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To: All Interested Bidders
From: Office of Budget and Accounting
Date: November 15, 2024

Subject: Responses to Electronic Questions – Request for Quotes (25-004) New Jersey English Language Arts and Mathematics Next Generation Statewide Assessment Program

Below are formal responses to bidder submitted questions in accordance with the deadline established in the Request for Quotes (RFQ). These responses are intended to provide further clarification and detail regarding the requirements and expectations of this solicitation. Please review each response carefully, as they may contain information critical to preparing a compliant and competitive bid.

#	Page #	RFQ Section Reference	Question	Answer
1			Is NJDOE open to receiving responses that include alternative proposals, such as utilizing off-the-shelf assessments, for this RFQ? If so, how should a vendor include that information?	No. While the beginning of the contract will essentially be an off-the-shelf assessment since it will be based on the vendor’s item bank, the new development will focus on New Jersey standards and interpretation and become property of New Jersey.
2			Please clarify if Contractors should begin their technical response starting at Section 3.6 Technical Quote on pg. 8 of the RFP and conclude with Section 4.14.4 Attendance at Conferences on pg. 95.	Any interested vendor must provide all required documents as outlined in the RFQ, which includes Forms, Technical Quote, State-Supplied Price Sheet and State of New Jersey Security Due Diligence Third Party Information Security Questionnaire. Each vendor should determine how best to structure their response to each requirement that is outlined in the RFQ.

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3		3.15	For Section 3.15 Resumes, are there specific required roles/key personnel we should identify in our response? If so, please clarify what these roles are.	At a minimum, the following positions should have their resumes provided: i. Project manager, ii. Psychometrician(s) overseeing the project, iii. Lead content specialist(s) assigned to the project, and iv. Lead data specialist(s) assigned to the project.
4			Please confirm Contractors are not required to provide responses to the numbered sections under “5. General Contract Terms” starting on pg. 96 of the RFP, and “6. Data Security Requirements – Contractor Responsibility” starting on pg. 98.	While these sections don’t need a response, they should include some acknowledgment that they read and if selected agree understand that they will be required to comply with these provisions.
5			<p>Section 1.1 of the RFP states this will be a three (3) year Contract that will run through the end of the 2026-2027 academic year.</p> <p>a. When does NJDOE expect the new contract to start? Will Year 1 be a partial year, with the Contractor shadowing the existing Contractor for the remainder of 2024-2025 academic year and getting systems ready for the 2025-2026 academic year? Or will Year 1 start with the beginning of 2025-2026 academic year and the 3-year term will run through the 2027-2028 academic year?</p> <p>b. If the contract will be a partial year commencing in 2024-2025 academic year, how should Contractors fill out the pricing sheet since many of the Year 1 activities will be not applicable (i.e., all items</p>	<p>a. It is intended that year 1 will begin during the 2024-2025 academic year. There is no operational administration anticipated for year 1 of the contract.</p> <p>b. In year 1 the expectation would be the delivery of a field test of the item bank the vendor is bringing to New Jersey for use. New Jersey is looking to conduct standard setting activities following the first operational administration in Spring of 2026, and baseline statistics would need to be established prior to that administration. The level of item development should be commensurate with the time available from the contract award to the agreed upon field test.</p>

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			around administration, scoring and reporting)?	
6			For Section 4.5.2.3.3 NJGPA: Design and Reporting Requirements, could NJDOE provide item counts and item types for the existing item pools for NJGPA?	No. New Jersey currently owns no items for the ELA or mathematics assessments.
7			In Section 4.7.1.7.1 Compliant Content Format, the word “pre-recorded” was removed from the original RFP with respect to human recordings. Can you please clarify the intent behind this removal? Additionally, if items already have TTS, do you expect them to also have human recordings? If so, can you please elaborate on the scope of this work (e.g., all items need human recordings? Items on accommodated forms only?)	Text-to-speech capabilities can suffice to satisfy the requirement of a human recorded reading of the text provided the “voice” output sounds authentic and not robotic. The term “pre-recorded” was removed as it was redundant to the term “recorded” as that indicates the reading was recorded prior to the student encountering the item.
8			Is there a way for Contractors to signal reductions in meetings (number of days, number of participants) for Rangefinding (Field Test or Operational) if the solution they offer does not require the estimated quantities for each year as indicated in the pricing sheet?	As the meetings are listed as each, the vendor should price them appropriately. The total number used and length of each (thereby the cost) can be modified during the contract period with a change order.
9			Based on the RFQ, we understand the State prefers an assessment from Contractor-provided licensed items, and that the State prefers the use of automated scoring. If the Contractor-owned items have calibrated scoring models, does the State require Contractor-owned items to use New Jersey students to retrain the scoring engines? For extended response items, we would expect that to be done in the first year only. Does the State envision needing this in subsequent years? Does the State	Yes, New Jersey would expect the scoring engines to be trained based on the New Jersey Educator Committees interpretation of the scoring rubric and data provided by New Jersey Students. This is intended to be set the first time the item is used and only modified should there be drift or a change in rubric (which the item would need to be re-field-tested).

