Request for Proposals

New England Assessment Consortium:
Implementation of the Smarter Balanced English Language Arts and Mathematics Assessments

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Part 1 Introduction

Connecticut, New Hampshire and Vermont, hereafter referred to as the New England Assessment Consortium (NEAC), intend to implement the new Smarter Balanced Assessments through a multi-state procurement collaborative. The states seek proposals from qualified individuals, companies and organizations to execute the scope of work outlined in this RFP, covering an array of activities and services that will be needed to manage the project, and to administer, score and report the Smarter Balanced English Language Arts and Mathematics assessments in Grades 3 through 8 and 11. In addition, the states are seeking separate bids for the development and hosting of a secure online analysis and reporting system. The assessments will be administered in accordance with Smarter Balanced policies, procedures and technical specifications, and consistent with the policies and guidelines that govern procurement and project implementation in each of the three states, the state guidelines and regulations taking precedence if conflicts occur.

The NEAC states are all governing states in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and have made extensive contribution to the design and development of the assessments. Smarter Balanced is currently in the final year of developing a comprehensive and integrated assessment system that includes summative, interim and formative components. The summative assessment will feature online delivery of test items, using computer adaptive technologies, and performance tasks. An array of digital tools and features that will enhance the testing experience for all students, particularly students with disabilities, English language learners, and other students with special assessment needs, will also be provided (note: the digital tools will be provided by Smarter Balanced and are not included in the scope of work for this RFP). Both the summative and interim assessments will require web hosting, as well as provisions for technical assistance to schools and other users (the proposed digital library of formative assessment professional development modules will be hosted on the web by Smarter Balanced).

Part 2 Purpose of Solicitation

The NEAC states seek a Contractor experienced in web-based student assessment test delivery, scoring methodology, and related services to provide a web-based computer-adaptive testing system that must be compliant and certified (pending certification process) for specifications of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium's common assessment for mathematics and English language arts. The resulting system shall be hosted on the Contractor's site or a site managed by the Contractor or its subcontractor. The System will become available for operational testing by January 2015.

Although the NEAC tests will be administered jointly by Connecticut, New Hampshire and Vermont, the Contractor will enter into separate contract agreements with each of the three states. Each of the states will award individual contracts that reflect the maximum number of years that the state can provide, with the intent that the Contractor will provide services for three years, beginning on or about July 15, 2014, and terminating on July 15, 2017.

This common RFP is being issued simultaneously by each of the three states. As described in greater detail in the Common Response Guidelines (Section III), proposals will be submitted to each of the states individually. Contractors must respond to all three states in order to be considered. Contractors will prepare a single response that covers combined costs associated with the program across the three states, as well as the costs to be incurred by each individual state. For purposes of distributing costs, the states have agreed on a formula that designates some key project components to be shared equally and others to be distributed proportionally based on the number of students to be assessed in each state. (See Appendix 1) This formula will be applied to proposed budgets to form the basis for contracts with the individual states.

The contract period for the tasks described in this RFP will begin on or about July 15, 2014, and will continue through July 15, 2017. The contract awarded through this RFP covers preparation for operational testing, including development, deployment and scoring of Pencil and Paper tests, development and deployment of web hosting for online administration, and preparation of scoring procedures and training packs for all Pencil and Paper test items, some on-line items and performance tasks. The contract will also cover three operational administrations of the assessment, including debriefing with the states and Smarter Balanced after the first testing cycle that may require adjustments and improvements in the second and third administrations The reporting functions shall be bid out separately but should be included in the Proposer's response.

In light of the fact that the initial contract includes development and beta-testing of web hosting for the test administration platform, the scoring procedures and training pack, and methods for secure data transfer to and from the Smarter Balanced organization, it is anticipated that bids for the second and third years of the contract shall be less than the price of the initial 12 to 14-month development/implementation period. It is anticipated that costs for the second and third annual assessment cycles will be relatively uniform in terms of the responsibilities of the parties, and as such, that price increases will be generally limited to increases in the rate of inflation.

Annual testing in English language arts and mathematics at Grades 3 through 8 and 11 as described in this RFP reflects current requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). If reauthorization of the ESEA or related legislation results in changes to assessment requirements, the states reserve the right to amend the program accordingly. All contracts and renewals are contingent upon the availability of funding.

Part 3 Background and Overview

3.1 History

Connecticut, New Hampshire and Vermont have been active participants in the development of the Smarter Balanced Assessments since the inception of the multi-state consortium in 2010. They are all governing states, and each has made staff available to serve on a variety of the Smarter Balanced workgroups. Vermont's Assessment Director has been elected twice to the Smarter Balanced Executive Committee and serves as liaison to the Smarter Balanced Test Administration and Student Accessibility workgroup. The states intend to continue their commitment to Smarter Balanced into to the operational phase of the program by creating a regional consortium that will deliver high quality assessments in accordance with Smarter Balanced policies, procedures and technical specification.

New Hampshire and Vermont are currently members of the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP), which was formed in 2004 and has jointly administered annual reading, writing and math assessments each fall to students in Grades 3 to 8 and Grade 11. The final of administration of NECAP Reading, Writing and Mathematics tests occurred in October 2013. The success of NECAP has demonstrated that a consortium of small states can

share resources and apply economies of scale to produce high quality assessments at a price each state can afford. NEAC will build on the NECAP experience, and will expand both capacity and expertise with the addition of Connecticut.

3.2 Smarter Balanced Sustainability

Delivery of the Smarter Balanced Assessments through a regional, multi-state consortium arises from a sustainability model proposed by the Smarter Balanced Consortium. When the federal grant that supports Smarter Balanced runs out in September 2014 the assessment development process will be essentially complete, from basic architecture to standard setting. The Smarter Balanced Consortium will continue to exist after September 2014 as an affiliate of UCLA, funded through membership fees. The post-grant Smarter Balanced organization will serve as a certification entity, and provide a variety of member services related to the design, development and ongoing maintenance of the assessment system, describe throughout this RFP. Smarter Balanced member states, working individually or in smaller consortia, will be responsible for the broad spectrum of program implementation activities, either through the use of internal resources or through contracts with qualified vendors. Figure 1, reprinted from the Smarter Balanced Sustainability Plan, summarizes the scope of work and distribution of services.

Figure 1: "This - Not That" for scope of services

May Apply to Formative and/or Interim Assessment

	Smarter Balanced will provide services related to the **design, development** and **ongoing maintenance of the system:**	**States will continue to be responsible for** distributing the tasks between the State and the vendor(s) as to who will:
Summative (& Interim) Assessment	▪ Develop, calibrate and evaluate quality of items ▪ Ensure integrity of blueprint and scale ▪ Develop and release the Smarter Balanced version of the test administration platform (on annual basis) ▪ Develop and implement a certification process: – To certify eligible vendors for test administration – To certify States' implementation of the overall Smarter Balanced system ▪ Produce materials and processes to maintain consistency across States (e.g., training, administration manuals, accommodations procedures, etc.) ▪ Produce standardized reports for assessment results ▪ Supply student results to the state level (if requested), and provide access to reporting system ▪ Conduct research studies in support of the Smarter Balanced validity framework and use of effective accommodations and supports for students ▪ Design paper & pencil forms	▪ Host the test administration platform ▪ Deliver the assessment ▪ Provide help desk services for test administration platform ▪ Provide training at the local-level on the assessment administration procedures ▪ Score operational items, tasks, and tests ▪ Produce any special reports to comply with state-specific accountability requirements ▪ Produce and distribute any paper & pencil forms ▪ Manage coherent flow of institution, teacher, and student data, including: – Maintain unique, high-quality student identifier – Transmit student registration data in the Consortium interoperability standard – Reconcile student records – Deliver student data sets to Districts – Delegate permissions/access to Districts
Digital Library	▪ Develop and maintain digital library application ▪ Centrally host digital library application ▪ Facilitate development and review of formative materials ▪ Regular review and evaluation of user needs	▪ Establish and maintain user permissions ▪ Engage with Smarter Balanced in development of formative materials
Member Services	▪ Provide general communication tools & templates ▪ Provide "Tier-1" help desk support for State Assessment Directors and Chiefs ▪ Maintain state-led governance system	▪ Communicate with legislature and in-state stakeholders ▪ Serve as primary point of contact for Districts, Principals, Teachers, Parents and other primary users

3.3 Proposed Timeline for Major Contract Activities

The States have established the following dates and timelines for posting the RFP, receiving and reviewing proposals and awarding the project:

Table 1: Schedule for Posting, Evaluation and Contract Award

Date	Major Milestones
4/28/2014	**RFP posted simultaneously by the each of the NEAC states**
5/12/2014	**Bidder's conference**
5/23/2014	**Last day to submit questions.**
6/6/2014	**Proposals must be received by states in order to be considered**
Anticipated Date	**Major Milestones**
6/6/2014 to 6/30/2014	**Proposals evaluated and rated by states**

Table 2 provides a rough outline of the major contract activities across the first 12 months of the agreement. After the award recommendation, the states will work with the contractor to establish a specific timeline for activities during the initial and subsequent years of the contract. As shown in Table 1, the initial work of the contract (July, 2014 through September, 2015) is focused on preparation for the first operational administration of the assessment, and ends with administration, scoring, reporting and review of the first operational administration, currently scheduled for the last three months of the 2014-2015 school year (exact dates to be announced in the fall).The Proposer's response should address any concerns with the proposed timelines and may include requests and recommendations for modification.

