

**RFP #17-001 Provider of Student Growth Measures for Use in Educator  
Evaluation and Institutional Accountability  
Q & A Document**

Questions submitted to the Growth RFP email address were placed into the following categories:

- Program Matters
- Reporting Questions
- Technology/Security Questions
- Submission Questions
- Fiscal/Contractual Matters
- M/WBE Matters

***Program Matters***

1. **Is this a new requirement for the state or is there an incumbent? If so, who is the incumbent contractor and when does their contract expire?**

There is an incumbent: American Institutes of Research (AIR). The existing contract expires December 31, 2016.

2. **Has the NYSED previously worked with any outside vendors/consultants for any work related to this scope? If yes, who has the Department worked with / is currently working with?**

Please see the answer to question #1.

3. **Is the Contractor creating the APPRs or just performing the data analysis for the APPRs?**

The contractor is not responsible for creating the Annual Professional Performance Reviews (APPRs). The contractor is responsible for providing student growth measures for use in Institutional Accountability and State-provided growth ratings and scores for teachers, principals, and schools, which are used as one of multiple measures in educators' APPRs.

***Reporting Questions***

1. **To what extent must one reproduce the procedures implemented in <https://www.engageny.org/file/147081/download/2014-15-technical-report-for-growth-measures.pdf?token=4Kdm3PMf>**

For Year 1 of the contract, the vendor must calculate and deliver State-provided growth scores based on the student growth methodologies approved for implementation in 2015-16 school year. These methodologies are the same as those described in the 2014-15 Technical Report.

In renewal years, the vendor will update and submit for approval revised detailed business rules that account for any additional changes to the student growth methodology beta modeled by the vendor and approved by NYSED.

2. **It is believed the current model is calculated using SAS. Must the 2016-17 analyses also be conducted in SAS? Statistical software does not always give equal results even for the same procedures.**

It is correct that the current model is calculated using SAS. The New York State Education Department (NYSED or "the Department") is not opposed to the vendor using a different statistical software package. If the vendor chooses to use a different software package, NYSED expects the vendor to directly translate the 2015-16 programming into the different software language and provide evidence that the results have impact/sensitivity statistics that are comparable to prior years' results. The vendor should include in the project narrative of the

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technical proposal a clear articulation of how the software will meet all required deliverables for Services 1.2.1 and 1.2.2, including the technical approach to the data analysis and beta modeling, and why this approach will best meet NYSED's needs.

3. **The current procedure used for dealing with linear model misfit at the extremes (LOSS/HOSS) documented on page 67 of <https://www.engageny.org/file/147081/download/2014-15-technical-report-for-growth-measures.pdf?token=4Kdm3PMf> is not well formulated and documented to an extent that it can't be reproduced by someone other than the current vendor (AIR). Is it a requirement to use this procedure for LOSS/HOSS adjustments in the 2016-2017 year?**

Yes, the procedure for LOSS/HOSS adjustments will be required for the 2016-17 growth model. These procedures will be provided to the winning vendor.

4. **Following the requirement in the RFP to provide detailed documentation and source code on the calculations, is such source code and documentation available for the 2014-2015 analyses documented in <https://www.engageny.org/file/147081/download/2014-15-technical-report-for-growth-measures.pdf?token=4Kdm3PMf>**

NYSED will provide the vendor with the programming and business rules used to generate the 2015-16 results, as well the 2015-16 Technical Report.

5. **The Engage NY website contains many materials that explain the current methodology in place for growth metrics (referenced on page 13 & 14).**
- a. **Given that the 2016-17 analysis will follow the same business rules as prior years, will these materials remain in use as-is for 2016-17?**

The existing resources will remain available on the EngageNY website. As described in Service 1.2.1, Deliverable 3, the vendor must develop, maintain, and deliver annual updates to documentation of growth model methodologies to meet the needs of several different audiences. Documents will be reviewed and approved by NYSED, and the vendor will prepare revised final versions for public distribution based on NYSED feedback.

- b. **Will these materials be available to build upon and modify by winning vendor for subsequent years of analysis where methodology may differ?**

See the answer to question 5(a).