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			require constructed response items outside of extended response items?	
10	1	1.1 and Price Sheet	<p>Please confirm the contract years for the bid.</p> <p>Year 1 – 2024-2025 Academic Year Year 2 – 2025-2026 Academic Year Year 3 – 2026-2027 Academic Year Optional Year 1 – 2027-2028 Academic Year Optional Year 2 – 2028-2029 Academic Year</p> <p>If the above are correct, please confirm that there is no administration of the assessments under the new contract in the first contract year (2024-2025), only item development. The Price Sheet has lines for delivery of materials, scoring, technical report, etc. which would not seem to apply to year 1.</p>	<p>In year 1 the expectation would be the delivery of a field test of the item bank the vendor is bringing to New Jersey for use. New Jersey is looking to conduct standard setting activities following the first operational administration in Spring of 2026, and baseline statistics would need to be established prior to that administration. The level of item development should be commensurate with the time available from the contract award to the agreed upon field test.</p>
11	13	4.1	<p>Please confirm that ELA for grade 9 has both a fall and spring administration. Is this basically the ELA equivalent of the mathematics EOC assessments?</p>	<p>Yes, that is correct.</p>
12	13	4.1 and Price Sheet	<p>From a contract year perspective, for pricing purposes, is Summer the first administration in a contract year or the last administration? For example, should the Summer 2027 administration be included in Contract Year 3, or in the Optional Year 1 pricing?</p>	<p>It is intended that the administration (contract year) would begin with the Spring administration and conclude with the Fall administrations (Fall block for ELA 9, Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II, and Fall make up for the graduation proficiency assessment).</p>
13	14		<p>Please confirm that the first administration under the new contract is for Spring 2026, and that the current vendor will be responsible for the Fall 2025 administration.</p>	<p>The first operational administration under this contract is intended to be Spring, 2026. It is the expectation of New Jersey that the vendor will schedule a field test prior to the first operational administration to establish baseline statistics for the items based on NJ student performance.</p>

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14	16	4.2.4	Based on historical data, what is the projected annual contact volume (including phone, email, and online chat exchanges) that the Customer Support Center can expect?	The Customer Support Center experienced the following on an annual basis: <u>NJGPA</u> Total Contacts: 1,077 Phone: 584 Chat: 329 Email/Webform: 164 <u>NJSLA</u> Total Contacts: 2,948 Phone: 2,154 Chat: 586 Email/Webform: 208
15	40	4.5.2.3.1	The RFQ states “Students who do not demonstrate proficiency in grade 11 shall have opportunities to retake the component(s) they failed in the summer following their junior year...” By “components” do you mean either ELA or mathematics? So the student could just retake one subject and not the other? If so, please provide counts of retesters by subject for the summer and fall administrations.	The graduation proficiency assessment is a single assessment with two parts. When an LEA registers a student for the assessment, they are registering for both parts of the assessment. It is New Jersey’s expectation that the student will participate in all components of an assessment for which they are registered.
16	43	4.6.3.2.2	Is the ELA assessment also provided in Spanish? And if so, is it the entire assessment or just the test directions?	The ELA assessments are not provided in Spanish at this time. The Test Administration Scripts are currently translated into the top 10 languages spoken in New Jersey.
17	55	4.7.3.1.1.3	Are the Student Preparation Booklets actually printed and shipped to schools or just posted online? If printed and shipped, please provide quantities for bidding purposes.	They are to be posted online.
18	89 & 90	4.13.5.1 & 4.13.5.2	Please confirm requirement for producing and shipping CDs/USB flash drives. Could these files be posted securely online as an alternative solution?	New Jersey is open to alternative solutions, but solutions must meet the requirements for archiving and data retention. For most components of the statewide assessments, the requirement for retention is seven years.
19	1	1.1	By what date does NJDOE anticipate awarding the contract?	In year 1 the expectation would be the delivery of a field test of the item bank the