Table 2: Proposed Timeline for the Initial Contract Work
(July, 2014, through September, 2015)

	Date	Major Activities
Development	**June 30 to July 30, 2014**	Award contract and begin contract negotiations
	July/August 2014	Develop and approve work plan. Begin work
	July to November 2014	Articulate procedure and prepare materials for initial administration, including: development of technology approach, support and web-hosting, articulation of key policies and procedures regarding test security, scoring procedures, and development of test administration training procedures, others as described in the project plan. Determine schools and number of students needing Pencil/Paper tests.
	December 2014 to February 2015	Continue preparation for testing. Print and distribute Pencil/Paper tests. Train Test Coordinators and Test Administrators. Recruit and train service center representatives Recruit and train scorers. Prepare for reporting.

Administration	**March to June 2015**	Test Administration Window: deploy online testing, provide consultation and technical assistance to schools through the service center, and score assessments, update training materials, others as recommended. Complete scoring; Continue providing technological support to schools.
	July to September 2015	Complete reporting following final Smarter Balanced standard setting using; Review and analyze first operational assessment, providing reports on scoring, use of service center, test security and others as included in the project work plan. Develop and implement a plan for corrective actions as needed. Interact with Smarter Balanced to review and implement recommended changes to the assessment. Prepare for spring 2016 Administration.

3.4 NEAC Project Management

The States have assembled a project management team to manage the daily operation of NEAC's joint activities. The management team includes a lead representative from each state, with management support from other individuals, both internal and external, at the discretion of the states' Chief State School Officers. An initial list of management team members will be established during the development of the project plan, and the contractor will be given sufficient notice if additions or changes are deemed necessary. The management team serves as the states' primary point of contact with the contractor.

The state lead will serve as the contact person to the contractor on issues unique to the respective state (e.g., number of schools, enrollments, shipping procedures). The state lead will also be responsible for making major consortium decisions, assuming the responsibility to gather input from colleagues and the state's Chief. NEAC will strive to make decisions by consensus, but in cases when a vote may be required, the vote of each state will be weighted equally.

The contractor will be required to facilitate decision making by establishing clear timelines and providing supporting documentation as necessary to assist the state lead in communicating issues to the state's Chief.

3.5 Definition of Terms Used in the RFP

3.5.1 **"Artificial Intelligence Scoring"** and "**AI Scoring"** refer to an automated approach to scoring student test responses that uses a machine-scoring engine that applies artificial intelligence technologies in a manner that emulates human scoring.

3.5.2 **"Computer Adaptive Test Engine"** and **"CAT"** refer to a software system with the ability to automatically adjust the difficulty level of test questions based on student responses. An adaptive test engine has the ability to automatically determine which questions should be delivered next based on the previous response.

3.5.3 **"Interim Assessment"** refers to assessments that provide educators with actionable information about student progress at locally determined intervals throughout the school year. Like summative assessments, the interim assessments described in this RFP will be computer adaptive and will include performance tasks.

3.5.4 **"New England Assessment Consortium"** and **"NEAC"** refer to the New England states in this procurement collaborative that are requesting the services described in this request for proposals.

3.5.5 **"New England Secondary School Consortium" and "NESSC"** refers to a regional partnership made up of Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont, that are working together to close persistent **achievement gaps** and promote greater educational **equity** and opportunity for secondary school students. Working through its host organization, the Great Schools Partnership, NESSC will provide a single point of contact for receiving vendor questions, and other supports critical to the development and release of this RFP. NESSC will NOT play a role in screening applicants or awarding the contract.

3.5.6 **"Performance Task"** refers to a goal-directed assessment exercise that consists of an activity that is completed by the student.

3.5.7 **"Smarter Balanced"** and "**Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium"** refer to the partnership of 24 states and 1 affiliate that have joined forces to manage the design, development and delivery of the Smarter Balanced assessment system.

3.5.8 **"Smarter Balanced Staff"** refers to the staff employed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium who provide leadership and management regarding the design and development of the assessment system.

3.5.9 **"Summative Assessment"** refers to a test used primarily to evaluate student competency at the end of comprehensive and integrated period or unit of learning, typically at the end of a school year. Summative assessments are commonly aligned with state standards and are typically used for purposes of determining school accountability.

3.5.10 **"System"** refers to the array of software-based services and outcomes provided by a contractor necessary to provide a Web-Based Computer-Adaptive Testing System. The System is the sum of the services, developments, contractor intellectual property, software, COTS software, hardware and documentation described in the scope of work that comprise the system the contractor will deliver configure, and implement under the terms of this contract.

Part 4 Project Priorities and Challenges

4.1 Emphasis on Efficiency and Cost Effectiveness

Efficiency is a guiding principle of the partnership among the NEAC states. Cost savings and the ability to pool resources and staff to implement the Smarter Balanced Assessments efficiently and effectively were major factors in the initial decision to form the Consortium. Continuing to improve in efficiency in the operation of the program for the states and schools/districts continue to be a primary goal of the states.

Sound project management and careful planning are the foundation of an efficient assessment program, but it is clear that effective use of emerging technologies is also critical. The states are interested in exploring the use of technology as a means to increase the quality and efficiency of the project. Throughout the response, the Proposer should provide specific examples of how technology will be applied to support the assessment program, with respect to project management, but also as a means to improve services to schools.

A key feature of the Smarter Balanced Assessment System is its use of digital delivery of tests, reports and professional development modules. Key among these technologies is the set of embedded tools and supports that are embedded in the assessment to meet the accessibility needs of students with special assessment needs, including students with disabilities and English language learners. The embedded tools and supports are described in the *Smarter Balanced Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines* and will be enabled on the Smarter Balanced Practice Tests. Equally important to the assessment delivery system is the Smarter Balanced Computer Adaptive Algorithm that is expected to improve the precision of assessments while reducing the overall testing time for students. A Proposer's response should demonstrate an overall capacity and experience with the these and other emerging assessment technologies, particularly the ability to provide trainings for district and school staff, help desk services, and hosting and scoring web-based assessments including a detailed description of the Proposer's technology approach, experience with web-hosting, and methods that will be used to ensure the security of the computer-administered tests. Proposers are encouraged to describe other ways that technology can be used to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the project.

Validity is a primary concern regarding scoring. The states assume that automated scoring of text-based student response (aka Artificial Intelligence scoring) is currently not sophisticated enough to provide valid scores for all of the Smarter Balanced items. Therefore, the states are not likely to consider responses that rely solely on technology for the scoring of individual student responses to text based constructed-response items and components of performance tasks. However, the states are very interested in the efficiencies that may be gained from automated scoring and encourage Proposer's to describe how technology may be integrated into the scoring of constructed-response items and performance tasks during the initial contract year and as the technologies improve over subsequent years. The states also acknowledge that advances in technology and the increased availability of technology may result in substantive changes to the assessment program during the course of the contract. Cost and schedule adjustments related to such changes will be negotiated as needed.