6. **Are the on-line systems to support educator access to "Reporting Templates" going to continue to exist?**

The secure online Growth Reporting System (GRS) enables authorized users to securely access their current year (and, if applicable, prior years) State-provided growth scores/ratings and growth data. This online reporting system is hosted by the current vendor and will not continue to be provided to educators after June 30, 2016.

7. **In what format will the data be received from NYSED?**

Data files will be provided in comma separated value (.csv) or Excel formats.

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**8. In what format should the vendor return the data in?**

Per Deliverable 1(c) of Section 1.2.1, the vendor will produce and deliver to NYSED statewide data files containing the outcomes in a format agreed upon by NYSED. Under the current contract, files are provided to districts in comma separated value (.csv) format.

**9. On page 12, please clarify what is meant by “Vendor will process source data files”? What steps are included in “process”?**

NYSED expects the winning vendor to conduct quality control checks on all source files and provide summaries of these reference files to NYSED. NYSED and the winning vendor will work together to define the expectations of these checks.

**10. On page 13, how many LEAs are there that the vendor will be creating a separate data file for? Will data files be on a student-level, LEA level, or both?**

Per Deliverable 1(b)(i) of Section 1.2.1, the vendor will provide student-level growth results, as well as educator and school-level growth results to each LEA. These files will also include a district summary file. For the 2015-16 school year, there are approximately 733 public school districts, 37 BOCES, and 260 charter schools.

**11. In order to calculate ‘growth,’ how many years of historical data will the vendor be provided?**

The Grades 4-8 Growth Model uses up to three years of historical grades 3-8 ELA and Math assessment data to calculate growth. The Grades 9-12 Growth model uses up to ten years of historical grades 3-8 ELA and math assessment and NYSESLAT data and up to eight years of historical Regents assessments. See the 2014-15 Technical report for more information: <https://www.engageny.org/resource/technical-report-growth-measures-2014-15>.

**12. Will the NYSED provide data files inclusive of all students or only students enrolled during State assessments?**

NYSED will provide data files that are inclusive of all students.

**13. Will student-teacher linkages be one-to-one, or will the student be linked to each teacher that they have? If one-to-one, will NYSED advise the vendor on the linkage?**

Teacher-student linkages are reported at the building/teacher/student/course level. Multiple linkages may be reported for each building/teacher/student/course as a result of either students being enrolled in more than one course-section at the same time and/or students leaving and entering the same course throughout the school year. NYSED will provide the vendor business rules describing how to process these data. See the “Staff Student Course” instructions in the 2015-16 reporting template here: <http://p1232.nysed.gov/irs/vendors/2015-16/techInfo.html>.

**14. Are calculations based on fall data or spring data for high schools?**

The grades 9-12 growth model uses assessment data for the current school year. These data include the August, January, and June assessments.

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**15. Is the Contractor reviewing accuracy of the data or just performing calculations strictly on the data we're given?**

Per Deliverables 1 and 2 of Service 1.2.1, NYSED expects the vendor to process source files received from NYSED with interim output files summarizing the results of the file preparation as a quality assurance mechanism and to conduct extensive sensitivity and impact statistical analyses on the results generated by the model. These analyses will be compared to similar statistics generated from prior years' growth models. Please also see RFP Section 1.3.2, Quality Control Processes.

**16. RFP specifies that new vendor will replicate 2015-16 business rules and methodology for the 2016-17 analysis (page 9). Will the prior vendor continue to defend the business rules and methodology for the 2016-17 analysis in the event of challenges?**

No, the prior vendor will not defend the business rules and methodology for the 2016-17 analysis. The winning vendor will be responsible for defending any challenges to the 2016-17 growth model, including but not limited to the 2016-17 business rules and methodologies. Please see paragraph 7 of Section 1.3.8 for more information.

While the vendor is expected to defend any challenges to the model, at its September 2015 meeting, the Board of Regents amended Subparts 30-2 and 30-3 of the Rules of the Board of Regents to prescribe an appeals process for a teacher or principal who wishes to challenge their State-provided growth score (SPGS), in certain limited circumstances for the 2014-15 school year and thereafter while the Department is reviewing the growth model to determine if any changes are needed.

