

Addendum 1 SBAC RFP-02
Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
IT Readiness Tool
Information, Questions & Answers

1. What extent of automatic workstation and network performance information discovery and collection is expected? How much information is expected to be self reported / entered vs. collected via other software packages? (Section 2.1 / General)

The CONSORTIUM is open to innovative approaches in the collection of information to track and measure Readiness as described in the Technical Requirements. Although there is no explicit expectation of automation, the CONSORTIUM needs the capability to load a previous year's readiness information and potentially utilize the optional Automated Sniffer (Section 2.1 I) to automatically pre-populate remaining information required in Section 2.1. The solution should, to the extent possible, reduce the amount of information entered manually and provide a simple means to validate collected information. The CONSORTIUM is interested in how the Proposer intends to accomplish these objectives.

2. What level of integration with other software tools that collect this information is expected? (Section 2.1 / General)

The Readiness Tool should support a standard import and export data function. The Proposer should delineate what protocols will be supported and describe how these specifications would be beneficial to the CONSORTIUM. Solutions that are robust and flexible will be evaluated more favorably.

3. How will this tool and gap analyses be used with broader scale (statewide) stress testing that may occur? (Section 2.1 / General)

Load Testing is out of scope for this process.

4. How will Technical / Test support personnel information be collected, verified and enforced? (Section 2.1)

It will be a state educational agency or district function to verify and enforce.

5. How will student / roster information be collected and verified for student related metrics? (Section 2.1)

In the majority of cases, the districts / schools will provide student / roster information which in turn will be verified by each state's educational agency.

Addendum 1 SBAC RFP-02
Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
IT Readiness Tool
Information, Questions & Answers

6. How will site level technology issues be supported and resolved during implementation and rollout of the tool? (Section 2.1 / General)

The Consortium expects the Contractor to provide customer service through troubleshooting technical issues with software to regular help desk support to all member states during the standard business week (Monday through Friday, with the exception of holidays) and a standard range of work hours, recognizing that between PARCC and SBAC member states stretch from Maine to Hawaii.

7. What resources will be provided by the Consortium and/or states to carry out the readiness assessment in each state? Will contractor resources be involved at the district and school levels per state? (Section 2.8)

State Educational Agencies to a varying extent may be able to provide information to pre-populate metrics for Readiness. The CONSORTIUM can provide marketing and education to provide guidance to the district and school levels. The Contractor will be responsible for implementing and completing the readiness assessment in each state.

8. What level of hosting / implementation is required for this solution -- district / state / Consortium? (Section 2.12)

As long as there is appropriate levels of security and control, a specific solution for hosting is not required. The implementation of the solution will need to provide separation and partitioning between state data.

As an optional component, the CONSORTIUM would like to review alternative hosting solutions as requested in Application Hosting and Maintenance (Section 2.12).

9. Will the State Education Agencies (SEAs) be responsible for disseminating information about the IT Readiness Tool and ensuring that schools/districts participate? As the contractor, we can provide the tracking tool, but is it the SEAs responsibility to communicate to the districts and schools that they need to complete the assessment tool and follow-up with those who have not complied?

Refer to responses given to questions #7.

10. Are funds available for working with the SEAs and Consortiums to create templates they can use for promotion of the Tool? What is role of contractor in dissemination and outreach?

The Contractor will need to provide a clear and concise user manual. As referred to in responses given to questions #7, the CONSORTIUM expects the Contractor to be responsible for implementing and completing the readiness assessment in each state.

Addendum 1 SBAC RFP-02
Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
IT Readiness Tool
Information, Questions & Answers

11. Will the CONSORTIUM be able to give the contractor minimum technology standards needed for the assessments they are building or envision building? If so, when can this information be provided? Or will they use the assessment data we are collecting to inform their assessment design?

As stated in the RFP, the minimum technology requirements will need to have the ability to be updated easily as they change over time. Also, PARCC and SBAC may have different minimum and recommended requirements, so the solution should be customizable for a specific State Educational Agency. The expectation is that the State/District/School will be able to easily review and match their Readiness information against the technology requirement.

At the end of June 2011, the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) will be providing the CONSORTIUM, current technical specifications for states currently engaged in online testing. This data may be leveraged as a starting point for evaluating minimum technology specifications.

