

**Request for Qualifications
for
New Jersey Adult Education Test Centers
for
High School Equivalency Assessment**

**Issued by
The State of New Jersey
Department of Education**

Date issued: January 2021

Responses will be accepted on an on-going basis.

**State of New Jersey- Department of Education
Division of Finance and Administration
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Request for Qualifications for New Jersey Department of Education Adult Education Test Center Providers for High School Equivalency Assessment

1.0 Purpose and Intent

This Request for Qualifications (RFQ) is issued by The State of New Jersey, New Jersey Department of Education (“NJDOE” or “the Department”) to solicit Applications for qualified Vendors to provide Test Center services to administer High School Equivalency Testing. Qualified Vendors will be added as a Test Center Provider to the NJDOE’s List of Approved Adult Education Test Center Providers for High School Equivalency Assessment. The Test Center Provider may only contract with an Assessment Provider who is on the NJDOE’s List of Approved High School Equivalency Assessment Providers.

All approved Test Center Providers who meet the criteria specified in this Request for Qualifications (RFQ) will be included on this List. The List will be maintained by the NJDOE. No funding is directly associated with this application for approval. This solicitation will not result in a contract with the NJDOE.

Entities proposing that their Test Center be approved by the NJDOE must submit a Technical Proposal, the details for which are located at the end of this RFQ (Form A) and must submit all required documentation with the submission. The NJDOE will review the Technical Proposals submitted and evaluate them on their alignment with the requirements set forth in this RFQ. If approved, the Applicant will be notified of the Test Center’s approved status and their Test Center will be placed on the NJDOE’s List of Approved Adult Education Test Center Providers for High School Equivalency Assessment.

Note: Approved Test Center Providers may also be removed from the approved List subject to failure of the Provider to meet the conditions specified within this RFQ.

There will be future opportunities for new Applicants to demonstrate that their Test Center meets the requirements. Future opportunities will be on a schedule to be determined and published by the NJDOE.

However, the State reserves the right to separately procure individual requirements that are the subject of the RFQ, when deemed by the Director to be in the State’s best interest. The State does not guarantee the amount of work given to any Provider approved under this RFQ.

1.1 Background

The New Jersey State Department of Education (“NJDOE” or “Department”), as part of its plan to change the way adults can earn a State-issued high school diploma, is soliciting qualification proposals for Adult Education Test Center Providers for High School Equivalency Assessment that are private non-profit and private for-profit entities. The NJDOE will use the objective criteria specified within to review such proposals and will add any Test Centers approved under this RFQ to the existing List of approved Test Centers, which currently consists only of public agencies and institutions. Under this RFQ, a Test Center will be approved to administer any of the tests on the NJDOE List of Approved High School Equivalency Assessment Providers.

1.2 Submission of Application

In order to be considered to be an approved Vendor, the Application must be marked Test Center Provider and received by the NJDOE at the appropriate location by the required time. The Date and Time are indicated on the cover page of the RFQ. Any Application not received on time via

U.S. postal mail and e-mail, as indicated below, will be rejected.

Submit with the subject line: Attention Test Center Provider Purchasing Unit via U.S. postal mail to State of New Jersey, Department of Education, Budget and Accounting, P.O. Box 500, Trenton, NJ 08625-0500.

Submit via e-mail to: purchasi@doe.nj.gov with the subject line: Attention Test Center Provider Purchasing Unit.

All Respondents must limit their Applications to twenty-five (25) single-sided pages or less, at no smaller than 12-point font. Do not consider Exhibits and/or Attachments in the page count.

Subsequent to Application submission, all information submitted by Respondents in response to the Proposal solicitation is considered public information, except as may be exempted from public disclosure by the Open Public Records Act, N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 et seq., and the common law.

1.3 Question and Answer

The NJDOE will accept questions electronically, pertaining to this RFQ, on an on-going basis from all potential Applicants. Questions shall be directed via e-mail to: purchasi@doe.nj.gov with the subject line: Attention Test Center Provider Purchasing Unit.

