

Questions and Answers Concerning MeCAS RFP 201012853

Written questions concerning this MeCAS RFP, #201012853, should be directed to Wanda Monthey at: wanda.monthey@maine.gov no later than 4:00 pm local time, **February 18, 2011**. All written questions and answers will be posted on the web at: <http://www.maine.gov/education/lsalt/index.htm>.

1. There are two deadlines/closing dates shown for submission of proposals—March 11th and March 15th. Please state which date is correct.

Revised Answer: March 15th (p.4, Sec.3.1) is correct. The March 11th reference on p.9, sec. 3.6 has been corrected. The MDOE is hereby amending the RFP to correct the date included in sec.3.6 from March 11 to March 15.

2. When answers to bidders' questions are ready, will they be sent via email to each bidder submitting questions, will they be posted to a specific page within the Maine DOE website, or both? And in what approximate timeframe?

Revised Answer: The initial Q & A will be posted at the website above and sent by email to those who have requested copies of the RFP. A final updated version of the Q&A will be posted and emailed as soon as possible.

3. Regarding RFP 201012853, is there an estimated value for the contract resulting from this RFP? Also, is there incumbent information available, including the following?

Revised Answer:

1. incumbent vendor: Measured Progress
2. incumbent contract duration: 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010– 2011
3. incumbent contract value: \$ 2,058,254 for last year of a 3 year agreement, July 1,2010 to December 31, 2011.

See questions 15 and 19.

4. Section 7.7.8.5 states printed paper copies of Individual Student Reports (ISRs). The table in 7.7.8.9 does not indicate any printed ISRs. Are printed ISRs in fact required, and if so, what are the print specifications, (i.e. paper size, color vs. black and white, number of copies, etc.)?

Answer: Yes; one color printed ISR on 11x17 paper per student at grades 5 and 8 and one color printed ISR on 8½x11 paper per student at high school is required. The MDOE is hereby amending the RFP to correct the table in 7.7.8.9 to include 1 paper copy per student to be provided to schools.

5. Section 7.7.8.5 states printed paper student score labels. The table in 7.7.8.9 does not indicate printed student score labels. Are printed score labels required?

Answer: Yes, printed student score labels are required. The MDOE is hereby amending the RFP to correct the table in 7.7.8.9 to include 1 paper score label per student to be provided to schools.

6. The table in Section 7.7.8.9 shows two printed MeCAS Technical Reports (Parts 1 and 2). The similar table in Section 8.6.4 shows three printed MeCAS Technical Reports (Part 3). Should the two print quantities match? If so, at two or three copies?

Answer: There are 3 separate MeCAS Technical Reports designated as Parts 1, 2 and 3. The MDOE requires the provision of two paper copies of each of the Parts. The MDOE is hereby amending the RFP to correct the wording in table in 8.6.4 from "3 Printed" to "2 Printed".

7. Please provide any possible further detail about: 1/ the guide to the MEA; and 2/ the guide to the MHSA to be developed in collaboration with the College Board. For example, estimated page count of the documents, print specifications (color vs. black and white, weight of paper), and print/distribution quantities.

Answer: The MDOE is hereby amending the RFP to change the deliverable of section 7.8 from production and distribution of print versions to schools to provision of electronic formats to the MDOE only. The language of that paragraph is amended to follow: "Although all elements of production will be the responsibility of the Contractor, the work will be closely monitored by the MDOE to ensure that the brochures adequately and accurately reflect the nature and goals of the MEA and MHSA. The brochures must be provided to the MDOE in Adobe PDF and Microsoft Word electronic formats for web posting."

8. Section 8.6.3 states printed Individual Student Labels for the PAAP assessment. There is not a row in the table in 8.6.4 which mentions these labels for the PAAP assessment, yet there is such a row in the MEA/MHSA table in 7.7.8.9. Please confirm that printed paper labels (Individual Student Labels) are required for the PAAP assessment as well.

Answer: Yes, printed paper individual student score labels are required. The MDOE is hereby amending the RFP to correct the table in 8.6.4 to include 1 paper score label per student to be provided to schools.

9. Appendix C - We believe that some of the page-count values in this table may be incorrect, as they are not multiples of four. If any values are incorrect, please show a new table with any needed corrections.

Answer: The MDOE is hereby amending the RFP to correct Appendix C as follows:

	Test Booklets	Answer Booklets	Test Administrator Manuals	Principal/Test Coordinator Manual
Grade 5	24	8	24	32
Grade 8	28	8	24	32
3 rd Yr. HS	28	8	16	28

10. Section 3.5.7: Bidders are instructed to include additional information in Section 7 of their proposal. Can MDOE clarify what information should be included in this section? Should additional supporting information (e.g., appendices) be included in this section?

