

New England Assessment Consortium  
Connecticut | New Hampshire | Vermont

BIDDER QUESTIONS and CONSORTIUM RESPONSES  
(5/27/2014 Update)

Item# (Date Rec'd)	Section	Question	Consortium Response
1 (5/12/14)	General	Of the three components of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Model (e.g., Summative, Interim and Formative), which ones are included in the scope of work for this rfp?	Bidders should plan on hosting and support for the Summative and Interim Assessments, both of which will use the same assessment delivery platform. The Formative Assessment Digital Library will be hosted by Smarter Balanced.
2 (5/12/14)	8.8 VT & NH 7.8 CT	For costing purposes, do the states require hand-scorers to be trained on each item in the item pool or will vendors score items based on item type or genre?  Since there are so many constructed response and extended response items in the item pool that could appear during one CAT administration, the amount of time to train readers will be quite extensive if we are required to train readers using the full complement of training materials for each item provided by SBAC. Our question concerns the possibility of training by item type rather than by each individual item. For example, may we train readers on persuasive writing by grade and then score all the persuasive writing responses for a grade based on that training?	We have passed this question on to SBAC and should have an answer in a few days. Please check back later.
3 (5/12/14)	General	For paper materials, how many schools should bidders plan to provide materials to in each state, how many districts should bidders plan to provide materials to in each state. Should bidders plan to ship materials directly to schools or should bidders pack materials by school but ship them to the districts?	Bidders should plan on packing and shipping paper testing materials to schools, rather than districts. Table 4 in the rfp provides an estimate of the numbers of students in each state that may need a paper test form. In terms of the number of schools this represents, here are our best estimates:  CT – 10 or less NH – Not able to answer this question at this time VT – 5 or less
4 (5/12/14)	8.1, NH	The numbering in section 8.1.2 is not numbered sequentially. Sub-sections currently are listed as 8.1.1.1 and 8.1.1.2, instead of 8.1.2.1 and 8.1.2.2. Should we use the numbering as is or correct it?	Please organize your response using the numbering sequence from the VT rfp

5 (5/12/14)	8.4 VT & NH 7.4 CT	For costing purposes, will all items in the item pool be available for use in the CAT pool each year or is the item pool to be partitioned and only a segment of the items to be used in the CAT each year?	All items will be included in the annual pools. Smarter Balanced will monitor item use and will replace items once they have reached a predetermined level of maximum exposure.
6 (5/12/14)	8.4 VT & NH 7.4 CT	Do the states anticipate any state-led item development in support of the Smarter Balanced consortia?	Yes, but probably not until the second year of the project. See "State led item development" in the rfp. Bidders do not need to budget for item development but should demonstrate that they have sufficient capacity to provide this work.
7 (5/12/14)	8.5.1 VT & NH 7.5.1 CT	In regards to student counts, what percent of overages should bidders use for calculating AMOs, spoilage, samples, etc.?	Bidders should plan on 10% overage, with a minimum of 5 for small schools.
8 (5/12/14)	8.8 VT & NH 7.8 CT	Will the Interim tests require bidders to hand score performance tasks throughout the year or should the bidders provide a way for local teachers to score these tasks locally?	Constructed response items on the interim assessment will be scored by teachers using scoring packs provided by Smarter Balanced.
9 (5/12/14)	8.11.7.2, VT	The text reads: 8.11.7.2 Connecticut On-line Reports URL: <a href="http://www.ctreports.com/">http://www.ctreports.com/</a> User Guide: <a href="https://solutions1.emetric.net/CTDataAnalyzer/Help/HelpGuide.pdf">https://solutions1.emetric.net/CTDataAnalyzer/Help/HelpGuide.pdf</a> Does Vermont have a state-specific reporting system of their own (as opposed to Connecticut's) they would like bidder's to review?	Both VT and NH are members of the NECAP consortium and use the same on-line analysis and reporting system. As noted in the rfp, bidders may review the system using the DEMO passwords that are provided.
10 (5/12/14)	All	Regarding the reporting system, please confirm that the consortium desires one shared reporting system and not three unique state-specific systems.	Bidders should plan for a single reporting system that will be used by all three states.
11 (5/12/14)	Ap. 2 NH	Is form P-37 in Appendix 2 of the NH RFP to be completed and included in the proposal? If so, how do we access the information to be used in fields 1.6, 1.7, and 1.8?	NH Assessment has posed this question to the NH IT Division and will post the response here once received.
12 (5/12/14)	Ap. 2 NH	Is form P-37 in Appendix 2 of the NH RFP to be completed and included in the proposal? If so, how do we access the information to be used in fields 1.6, 1.7, and 1.8?	NH Assessment has posed this question to the NH IT Division and will post the response here once received.