12. The RFP states, *“The applications will be designed and built in collaboration with the PARCC consortium and will modular such that it can connect to the larger Consortium system and be updated periodically to address any updates in system requirements that require changes in technology”*. Will updates to the assessment tool be scheduled? If so how often?

The CONSORTIUM expects that the Readiness Tool will be supported and updated as necessary during the duration of the contract.

13. What types of data (i.e. data extract, system-to-system, user-to-user) will be connected between the tool and the CONSORTIUM System and SEAs? For what purposes? How often will data exchanges between systems occur?

As referred to in responses given to questions #1 and #2, there needs to be a way to use standard protocols and common tools to extract and import data into the Readiness tool. The function should be available on demand to support the CONSORTIUM requirements.

14. Travel: Are there any required meetings with the CONSORTIUM or SEAs that we will have to budget travel expenses for?

No.

Addendum 1 SBAC RFP-02
Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
IT Readiness Tool
Information, Questions & Answers

15. Would OSPI and the Consortium consider Proposals which include an Intellectual Property ownership structure which differs from the terms of Paragraph 11, such as Open Source Licensing? (Exhibit E, Paragraph 11, Page 36, Intellectual Property).

The CONSORTIUM is committed to open licensing and open-source technology standards and applications that support interoperability, innovation, and a lower cost of ownership. Yet it recognizes the current limitations in available open-source software and, in certain situations, may accept the use of proprietary components as long as these proprietary components are the best options available to assist the CONSORTIUM on developing a system in a cost effective manner.

If a solution with proprietary components is selected, the CONSORTIUM is at a minimum expecting that the proprietary component will have a no-fee license arrangement for use through the 2014-2105 school year.

16. In reference to the provision: “If the consortium’s Governing Committee is not satisfied with proposed personnel assignments of the Proposer, the Consortium, through OSPI as fiscal agent, will be allowed to retain the services of qualified service providers at the Proposer’s expense,” (Paragraph 3, Page 12, Contractor Personnel Assignments).

- a. We assume approval of Contractor’s personnel assignments will not be unreasonably withheld, and OSPI and the Consortium will provide Contractor with written justification for the disapproval of Contractor personnel assignments. Is this a correct assumption, and if not, how is it incorrect?

This is a reasonable interpretation that the Consortium would agree to.

- b. We assume the Contractor will be provided with written notice of disapproval of personnel assignments, and the Contractor will have a cure period in which to propose alternative personnel assignments or negotiate a subcontractor staffing plan for the project. Is this a correct assumption, and if not, how is it incorrect?

This is a reasonable interpretation; the timeline for redress of the situation will be agreed to by all parties, but limited to a maximum of 30 calendar days.

Addendum 1 SBAC RFP-02
Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
IT Readiness Tool
Information, Questions & Answers

17. In reference to the provision "The State of Washington shall not be responsible for payment of PARCC's portion of the funding available for this project in the event PARCC does not participate," (Paragraph I.5, Page 4, Funding).

- a. Will the sub-grant from the State of Florida to the State of Washington for PARCC's portion of the funding be complete prior to commencement of work under the Contract?

Yes.

- b. Upon issuance of the sub-grant to the State of Washington, can PARCC withdraw from participation in the project and rescind the funding?

Withdrawal from the agreement would need to be based on similar grounds as termination of a contract (e.g., termination due to lack of funding provided by the appropriating body, termination for cause, etc.).

18. While the RFP provides that work direction and expenditure decisions will come from the Consortium's Governing States, or as delegated to the Executive Director, the RFP does not include the process or procedure by which the Contractor must work with the various members of the Consortia, Governing Board, or Project Management Partners on a daily basis. Will the Consortia provide Contractor with the Consortia project management structure, expectations, and project approval requirements to assist the Contractor with developing appropriate Consortia communication plans, work schedules, and approval processes? For example, will the Contractor be expected to coordinate status meetings and approval of deliverables through Wested, or will the Contractor work directly with an appointed group of named Consortia Governing State representatives to obtain approval for deliverables? Will deliverables be approved by a select group of Consortia member representatives, or will each Consortia Governing State be required to approve deliverables before deemed acceptable? Will the Contractor be expected to modify materials to accommodate a specific Consortia member request? (Paragraph I.3, Page 3-4, State's Role).