- A. Questions should be directly tied to the RFQ and asked in consecutive order, from beginning to end, following the organization of the RFQ;
- B. Each question should begin by referencing the RFQ page number and section number to which it relates;
- C. Communications with other representatives of the State regarding this RFQ are prohibited during the submission and selection processes. Failure to comply with these communications restrictions may result in rejection of an Application;
- D. The State will not be responsible for any expenses in the preparation and/ or presentation of the Applications, oral interviews, or for the disclosure of any information or material received in connection with this RFQ; and
- E. The State reserves the right to reject any and all Applications received in response to this RFQ, when determined to be in the State's best interest, and to waive minor noncompliance in an Application. The State further reserves the right to make such investigations as it deems necessary as to the qualifications of any and all Respondents submitting Applications in response to this RFQ. In the event that all Applications are rejected, the State reserves the right to re-solicit Applications.

1.4 Addenda/Modification: Revisions to this RFQ

In the event that it becomes necessary to clarify or revise this RFQ, such clarification or revision will be by Addendum/Modification. Any Addendum/Modification to this RFQ will become part of this RFQ and part of any contract awarded as a result of this RFQ.

2.0 General Definitions

- **Addendum/Modification** – Written clarification or revision to this RFQ issued by the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE).
- **Director** – Director, Office of Budget & Accounting and Grants Management, Division of Administration and Finance, Department of Education. By statutory authority, the Director is the chief fiscal contracting officer for the State of New Jersey.
- **Division** – The Division of Administration and Finance.
- **Evaluation Committee** – A Committee established by the Director assigned to review and evaluate Applications/Proposals submitted in response to this RFQ and to recommend a contract award to the Director.
- **May** – Denotes that which is permissible, not mandatory.
- **Project** – The undertaking or services that are the subject of this RFQ.
- **Respondent** – An individual or business entity submitting an Application in response to this RFQ.
- **Shall or Must** – Denotes that which is a mandatory requirement. Failure to meet a mandatory material requirement will result in the rejection of an Application/Proposal as non-responsive.
- **Should** – Denotes that which is recommended, not mandatory.
- **State Contract Manager** – State employee responsible for the approval of all deliverables and the main point of contact for the Contractor (i.e., Vendor).
- **Subtasks** – Detailed activities that comprise the actual performance of a task.
- **State** – State of New Jersey.
- **Subcontractor** – An entity having an arrangement with a State contractor, where the State contractor uses the products and/or services of that entity to fulfill some of its obligations under its State contract, while retaining full responsibility for the performance of all of its [the contractor's] obligations under the contract, including payment to the subcontractor. The subcontractor has no legal relationship with the State, only with the contractor.
- **Task** – A discrete unit of work to be performed.

2.1 Contract-Specific Definitions/Acronyms

- **Local Education Agency (LEA)** – A school district; an entity which operates local public primary and secondary schools in the United States.
- **New Jersey Department of Education (“NJDOE” or “the Department”)** – The State agency that administers State and federal aid programs affecting more than 1.4 million public and non- public elementary and secondary school children in the state of New Jersey.
- **Program** – The undertaking or services that are the subject of this RFQ.

3.0 Scope of Work

Test Center Provider interested in having a Test Center placed on the NJDOE's List of Approved Adult Education Test Centers for High School Equivalency Assessment shall submit an Application, complete the request form found in Section 5.0 of this RFQ, and its subsections, and submit all requisite documentation that is needed for the Test Center to be reviewed and approved.

3.1 Engagement Process

- A. Any Test Center Provider on the NJDOE's List of Approved Adult Education Test Centers for High School Equivalency Assessment shall only contract with approved Assessment Providers on the NJDOE's List of Approved High School Equivalency Assessment Providers and shall be responsible for meeting the terms of its Agreement with the Assessment Provider; and/or shall document how it will administer the testing through its own organization; and
- B. Prior to finalizing any engagement under this contract, the Director will determine whether the intended Test Center Provider has any conflict with regard to the specified Services.