13 (5/12/14)	CT	Addendum #1 states that the States are expecting three identical proposals. Connecticut's RFP did not include the same Part 2 that New Hampshire and Vermont did, so their numbering is off by one (NH and VT Part 4 is CT Part 3). For the sake of maintaining numbering consistency between the proposals, can bidders adjust the numbering for CT, or should bidders use CT's numbering as written.	As noted above, bidders should organize their response using the numbering sequence from the VT rfp.
14 (5/12/14)	All	Do the States anticipate that they will receive one identical schedule for the NEAC in each state's proposal or are they anticipating customized schedules for each state? And if customized schedules are desired, please provide a high-level list of deliverables and the state-desired due dates.	Bidders should plan on one identical schedule. In the rare instance where a state may need alterations to that schedule, arrangements would be negotiated between the individual state and the vendor.
15 (5/12/14)	CT	Are there any state-specific forms that need to be completed for CT, other than Appendix 3?	No
16 (5/12/14)	All	When are the Interim assessments first to be administered?	Smarter Balanced anticipates providing states with the interim items in September or October so that the interim system can go live in November, 2014.
17 (5/12/14)	General	Will each of the states pay their own Smarter Balanced Fees or is the Bidder to pay these fees on behalf of the states?	The states will assume fiscal responsibility for Smarter Balanced. Bidders only need to plan for the collaboration conferences with Smarter, as articulated in the RFP.
18 (5/12/14)	General	It is assumed that by creating a consortium the states desire to create efficiencies with contractor staffing levels. What level of individualized staffing support do each of the States require? Example, one Program Manager assigned for each state or a single Program Manager for the NEAC?	Bidders should plan for a single management team that serves the concurrent needs of all three states. It will not be necessary to have a dedicated staff for each individual state unless the bidder believes that would be necessary to meet the goals and responsibilities articulated in the RFP.
19 (5/7/14)	General	Are there printed booklets for Braille and LP? If so what are the estimated quantities needed for each state?	Students who are blind will take the on-line tests using refreshable Braille and graphics embossers, or may print out items one at a time to a Braille typewriter, in both cases allowing the student to benefit from the Computer Adaptive Testing technology. The on-line test engine also includes embedded options for enlarging or magnifying text. It is likely that a Braille form of the pencil-paper test will be necessary but at this point in time it is difficult to predict numbers or grade levels until it is established which schools will require a pencil-paper tests and if any of those schools have students who need a Braille or large print test.