The Consortium will provide the Contractor with the project management structure, expectations, and project approval requirements to assist the Contractor with developing appropriate communication plans, work schedules, and approval processes.

There will be a single approval process that would constitute approval from the CONSORTIUM. There will not be a need to work through the CONSORTIUM's Governing States to approve deliverables.

There is no expectation to modify materials for specific Consortia members.

Addendum 1 SBAC RFP-02
Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
IT Readiness Tool
Information, Questions & Answers

19. The budget for the IT Readiness Tool contract is estimated at a maximum of \$500,000 for the period starting approximately September 1, 2011 through September 30, 2014. (1.5 Funding).

Will you confirm which of the following RFP requirements are included in the RFP budget \$500,000, specifically:

1. Development of the readiness tool described in (2.1 – 2.10)
2. Optional Component – Automated Sniffer (2.11)
3. Optional Component – Application Hosting and Maintenance (2.12)

Responders must submit a comprehensive proposal which addresses their solution for all three components, with the pricing itemized by component. The expectation is that prospective bidders will be able to provide solutions for all three components within the prescribed budget, with Component #1 (2.1-2.10, Readiness Tool) a priority and components #2 (Automated Sniffer - 2.11) and #3 (Application Hosting and Maintenance - 2.12) options for greater Consortium utility.

The Consortium would be open to consideration of proposed solutions to the optional components that, in the perspective of the Contractor, could enhance component utility. If such proposed enhancements resulted in cost proposals in excess of the prescribed budget, such enhancements would require separate accounting for review purposes.

Ultimately, the Consortium desires a comprehensive solution to assessing school, district and state readiness that will allow flexibility to meet the needs of the member states, while retaining both the fiscal and operational flexibility in the awarding of subsequent contract or contracts supporting the readiness tool and optional components (i.e., the Consortium would have the option to award the different components to different vendors, if it was determined to be best for the overall project).

Addendum 1 SBAC RFP-02
Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
IT Readiness Tool
Information, Questions & Answers

20. The Service Level Expectations and Remedies provision includes terms which make it difficult for Contractors to assess risk and understand obligations under the Contract. In an effort to clarify the terms, the following series of questions about each Service Level Expectation and Remedy. (Paragraph 8, Page 25, Service Expectation and Remedy).

In an effort to clarify the terms of the Service-Level Expectations and Remedies, the following questions are presented regarding the first Project Management Service Expectation, “Requests from Consortium Member...are responded to in a timely manner”:

The CONSORTIUM’s intentions are for the Service Level Expectations to set the level of performance for the eventual contractor. Where problems arise, these will be addressed accordingly based on the tenets of the Service Level Expectations. The Consortium member closest to the issue(s) will identify the problems and the Executive Committee and Lead State (Washington) will be brought into the conversation to determine the extent of implementation required of the applicable remedy.

- a. We assume that, in order for the Contractor to know which individual’s requests are covered by this requirement, the Consortium will provide the Contractor with the specific names and contact information for those individuals defined as “Consortium Member, Work Group, Project Management Partner, or Leadership” prior to execution of the Contract. Is this a correct assumption, and if not, how is it incorrect?

Yes – applicable Consortium, Work Group, Project Management Partner and Leadership members will be defined, with associated contact information, for the Contractor in order to meet the specified expectation criteria.

- b. We assume that “Description of process and anticipated timeline for resolution” is defined as a Contractor response to the Requestor which acknowledges receipt of the request, and provides a timeline for researching and responding to the request. Is this a correct interpretation, and, if not, how is it incorrect?

Yes – the expectation is the Contractor is demonstrating responsiveness to the Consortium and providing the means for project decisions to be made for purposes of maintaining not only the contract tasks, but Consortium’s overall project, on schedule.

- c. Can Contractor assume that the one (1) business day response period for paper-based requests commences upon Contractors receipt of tracked mail from the Requestor?

Yes, with the understanding that electronic mail should have a means for time and date stamping.