Answer: Bidders should format their proposals in a clear, concise manner, including any additional supporting information. Information concerning desirable features should be included either in the body of the proposal or as an appendix. Cost estimates for desirable features must be included with other cost proposals in Appendix B.

11. The RFP states that the electronic copy of the proposal should be submitted using Microsoft Word. Will MDOE also accept Adobe PDF files for the electronic copy?

Answer: The MDOE will accept Adobe PDF files for the electronic copy.

12. Section 7.3 - Please provide more detail about the BRC and IRC committee meetings. How many days are the meetings? Is there a different group of committee members for each grade? How many members per grade?

Answer: BRC meetings are 1 day; there is one group meeting for all three grade spans; there are approximately 8-10 members in total. IRC meetings are 2 days; there is a different group of committee members for each of three grade spans; there are approximately 8-10 members per grade. See question 27.

13. Section 7.3 - "Following reviews by the Bias and IRC Committees, the Contractor will submit proposed science items to a content accuracy review by staff or third party who have advanced degrees..." Can the staff be the contractor's staff other than those who have been involved in the item development or must it be an independent third party review?

Answer: It must be an independent third party review. The MDOE is hereby amending the RFP to change the wording in the last sentence of 7.3. to read as follows: "Following reviews by the Bias and IRC Committees, the Contractor will submit proposed science items to a content accuracy review by a third party who have advanced degrees (MS or PhD) in Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and/or Earth and Space Science, as appropriate."

14. Table "MEA/MHSA Reports/Data Files", p. 38-39 - Please provide additional information regarding the report identified as "Identification: Top 50 University System Students." Is this report to be provided by the new vendor?

Answer: This deliverable will be a data file, not a report, developed using mutually-agreed upon criteria and will be the Contractor's responsibility

15. In the Q&A released on February 15, the incumbent contract value was identified as \$2,058,254. Please confirm the following:

- a) that this is an annual amount;
- b) that this amount includes all components of the current RFP (the science assessment, the alternate assessment, and accountability reporting); and
- c) that the scope of work for the current contract is essentially the same as the scope included in the RFP.

Answer: This RFP does not reference a value for the agreement to be negotiated with the successful bidder. The current agreement for these services reflects the amount for the term of the agreement (July 1, 2010 to December 31, 2011), which is the last year of a 3 year agreement, and the work specifications set forth therein. See questions 3 and 19.

16. Although the RFP does not contain a requirement for used and unused test materials and data storage, we presume the awarded bidder will be required to store test materials and data (e.g. used and unused test books, answer documents, manuals, student data files, etc) for some length of time. Please provide specific retention requirements so that bidders may price accordingly.

Answer: Materials and data must be stored for at least the duration of the agreement. Final disposition will be determined by the parties at the end of the agreement period.

17. The RFP is silent in regards to whether or not copyrighted materials will be utilized and related permissions requirements associated with copyrighted items. In the event that copyrighted materials are utilized for item and prompt development, we presume that the contractor will be responsible for obtaining and maintaining copyright permissions during the term of the contract only. Is that correct?

Answer: Yes.

18. Our best practice/policy is to apply a unique litho code to sheets or pages of scannable documents for document integrity. In their absence a data collection error may occur if response booklets or documents become co-mingled or out of sequence during test administration or processing. Using litho codes reduces the likelihood of an error not being detected and corrected during the scanning and/or editing processes.

Does [the State/Customer] agree that litho codes should be applied to scannable form during print production to allow for this additional document integrity check during processing?

Answer: Yes.

19. Q & A #1; question #3:

Does the contract value of \$2,058,254 provided represent the total value of the contract or the annual value of the contract?

Answer: The RFP does not reference a value for the agreement to be negotiated with the successful bidder. The current agreement for these services reflects the amount for the term of the agreement (July 1, 2010 to December

31, 2011), which is the last year of a 3 year agreement, and the work specifications set forth therein. See questions 3 and 15.

20. Page 12, Section 3.17: In paragraph 3.17 on Page 12 of the RFP the State lists an Irrevocable Letter of Credit as a requirement for any bidder. Will the State accept a Performance Bond in lieu of an Irrevocable Letter of Credit?

Answer: No

21. Page 13, Section 3.22.1.1, last paragraph: How many sample items should be provided to illustrate our experience in developing performance tasks for alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards? And how many of our clients' alternate assessments (AA-AAS) should be described?

Answer: Please refer to page 14 of the RFP, last paragraph of the cited section, which specifies a narrative response. *"The Bidder must also provide a detailed narrative description of the Bidder's experience in development, support and scoring of an academically based alternate assessment..."*

22. Page 20, Table 6-3: The test blueprint for Grade 8 science indicates 32 MC common items, 6 CR common items, 8 MC field test items, and 2 CR items. Has the test blueprint changed?
Can MDOE provide access to the 2009-2010 Technical Manuals for both MEA and MHSA?