4.2 Impact on Instruction

The States are committed to administering a testing program that will have a positive impact on instruction. The Smarter Balanced Assessment System is comprised of three components, the Summative Assessment System, a more flexible Interim Assessment System and the Formative Processes and Tools System. The Summative and Interim Assessment Systems will be delivered via the test administration platform described in this RFP. The Interim System includes comprehensive and content-cluster measures that provide information about how students are progressing throughout the year. The Formative System is housed in a Digital Library that will provide professional development and learning resources for teachers. These resources will be used by teachers throughout the year to better understand a student's learning needs, check for misconceptions and/or to provide evidence of progress toward learning goals. The summative and interim assessment systems will use a variety of innovative and instructionally relevant item types that are made possible by digital assessment delivery.

Proposals should describe how the Proposer will help states maximize use of the Smarter Balanced features, and propose additional strategies or procedures that will help the states and their schools improve instructional practices and student outcomes, including but not limited to the digital interactive analysis and reporting system for which the states are requesting a separate bid.

As the program matures during the course of this contract, the states are committed to continuing to provide assessments and materials designed to support best practices in instruction.

Throughout the course of the contract, information on the impact of NEAC on instruction will guide and inform decisions in the ongoing evaluation of the program.

4.3 Challenges

There are several challenges worth noting that the states and contractor will have to meet in the implementation of the NEAC contract. Several key issues are presented in this section. Some, such as the development and implementation of procedures and guidelines for the operation and governance of the consortium, require immediate action. Others, such as the development of an effective working relationship between the contractor and Smarter Balanced, are ongoing concerns that will require attention throughout the contract.

4.3.1 NEAC Operational Procedures and Governance

Development of policies and procedures for governing the NEAC Consortium fall outside the purview of this contract, as does the current governance model adopted by the Smarter Balanced Consortium. However, the contractor will be expected to implement aspects of the NEAC and Smarter Balanced governance models to the extent that they impact on management and day to day operation of the project. Therefore, during the development of the project implementation plan, the Proposer will reflect on the governance models and suggest changes or additions that will improve operational efficiency and effectiveness.

4.3.2 Coordination with Smarter Balanced

The States acknowledge that the NEAC project is unique in two critical ways: first, it will be necessary to implement an assessment system that was not designed or developed by the contractor, and second, the contractor will be required to interact effectively with a third party entity, the national Smarter Balanced Organization, for a variety of purposes including project certification, secure data exchange, item replacement, program validation, system updates and improvements, and some aspects of reporting. In order to maintain the productivity of this relationship, the contractor will be required to provide periodic updates on the cooperative activities with Smarter Balanced and offer suggestions for improving efficiency and productivity.

4.3.3 Technology Readiness of Schools

For many of the schools in the NEAC states, this will be their first experience with computer-based test delivery. In addition, the schools vary widely in technology readiness; the number of devices available for testing, web access and bandwidth, and internal technical support personnel. Technology readiness will be a critical issue for the first operational administration and will required on-going attention throughout the duration of the project. Although the states look forward to the time when all students will have access to the Smarter Balanced digital delivery system, that may not be the reality in the first year(s) of the program. Proposers are encouraged to provide an overview of their capacity and experience providing technological support to first time users, and to propose strategies and methods for improving the technology readiness of the schools demonstrating the greatest needs. Proposers should propose a strategic approach to the use of paper and pencil tests as a mitigation strategy for technology risks while still minimizing implementation costs, and may also propose additional interim strategies such as, but not limited to, using computer delivery in some but not all grades or in one but not all content areas.

4.3.4 Maximizing Test Security and Minimizing Cheating

Over the past several years, high profile incidents of cheating have prompted new efforts to strengthen test security, and to apply methods for minimizing cheating, including embedded procedures for identifying significant test security breaches. Proposers are encouraged to provide an overview of their methods and procedures for identifying cheating or other administration irregularities, with an emphasis on recommendations for maintaining test security in a digital test delivery system.

4.3.5 Change management

Proposers must plan for and manage changes between the first 14 months of the project and the subsequent years. Proposers should anticipate changes including but not limited to:

- 4.3.5.1 item specifications for new field test items
- 4.3.5.2 data format for test registration and assessment results
- 4.3.5.3 adaptive algorithm
- 4.3.5.4 cooperation for implementation of SBAC field test plan
- 4.3.5.5 achievement standards
- 4.3.5.6 item metadata
- 4.3.5.7 item content (items will be reloaded each year)
- 4.3.5.8 advances in artificial intelligence scoring technology
- 4.3.5.9 advances in response capture modes

Part 5 Common Response Guidelines

To as great an extent as possible, proposers will be asked to prepare a common, single staffing plan, budget, and description of work that will be submitted to each state in response to each states' particular RFP. Tasks or costs that apply to an individual state are clearly indicated and must be reported separately.

The Proposer's response must include each of the following sections described in paragraphs 5.1 through 5.7, below:

5.1 Introduction

The Proposer's response will include an introduction that briefly describes the Proposer's approach for completing the tasks required for this project, and that demonstrates the Proposer's overall understanding of the Smarter Balanced Assessment system, the required tasks and the needs of the states. This section of the Proposer's response should also introduce any alternative methods or additional tasks that the Proposer plans to propose to successfully complete this project.

5.2 Scope of Work

The Proposer's response will describe the Proposer's specific approach and plans for accomplishing the scope of work called for in the RFP. The response must provide sufficient detail to allow the states to evaluate the proposed methods.

The Proposer must respond to each task described in the scope of work as well as provide descriptions of additional tasks that the Proposer determines are necessary for the successful completion of the project. Please note that the states are requesting separate bids for development and hosting of an on-line, interactive analysis and reporting system (see 7.9).

If the Proposer identifies alternatives or modifications to specific tasks described in this RFP, each proposed task must be fully described and clearly identified. The Proposer's response must include a budget for the task as described in the RFP as well as a budget for the proposed modified task.

5.3 Project Staffing

The Proposer's response will include descriptions of experience and resumes for all individuals proposed to fill key functions within this project. The Proposer's response will also include a staffing plan that notes the allocation of persons and/or departments by full time employee (FTE) across the major tasks to be completed. Any individual assigned to the project as key management, test development or at 0.5 FTE or more must be named in the Proposer's response and a resume must be submitted for that individual. Staffing information will be submitted on the task allocation forms provided.

Throughout the course of the project, the states retain the right of approval of individuals assigned to key management and test development positions within this project.

If the Proposer proposes to use subcontractors, each subcontractor's roles and responsibilities must be clearly delineated as well as the Proposer's management plan to hold the subcontractor accountable for the work, and how the states will be involved if a subcontract needs to be terminated. States retain the right of approval of any subcontractors.

5.4 Budget

The Proposer's response will include a single joint budget for all tasks that can be considered joint components of the project. A separate individual budget by state will be provided only for the small subset of tasks that apply primarily to an individual state. Those tasks will be clearly identified in the scope of work section of the RFP and on accompanying budget forms.

The Proposer's response must include a detailed narrative describing the basis for costs in each of the major task areas. Any cost drivers in the Proposer's assumptions must be delineated clearly. Otherwise the states will not incur any additional costs if conditions or variables subsequently change. The states are not open to the notion that some contract activities are assumed, but not fully described in the proposal. Therefore, change orders will be entertained only when the states request additions or alternatives to items specifically noted in the proposal.

To allow comparisons across Proposers, budget information must be provided on the forms provided. See Appendix 3.

Proposers who propose alternative methods or tasks in addition to those specified in the RFP must submit separate budget forms detailing the costs of the alternatives proposed.

Annual budgets should be based on work completed during fiscal years beginning July 1 and ending June 30. Time and costs should be allocated to the fiscal year in which the work is to be performed. Work related to any single test administration will be conducted across at least two fiscal years.

5.5 Corporate Capability

The Proposer's response must include a description of the corporate capability of the prime Proposer and all proposed subcontractors and vendors that will be performing key functions on

this project. Subcontractors include individuals and organizations performing tasks directly related to implementation of the Smarter Balanced Assessment System for NEAC, including such items as web-hosting (services and materials), quality control, psychometric and technical assistance for the states, help desk services for the districts and schools, scoring and reporting, and printing, scanning, and shipping of paper materials. In addition, the contractor will be required to build and maintain documentation regarding the implementation of the system including industry standard practices for server hosting, help desk services and scanning and scoring. In describing tasks approaches to the work, Proposer should use as guides: the Smarter Balanced item specifications (see Appendix 5), the ATP/CCSSO operational best practices for Large-Scale Assessments, and the Joint Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing.