Addendum 1 SBAC RFP-02
Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
IT Readiness Tool
Information, Questions & Answers

21. In an effort to clarify the terms of the Service-Level Expectations and Remedies, the following questions are presented regarding the second Project Management Service Expectation, “initial baseline project plan is presented within five (5) calendar days of contract execution date...”: (Paragraph 8, Page 25, Service Expectation and Remedy).

The CONSORTIUM’s intentions are for the Service Level Expectations to set the level of performance for the eventual contractor. Where problems arise, these will be addressed accordingly based on the tenets of the Service Level Expectations. The Consortium member closest to the issue(s) will identify the problems and the Executive Committee and Lead State (Washington) will be brought into the conversation to determine the extent of implementation required of the applicable remedy.

- a. We assume subsequent revisions of the initial baseline project plan will be due pursuant to timelines agreed upon by the parties as the revision becomes necessary, as documented in writing. Is this a correct assumption, and if not, how is it incorrect?

This interpretation is reasonable with the understanding that “parties” includes the Contractor *and* Consortium representation from both SBAC and PARCC, and that Washington will be acting on behalf of the Consortium in implementing contract terms and conditions under Washington contracting rules.

22. In an effort to clarify the terms of the Service-Level Expectations and Remedies, the following questions are presented regarding the third Project Management Service Expectation “meet the on-time delivery of milestones as specified in the proposal and tracked on the baseline project plan”: (Paragraph 8, Page 25, Service Expectation and Remedy).

The CONSORTIUM’s intentions are for the Service Level Expectations to set the level of performance for the eventual contractor. Where problems arise, these will be addressed accordingly based on the tenets of the Service Level Expectations. The Consortium member closest to the issue(s) will identify the problems and the Executive Committee and Lead State (Washington) will be brought into the conversation to determine the extent of implementation required of the applicable remedy.

- a. The project plan will include numerous work tasks, in addition to the critical milestone deliverables. We assume the deliverable milestones which are subject to the assessment of financial remedies pursuant to the third Service Expectation will be clearly distinguished and agreed upon by the parties in the project plan. Is this a correct assumption, and if not, how is it incorrect?

Yes, with the understanding that a project plan that does not meet with the satisfaction of the Consortium, and that if the associated differences cannot be resolved in short order (i.e., one business week) that such situation would be grounds for cancellation of the contract.

Addendum 1 SBAC RFP-02
Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
IT Readiness Tool
Information, Questions & Answers

- b. We assume the acceptance criteria for milestone deliverables will be based solely on conformance with the agreed upon project plan and specifications for each such deliverable. Is this a correct assumption, and if not, how is it incorrect?

Yes, with the understanding that both the project plan and specifications may require modification and subsequent agreement by all parties once the project begins.

- c. We assume an “incident” is defined as a “late milestone deliverable.” Is this a correct assumption, and if not, how is it incorrect?

“Incident” is used generically across all the Service Level Expectations (SLE) to mean each instance of missing the agreed upon expectation associated with the unique project management objective. In the case of the third SLE determination that a milestone delivery was late would equate to an incident. Additionally, a “late deliverable” would be a deliverable that does not meet with prescribed specifications or other governing criteria.

23. In an effort to clarify the terms of the Service-Level Expectations and Remedies, the following questions are presented regarding the fourth Project Management Service Expectation, “provide weekly status reports...”: (Paragraph 8, Page 25, Service Expectation and Remedy).

The CONSORTIUM’s intentions are for the Service Level Expectations to set the level of performance for the eventual contractor. Where problems arise, these will be addressed accordingly based on the tenets of the Service Level Expectations. The Consortium member closest to the issue(s) will identify the problems and the Executive Committee and Lead State (Washington) will be brought into the conversation to determine the extent of implementation required of the applicable remedy.

- a. We assume the designated names and contact information for those defined as the “Consortium Leadership” will be provided to Contractor. Is this a correct assumption, and if not, how is it incorrect?

Refer to response to Question #20a.

Addendum 1 SBAC RFP-02
Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
IT Readiness Tool
Information, Questions & Answers

24. In an effort to clarify the terms of the Service-Level Expectations and Remedies, the following questions are presented regarding the first Deliverables and Supporting Materials Service Expectation, “Draft work products and supporting materials from the Contractor do not contain substantial errors or omissions”: (Paragraph 8, Page 26, Service Expectation and Remedy).