Additionally, in December 2015, the Board of Regents adopted regulatory amendments to add §30-2.14 and §30- 3.17 to the Rules of the Board of Regents, which provide a four-year transition period for APPRs during which time State-provided growth scores will not be used for employment purposes and will be used for advisory purposes only. This transition period will last through the 2018-19 school year. During this transition period, NYSED expects to convene a workgroup to review the current New York State student growth model and review and recommend any changes to the model that are deemed necessary.

Because state provided growth scores will be used solely for informational purposes during the 2016-17 school year, and will not be used in any consequential way for teacher and principal evaluations, the Department believes the likelihood of legal challenge to the 2016-17 business rules and methodology is unlikely.

***Technology/Security Questions***

**1. Vendor interprets the requirement in Section 1.8.3(1) to mean that NYSED will retain ownership in all work, including code and methodologies, that is developed by Vendor in the performance of the services under the contract. Is Vendor's interpretation of this requirement correct?**

If you are referring to 1.3.8, yes, you are interpreting this correctly. All work developed by the vendor under this contract shall be the sole and exclusive property of NYSED.

**2. For Deliverable 9, would the corrected student assessment data be sent to the vendor by NYSED or the districts/BOCES? Or would the vendor develop the actual process that allows districts/BOCES to correct student assessment data?**

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The vendor would develop the process that allows districts, BOCES, and Charters to review their growth results and submit corrections to the vendor.

3. **Under security requirements, in Appendix R security measures, RFP specifies that #3 g. A copy of the Contractor's security review evidencing compliance with these requirements must be submitted to NYSED for review and approval within 6 months of the signing of the contract or before the first certification test is performed, whichever occurs first.**

- a. **Can we get more clarity on above—what is considered a “certification test”?**

The “certification test” is a reference to Section 2 of Appendix R.

- b. **Is the contractor's “security review evidence compliance” same as the “security procedures” document the contractor is required to provide?**

Yes, these are the same concepts. Both serve the purpose of documenting compliance with Appendix R.

4. **Will work be performed on-site or from a remote location?**

The vendor will complete the work at the vendor’s own location. NYSED program staff and the vendor will participate in routine project management conference calls. As described in the RFP, there will be limited travel to the NYSED office in Albany, NY.

***Submission Questions***

1. **Where should forms identified in the RFP but not included in the checklist (Identifying Data on page 6, Partnership Document on page 7, Non-Disclosure Certificate on page 19, M/WBE Purchases on page 28, Letter from previous clients, Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire, and NYSED Vendor Responsibility Review) be included?**

- Pages 6 and 7 within RFP Section 5, Submission Documents (posted separately alongside the RFP), are part of the Non-Collusive Bidding Certification Form, which begins on page 5.
- As indicated in the RFP, the Non-Disclosure Agreement must be submitted to NYSED prior to the initiation of work under this contract. The winning vendor and all of its subcontractors performing work on the contract must sign this agreement. If you would like to submit this form with your bid, you may include it in the sealed Technical Proposal package.
- The M/WBE Purchases Form is the M/WBE Subcontracting/Supplier Form listed on the Application Checklist. It should be submitted within the sealed Cost Proposal envelope.
- The letters of reference from current clients should be included within the Technical Proposal package and referenced within the Evidence of Organizational Capacity and Demonstrated Effectiveness section of the proposal.
- It is recommended that the Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire be submitted online, per RFP instructions. As indicated on the Application Checklist, if submitting a paper version of the Questionnaire, it should be included within the sealed Submission Documents package.

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2. **In Section 4. Assurances on page 46, it notes that the “Submission Documents” must be signed by the Chief Administrative Officer. May these forms be signed by the lead engagement partner, who is authorized to sign on behalf of the firm?**

The Submission Documents must be signed by an individual authorized to sign on behalf of the prime bidder.