Answer: The correct test blueprint appears in section 7.2 on page 27. There is no Table 6-3 in the RFP. The 2009-2010 Technical Manuals are being finalized and are not yet available.

23. Page 23, paragraph 6.1.6 of the RFP indicates that the MDOE retains ownership of all materials and items created in the course of the Contract. Does the State acknowledge that rights in any materials and proprietary computer programs previously developed by the contractor, as well as rights to any derivative works, shall belong to the contractor?

Answer: The State acknowledges that rights in any materials and proprietary computer programs previously developed by the contractor shall belong to the contractor, as well as rights to any works derived from materials and proprietary programs previously developed by the contractor.

24. Page 23, Section 6.1.4: Will the new contractor be responsible for any costs associated with the June 2011 CCSSO meetings?

Answer: No. Those costs are the responsibility of the current contractor. The MDOE is hereby amending the RFP to change the wording in the last sentence 6.1.5 to read as follows: Starting in 2012, the Contractor will be responsible for all costs associated with the attendance of six (6) MDOE staff members at comprehensive planning meetings scheduled during the annual Conference of Chief State School Officers' assessment conference.

25. Paragraph 7.3 on Page 27 of the RFP states that "some items will be lost in the process of item reviews, so at least 150% of field test items will be submitted for approval" and Paragraph 7.4 on page 28 states "all unused developed field test items will be retained by the MDOE for future use. With respect to ownership of intellectual property, will the State permit the Contractor to retain any items rejected by the State and not developed for future use?"

Answer: No. As a point of clarity, the actual quote in paragraph 7.4 on page 28 states, "All unused developed field-test items will be retained in the MDOE's item pool for potential future use."

26. Page 28, Section 7.3: Should vendors provide costs for a third party review of alignment?

Answer: Yes.

27. Page 28, Section 7.3: How many committee members typically attend the BRC and IRC meetings? Does MDOE typically combine grade levels into one meeting or conduct a separate meeting for each grade?

Answer: Approximately 8-10 members attend the BRC meetings at which all grades are combined into one meeting. Approximately 8-10 members attend each of the three grade span IRC meetings. See question 12.

28. Page 28, Section 7.5: What is the focus of the student, teacher and principal questionnaires, and how long is each?
Answer:

- Student questionnaires contain 14 multiple-choice questions at grade 5, 15 at grade 8, and 46 at high school. The focus will be determined, but is generally on questions regarding current science instruction, the test questions and student aspirations.
- Teacher questionnaires contain 6 multiple-choice and check box questions at grade 5, 10 at grade 8, and 15 at high school. The focus will be determined, but is generally on questions regarding standards and professional development.
- Principal questionnaires contain 4 multiple-choice and check box questions at grades 5 and 8 and 8 questions at high school. The focus will be determined, but is generally on questions regarding standards and professional development.

29. Page 30, Section 7.5: Please confirm the only accommodations needed are large print and Braille versions for one test form at each grade. No audio script is required.

Answer: Yes, only large print and Braille versions of one test form is required.

30. Page 30, Section 7.5: Will FT items be included in the Braille and LP forms or just the common items?

Answer: Only common items will be included in the Braille form. All FT items appear in LP forms.

31. Page 31, Section 7.7.1: Can MDOE please clarify benchmarking expectations? Will the vendor convene a committee based benchmarking approach, where proposed papers are reviewed and discussed by committee for purposes of identifying anchor and training papers? If so, please provide guidance on the size of the grade level committees. If benchmarking is not committee based, are the meeting participants only the MDOE science content specialist and the vendor's chief readers?

Answer: The meeting participants will include only the MDOE science content specialist, the vendor's science developer(s) and the vendor's chief reader(s).

32. Page 31, Section 7.6.2: Please confirm the form used for ASL signed directions is related to the directions test administrators read to students, not the test items.

Answer: Form 1 is available for use in ASL signed directions. The form may also be used to sign items for students for whom the appropriate accommodation has been approved.

33. Page 32, Section 7.7.2: On page 25 of the RFP, MDOE states that the continuity of the assessment system (specifically, the consistency of the calibration of items) is valued by the MDOE. On page 32 of the RFP, MDOE states, "Trained personnel using approved scoring rubrics will score between 1000 and 1500 field-test constructed-response items." Given that the MeCAS is currently calibrated with the three parameter model, what is the n-count per item that all bidders *should use for the sake of costing* the scoring of field test constructed responses?

Answer: The n-count should be 1,200 responses per field test constructed response item.

