assessment, and (as a preference) each mid-incidence assessment. How many computer-based practice tests exist now? Do these computer-based practice tests belong to NYSED? Please provide the sales volume of each computer-based practice test in 2014 and 2015.
There are currently 3 full-length computer-based practice tests available (ALST, ATAS, EAS). All practice tests, as work products of the contract, belong to NYSED. The sale volume for these practice tests was 8,891 in 2014 and 7,379 in 2015.

6. Please provide the total number of tests taken by month for 2014 and 2015.

Total # of NYSTCE test takers by month for 2014 and 2015			
Month	Count	Month	Count
2014-01	6633	2015-01	6164
2014-02	10946	2015-02	6358
2014-03	8075	2015-03	6611
2014-04	10930	2015-04	9566
2014-05	6157	2015-05	8726
2014-06	6407	2015-06	7540
2014-07	9611	2015-07	9325

Month	Count	Month	Count
2014-08	7888	2015-08	8454
2014-09	4632	2015-09	5387
2014-10	5089	2015-10	5297
2014-11	5112	2015-11	5494
2014-12	5185	2015-12	5950

7. Please provide the total number of tests taken by location in New York for 2014 and 2015.

2014: Test Taker Count in New York (by City)	
City	Count
Albany	2707
Alfred	342
Amherst	912
Babylon	1588
Binghamton	1003
Brewster	914
Bronx	3245
Brooklyn	7393
Buffalo	524
Canton	184
Cortland	333
East Syracuse	1943
Elmira	218
Farmingdale	120
Geneseo	572
Islandia	6620
Jamestown	18
Latham	592
Middletown	838
Monticello	724
New Paltz	257
New York	20925
Niagara	562
North Hempstead	4983
Oneonta	10
Parksville	4
Plattsburgh	232
Potsdam	226
Queens	15526
Rochester	2549
Staten Island	3776
Utica	956
Victor	864
Watertown	713
White Plains	4182
Williamsville	1935

2015: Test Taker Count in New York (by City)	
City	Count
Albany	2975
Alfred	291
Amherst	929
Babylon	1838
Binghamton	787
Brewster	1495
Bronx	8132
Brooklyn	7173
Buffalo	877
Canton	176
Cortland	941
Dunkirk	103
East Syracuse	2272
Elmira	262
Farmingdale	118
Geneseo	784
Hempstead	264
Islandia	7196
Jamestown	136
Latham	572
Middletown	816
Monticello	456
New Paltz	710
New York	18344
North Hempstead	4455
Olean	74
Oneonta	578
Parksville	25
Patchogue	430
Phoenix	10
Potsdam	316
Poughkeepsie	402
Queens	13387
Rochester	3125
Rockville Centre	3810
Staten Island	3999
Utica	944
Victor	207
Watertown	697
West Point	8
White Plains	4511

8. Please provide the total number of tests taken by location outside of New York (by state and by country) for 2014 and 2015.

2014: Test Taker Count Outside of NY (by State)

State	Count
AK	3
AL	13
AR	5
AZ	18
CA	263
CO	13
CT	1598
DC	82
DE	53
FL	173
GA	93
HI	5
IA	3
ID	2
IL	91
IN	27
KS	17
KY	3
LA	13
MA	297
MD	83
ME	11
MI	87
MN	12
MO	13
MS	4
MT	3
NC	81
ND	1
NE	6
NH	44
NJ	2418
NM	1
NV	20
OH	46
OR	17
PA	733
RI	62
SC	13
SD	1
TN	32
TX	90
UT	13
VA	106
VT	164
WA	41
WI	31
WV	3
WY	1
Out of Country	1053

2015: Test Taker Count Outside of NY (by State)

State	Count
AK	10
AL	31
AR	2
AZ	34
CA	243
CO	53
CT	1115
DC	84
DE	72
FL	224
GA	69
HI	9
ID	1
IL	120
IN	11
KS	9
KY	6
LA	6
MA	418
MD	102
ME	25
MI	85
MN	25
MO	8
MS	3
MT	7
NC	131
NE	1
NH	35
NJ	2297
NM	14
NV	28
OH	85
OK	12
OR	33
PA	771
RI	64
SC	48
TN	30
TX	83
UT	12
VA	168
VT	313
WA	69
WI	24
WV	4
Out of Country	891