Each corporate capability statement must address the Proposer's qualifications, background, experience, and capacity to perform the tasks required for the successful completion of this project. The response should include descriptions, if applicable, of previous custom large-scale assessment work and similar work performed.

The Proposer's response must adequately address issues related to the handling, transmission, and storage of secure and/or confidential materials by the prime contractor and all relevant subcontractors and vendors, consistent with the Smarter Balanced Student Records Privacy Policies and Procedures (under development) as well as applicable Federal and State laws that govern access to personally identifiable student information. In addition to the security of physical materials, the response must address the security of materials delivered electronically via the internet (e.g., data files, secure test items, individual student results), as well as the Proposer's ability to transfer data securely to and from the states and Smarter Balanced. The Proposer's response should include an independent external report summarizing a third party security audit and certification that includes any security flaws that were discovered and how they have been corrected.

The Proposer's response must include a list of each large-scale assessment project in which the organization is currently or has been involved as a prime contractor or subcontractor over the last ten years, with particular emphasis on projects that featured web-based or computer-delivered assessments, and/or digital accessibility tools and features. The list and description should include a short description of the responsibilities and outcomes, dates engaged, and total amount of contract as well as client contact information for each project (i.e., contact name, affiliation, phone number, and email address). The Proposer must also describe any service levels that were executed by the client. By submitting the list of past clients, the Proposer gives permission for the states to contact current and prior staff of those clients.

5.6 State-Specific Appendices and Cover Materials

Each state has identified any state-specific contract forms, cover materials, assurances, or other contract provisions that must be submitted separately in response to each state's RFP (See Appendix 2 - State Specific Contract Forms and Attachments). These documents will be the basis on which the formal contract with each state will be negotiated with the successful bidder.

5.7 Liquidated Damages/Penalties

The final contracts negotiated under this contract will include a provision for penalties or liquidated damages due to non-performance or breach of contract. In particular, penalties or liquidated damages will be tied primarily to actions on the part of the contractor that result in either the late delivery of materials or services, or execution of deliverables that fail to meet contract specifications Specifics of the penalties and liquidated damages will be determined

during contract negotiations. As a starting point for negotiations, the States propose a policy in which the contractor shall be penalized no more than a fixed percentage (e.g., 7.5%) of the total contracted amount in a given year. The maximum penalty shall be prorated against the number of days in which the contractor is determined to be in noncompliance with the contract (e.g., failure to provide deliverables on time and/or insufficient to meet technical specifications). States will hold the penalty sum in escrow over the course of the contract year and will add the sum to the final annual payment if all contract deliverables have met timelines and specifications. Contractors will not be held responsible for delays that result from states failing to meet their specific timelines and responsibilities.

Part 6 Application Procedures

Issues concerning application procedures and a review schedule are addressed in this section of the RFP. Any changes to these procedures will be posted on the Connecticut State Contracting Portal at: http://www.biznet.ct.gov/SCP_Search/Default.aspx?AccLast=2.

6.1 Bidders' Conference

A bidders' conference will be held on May 12, 2014, using a virtual meeting format. The purpose of the conference will be to answer bidder's questions and to provide any updates or new information that has come from Smarter Balanced since the date of posting.

6.2 Questions Concerning the RFP

The states will accept written questions via e-mail through 12:00 p.m. EDST, Friday, May 23, 2014. All questions should be directed to the following address: neac_rfp@greatschoolspartnership.org. All questions and responses will be posted on the Connecticut State Department of Education Web site at http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2683&Q=320346.

Responses to questions received each week by Monday at 12:00 noon EDST will be posted to each state's Web site no later than the following Friday. All questions and responses will be posted by Thursday, May 29, 2014.

6.3 Submission Requirements

Proposers are required to submit an original and four (4) hard copies of all materials and forms requested in this RFP to each state. Proposers must also submit an electronic copy of the materials. Proposers may submit hard copy or electronic copies of supplemental materials and/or work samples submitted to support their proposals.

6.4 Proposal Deadline

All proposal materials must be received by 4:00 p.m. EDST on Friday, June 6, 2014. Proposals not received by all states by this deadline will not be considered.

Proposals must be addressed to:

Gail Pagano
Education Consultant
Connecticut State Department of Education
165 Capitol Avenue, Room 215
Hartford, CT 06106
Telephone: 860-713-6821
Gail.Pagano@ct.gov

6.5 Planned Review Schedule

The states plan to review proposals and make an award recommendation according to the following schedule. Unforeseen circumstances may result in changes to the schedule. Bidders will be informed of any schedule changes via e-mail. Additional details will be provided as they become available.

The states will review proposals and identify additional questions for Proposers by Monday, June 20, 2014.

The states may choose to interview particular bidders prior to making an award recommendation. Interviews would be conducted during the first week of June at a location to be determined – either in person in one of the states or using virtual meeting technologies. Proposers

would be represented at the interview by the proposed project director and senior staff as requested.

The states plan to make an award recommendation by Wednesday, July 30, 2014.

6.6 Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated according to the criteria contained in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Proposal Evaluation Criteria

RFP Evaluation Criteria and Rating System				
Each Proposal Evaluation Criterion will be rated for evidence of quality, clarity, completeness, innovation and overall probability of success using the following ratings: **S = SUPERIOR** ***Meets and exceeds expectations for this criterion; demonstrates a high level of capacity, innovation and creativity; High probability of success.*** **A = ADEQUATE** ***Meets expectations for this criterion; consistent with industry standards and practices; good probability of success.*** **M = MINIMAL** ***Meets some but not all expectations, and/or meets expectations at the lowest acceptable levels; moderate to low probability of success.*** **I = INADEQUATE** ***Fails to meet some or all expectations; does not demonstrate sufficient capacity to reach project objectives; low to very low probability of success.***				
Criterion **(circle rating point value)**	S	A	M	I
Quality of Response to Project Priorities (24 points):				
1. Responds clearly, concisely and completely to all RFP priorities and requirements.	**6**	**4**	**2**	**0**
2. Demonstrates understanding of the states' vision and the challenges that need to be met in order to achieve it.	**6**	**4**	**2**	**0**
3. Proposes methods, procedures and strategies that are sound, innovative, and represent current research and best practice in assessment design and delivery.	**6**	**4**	**2**	**0**
4. Achieves an acceptable level of balance between technical quality, efficiency, and cost effectiveness.	**6**	**4**	**2**	**0**
Corporate Capacity and Staffing (24 points):				
1. Provides a staffing plan that is sufficient in terms of numbers, roles, and areas of expertise.	**6**	**4**	**2**	0
2. Includes evidence that key project staff are adequately trained and have sufficient experience with respect to each staff member's role in the project.	**6**	**4**	**2**	0
3. Demonstrates the capacity to meet project deadlines, work within budgets, handle and solve problems, and achieve a high level of client satisfaction, citing satisfactory completion of similar projects and providing references where appropriate.	**6**	**4**	**2**	0
4. Proposes project management procedures and strategies that address the unique challenges of serving a multi-state collaboration, citing experience that prepares the bidder for this role.	**6**	**4**	**2**	0