20 (5/7/14)	General	In the Purpose of Solicitation section, paragraph 4, it states "The reporting functions shall be bid out separately but should be included in the Proposer's response." Will the NEAC consortium allow for vendors to bid solely on the Analysis and Reporting solution or do all submissions have to include a full bid package?	The states are seeking a vendor that will provide all the functions and services listed in the scope of work, including the reporting solution. Bidders may subcontract any of the work, however, as long as the subcontractor's qualifications are clearly articulated in the proposal.
21 (5/7/14)	General	Does the NEAC consortium intend to have single sign-on integration between the Test Administration and Reporting solutions?	If the bidder is proposing use of an alternative test delivery platform rather than the open source technology provided by Smarter Balanced, then a single sign-on system would be desirable although not required. If the Smarter Balanced test engine will be used, then separate sign-on systems will be necessary.
22 (5/7/14)	General	With the exception of the 'State Specific Requirements' section of the RFP, should proposers submit identical responses to each state's RFP?	Yes. Although each of the three states has issued its own rfp, with the exception of the state specific requirements, the states are anticipating receipt of identical proposals that integrate the scope of work into a single unified project.
23 (5/7/14)	General	In Appendix 1 there is a table showing the cost distribution model but it doesn't include the reporting system. Should the cost of the reporting system be equally distributed or proportionally distributed?	Costs for the On-line reporting system should be distributed equally.
24 (5/7/14)	8.1.2.1 NH	For budgeting purposes how many members of the State project management team will be attending each of the management meetings?	Bidders should budget for two representatives per state per meeting. There may, from time to time, be specific agenda topics that would benefit from participation by others (e.g., the states' English Language Arts consultants are asked to attend for a discussion of scoring protocols). However, this will not be a frequent occurrence and the vendor will have advanced notice that additional participants will be attending. As standard operating procedure, a state will provide prior notice to the vendor and management team members if additional representatives will attend a meeting.
25 (5/7/14)	8.2.1 NH	How many TAC members will be needed?	As noted in the rfp, in the early stages of the project, states would like to discuss TAC specifics with the vendor to identify the configuration, roles, functions and individuals that will best support the consortium's work. Bidders can plan on no more than 10 TAC members and possibly less.

26 (5/7/14)	8.2.9 NH	Is the Contractor only responsible for staff travel expenses for attending the meeting with State education leadership and not for meeting expenses (e.g., meeting facilities)?	Yes. The state that requested the meeting with education leadership will make arrangements for the meeting and related expenses.
27 (5/7/14)	8.2.10 NH	Is the Contractor only responsible for staff travel expenses for attending the meetings held by the Smarter Balanced Consortium?	Yes. Smarter Balanced has indicated that these meetings will occur at a location arranged by them. Bidders should plan only on providing travel and lodging expenses for their staff.
28 (5/7/14)	7.5 CT	For the print accommodated version of the tests, will each state require a unique cover specific to that state, or will a generic cover be acceptable?	Bidders can plan on developing a generic cover for the pencil and paper test forms, but the template should include a section that lists state-specific information.
29 (5/7/14)	7.5.1 CT and 8.5.1 NH	The Connecticut RFP states 9,000 students per grade for NH but in section 8.5.1 of the New Hampshire RFP the counts are 725 students per grade. Which one is correct?	New Hampshire is projecting 725 students per grade. Connecticut apologizes for the editing error.
30 (5/7/14)	7.5.2 CT	Should costs be included for vendor site visits during printing/collating?	Bidders may propose a variety of methods for ensuring print quality, including but not limited to site visits and/or embedded quality control procedures. Vendor costs for the strategies and procedures listed in the proposal should be reflected in corresponding areas of the proposed budget.
31 (5/7/14)	8.3.9 NH	Please describe what the contractor will be responsible for providing for the one-half day regional trainings. Is the contractor responsible for the meeting facilities? Would the contractor be responsible for covering any travel expenses (mileage, meals, lodging, etc.) for participants? Approximately how many participants would attend each regional training session?	Bidders should plan for 100 to 125 participants per half day training session. Vendors will work with the management team to develop and present test administration training materials that may be developed to supplement those provided by Smarter Balanced. Bidders should plan on budgeting for all aspects of these training (e.g., facilities, snacks, staff travel) but will not be responsible for any participant costs, including travel expenses for the states' representatives.
32 (5/7/14)	7.7.2 & 7.7.3 CT	Are these guidelines to be part of a test coordinator's manual, or a separate document? And are they to be "published" and made available online as a pdf or printed and distributed in quantity?	Bidders should plan on preparing a test coordinator's manual for the pencil and paper testing option. For the on-line assessment, any additional materials would be intended to supplement the test administration modules and materials provided by Smarter Balanced, and would be limited in size and scope to meet needs for information identified during the first operational administration. In general, the states are committed to using on-line publication resources whenever possible, including for test administration materials.