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			Are the three years of the base contract intended to be the remainder of Academic Year 24-25 and then Academic Year 25-26 and Academic Year 26-27?	vendor is bringing to New Jersey for use. New Jersey is looking to conduct standard setting activities following the first operational administration in Spring 2026, and baseline statistics would need to be established prior to that administration. The level of item development should be commensurate with the time available from the contract award to the agreed upon field test.
20	16	4.2.4.2	Can NJDOE share customer support services metrics, e.g., total calls, emails, chats, handle times by day/month for previous year?	The Customer Support Center experienced the following: <u>NJGPA</u> Total Contacts: 1,077 Phone: 584 Chat: 329 Email/Webform: 164 <u>NJSLA</u> Total Contacts: 2,948 Phone: 2,154 Chat: 586 Email/Webform: 208
21	23	4.3.2	Please confirm that the “alternate representation” tests shown in Table 4 are the breach forms described in section 4.7.2.1.D. If not, what are they?	The alternate representation is the paper tests that are not Large Print or Braille. The Total Paper is the sum of all other columns. The other data points are counts from the SR/PNP. The remaining 50 paper assessment are students that needed to test via paper due to special circumstances.
22	14 & 31	4.2.2 & 4.3.11.8	These two sections have references to item development and field testing prior to the first operational assessment (spring 2026). a. Can NJDOE please clarify when (calendar month) they would want/expect a standalone field test? And what is the specific purpose/goal of the standalone field test? Is the goal to bring the	a. New Jersey is open to discussing a plan with the vendor on the best timing/method for field-testing items prior to the first operational administration. The method proposed by the vendor should be psychometrically sound and defensible. The purpose of field-testing the items prior to the first operation administration would be for establishing baseline statistics using responses from New Jersey Students.

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			<p>standalone field-test items onto an existing NJ scale? If that is the intent, will any current NJ items be available to be used as anchor items for the calibration?</p> <p>b. Is the “new development” to be tested licensed content from the contractor, custom new content for NJ, or other?</p> <p>c. Please confirm that after this first standalone field test, annual field testing will occur embedded in the spring assessments (that seems to be referenced in several places in the RFQ).</p>	<p>b. This depends on the award date of the contract. If the contract is awarded with enough time, New Jersey would hope to complete some new development and include those items in the field-test. If time does not permit, then the stand alone field-test will consist of items from the vendors item bank for the sole purpose of establishing baseline statistics using responses from New Jersey Students.</p> <p>c. Yes, that is correct. Field-tested items will be embedded (either embedded throughout, or as a separate unit) during all administrations.</p>
23	31	4.3.11.8	<p>Please clarify the statement “any item intended to be utilized operationally is field tested prior to use.” Do items that the contractor has previously field tested and that have statistics need to be field tested again in NJ before use on NJ assessments? (Such a requirement would be highly prohibitive of an item bank large enough to support adaptive testing models.)</p>	<p>In general, yes. For the graduation proficiency assessment this is an absolute must as the State will be drawing graduation readiness conclusions from the operational form. For the remaining assessments, New Jersey is open to discussions to ensure psychometric reliability and validity in the assessment but would greatly prefer being able to have those discussions in the context data provided by New Jersey students. All items newly developed for the program will be field tested in New Jersey prior to their operational use.</p>
24	33	4.5.2.1.3.2	<p>Please clarify the requirement for “a combination of authentic, previously published literary and information texts.” May informational texts be commissioned as new pieces rather than using previously published texts?</p>	<p>New Jersey will consider commissioned texts when a need arises. The use of commissioned texts must be approved by the SCM.</p>
25	33	4.5.2.1.3.2	<p>Please confirm that the two extended writing tasks should be embedded within the 4-6 passage</p>	<p>The text development section was provided as an example. New Jersey is open to other designs that may fit better with the</p>

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			sets described in section A, as opposed to being included in the test with their own (additional) unique passage(s). Or do the writing tasks draw from passages that appeared previously in the test which are then presented again with the writing prompt to provide the writing task?	proposed adaptive testing system. When passage sets are utilized, the questions for the set should be presented in proximity to the sets.
26	43	4.6.3.2.2	Please confirm NJDOE wants both the English Language Arts and the Mathematics tests translated/trans-adapted into Spanish.	At this time New Jersey is only offering the mathematics assessment in Spanish.
27	63-69	4.9	For meetings that involve educators and reviewing test/tested content (e.g., field test item review meetings, passage review meetings, range finding meetings, sensitivity and bias review meetings, data review meetings, forms construction and review meetings), is NJDOE open to considering other “shared meeting” models involving multiple clients based on the current process and licensing model for the contractor’s licensed bank?	No, all items developed in conjunction with this contract become property of New Jersey. The vendor will retain all rights and ownership of items developed prior to this contract or not created in conjunction with this contract.
28	63-69	4.9	The meeting explanations offer information on whether they are to be in-person or virtual. Is NJDOE open to considering options for more of those meetings to be virtual?	New Jersey is open to considering moving more meetings to a virtual environment, but for the purpose of the bid, the vendor should assume the meetings will occur as indicated in the bid request. Adjustments can be made at a future date though change orders as needed.
29	65	4.9.5	Can NJDOE clarify the purpose of the range finding meetings for operational items? Is it to ensure consistent scoring between vendors, to add more (aligned) papers to the scoring packs for scorer reference, or some other purpose?	Traditionally this meeting has been used to add more (aligned) papers to the scoring packs for scorer reference, training, and monitoring.