Figure 3: Proposal Evaluation Criteria

RFP Evaluation Criteria and Rating System				
Each Proposal Evaluation Criterion will be rated for evidence of quality, clarity, completeness, innovation and overall probability of success using the following ratings: **S = SUPERIOR** ***Meets and exceeds expectations for this criterion; demonstrates a high level of capacity, innovation and creativity; High probability of success.*** **A = ADEQUATE** ***Meets expectations for this criterion; consistent with industry standards and practices; good probability of success.*** **M = MINIMAL** ***Meets some but not all expectations, and/or meets expectations at the lowest acceptable levels; moderate to low probability of success.*** **I = INADEQUATE** ***Fails to meet some or all expectations; does not demonstrate sufficient capacity to reach project objectives; low to very low probability of success.***				
Criterion **(circle rating point value)**	S	A	M	I
Expertise and Experience in Priority Areas (30 points):				
1. Demonstrates the capacity to develop, administer and process student assessments across four states within a three month testing window.	**6**	**4**	**2**	**0**
2. Demonstrates the capacity to score student assessments with a high degree of accuracy, integrity and efficiency.	**6**	**4**	**2**	**0**
3. Demonstrates the capacity to host a web-based assessment delivery system, provide technical assistance to system users, and implement sound quality assurance protocols.	**6**	**4**	**2**	**0**
4. Demonstrates the capacity to analyze and report student results to meet a variety of purposes and satisfy the needs of key constituent groups, including educators, policy makers and parents.	**6**	**4**	**2**	**0**
5. Provides evidence that all project activities and deliverables will adhere to the highest standards of integrity particularly as it relates to the confidentiality of student information.	**6**	**4**	**2**	**0**
Fiscal Management and Cost (12 points)				
1. Proposes a budget that is cost effective and consistent with the states' histories with projects of similar size and scope.	**6**	**4**	**2**	**0**
2. Demonstrates the ability to employ sound fiscal management practices that meet and exceed standards of practice for the industry and in accordance with billing and reporting practices required by the states.	**6**	**4**	**2**	**0**
Overall Quality of the Proposal: **Provides a comprehensive, coherent and integrative response to the scope of work and other project priorities that demonstrates the capacity to implement the project on time, within budget and at a high level of quality (10 points).**	**10**	**7**	**4**	**0**
Sub-Totals				
Total	**/100**			

Please note that the States reserve the right to seek additional input and comments from the Smarter Balanced Chief Operating Officer, Chief Technology Officer and/or other Smarter Balanced staff. However, these inquiries will be for informational purposes only. States will make all decisions with respect to the awarding of points and selection of finalists.

Part 7 Scope of Work

This section of the RFP contains a description of the major tasks required of the Proposer for the successful completion of this project, and provides information on contract deliverables. The Proposer's response must directly reference and address each of the tasks contained in this section. The response must also reflect an understanding of the priorities and challenges noted in the opening sections of this RFP. In addition, the Proposer's response must identify any additional tasks not included in this RFP that the Proposer determines are necessary for the successful completion of this project. Proposers may also wish to propose alternative methods or modifications to tasks that they feel would improve the efficiency of the project and/or quality of the materials and services produced for the project. These alternatives should reference both how the alternatives will improve the quality of the program and any specific budget implications.

The quality of all work and materials produced by the recipient of this award, and the security of test materials and administration procedures, are critical to the success of NEAC. Consequently, there is no single 'quality control' or 'security' task included in the scope of work for this RFP. Throughout its response, the Proposer must provide evidence and descriptions of the methods and procedures that will be used to ensure the quality of work and to ensure security at each stage of the project, including the qualifications of all sub-contractors and how the quality of their work will be ensured.

Please note: All electronic and hard copy materials developed for this project, unless specifically stated in the RFP or prearranged by the Contractor during the initial project planning meetings, are the sole property of the states and will not be copyrighted or resold by the contractor. Technologies, protocols and materials produced by Smarter Balanced are the property of the Smarter Balanced Consortium to the extent permitted by open-source requirements for recipients of Federal grants.

7.1 Project Management and Planning

7.1.1 Proposer's Project Team

7.1.1.1 Project Director – The Proposer will appoint a single full-time project director who oversees the management of the project including work assigned to subcontractor(s) and serves as primary point of contact with the states' management team.

7.1.1.2 Project Manager(s) – The Proposer will appoint one or more project manager(s) who serve as primary point of contact with individual partner states on issues unique to the state (e.g., shipping, identification of schools)

7.1.1.3 Support Staff – The Proposer will indicate the number of full or part-time support staff specifically assigned to the project,

7.1.2 Management Meetings and Activities

7.1.2.1 Management Meetings – The Proposer will support regular management meetings with the states' project management team.

The Proposer should budget for one full day meeting per month, to be held at locations that rotate across the member states. Lodging and meals (as appropriate) for the states' management team will be arranged and paid by the contractor.

7.1.2.2 WebEx Conference Calls – The Proposer will support monthly WebEx conference calls with the states' project management team.

7.1.2.3 Management Reports – In addition to detailed minutes from management meetings, the Contractor will provide the following reports:

7.1.2.3.1 Annual project plan and schedule (including detailed procedures and specifications)

7.1.2.3.2 Monthly written status reports describing the current status of scheduled tasks and recommending updates and revisions, as needed, to the project schedule.

7.2 Technical and Policy Issues

The Contractor will plan and host two meetings per year of the NEAC Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Contractor responsibilities will include each of the following:

7.2.1 Work with management team to identify and recruit TAC members;

7.2.2 Execute any necessary contractual arrangements with TAC members, including payment of a reasonable stipend that is consistent with industry standards;

7.2.3 Identify an appropriate meeting site, and make all logistical and contractual arrangements, rotating the meetings around the three partner states;

7.2.4 Prepare all meeting materials, including an annotated agenda, and arrange for key staff members to attend and report to the TAC when appropriate;

7.2.5 Arrange travel and lodging for TAC members and two representatives per state;

7.2.6 Provide meeting facilitation;

7.2.7 Prepare and disseminate detailed meeting notes;

7.2.8 The Contractor may be required to prepare materials and/or make presentations related to particular TAC agenda items. Meeting schedules and agendas will be determined by the states in consultation with the Contractor;

7.2.9 The Contractor will attend a meeting with individual state education leadership (e.g., commissioner, board of education) upon request, but not to exceed one time per state per year. The Contractor will be represented by the project director, senior management, and/or additional staff with responsibility, expertise or experience relevant to the topics for discussion; and

7.2.10 The contractor may be required to attend 2 meetings each year held by the Smarter Balanced Consortium.

7.3 **Online Assessment and Technical Support**

The Contractor will provide the hosting site, test administration application, server and application management services, for the Smarter Balanced on-line operational test construction (e.g., the adaptive algorithm), assessment delivery, and records retention for both the summative and interim assessments. The Proposer may propose use of an alternative to the Smarter test delivery platform, but must demonstrate that it meets the

technical specifications of the Smarter platform, consistent with the interoperability standards adopted by Smarter Balanced, and provides comparable tests using the same functionalities, accessibility tools, and the same or greater test security protections. SBAC has provided the following documents to assist states and prospective vendors prepare for on-line assessment and technical support:

- SBAC Hosting Requirements: See Appendix 4
- Industry Questions and Answers Regarding Smarter Balanced Assessments: http://www.smarterapp.org/spec/2014/04/11/specs-QuestionsAndAnswers.html
- Smarter Balanced Applications Deployment and Technology Certification Overview: http://www.smarterapp.org/spec/2014/04/11/specs-AppDeploymentTechCertification.html

Proposers will describe how the services, procedures and technologies described in the Hosting Requirements document will be provided. If an alternate delivery platform is proposed, the proposal will provide the following information:

7.3.1 Requirements for the use of any software (and supporting devices) should be clearly documented and explained.

7.3.2 The minimum and preferred technology infrastructure needed to support online testing should be documented and explained.

7.3.3 The technical support documents should include information about suggested computer lab configurations.

7.3.4 Information on computer-based assistive technologies should be provided to the client so that the client can determine which they may allow; data on use of these technologies should be collected.

7.3.5 A practice and training test should be provided to allow students to become familiar with keyboarding and navigation techniques and tools that will be used during the live assessment.

7.3.6 Procedures for uploading student demographic data in the online assessment system, including any necessary accessibility tools and supports, should be provided, as well as instructions and procedures for modification of enrollment data, where permitted by the client.

7.3.7 Procedures for maintaining the security of the online testing environment should be documented.

7.3.8 Descriptions of training protocols to be provided at the local level on the test administration procedures should be provided.

7.3.9 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 online training materials (e.g., slide deck from webinar, FAQ document).

7.3.10 Technical support should be available via telephone and/or electronically with tools such as help desk and/or e-mail.

7.3.11 Metrics for monitoring and documenting systems performance should be identified.

7.3.12 Documentation should be provided regarding the capacity of the system to support the current and potential future range of Smarter Balanced item types (See Appendix 7 for link to Smarter Balanced Systems architecture and Item Specifications).

7.3.13 Describe methods for establishing the comparability of test results in comparison to those that would be delivered via the Smarter Balanced Test Administration engine.