3.2 Approval Criteria of Test Center Providers

The NJDOE shall evaluate a Test Center for inclusion on the approved List pursuant to this RFQ process. Test Centers will be included on the NJDOE's approved List upon determination that an Application satisfies each of the criteria described in RFQ Section 4.0.

NJ DOE will conduct on-site monitoring, at its discretion, during the contract period. During the on-site monitoring visit, the NJDOE staff will evaluate to see that:

- A. Test vendor testing policies are being carried out;
- B. The test center facility remains suitable for testing; and
- C. Testing is administered by test center staff, who has been qualified by the test vendor under test vendor policies and procedures. Said policies and procedures from each test vendor must be immediately available to the visiting NJDOE staff.

3.3 Approval of Test Center Providers

A Test Center that is placed on the approved list shall remain on the list for a period of five years unless the Test Center is disqualified pursuant to Section 3.4 of this RFQ.

3.4 Disqualification of Test Center Providers

Approval for inclusion on the NJDOE's List of Approved Adult Education Test Center Providers may be withdrawn for good cause. This may include, but not be limited to, a recommendation to and determination made by the Commissioner that the Test Center: is in noncompliance with one or more of the criteria for approval set forth in this RFQ, or is in noncompliance with the Department's regulations.

Additional disqualifiers would include any use, sale or offering of testing data in any form (except as otherwise provided in this RFQ) by the Test Center or any individual or entity in the Test Center's charge or employ, for personal gain, or release, or to disseminate or publish such information prior to the completion of the project. Test centers not following regulations will immediately halt testing until a corrective action plan has been submitted and approved by the NJ DOE Contract Manager.

3.5 Confidentiality

All data that is supplied by the State is confidential. The Vendor shall be prohibited from releasing any information obtained from the NJDOE that is deemed confidential. Any non- Contractual use, sale or offering of information or data in any form by the Vendor, or any individual or entity in the Vendor's charge of employ, will be considered a violation of this Contract and may result in Contract termination and the Vendor's suspension or debarment from State contracting. In addition, such conduct may be reported to the State Attorney General for possible criminal prosecution.

4.0 Application Content

Note: Applications in response to this RFQ must respond to each of the following requirements in the order indicated:

- A. A Test Center will be included on the NJDOE's approved list upon determination that an application satisfies each of the following seven (7) criteria. Respondents to this RFQ shall provide documentation that their Test Center can meet or exceed each of these seven (7) criteria. The Application should include:
 1. Technical Application, in response to RFQ Section 3.0 and its subsections. This section of the bidder's submission should be limited to twenty-five (25) pages, excluding Exhibits and/or Attachments (such as resumes, letters of reference, printed brochures describing the services provided, certificates of incorporation or other legal documentation, fiscal documents, tables, charts, graphs, scanned images, or photocopies), and typed in no smaller than a twelve (12) point font;
 2. Note: CD presentations, videotapes, or other multimedia productions must not be included;
 3. The Technical Application should be divided into five sections:
 - i. Section I – Application (Form A)
In this section, the Applicant shall complete the Technical Proposal Application Form;
 - ii. Section II – Test Center Narrative (Form B)
In this section, the Applicant shall describe in detail the nature of the Test Center and the services the Applicant will provide to the test taker;
 - iii. Section III – Request for Exemption from Disclosure Pursuant to the Open Public Records Act (Form C)
The Applicant must complete a Request for Exemption form in order to identify any proprietary materials submitted as part of, or in support of, an Applicant's Proposal, which Applicant considers confidential or otherwise exempted from disclosure under the Open Public Records Act;
 - iv. Section IV – Test Center – Statement of Assurances (Form D); and
 - v. Section V – Appendices.
- B. The Applicant shall also provide any supporting documentation that has been requested in this RFQ, or which has been referenced by the Provider in the completed Technical Application/Proposal.
 1. A Transmittal Letter and Form C require authorized signatures and therefore must be submitted via mail or hand delivery. The original of each of these documents must be signed in black/blue ink.
- C. The Application should be submitted as follows:
 1. One (1) complete, electronic Application, clearly marked as the Application responding to this RFQ;
 2. One (1) complete, paper Application, clearly marked as the Application responding to this RFQ;
 3. Four (4) complete, paper Applications, clearly marked as the Applications responding to this RFQ; and

4. Any information found in the Application considered by the Applicant to be proprietary in nature should be marked accordingly as information contained in the Application is subject to public release, as set forth in Section 1.2 of this RFQ.