34. Page 33, Section 7.7.2.2: Is instructor-led scorer training required? Is site-based scoring required?

Answer: Instructor-led scoring training and site-based scoring are not required but are preferable. Bidders may propose alternate methods for consideration and should include information on the maintenance of test/response security associated with the methods proposed.

35. Page 38, Section 7.7.8.9 and Page 45, Section 8.6.4: Will the new contractor be responsible for the (2010-11) MeCAS Technical Report due December 31, 2011?

Answer: No.

36. Page 39, Section 7.9, paragraph 1: When are the SAT Initiative Collaborative meetings typically held?

Answer: October/November

37. Page 39, Section 7.9, paragraph 1: Please confirm that the contractor is to plan for and provide costs for meetings during the 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14 contract years, one in Maine, one at contractor location, and one in New York at College Board location?

Answer: Yes. The RFP states that the meeting sites will rotate among collaborative members and the members are: the MDOE, the College Board (New York) and the location of the successful bidder.

38. Page 40, Section 8.3, paragraphs 1& 2: The materials required for each task are listed as, an entry slip, task description, work templates, task summary pages and any necessary passages, and/or graphics. Are "cutouts" additional materials that the vendor must produce? They are mentioned in the PAAP Administration Handbook on page 23, in the sample of a PAAP Task Description. Under the heading, directions for test administration, it states: "Prior to task administration, the teacher prints pictures from Extra Page 1, in color, and cuts them out." Is the vendor required to produce and distribute these "cutouts"? If so, then how many cutouts should be produced per task? If this quantity varies, then what average quantity should be used for estimating costs? Could you please provide a brief description of these cutouts? Are they answer options in picture form? Are they printed in color?

Answer: The vendor is not responsible for "cutouts". "Cutouts" are provided as part of each task and the teacher will reproduce what is needed for the required task.

39. Page 42, paragraph 8.6.1: "The MDOE and the Contractor will meet to define the training processes, the materials, and the personnel needed for accurate scoring." Should vendors cost for a face to face meeting for this activity to occur? If so, how many days/participants are typically required?

Answer: Yes, the vendor should cost for a face to face meeting. The meeting will take up to 2 days and will include up to 2 MDOE staff, as well as a mutually-agreed upon number of vendor alternate assessment staff (usually 3).

40. Page 43, Section 8.6.2.1: Can MDOE please confirm that training materials/sets will be provided for use in training PAAP scorers? Also, please indicate how long (in days) this scorer training takes to deliver.

Answer: Please refer to page 42 of the RFP section 8.6.1. *"The Contractor will assume responsibility for all aspects of scoring. The MDOE and the Contractor will meet to define the training process, the materials and the personnel needed for accurate scoring."* To maintain consistency, training materials currently in use will be provided by the MDOE and revised with the vendor. Scorer training is 1 day training.

41. Page 43, Section 8.6.2.2: "The two independent scores for each portfolio will be reviewed by table leaders and chief readers/program management to ensure matching scores, and rescored if necessary." This statement seems to indicate that a manual compare of the two required scores is to take place for each portfolio. Is our interpretation of this expectation (a manual score compare) accurate? Or, will it be permissible for vendors to use a scoring system to conduct the compare for purposes of identifying portfolio tasks/items that require additional reads (resolution scoring)?

Answer: Yes, it will be permissible for vendors to use a mutually agreed-upon scoring system to conduct the comparison for purposes of identifying portfolio tasks/items that require additional reads.

42. Page 65, paragraph 15: On page 65, Rider B, paragraph 15, the State details the right to terminate any agreement formed out of the RFP. We presume that the successful bidder will be allowed to negotiate reciprocal good cause termination rights upon award. Is this correct? Question inserted here.

Answer: Please review RFP sections 3.5.8 (6); 3.15 and 3.18. Any negotiated language developed by the parties that amends a State agreement Rider B would be included as an exception in Rider C and subject to the State Purchases Review Committee's approval.

43. Page 66-67, paragraph 25: With regards to the Force Majeure Clause, we presume Contractor will not be held responsible for delay or default to the extent caused by the State or a 3rd party. Is this correct? If this is not correct, please explain.

Answer: The Force Majeure clause refers specifically to delay caused by conditions beyond the control of the parties. The Department is willing to include mutually-agreed upon language in a negotiated final agreement that acknowledges that the Contractor will not be held responsible for delay or default to the extent caused by the State or a 3rd party. This amendment to a Rider B provision is subject to the approval of the State Purchases Review Committee, as is the agreement itself.

44. Would you be so kind as to tell us when the proposals will be opened (Date & Time)?

Answer: Proposals will be opened on March 15, 2011 at 2:00pm