9. Please provide the number of accommodations granted to candidates by type of accommodation during 2014 and 2015.

NYSTCE Number of Accommodations by Type

Accommodation Type	2014	2015
100% Extra Time	236	202
50% Extra Time	912	1142
Adjustable Workstation	0	11
ASL interpreter - items and directions	4	12
ASL interpreter -directions only	14	17
Braille	14	3
Bring and Use a Braillewriter	10	4
Calculator	52	84
CCTV	13	3
Circle Answers	25	11
Handheld Magnifier	11	1
Health Aids	24	31
Large Font Keyboard	2	0
Large Print Paper Test	13	15
Line Guide	4	0
Marker	38	16
Oral Interpreter	2	0
Other *	11	6
Paper Test	84	83
Reader	165	187
Scrap Paper	12	5
Screen Magnifier	3	7
Separate Room	342	429
Spellchecker	18	65
Trackball Mouse	0	2
Typist	39	20
Video Captions (SBL)	0	4
Waiver of Biometrics	1	3
Water Bottle	36	16
Zoom-Text	9	8

*bring own chair, bring lamp, elevate feet, etc.

10. What was the New York State Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE) spend in 2014 and 2015? How does that spend relate to the desired participation rate of 30%?
 Prior year spending is not relevant to this RFP, because M/WBE participation is not mandatory in this RFP. However, NYSED encourages all bidders to utilize the M/WBEs consistent with the State's goal of 30% participation. Note that M/WBE participation rates will not impact the review of proposals.
11. **Fiscal.** We presume the questions submitted by vendors and the State's responses to those questions will be incorporated into the contract. If this is not correct, please explain.
 Questions submitted by vendors and the State's responses to those questions will be incorporated into the contract.
12. **Fiscal.** Confidential Information. If a bidder wants to submit confidential information in their proposal, but does not want it to become public, will the State allow a bidder to designate certain information as confidential so that it will not be disclosed publicly or to other bidders? If yes, may bidders include with their proposals a preface that identifies the respective proposal components to be withheld from disclosure? If a bidder wishes to designate certain information as confidential, it should use the form entitled Request for Exemption from Disclosure Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Law (section 6.1.10 of the RFP) to indicate information that it wishes to have withheld from disclosure, as well as the basis for the claim. Please note that the entity requesting exemption from disclosure has the legal burden of establishing

entitlement to confidentiality, and submission of this form does not necessarily guarantee that a request will be granted. If necessary, NYSED will make a determination in accordance with the process set forth in Public Officers Law §89(5).

13. **Fiscal. RFP page 29, 1.13, Study Guides and Practice Tests**, states “Full-length, computer-based practice tests shall be provided to candidates... at a cost not to exceed \$30” **and RFP page 30, 1.15, Additional Fees** provides a table of “maximum additional fees” for other services for which the “contractor is permitted to charge.” **RFP Package C—Cost Proposal** does not provide a location at which bidders should identify the fees to be proposed for these services. Are bidders expected to include these fees in the Cost Proposal? If so, please identify in what manner these fees are expected to be provided.
The Bid Form – Cost Proposal has been revised in order to include proposed costs for practice tests. Additional fees as allowed for in Section 1.15 should not be included and will not be considered as part of the cost proposal.
14. **Fiscal. RFP page 2**, states, “NYSED will award one contract pursuant to this RFP with a term of three years and two months, anticipated to begin July 1, 2016.”
 - a. On or by what date will the selected contractor be notified of award?
The selected contractor will be notified following the completion of the RFP review process and necessary internal approvals. This is anticipated to occur by approximately April 2016.
 - b. By what means will the selected contractor be notified of award (e.g., e-mail, US mail, etc)?
The tentative award letter will be sent via email to the individual who signed the Response Sheet to Bids, using the contact information provided on this form.
15. **Program. RFP page 9, Glossary of Terms and Acronyms Used in this RFP**, states "A rejected item is an item... not approved by NYSED at the designated stage of the test development process." Which stage in the test development process is the designated stage for NYSED's rejection of items?
A rejected item as defined in the Glossary of Terms and Acronyms refers to any item rejected during NYSED's initial review of passages and items. This will determine the rejection rate to be used in calculating Fees for Reimbursement Related to Passage Selection and Item Development. (Section 1.7, page 23)
16. **M/WBE. RFP page 10, 1.1, Description of Services to be Performed**, states, “NYSED has not established specific utilization goals for this procurement. Nevertheless, NYSED remains committed to promoting the participation of certified Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises to the greatest extent possible. Therefore, NYSED strongly encourages bidders to seek New York State certified M/WBE subcontractors at a participation rate of 30%.” Since NYSED has not “established specific utilization goals for this procurement,” are bidders still required to submit a Request for Total or Partial Waiver if they do not meet the 30% “encouraged” participation rate?
No, bidders are not required to submit waiver requests for this RFP.
17. **Program. RFP, page 13, section 1.3 Overview of Required Services, #8**, states that the contractor is required to, "provide electronic access to current and past detailed student background information collected from both the IHEs and the students, scores, and reports for all examinees for NYSED and New York State-approved teacher education institutions."
 - a. What types of current and past detailed student background information are included?
In addition to test score, detailed student background should include, at a minimum, name, address, phone numbers, email address, date of birth, social security number, race/ethnicity, gender, institution attended, current educational status, type of program, matriculation status, NYCDOE program (if applicable), first language. This information may change from time to time.
 - b. By what means and in which format(s) will the contractor be provided such data?
All data needs to be provided in a Delimited File Format compatible with the NYS TEACH System. The exact file format will be negotiated between NYSED and contractor at the start of the contract.
18. **Program. RFP, page 17, section 1.4 Timeline for Required Services**, indicates that development of all Category 2 exams is to be completed by 8/31/19. **Page 18, section 1.5.1, Item Criteria--NYSTCE Custom Designed Tests**, states "For... Category 2 custom-designed tests, the contractor will use the New York State