D. Please use the checklist (Table 1: Checklist) to ensure that you have submitted all of the required materials in the required formats:

Table 1: Checklist

Component	Requirement/Format	Submitted?
Transmittal Letter	An authorized individual must write a brief Transmittal Letter to formally submit/transmit the Application, Proposal, and other materials, on behalf of the applying entity, to the New Jersey Department of Education. The transmittal letter must be signed and dated by the authorized individual in black/blue ink.	
Form A	The Applicant must complete an Application.	
Form B	The Applicant must submit a Plan/Narrative.	
Form C	The Applicant should complete a Request for Exemption from Open Public Records Act.	
Form D	The Applicant should complete a Statement of Assurances.	
Appendices/Attachments	The Applicant must provide appropriate Appendices/Attachments.	

5.0 Selection Process

5.1 Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated by an Evaluation Committee composed of members of the NJDOE. The following evaluation criteria categories, separate or combined in some manner, and not necessarily listed in order of significance, will be used to evaluate Applications received in response to this RFQ.

After a determination is made that all of the minimum requirements in Section 4.0 of the RFQ are met, Applications/Proposals will be evaluated by an Evaluation Committee on the quality of the response and overall experience, including, but not limited to the criteria in RFQ 5.2 Evaluation of the Proposals and RFQ 5.3 Oral Presentation and/or Clarification of Proposal.

The NJDOE shall evaluate an eligible Test Center for inclusion on the Department's approved List pursuant to this RFQ process. Test Centers will be included on the Department's approved List upon determination that an Application satisfies each of the following criteria described below.

1. Provides evidence, with details of experience, of the capacity to administer large scale testing, on a county, state or nationwide basis, or for a large national corporation;
2. Provides evidence of at least two test administrations monthly of one or all of the state approved adult education assessments and, provides an annual list of testing dates and times;
3. Provides a list of all Test Center personnel, including title, duties, and contact information. The List is to include 1 chief examiner and proctor to student ratio of 1/10. If these positions are not yet filled, a detailed recruitment and training plan must be provided;
4. Provides a plan on how the Test Center will make information available to test takers, including how to register for the test, test dates and all other pertinent information that a student will need to bring to the Test Center on the day of testing;
5. Provides how the test center will maintain control over the confidential and sensitive information, such as names, social security numbers, dates of birth and addresses that the center collects as well as the information that it is given including, but not limited to documents, reports, files and data analyses;
6. Provides how the test center will keep sensitive information in a secure location; and
7. Provides how all such information shall be kept in a manner that maintains test integrity and student confidentiality and shall comply with laws and regulations governing the confidentiality of student records as detailed in The [Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html).
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>;
8. Respondents must document a history of providing large-scale testing to one or more states and providing at least ten thousand (10,000) test administrations; and
9. Respondents to this RFQ shall provide documentation that their Test Center satisfies each of the seven (7) characteristics listed in Form B (included herein this RFQ).

5.2 Evaluation of the Applications/Proposals

Applications will each be independently reviewed and evaluated by members of an Evaluation Committee, pursuant to the approval criteria specified below:

Applicant responses on Form B of the Technical Proposal, included herein, will be used to determine the Provider's adherence to the established approval criteria.

For each established criterion, an Applicant will receive either a score of:

- [2] Evidence provided meets or exceeds the established criterion; or
- [1] Evidence partially meets the established criterion; or
- [0] Evidence provided does not meet the established criterion.