The CONSORTIUM’s intentions are for the Service Level Expectations to set the level of performance for the eventual contractor. Where problems arise, these will be addressed accordingly based on the tenets of the Service Level Expectations. The Consortium member closest to the issue(s) will identify the problems and the Executive Committee and Lead State (Washington) will be brought into the conversation to determine the extent of implementation required of the applicable remedy.

- a. Since draft deliverables are, logically, not intended to be final, we assume “substantial errors or omissions” in drafts of a deliverable is defined as substantial noncompliance with the specifications for a draft version of the deliverable, and a draft will not be deemed erroneous simply for being not of a quality that would be expected for a final deliverable. Is this a correct assumption, and if not, how is it incorrect?

This is an acceptable interpretation with the understanding that in draft versions the non-addressing of Consortium requests, whether through missed incorporation into the deliverable or lack of explanation to why the request or specification is not included will be construed as erroneous. Drafts are to demonstrate sufficient attention to the specifications and related conversations between the Consortium and Contractor so each clearly distinguish status as “on” or off “track” to the final product(s). This measure will ensure a productive use of Consortium time in review and approval processes. Again, the expectation is the Contractor is demonstrating responsiveness to the Consortium.

- b. We assume that an incident is defined as a deliverable which includes substantial errors or omissions. Is this a correct assumption, and if not, how is it incorrect?

Refer to the first sentence in the response to Question #22c. For this SLE, “incident” would mean a deliverable determined to have errors or unexplained omissions.

Addendum 1 SBAC RFP-02
Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
IT Readiness Tool
Information, Questions & Answers

25. In an effort to clarify the terms of the Service-Level Expectations and Remedies, the following questions are presented regarding the {fourth} Deliverables and Supporting Materials Service Expectation, “Unless otherwise authorized in advance, Consortium leadership is provided a minimum of three complete business days of response time to review and edit draft work products”: (Paragraph 8, Page 26, Service Expectation and Remedy).

The CONSORTIUM’s intentions are for the Service Level Expectations to set the level of performance for the eventual contractor. Where problems arise, these will be addressed accordingly based on the tenets of the Service Level Expectations. The Consortium member closest to the issue(s) will identify the problems and the Executive Committee and Lead State (Washington) will be brought into the conversation to determine the extent of implementation required of the applicable remedy.

- a. We assume “work products” is defined as milestone deliverables, as identified in the Project Plan. Is this a correct assumption, and if not, how is it incorrect?

No – this particular reference should be for any item that requires Consortium review and/or approval prior to proceeding with task completion.

- b. We assume agreed upon changes to deadlines for milestone deliverables must be memorialized in writing by the parties. Is this a correct assumption, and if not, how is it incorrect?

This would be an appropriate interpretation to mitigate any later issues raised by either the Consortium or Contractor.

26. We assume the Contractor will not be liable for any failure {to} achieve a Service Level Expectation and will not be assessed a Remedy, to the extent such failure is due to events or issues beyond Contractor’s reasonable control (including without limitation, acts of OSPI, the Consortium(s), any third party; acts of God; acts or omissions of governmental authorities; strikes, lockouts or other industrial disturbances; acts of public enemies; wars; blockades; riots; civil disturbances; epidemics; floods; hurricanes; tornadoes; and any other similar acts, events, or omissions.) Is this a correct assumption, and if not, how is it incorrect? (Paragraph 8, Page 25-26, Service Expectation and Remedy).

This is a reasonable assumption, but a final determination of *force majeure* or like event outside Contractor control will be agreed upon by all parties. A clause stipulating this term and condition with regard to the SLE enforcement will be included in any subsequent contract text.

Addendum 1 SBAC RFP-02
Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
IT Readiness Tool
Information, Questions & Answers

27. Would the OSPI and Consortium agree to negotiate a cap to the cumulative total amount of Remedy payable by the Contractor under the terms of the Contract? (Paragraph 8, Page 25-26, Service Expectation and Remedy).

Not a cap, but suggestions for adjusting the amount of each remedy as part of a proposal would be evaluated for adjustment to take effect at the start of contract award.