7.3.14 Provide documentation regarding the application's capacity to import and export as applicable: items, student item response data, student registration, demographics, and data regarding eligible and utilized accommodations.

7.4 Test Items and Performance Tasks

Smarter Balanced will develop, review, and field test a number of test items and performance tasks sufficient to populate item pools for both the summative and interim assessments. They will also provide ongoing monitoring of item usage, removing items that become over exposed. Smarter Balanced will continue developing items in subsequent operational years in numbers sufficient to maintain the viability of the item pools. The contractor will support this process by providing the following:

7.4.1 Implement operational field-testing in accordance with a plan approved by the Smarter Balanced Governing states that includes, at a minimum, parameters for items to be used in CAT and performance tasks.

7.4.2 Conduct quality control on the import of items, item metadata and item tags into the test administration platform

7.5 Manufacture Delivery, Scanning and Scoring of Paper-based Tests

Although the Smarter Balanced Assessments are designed for digital delivery, the states will provide a paper-pencil test form for at least 2 operational years of the project to schools that lack the technology readiness for delivery of computer-based assessments. Smarter Balanced will provide a set of camera ready test forms for all grades and content areas. These forms will meet specification established by the Smarter Balanced Governing States. Smarter Balanced will not field test new items on paper. However, the operational paper tests will necessarily be longer than the computer adaptive tests in order to increase the reliability of the paper forms. Additional hand-scoring, above and beyond what is required for the online tests, will be necessary because some of the online delivered, machine-scored items will need to be hand scored. Proposers will describe how they will provide the following processes and services relative to the paper-pencil test option:

7.5.1 A process to help ensure production of necessary quantities of manufactured paper-pencil test materials based upon enrollment data and overage requirements provided by the states. Preliminary estimates of the numbers and percentages of students needing the paper-pencil option are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Initial estimates of students who will require paper-pencil test forms

State	Number and Percent of Students
Connecticut	Approximately 2,075 students at each grade level (5%)
New Hampshire	Approximately 9000 students at each grade level (5%)
Vermont	Approximately 50 students at each grade level (<1%)

7.5.2 A process to help ensure that all test paper-pencil test materials meet specifications provided by the states prior to final production, including checks during printing.

7.5.3 A process to help ensure accurate collating of paper-pencil test materials.

7.5.4 A process to identify and protect the security of paper-pencil test materials.

7.5.5 A process, where required, to pre-code answer documents with student SSID numbers, demographic information, LEA and school/testing site information. To ensure student confidentiality, a unique Smarter Balanced student identifier will be used for data transfer rather than the regular state student identification number.

7.5.6 A process to ensure students who take the paper assessment do not take a computer-based assessment in the same content area unless an exception is approved by the state. This process must also include procedures to identify and resolve any cases where students have two or more paper exams that may occur in cases when students change schools during the testing window.

7.5.7 A process and procedures to ensure the accurate and timely packaging of orders, including additional materials orders, including each of the following:

- 7.5.7.1 A process to ensure that all paper-pencil test materials, are shrink-wrapped, banded, or packaged according to standard industry practice.
- 7.5.7.2 A process to ensure the accurate labeling of all completed packages.
- 7.5.7.3 An expedited packaging and shipping system.
- 7.5.7.4 A process to ensure documentation is created and maintained for all completed orders.
- 7.5.7.5 A process to ensure accurate receipt, check-in, and processing of materials at the processing center.
- 7.5.7.6 A process to reconcile and report any missing packages or material.

7.5.8 Methods and quality assurance guidelines for scanning paper-pencil test forms that includes the following:

- 7.5.8.1 A process that ensures accurate scanning.
- 7.5.8.2 A process that ensures that the integrity of booklets and student response documents are maintained during the scanning process.
- 7.5.8.3 A process that ensures that all relevant documents complete the scanning process.
- 7.5.8.4 An editing process that ensures accurate collection of data from scanned documents.
- 7.5.8.5 A contingency plan or system to ensure that any issues encountered in scanning will not delay scoring.
- 7.5.8.6 A process to integrate the data collected from paper with data from the online administration for scoring and reporting.
- 7.5.8.7 A process to collect, analyze and report any industry standard statistics regarding validity and reliability across the paper and online administrations.
- 7.5.8.8 A process to detect and address any security breaches associated with then paper forms.

7.5.9 Methods and quality assurance guidelines for scoring paper-pencil tests; Please see Section 7.8 for general requirements and procedures for scoring.

7.6 Security, Chain of Custody and Data Forensics

The following tasks are primarily the responsibility of the contractor, but will also require direct involvement of the Project Management Team. Proposers will describe how they will address the following tasks and responsibilities:

7.6.1 Test Security

7.6.1.1 Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to ensure the security of test items, materials, and student data.

7.6.1.2 Develop and implement training procedures and materials regarding test security, and confidentiality of student data and personally identifiable information.

7.6.1.3 Develop and implement uniform policies and procedures for identifying and dealing with possible security beaches and testing irregularities.

7.6.1.4 Develop implement procedures to account for and protect secure materials at all stages of distribution, receipt, storage, and return. Note: This requirement has general implications, but applies specifically to paper-pencil test forms.

7.6.2 Chain of Custody

7.6.2.1 Develop and implement processes and procedures the Contractor will use to ensure the security, integrity, and accuracy of materials shipped, transported, and received while maintaining chain of custody.

7.6.2.2 Develop and implement policies, guidelines and sign-off procedures for State, District, and School officials to establish and document a chain of custody for hand-offs to ensure that documents are received, accounted for, and distributed and returned.

7.6.3 Data Forensics

7.6.3.1 For online assessments, describe plans and procedures to provide continuous updates that capture a variety of data including but not limited to:

7.6.3.1.1 time of testing;

7.6.3.1.2 all student answer choices including the final choice used for scoring;

7.6.3.1.3 response latency;

7.6.3.1.4 tracking the movement of the examinee through the test;

7.6.3.1.5 student response times;

7.6.3.1.6 accessibility options used by the student; and

7.6.3.1.7 analysis of student gains over time.

7.6.3.2 The Contractor should be prepared to provide appropriate reporting for the states and any impacted schools or school districts.

7.6.3.3 For paper-pencil tests, the Contractor will describe procedures used for erasure analysis, and any other checks or safeguards to identify cheating or other testing irregularities.

7.7 Test Administration

The following tasks are primarily the responsibility of the contractor, but will also require direct involvement of the Project Management Team. Proposers will describe how they will address the following tasks and responsibilities:

7.7.1 Utilizing information about the testing window provided by Smarter Balanced, the Contractor will identify and publish an annual calendar of the assessment window well in advance of testing. Each state is responsible for setting any limits or modifications to the testing window as required by legislation or other factors.

7.7.2 The Contractor will develop and publish guidelines on how and when and what materials, including student-level directions for administration, should be made available prior to the administration window.

7.7.3 The Contractor will develop and publish a protocol for preparing the testing environment, to be included as a part of the procedure manuals and training.

7.7.4 The contractor will develop and maintain a secure database of District Test Coordinator contact information.

7.8 Scoring

Using the Smarter Balanced Test Blueprint (See link in Appendix 7) and the Smarter Balanced Item Specifications (See link in Appendix 7) as guides, proposals will describe strategies, methods and procedures for ensuring the timely, secure and accurate scoring of all Pencil/Paper test items, as well as the computer-delivered test items that require human scoring, including responses to performance tasks. The Pencil/Paper test will employ a combination of selected response, short answer and constructed response items. The computer-delivered tests will introduce a variety of innovative items types, including technology enhanced items and performance tasks, as summarized in Table 5.

Table 5 – Summary of item types and test presentation formats for computer delivered assessments.