In order to be added to the NJDOE's List of Approved Adult Education Test Center Providers for High School Equivalency Assessment, an Applicant must receive a score of 2 for each of the seven (7) approval criterion, including sub-criteria, as set forth below, from the assigned reviewers. Further, each Test Center must receive a total of fourteen (14) points in order to be approved. Terms used in the criteria to follow are defined in Appendix A of this document. Approved Test Centers will be placed in the NJDOE's List of Approved Adult Education Test Centers for High School Equivalency Assessment.

Non-responsive Applications will be rejected without evaluation. The State reserves the right to waive minor irregularities.

5.3 Oral Presentation and/or Clarification of Applications

The State may require oral interviews, and reserves the right to do so, in person or by telephone. Applications should be complete on their face. The State reserves the right to request clarifying information subsequent to submission of the Application.

5.4 Forms

The Forms begin on the next page.

Form A
High School Equivalency Assessment Providers Technical Proposal Application

Name of Entity:

Address:

City:

State:

Zip Code:

Phone:

Fax:

E-mail:

Name and Title of Authorized Contact:

Address of Contact:
(if different from above)

City:

State:

Zip Code:

Phone:

Fax:

E-mail (required):

URL (required):

The organization is: (please select one)

Local Education Agency (LEA)

For-profit corporation

Non-profit corporation

Limited Liability Company (LLC)

Other (Please specify)

Form B
Adult Education Test Center for High School Equivalency Assessment
Technical Proposal - Narrative

Test Center Narrative

In this section, the Applicant must describe in detail the nature of the Test Center and the services the Test Center will provide the test taker. Please be advised that your responses will be thoroughly reviewed and rated on a point-based evaluation system. We strongly encourage you to be as complete and detailed as possible in your responses. If you are attaching supporting documentation, please do not simply indicate “see attached” in the response fields.

Approval Criteria

Please thoroughly describe any evidence to support how your Test Center meets the criteria with the categories listed.

1. Provide evidence, with details of experience, of the capacity to administer large scale testing.
(0 to 2 points)

4. Provide a plan on how the Test Center will make information available to test takers, including how to register for the test, test dates, and all other pertinent information that a student will need to bring to the Test Center on the day of testing. (0 to 2 points)

5. Provide how the test center will maintain control over the confidential and sensitive information, such as names, social security numbers, dates of birth and addresses that the center collects; as well as the information that it is given; including, but not limited to, documents, reports, files and data analyses. (0 to 2 points)

6. Provide how the test center will keep sensitive information in a secure location. (0 to 2 points)

7. Provide how all such information shall be kept in a manner that maintains test integrity and student confidentiality, and how it shall comply with laws and regulations governing the confidentiality of student records as detailed in The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
(0 to 2 points)

Form C
Request for Exemption from Disclosure Pursuant to the Right to Know Law

New Jersey Open Public Records Act (OPRA), N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 et seq., and the common law, require that each agency shall make available all records maintained by said agency, except that agencies may deny access to records or portions thereof that fall within the scope of the exceptions listed in OPRA or established under the common law.

Any proprietary materials submitted as part of, or in support of, an Applicant’s Application/Proposal, which Applicant considers confidential or otherwise excepted from disclosure under the OPRA or the common law, must be specifically so identified, and the basis for such confidentiality or other exception must be specifically set forth.

Please list all such documents for every portion of the Proposal in the “Proposal Documents” table below and include a copy of this document with each separate portion of the Proposal. Materials which are not indicated below may be released in their entirety upon request without notice to you.

The submission of any information to the NJDOE by a vendor puts the risk of disclosure on the vendor. Submission of this form does not guarantee that a request for exemption from disclosure will be granted. If necessary, NJDOE will make a determination regarding the requested exemptions, in accordance with the process set forth in OPRA and common law.

Proposal Documents

Material for which Exemption is Requested	Location / Page Number(s)	Basis for Request

Form D
Adult Education Test Center Provider for High School Equivalency Assessment
Statement of Assurances

I hereby affirm that (name of test center)

will provide and adhere to the Technical Proposal Narrative submitted with this RFQ.

Name:

Signature:

Title:

Date (mm/dd/yy):