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30	67	4.99 & 4.9.10	<p>Please clarify the difference in these two meetings in terms of timing and tasks to be completed. Should a psychometrician attend either of these meetings?</p> <p>Do these meetings only apply to the fixed/accommodated forms for NJSLA (not content for CAT forms) and to the fixed form NJGPA?</p>	<p>These two meetings are mainly intended for the fixed form versions of the assessment and for the NJGPA. They may also be required if a multistage adaptive assessment is utilized and the SCM determines a need for the “stages” to be considered like forms to ensure blueprint coverage.</p> <p>A psychometrician should be in attendance at the Forms Construction Meetings to provide support on what the impact on the form will be with changes to item selection. A psychometrician would not be needed at the Forms Review Meetings.</p>
31	74	4.11.1.3	<p>How do the task expectations for the contractor in this section (which seem to describe how the contractor pulls the test forms) compare to the expectations for the Forms Construction Meetings in 4.99 (which seem to describe a committee approach to pulling test forms)?</p>	<p>This section is the preliminary work leading into the Forms Construction Meetings. The Forms Construction Meetings are there for review of the form and to adjust as needed.</p>
32	81	4.12.6.3	<p>For requirement A (“<i>Beginning with the 2025-2026 statewide administration, provide a means of embedding a block of linking items in the operation form of each component to equate the various accommodation forms of the test</i>”), does NDOE expect that the various accommodated forms are different from each other (in more ways than paper replacements for TEI items) such that a dedicated linking block of items is needed across accommodated forms? Or is this requirement about linking the accommodated forms to the operational CAT each year?</p>	<p>It was New Jersey’s intention to indicate that the accommodated forms should be linked to the operational CAT each year, if possible.</p>
33	89	4.13.4	<p>Please clarify how this manual is different from the Instructional Guide for Constructed Response Scoring described in 4.7.3.1.1.6.</p>	<p>They are the same.</p>

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34	93	4.13.10.4	<p>Is the item analysis report an internal (NJDOE) document or a document released to the field and/or public?</p> <p>Is an item analysis report for an adaptive test supposed to include every item exposed to any student (as student test experience is not the same), or just the common routing set of items for all students? Are items on all accommodated forms also supposed to be included?</p>	<p>New Jersey is open to proposals to best address this analysis. Currently, the item analysis report is an internal (NJDOE) document.</p>
35		1.1	<p>The three (3) year Contract resulting from this Bid Solicitation will run through the end of the 2026-2027 Academic Year.”... Since the submission date is 12/6/24, and we can assume selection would not occur until early 2025, can we also assume this section should read, “end of the 2027-2028 Academic Year” for a (3) year contract?</p>	<p>It is intended that Year 1 will be the 2024-2025 academic year. There will not be an operational administration in Year 1, rather it is expected the vendor will provide a field test of item in that year. Spring 2026 will be the first operational administration of the new assessment with standard setting following summer 2026. The third year of the contract will be the 2026-2027 academic year.</p>
36		3.1	<p>Will NJDOE please confirm bidders can use standard USB-A flash drives and Office365 file formats including Word Documents and Excel Sheets for the electronic submission?</p>	<p>Yes, bidders can submit a standard USB-A flash drive containing files in Office 362 formats, including Word and Excel documents.</p>
37	2, 13, 15, 32 & 36	4.1, 4.5.2.1.2 & 4.5.2.2.2	<p>Can NJDOE confirm if the adaptive design (with items possessing NJ-based stats) must be in place for spring 2026?</p>	<p>In general, yes. For the graduation proficiency assessment this is an absolute must as the State will be drawing graduation readiness conclusions from the operational form. For the remaining assessments, New Jersey is open to discussions to ensure psychometric reliability and validity in the assessment but would greatly prefer being able to have those discussions in the context data provided by New Jersey students. All items newly developed for the program will be field tested in New Jersey prior to their operational use.</p>