33 (5/7/14)	8.8.1.7 NH	For budgeting purposes how many State representatives will travel to the scoring site?	Bidders should plan on providing travel expenses for one representative per state to observe scoring at one location. The states will coordinate the observations to cover the assessment content areas to the extent possible within the limits of three total observations.
34 (5/7/14)	8.12.1 NH	This section specifies that the Proposer should submit their bids with "A breakdown of the cost for the implementation of each system (individually), including the summative, interim and formative assessments." Should these costs breakdowns be included in Appendix 3, Form 2.3 under "Section 7. State Specific Requests?" Should this breakout only include the NH costs or costs for all three states (NH, CT, VT)?	Any bids under the "State Specific" section should reflect only the cost that will be incurred by the state making the request.
35 (5/7/14)	Pages 3 & 30 NH	It is our understanding, based on the text on Page 3, that the digital library of formative materials will be hosted by Smarter Balanced. Please clarify for what the vendor is supposed to provide costs in regards to formative assessment.	The scope of work does not include any requirements related to the Digital Library. Smarter Balanced will host this component of the Smarter Balanced Assessment System
36 (5/7/14)	Ap. 2 NH	In the Appendix 2 of New Hampshire, the State requirements tables formatting has cut off several of the sentences and some rows look as though there may be text that is unseen due to row height. Could we receive an updated table or a version in which row height could be manually manipulated? Please confirm the bidders are to include this table in our proposals.	New Hampshire is currently looking into the formatting problem.
37 (5/7/14)	Ap. 3, Form 2.1 NH	Form 2.1 requires hourly rates and total annual salary by staff. Will this information be considered confidential or will it be made public?	Bidders may designate any sections of their proposal, including detailed budgets, as "proprietary." In the event that there are requests to review the winning proposal, the contractor will be contacted by the states and given the option of having the proprietary sections redacted or may allow the proposal to be released in its entirety. However, the states are not open to the notion that an entire proposal would be labeled as proprietary, but understand that budget information and intellectual property should not be shared with the contractor's competitors.
38 (5/7/14)	Ap. 3, Form 2.3 NH	Please describe what should be entered in the second column in Form 2.3 "Scope of Work Task." Should Proposers enter the scope of work task from the RFP (e.g., 8.1.1 for the "Project Team [Salaries and Benefits]" row)?	Yes, although bidders may choose to enter more descriptive terms if they believe it will enhance the states' ability to evaluate the merits of the proposal.

39 (5/7/14)	Ap. 3, Form 3 NH	Please specify how proposers should provide FTEs. Should hours, percentages, or FTE hours (e.g., 0.75) be included on the form?	Bidders should calculate FTEs in terms of the proportion of the employee's work day that will be allocated exclusively to this project.
40 (5/15/14)	All	The number of text-based items (i.e., which are anticipated to be scored by hand or AI engines) in the item pool overall is quite large. For example, the Smarter Balanced blueprint indicates there are 2,350 such items in ELA and 1,495 in math for the entire summative pool. Are all these text-based items expected to be available for selection in the CAT algorithm for a single administration? If the expectation is for a subset of items, can you please specify the number of such items?	Please see Item 5
41 (5/15/14)	All	Can you confirm that the hand scoring or AI vendor will need to have scoring in place for each of the text-based items in the item pool?	Please see Item 2
42 (5/15/14)	All	Are the NEAC states open to limiting the number of text-based items in the item pool for a given administration or school year to gain efficiencies in scoring?	No. Bidders should plan on hosting the entire assessment package, including all items in the item pools, as provided by Smarter Balanced. Please see "Hosting Requirements" in the rfp appendices.
43 (5/15/14)	All	Has Smarter Balanced provided expected exposure rates for the text-based items (e.g., item 986 has a chance of being administered to 30% of students) so that allocation of training resources can be matched to expected item counts? If not, when will Smarter Balanced provide this information?	Please see Item 2
44 (5/15/14)	All	Will Smarter Balanced provide training and validation datasets for each of the text-based items that can be used for AI engine training? If so, when will this data be available?	As indicated in the rfp, the states are open to exploring possible benefits of automated scoring if it can be demonstrated that it can meet the criteria noted in the rfp. However, SBAC will not introduce AI scoring to its own assessment delivery system, nor have they provided any information to date on how they might support vendors who want to propose the use of AI. We will pass this question on to Smarter Balanced and will post the answer here.