Standards in the subject area...". Are all New York State Standards to be used for Category 2 exams currently available? If yes, are the respective Standards available to bidders (e.g., via web link)? If not, by what date are relevant standards scheduled to be available?

Currently, all New York State Standards to be used in the development of Category 2 exams are available via web link (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/standards.html>), with the exception of the Sciences and the Arts. Category 2 exams in the Sciences will be aligned to a new NYS P-12 Science Learning Standards which is currently available in draft (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/mst/sci/nys-p12-science-ls.html>). New P-12 Learning Standards in the Arts will be available sometime in the future.

19. **Program. RFP, page 20, section 1.5, Exam Development--NYSTCE Custom Designed Tests**, states "The contractor will... provide at least 4.5 times as many test items as are required by the blueprint... for each test." On pages 73-74, section 5.2, Attachment B, Item Bank Inventory, it appears that lower-incidence examinations currently have smaller item banks. This RFP requirement would require, *for example*, the item bank sizes for the Agriculture CST (taken by 1 person in 2014-15 per RFP Attachment A) and Students with Disabilities CST (taken by 4,097 people in 2014-15), both of which have the same test blueprint according to the NYSTCE program web site, to have the same item bank size. Is this the intention of this requirement? If not, for budgeting and planning purposes, should a multiplier other than "4.5" be used for mid-incidence and lower-incidence tests? If other multiplier(s), please provide such.
Although the requirement is that all test banks be kept at 4.5 times the number of items required by the blueprint, the contractor must be able to continually administer at least two forms of each low-incidence examination and at least four forms of each high-incidence examination. (section 1.5.1, page 20) In addition, the contractor must implement an industry standard plan for monitoring item exposure. (Section 1.10, page 26) As higher-incidence exams will require more form development and will result in more frequent replacement due to higher item exposure, the contractor should account for item development that keeps the bank of "usable" items at the 4.5 multiplier.
20. What is the anticipated contract award date?
See question 14.
21. Please provide a copy of the current contract for these services, including all amendments, renewals, and/or extensions.
NYSED is not providing these documents at this time.
22. **P. 11, 1.2 Background.** "the Assessment of Teaching Skills – Performance (ATS-P) will have to be retained by the contractor and administered as needed." Please provide additional information on the ATS-P so that we may ensure system compatibility; what item types and other critical characteristics are part of the test?
All tests will be delivered to the successful bidder as a bank of test items in Word via Rich Text Format (RTF). The contractor will be responsible for loading the test items on to an appropriate computer platform for delivery to candidates.
23. **P. 20, 1.5.4 Bilingual Educational Assessments.** Who will be responsible for the cost associated with translation of a test into a language not previously identified?
The contractor will be responsible for all costs related to the translation and construction of new Bilingual Education Assessments.
24. **P. 27, 1.11 Computer-Based Testing Administration.** Please confirm that the contractor will not be required to administer any paper-based tests. If paper-based tests are required, please provide candidate volumes for the most recent year by title and location, as well as test fees and remittance amounts for each title as listed in the Cost Proposal.
The contractor will be responsible for loading all test items on to an appropriate computer platform for delivery to candidates, with the exception for candidates granted special accommodations such as Braille, large type paper, and paper administration. Please see question 9 for the volume of previous accommodations granted.