Content Area	Available Response Types	Available Scoring Types	Description Notes
Math	Multiple-choice, single correct response	automatic with key	four option multiple-choice
Math	Multiple-choice, multiple-correct response	automatic with key(s)	Multiple-option multiple-choice
Math	Matching Tables (variation True/False or Yes/No)	automatic with machine rubric	table format, click entry
Math	Hot Text	automatic with	select and order text

Content Area	Available Response Types	Available Scoring Types	Description Notes
		machine rubric	
Math	Drag and Drop	automatic with machine rubric	drag and drop single- or multiple-elements
Math	Hot Spot	automatic with machine rubric	select text
Math	Graphing	automatic, graphic response scoring	plot points and or draw lines
Math	Equation/numeric	automatic, equation scoring	enter equation or numeric response
Math	Short text	hand-scored	keyboard alphanumeric entry
Math	Fill-in-Table	Automatic with machine rubric	keyboard numeric entry
ELA	Multiple-choice, single correct response	automatic with key	four option multiple-choice
ELA	Two-part multiple-choice, with evidence responses	automatic with keys	Two-part, multiple-option multiple-choice
ELA	Multiple-choice, multiple-correct response	automatic with key(s)	multiple-option multiple-choice
ELA	Matching Tables (variation using True/False or Yes/No format)	automatic with machine rubric	table format, click entry
ELA	Hot Text	automatic with machine rubric	select and/or move text
ELA	Short text	Hand-scored	keyboard alphanumeric entry
ELA	Essay	hand-scored	keyboard alphanumeric entry

Presentation Formats	
Response Type	**Available Presentation Types**
all	Static text
all	Static text with graphics
all	Graphics only
all	Animation (not interactive)
all	Audio segment
all	Simulation

7.8.1 General Scoring Requirements

7.8.1.1 The Proposer will describe a process for ensuring the accuracy, reliability, and confidentiality of scoring for open-ended responses, including a process that provides consistent and accurate hand-scoring.

7.8.1.2 The Proposer's response will include a description of the qualification and experience of the scorers proposed for the NEAC tests and a rationale for the proposal.

7.8.1.3 The Proposer's response will provide details on the processes and procedures used to train scorers and qualify scorers for participation in scoring.

7.8.1.4 The Proposer's response will provide details on the quality control processes used to monitor scoring rates and accuracy. The response will also provide details on processes used to identify scorers for retraining or removal and processes used to invalidate scores from particular scorers. This should include rate of double-scoring, selection of responses for double scoring, etc.

7.8.1.5 The Proposer will outline policies for the type and frequency of information provided from the scoring process (within and across scoring sites) to the states.

7.8.1.6 The states' project management shall have the right to request, "on- demand" within four hours any regular scoring report and to monitor activities at scoring sites.

7.8.1.7 The Proposer will provide for representatives or agents from the States to be present at the scoring site(s) during, scoring qualification, training, and initial scoring. The contractor's response must discuss the issues of making it possible for oversight with a very limited staff.

7.8.1.8 The Proposer will produce a document summarizing the scoring process for the current year that includes information described in tasks 1 through 7 above.

7.8.1.9 The Proposer will describe a process for identifying, evaluating and informing the states about "crisis papers" (e.g., student responses that contain disturbing content).

7.8.1.10 The Proposer will provide a plan that delineates the process for rescoring, late batch scoring, and score verification requests.

7.8.1.11 The Proposer will describe a plan for resolving requests for rescoring hand-scored open-ended responses.

7.8.1.12 The Proposer will describe the procedures and safeguards established for the scoring process that ensure confidentiality is maintained and student identify is securely controlled.

7.8.1.13 The Proposer will describe the processes that will be established to perform hand-scoring verifications of machine-scored items that are included on the test.

7.8.1.14 The Proposer will describe data forensic procedures that will be used to identify cheating and/or other irregularities in test administration and student response.

7.8.1.15 The Proposer will describe a process and procedures, including fees that may be assessed, for rescoring requests from individuals other that the states' representatives, as well as dispute resolution related to scoring.

7.8.2 Specific Requirements for Automated Scoring (including machine scoring and artificial Intelligence or AI scoring) if Proposed

7.8.2.1 Proposer will describe how it will be demonstrated that the Proposer's AI engine delivers comparable results to field test scoring.

7.8.2.2 Proposer will describe procedures that will be used to establish the quality of the AI engine that includes regularly scheduled performance checks for the scoring of constructed responses using a wide variety of new and previously scored student papers (both AI and hand-scored) using the AI engine.

7.8.2.3 Proposals should provide for input from psychometricians, hand-scoring experts, and technical staff that will help ensure that the software is providing reliable scoring that is as accurate, or more accurate than, human scoring.

7.8.2.4 Proposer will describe procedures that will be used for recalibration, retraining and delivery must be demonstrated and included as a required resource

7.8.2.5 Proposer will provide evidence that the AI Scoring Engine meets the following additional criteria:

- 7.8.2.5.1 includes a range of score points, types and styles of writing, and other types of constructed responses;
- 7.8.2.5.2 includes an automated process to provide a randomly selected pre-determined portion of the papers to be hand-scored;
- 7.8.2.5.3 meets the same standards for accuracy and reliability that exist for human scoring of the same item type;
- 7.8.2.5.4 provides evidence that the engine meets accuracy and reliability standards and they must be documented and included as part of the process;
- 7.8.2.5.5 includes validation processes that utilize student responses across the entire population, including a range of score points, types and styles of writing; and
- 7.8.2.5.6 provides evidence that the AI engine performs as well, or better than, human readers.

7.8.2.6 Proposer's System must give accurate, timely assessment results to the NEAC states with capability to disseminate scoring results to schools and districts as quickly as possible. Proposers should describe the strategies and procedures they will use to expedite reporting, with estimates of turn-around time.

7.8.2.7 Proposer's System must employ the use of a SSID System to identify each student and to ensure the accurate matching of the student to test results. NEAC states shall supply the SSID and will provide frequent file updates as needed. To ensure student confidentiality, a unique Smarter Balanced student identifier will be used for data transfer rather than the regular state student identification number. Overall, the system must satisfy Federal and state laws that provide for the protection of personally identifiable student information.

7.8.2.8 Proposer's System must perform the scoring of Smarter Mathematics and ELA assessments in accordance with specifications developed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. The scoring engine for Smarter Mathematics and ELA

assessments must be able to encompass the full range of the Smarter Balanced metric.

7.8.2.9 If full scoring by Artificial Intelligence is proposed for any assessment, the scoring, the Proposer should develop and implement a phase-in plan must be described in which humans have a decreasing role over time.

7.8.3 Specific Requirements for Hand-Scoring

7.8.3.1 Proposals will describe how the Proposer will perform hand-scoring for Smarter Mathematics and English Language Arts elements in accordance with specifications developed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium for constructed response and performance task items.

7.8.3.2 Proposals will describe the Proposer's experience and capabilities relative to hand-scoring services. Hand-scored items must be scored and results provided within 30 days from the close of the test window. The states are interested in scoring models that can take advantage of the fact that many schools will complete testing in the early weeks of a three month testing window, so that scoring might begin before all schools have completed testing.

7.8.3.3 Proposals for hand-scoring should be developed on the assumption that all scoring procedures, rubrics, exemplars, anchor papers, and annotations will be provided by Smarter Balanced. The states are open to cost estimates that are presented in per student units, unit ranges or as a flat fee, Proposals should explain how estimates were calculated, listing key variables that may impact estimates, and the extent to which estimates may change.

7.9 Web-based Designated Supports and Accommodations Data Collection System

The Smarter Balanced assessments provide students with universal tools, designated supports, and documented accommodations as described in the Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines (see Appendix 7). Proposals should include specifications and anticipated costs for the design and operation of a web-based data collection system for monitoring and cataloging designated supports and documented accommodations used by students during the assessment. Proposals should address the following:

7.9.1 Provide a detailed description of a secure web-based designated supports and accommodations data collection system that includes:

7.9.1.1 A submission process that allows for batch uploads of student demographic data from SDE Student Information Systems (SIS).

7.9.1.2 A submission process that allows for manual entries or batch uploads of students' designated supports and accommodations from LEA special education management systems or individualized education program (IEP) software.

7.9.1.3 A feature that allows for the review of designated supports and documented accommodation data in a roster report format.

7.9.1.4 A summary report of designated supports and documented accommodations data by type.

7.9.1.5 A feature that allows for a check for possible errors in data submissions.

7.9.1.6 A system that will allow for the transfer of designated supports and accommodations to the test administration platform (preferably an integrated system).

7.9.1.7 A system that will allow for future modifications.

7.9.1.8 A system that will allow for use with other state assessments that may require different supports and accommodations for students.

7.9.1.9 Proposers are asked to review the *CMT/CAPT Accommodations Data Collection Center Help Guide* (See Appendix 6), Connecticut's current accommodations data collection system to gain a better understanding of the options and functionalities states hope to offer LEAs.