45 (5/27/14)	Pg. 28 VT	<p>10.3 SEALED BID INSTRUCTIONS: All bids must be sealed and must be addressed to the State of Vermont, Office of Purchasing &amp; Contracting, 10 Baldwin St - Montpelier, VT 05633-7501. BID ENVELOPES MUST BE CLEARLY MARKED 'SEALED BID' AND SHOW THE REQUISITION NUMBER AND/OR PROPOSAL TITLE, OPENING DATE AND NAME OF BIDDER.</p> <p>Is there a requisition number for this procurement?</p>	No Requisition Number has been assigned to this project. The proposal tile is sufficient.
46 (5/27/14)	ALL	Do vendors need to be licensed to do business in each NEAC state prior to proposal response submission, or at time of contract award?	Vendors must be licensed to do business in each state in order to execute the contract, It will not be possible to sign the contract until this occurs.
47 (5/27/14)	Sec. 7.12.1 CT	In the CT RFP, section 7.12.1, is CT seeking to have the preliminary assessment results available via an online reporting system or is CT requesting to receive the preliminary assessment data via a data file?	Vendors should plan on producing a data file of preliminary assessment results
48 (5/27/14)	8.1.2.1	The RFP states, "Lodging and meals (as appropriate) for the states' management team will be arranged and paid by the contractor." Is the contractor also responsible for mileage reimbursement for the states' management team?	Vendors will not be expected to provide mileage reimbursement
49 (5/27/14)	8.3.5	Is it the NEAC's expectation that one practice/training test will be created? Should this be available for interim testing as well as summative?	Vendors do NOT need to provide practice/training tests unless they plan to propose an alternate assessment delivery system, and then only if there are compelling reasons to NOT used the practice/training tests that are part of the Smarter Balanced open-source assessment engine. The state prefer to use the Smarter Balanced practice/training materials if possible. The practice/training tests will support both the summative and interim assessments.
50 (5/27/14)	8.3.9	Contractors will be responsible for providing up to 4 one-half day regional trainings on system use and test administration procedures, to be supplemented by an online webinar and other on-line training materials (e.g., slide deck from webinar, FAQ document).	Vendors should plan on providing 4 regional trainings per state, for a total of 12.
		Is it expected that there will be 4 trainings per state, for a total of 12 trainings?	



51 (5/27/14)	8.3.10	Are there specific hours of coverage required for the help desk during the administration window?	Vendors should plan on making the Help Desk available during normal business hours (8:00 am to 4:00 pm)
52 (5/27/14)	8.12.1 NH	<p>The RFP states, “New Hampshire requests that the Proposer submit their bids with the following additional information:</p> <p>8.12.1 A breakdown of the cost for the implementation of each system (individually) including the summative, interim and formative assessments.”</p> <p>Since Proposers are bidding on a project for the three states (NH, CT, and VT) and the costs are split between the states, how should Proposers provide this information? For example, the development costs would be fixed, so it is difficult to assign specific costs to one state. Are the costs requested here the total costs for the systems for all three states?</p>	The Proposers should provide one bid on elements of the RFP common to all states and breakdown the costs for the summative, interim and formative portions of the system.
53 (5/27/14)	Ap. 2 NH	Is it New Hampshire’s expectation that bidders respond point by point to the State of New Hampshire’s Additional Terms and Conditions included in its RFP and that vendors will complete the tables in that Appendix ? If so, can the NEAC provide the table in format in which we can complete the table (e.g., Microsoft Word)?	The table can be made available in an Excel version upon request. Please contact Scott Mantie: 603-271-3844 scott.mantie@doe.nh.gov
54 (5/27/14)	Ap. 2 NH	What is the meaning of the word “criticality” in the table in Appendix 2? Also, does “M” in this context mean “mandatory?”	M means mandatory and O means optional.