25. **P. 27, 1.10 Test Administration – All Tests:** “The contractor must perform thumb or palm print scanning or an equivalent identity verification of all examinees at test administrations.” **P. 29, 1.14 Examination Fees:** “Proposals must include plans for the fingerprinting of all registrants.”
- Please confirm that the desired type of thumb/palm scanning and fingerprinting in each of these statements refers to single-digit candidate identification, and not ten-digit Live Scan fingerprinting.
The contractor is required to do a single scan at the beginning and conclusion of all examination to verify candidate identity.
 - If full Live Scan fingerprinting for background checks of applicants is desired, please provide the State Police and FBI fees per candidate. Also, may the contractor charge the candidate a separate fingerprinting fee?
A full Live Scan fingerprinting for background check is not applicable. Candidates may not be charged a fee for fingerprinting/scanning. Candidates may only be charged the examination fee and, when applicable, additional fees specified in Section 1.15.
 - Please provide the volume of candidates fingerprinted during the most recent year, if available.
All candidates are fingerprinted/scanned at each test administration.
26. **P. 29, 1.13 Study Guides and Practice Tests.** Please provide practice exam volumes by title as listed in the Cost Proposal.
Please see question 5.
27. **P. 71-72, 5.1 Attachment A.** Please clarify the time period for the candidate volumes listed in Attachment A. Page 71 states that the period is Sept. 2014 to Aug. 2015, but page 72 states that the period is Sept. 2013 to Aug. 2014.
All candidate volume listed on pages 71 and 72 of the RFP are for September 1, 2014 through August 31, 2015.
28. **P. 71-72, 5.1 Attachment A, and p. 99-102, 6.3 Package C - Cost Proposal.** There appears to be some discrepancy between the candidate volumes listed in Attachment A and the Weighting Factors for each type of exam listed on the Cost Proposal form. The volumes in Attachment A add up to nearly 83,000 exams per year, whereas the volumes in the Cost Proposal form add up to nearly 69,000 exams per year. Please clarify this difference.
Attachment A reflects the actual volume of individual tests taken. Note that some tests have multiple parts, which may be taken separately (Multi-Subject CSTs and School Leader assessments). The cost proposal asks for the complete cost of these assessments and reflects the approximate volume of test takers if each individual test was taken together. A minor inconsistency in the weighting of the Content Specialty Tests has been adjusted on the revised Bid Form – Cost Proposal.

and please also provide:

- Candidate volumes by exam title as listed in the Cost Proposal form for the most recent year.
The candidate volumes by exam title are listed in Appendix A.
- Pass rates by exam title as listed in the Cost Proposal for the most recent year.
This information is not available for release.
- Retake volumes by exam title as listed in the Cost Proposal for the most recent year.
Retake volume is included in the examination volume listed in Attachment A.
- The maximum time allotted for each exam title as listed in the Cost Proposal.

Current Time Allocations for NYSTCE	
Examination	Time (min)
Academic Literacy Skills Test (ALST)	210
Education All Students (EAS)	135
Content Specialty Tests (CSTs) excluding Mathematics CST and Multi-Subject CSTs	195
Mathematics CST	210
Multi-Subject CSTs (3 parts taken together)	315
Bilingual Education Assessments (BEAs)	240

Assessment of Teaching Assistant Skills (ATAS)	180
School Building Leader (each part)	240
School District Leader	240
School District Building Leader	240

29. Candidate volumes by location for the most recent year.
 See questions 7 and 8.
30. Please provide a list of the current test fees by title, in the same format as the Cost Proposal, as well as what portion (if any) of each fee is remitted to the State.
 The current fees by exam title are available in Section 1.3.1. No portion of the fee is remitted to New York State.
31. Are there any statutory fee caps on the tests and/or services required by the RFP?
 There is no statutory fee cap at this time; however, the RFP indicates that the cost to the candidate of any test may not be exceed by greater than 20% the current cost as provided in Section 1.3.1. Also, the RFP limits the cost of any additions fees to the maximum fees provided in Section 1.15. Please be aware that this is a best value procurement and the evaluation criteria assigns a significant portion (30 percent) of the proposal score to the financial criteria. Bidders are encouraged to submit proposals that are as cost effective as possible.
32. **p. 10, 1.1 Mandatory Requirements.** *“NYSED has not established specific utilization goals for this procurement. Nevertheless, NYSED remains committed to promoting the participation of certified Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises to the greatest extent possible. Therefore, NYSED strongly encourages bidders to seek New York State certified M/WBE subcontractors at a participation rate of 30%.”* As there are no specific utilization goals, are vendors required to follow the instructions on pages 37-40 of the RFP, regarding good faith efforts and waiver requests?
 No, bidders are not required to submit waiver requests for this RFP.