7.10 State Led Item Development

All assessment items and performance tasks for the operational assessments will be provided by Smarter Balanced. Item pools will be replenished using a process called "State Led Item Development" which will involve states, working with their individual contractors, to develop an annual quota of items using Smarter Balanced item specifications. Smarter Balanced will pay the contractors for the item development, but proposers must demonstrate the capacity, skill and experience necessary provide the service. It should also be noted that Smarter Balanced does not anticipate the need for State Led Item Development during the first operational year of the assessment, and approximately 200 items per content area in subsequent years. The states are requesting an overview of the Proposer's qualifications for this task, but no specific bid is required. Each of the following should be addressed: Item authoring, graphics development, tagging, item reviews for bias/sensitivity, accessibility, content and quality.

7.11 Web-based Analysis and Reporting System (Separate Bid Requested)

Smarter Balanced will host an interactive Web site that will provide a variety of options for analysis and reporting, both static and interactive (currently under development). However, the states have a history of providing high quality, interactive analysis and reporting and therefore, NEAC may choose to develop its own reporting solution. The states are requesting prospective vendors to propose an analysis and reporting system, as described below, and submit a separate bid covering development and deployment of the reporting tools. Proposals should address the following:

7.11.1 Provide a detailed description of a web-based analysis and reporting system that includes:

7.11.1.1 Downloadable student level data files in csv format;

7.11.1.2 Downloadable static reports. Vendor should propose a list of reports to be provided;

7.11.1.3 Interactive results analysis that includes, at a minimum, disaggregation by gender and key student groups, with a function for cross-tabulation;

7.11.1.4 Longitudinal data reporting for districts, schools and individual students; and

7.11.1.5 Other recommendations for functions that will provide schools with actionable data that may be used to analyze results in ways that

support NEAC's desire to make the assessments highly relevant to monitoring and improving curriculum, instruction and general classroom practices.

7.11.2 Provide information reflecting the Proposer's experience developing digital reporting systems, with links to demo sites and/or screen prints of key features of systems the Proposer has developed.

7.11.3 Provide descriptions of security measures embedded in the system, including multi-user password systems that will allow the system to serve as a public portal, and also an access point for confidential student-level data and reports.

7.11.4 Provide information on how results from both online and Paper-pencil administrations will be integrated into the reporting system.

7.11.5 Provide descriptions of administrative tools that will permit local school administrators, as well as education agency personnel, to monitor use of the system, assign new user passwords, and other functions to be recommended in the proposal.

7.11.6 Provide each state with a complete set of student level results. The format of these results will be defined by the States, in conjunction with the contractor, and may include, as appropriate, items such as: student growth factor, student assessment results including sub-scores, item level response where available, testing school, grade and content area, achievement level for each content area claim, and others as proposed by the contractor and defined by NEAC.

7.11.7 Proposers are asked to review the states' current interactive reporting sites to gain a better understanding of the options and functionalities they hope to offer schools. Access information follows:

7.11.7.1 NECAP Analysis and Reporting System (Demo):

URL: https://reporting.measuredprogress.org/NECAPReportingVT/
User Name: DEMOADEMO1
Password: 11475

7.11.7.2 Connecticut Online Reports

URL: http://www.ctreports.com/
User Guide: https://solutions1.emetric.net/CTDataAnalyzer/Help/HelpGuide.pdf

7.12 State Specific Requirements (Separate Bid Requested)

In addition to the scope of work outlined above, Connecticut requests bids on the following work, services or deliverables:

7.12.1 Proposers are asked to provide options for providing preliminary test results by June 1, 2016, and June 1, 2017, for the purposes of teacher evaluation.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Cost Distribution Model for Calculating Bids for Individual States

The NEAC states will share some project costs equally, and others in proportion to the number of students assessed in each state. The following tables summarize the cost distribution model and the enrollment numbers that were used to determine the proportional distribution.

Task	Distribution Method	CT	NH	VT
Project Management	Equal	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%
On-line Assessment and Technical Support	Proportional	67%	23%	10%
Manufacture, Delivery, Scanning and Scoring of Pencil and Paper Tests	Proportional	67%	23%	10%
Scoring of On-line Items and Tasks	Proportional	67%	23%	10%
Accommodations Data Collection System	Equal	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%

	Students to Be Assessed: Estimates by Grade Level								
State	3	4	5	6	7	8	11	Total	% All
CT	41,000	41,000	41,000	41,000	42,000	42,000	42,000	290,000	67%
NH	13,969	14,107	14,353	14,558	14,918	15,124	14,972	102,006	23%
VT	6,018	5,970	6,058	6,228	6,218	6,390	6,419	43,303	10%
All	58,269	58,929	58,942	59,765	60,711	61,340	60,984	435,309	100%

Appendix 2 – CSDE Standard Contract Language (pdf Attached)

Appendix 3 – Budget and Task Allocation forms (Excel File Attached)

Appendix 4 – SBAC Hosting Requirements (pdf File Attached)

Appendix 5 – Assessment Item Packaging Format Brief (pdf File Attached)

Appendix 6 – *CMT/CAPT Accommodations Data Collection Center Help Guide* (pdf File Attached)

Appendix 7 – Proposer Resources and References (Web Links):

Smarter Balanced IT System Architecture
This report provides a comprehensive understanding and defines enterprise architecture of the Smarter Balanced Assessment System, it also provides framework to guide the application architects.
http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/SmarterBalanced_ArchitectureReport_120321.pdf

Smarter Balanced Governance Plan
This plan explains the intent of the Smarter IT System's architecture and how it plans to meet the assessment obligation in October 2014.
http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Enterprise-Architecture-Governance-Plan-Phase-1-Report.pdf

Smarter Balanced Workshop Deliverables
This document describes the outcomes of three workshops which included Scoring, Distributed Scoring, Reporting and Portals/Dashboards, Item Authoring, Item Banking, Digital Library and Interoperability, Test Creation, Test Delivery Platform, Adaptive Testing and Integration Framework.
http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Smarter_IT-Systems_WorkshopDeliverables_120120.pdf

Smarter Balanced Usability, Accessibility and Accommodations Guidelines
The document describes the embedded tools and external accommodations and supports that are approved for use during the Smarter Balanced Assessments.
http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/SmarterBalanced_Guidelines_091113.pdf

Smarter Balanced Content Specifications
These two documents describe the content specifications that serve as the basis for the Smarter Balanced system of summative and interim assessments and formative assessment support for teachers.

ELA: http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/ELA-Literacy-Content-Specifications.pdf

Math: http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Math-Content-Specifications.pdf

Smarter Balanced Technology Strategy Framework and System Requirements Specifications
This document provides minimum hardware specifications and basic bandwidth calculations that will allow schools and districts to evaluate which of their existing devices will support the administration of next-generation assessments.
http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Technology-Strategy-Framework_2-6-13.pdf

Smarter Balanced Test Blueprint
This document describes the content of the English language arts/literacy and mathematics summative assessments for Grades 3–8 and high school—and how that content will be assessed.
http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Smarter-Balanced-Preliminary-Test-Blueprints.pdf

Smarter Balanced Item Specifications
This document summarizes the specifications used for developing summative and interim assessment items. For content specific item specifications use the link listed below under the heading Smarter Balanced Assessments Webpage.
http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/TaskItemSpecifications/ItemSpecifications/GeneralItemSpecifications.pdf

Smarter Balanced Assessments Webpage
This webpage contains an array of documents that describe all aspects of the Smarter Balanced Assessment design, including all of the item and task specifications. Many of the documents listed above can also be found here:
http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/

Industry Questions and Answers Regarding Smarter Balanced Assessments
Contractors and states have been submitting questions to Smarter Balanced about deployment and certification of the Smarter Balanced assessment system. This document represents a collection of those questions and Smarter Balanced responses to those questions.
http://www.smarterapp.org/spec/2014/04/11/specs-QuestionsAndAnswers.html

Smarter Balanced Applications Deployment and Technology Certification Overview
This brief describes the entire Smarter Balanced assessment platform, the components for which states will be responsible, and the resources that will be made available to support deployment and certification of each state's assessment delivery system.
http://www.smarterapp.org/spec/2014/04/11/specs-AppDeploymentTechCertification.html