***Fiscal/Contractual Matters***

1. **What is the anticipated total project value for this contract?**

NYSED is not providing a maximum budget figure for this work. Please keep in mind that the total project budget will be scored on a “best value” basis, meaning the budget that represents the overall lowest cost will receive the highest score, which represents 27% of total points available.

2. **Will NYSED consider commercially reasonable changes to Sections 1.3.8(2), 1.3.8(8), 1.3.8(9) and Appendix A-1?**

No, these sections are not negotiable.

3. **Will the successful vendor have an opportunity to negotiate the terms and conditions of the resulting contract?**

NYSED reserves the right to negotiate with the successful vendor within the scope of the RFP in the best interest of the State. Further, as described in the RFP, at the end of Year 1 and each anticipated renewal contract year thereafter, NYSED will negotiate with the vendor additional model enhancements to beta test during the subsequent renewal year.

4. **Will NYSED explain the negotiation process for the terms and conditions of the resulting contract?**

NYSED does not anticipate negotiating the terms and conditions of the resulting contract apart from the renewal year beta analyses negotiations mentioned in response to question #3 above. Prior to the beginning of each renewal year, a deliverable-based budget will be developed for the work, using an agreed upon number of hours for each Deliverable, multiplied by the blended hourly rate provided in the vendor’s approved cost proposal. The beta analysis work in renewal years is anticipated to be comparable in scope to Year 1 beta analysis work, meaning that we anticipate that Deliverables 5-8 in Section 1.2.2 of the RFP will remain the same; however, the specific model enhancements to be tested may differ slightly and the work involved is expected to be less extensive. The budget for this work is anticipated to be up to \$350,000 per contract year.

***M/WBE Matters***

1. **If we identify a potential subcontractor who is not yet certified as a minority or woman-owned business in New York, what are the possible risks associated in moving forward with such a partner? Specifically, what factors typically keep an organization from being certified?**

If the bidder chooses to subcontract with a company pending M/WBE certification, the bidder must:

- provide a reference number from Empire State Development indicating that all of the required documentation has been received;
- achieve Full participation as a result of using the company pending certification; and

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- inform SED’s M/WBE Unit if the subcontractor has not been certified after 6 months of initial M/WBE approval. If after 6 months the company is not certified, the M/WBE Unit will advise the bidder of next steps to maintain full compliance.

The contact person on M/WBE matters is available throughout the application and procurement process to assist bidders in meeting the M/WBE goals.

2. **We’re considering utilizing a subcontractor for the communication and video elements of our work plan, do you happen to know of M/WBE certified candidates who might be potential fits for this type of work?**

Please contact the MWBE Unit at MWBE@nysed.gov with details of your need.

3. **In examining the award criteria components (both Technical and Cost), we don’t see an explanation for how M/WBE goal attainment (full, partial or none) is calculated into the selection criteria. Is M/WBE goal attainment status no longer considered once the submitting organization has been deemed to have met the M/WBE goals or been issued a partial or complete waiver?**

M/WBE utilization is not factored into the scoring of proposal. All bidders must comply with the M/WBE requirements described in RFP.

4. **Is the advertising option a requirement in the demonstration of good faith efforts, or is it simply part of the portfolio of options?**

Advertising is one of the options – the contact person on M/WBE matters is available throughout the application and procurement process to assist bidders in meeting the M/WBE goals.

5. **Can you suggest strategies for identifying New York-centric publications likely to be seen by minority- and woman-owned firms in New York State?**

Please contact the M/WBE Coordinator at MWBE@nysed.gov.

6. **Can/Should any advertisement limit partnering availability to firms are already certified and included in NYS M/WBE Directory?**

No

7. **Finally, would we need to include the name of our organization in the notice, or would it be acceptable for the advertisement to simply reference the RFP and the needed services?**

The selection of NYS certified M/WBE firms to “provide meaningful participation” are the intent of the Good Faith Efforts. A listing of currently NYS certified M/WBE firms may be found at <https://ny.newnycontracts.com/FrontEnd/VendorSearchPublic.asp?TN=ny&XID=4687>.  
(See response to Question #2)