

SBAC RFP-14
Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
Item Task Writing Review Pilot, Questions & Answers

PROJECT TITLE: SMARTER Balanced Assessment CONSORTIUM Request for Proposals for Item Task Writing Review Pilot

Section A	INTRODUCTION	pg. 12-13
	4. Objectives and Scope of Work	

Q1 When does SBAC anticipate administering the Pilot Test during the 2012-2013 school year?

Answer: Between January and June of 2013.

Q2 Obtain and track necessary copyright permissions for all relevant materials
Does SBAC have an expectation for the percentage of passages/stimuli that are permissioned rather than commissioned for the assessments?

Answer: No specified percentage, however, the expectations of the CCSS (as interpreted through the SBAC Content Specifications) should be considered.

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Q3 Please clarify which order of the proposal respondents should follow. Page 22 lists sections 1 – 5.

1. Letter of Submittal, including signed Certifications and Assurances (Exhibit A to this RFP)
2. Technical Proposal
3. Management Proposal
4. Cost Proposal
5. Appendices

Page 23 has a section 2 as the introduction. The number 3 has been assigned to both Technical proposal (page 23) and Management proposal (page 43). Please clarify what should be used for tabs.

Answer: The ordering of the proposal respondents should be as follows.

1. Letter of Submittal
2. Introduction
3. Technical Proposal
4. Management Proposal
5. Cost Proposal
6. Appendices

Q4 Does the Technical proposal page limit of 300 pages apply to A. Project Approach/Methodology through F. Risks? Or does it include all sections of the proposal, excluding appendixes?

Answer: The page limit of 300 pages applies to all sections of the proposal, excluding appendixes.

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	3. Technical Proposal	

Q5 Task L1-12: Does payment for copyright permissions come out of the \$19,000,000 allocated for this project? If so, has SBAC set a cap? If not, shall the vendor set a cap? Who actually pays the copyright holders, the vendor, SBAC, or individual states? For what length of time and for how many exposures will copyright permission be required? Given that the tests will be administered via computer what guidance can SBAC offer with regard to limitations and financial expectations copyright holders may have with regard to online publication of their works?

Answer: Payment for copyright permissions comes out of the \$19,000,000 allocated for this project. A cap has not been set. The vendor pays the copyright holder on behalf of SBAC. The exposures and limitations would be within the context of both summative test use and interim test use.

Page 25: L1 – 12, bullet 1

Q6 Is it correct to assume that determining the number and types of items/tasks and stimuli needed for the pilot test pool by content, type, and cognitive complexity will be proportionate to the blueprints developed under RFP 09?

Answer: This is a reasonable assumption for the purposes of this bid, but not an absolute, as SBAC may determine that the number of certain types of items may need to be higher for research purposes than others.

Page 25: L1 – 12, bullet 3

Q7 What level of support might the contractor expect from SBAC and SBAC states in the recruitment of developers/writers/reviewers?

Answer: SBAC and its member states work in collaboration with the contractor in accomplishing the tasks of a contract. The contractor is expected to do the majority of the communication, under the direction and approval of SBAC. In general, member states' work provides the Consortium and its contractors with the support needed to accomplish the objectives of the Consortium. Details of SBAC's expectations for state support in development activities will be established as part of the work related to RFP 08.

Page 25: L1-12

Q8 The tasks for L1-12 do not specify whether the contractor and/or qualified participants will edit the draft items prior to presentation to the content, bias/sensitivity, and accessibility committees. Is editing included in the scope of work?

Answer: Yes, editing is included in the scope of work.

Page 25: L1 – 12, bullet 3

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Q9 Will a deliverable from SBAC RFP 08 be the identification of specific qualified individuals for item development/writing? If not, to what extent will the RFP 14 Contractor be expected to identify item developers under the SBAC guidelines, as separate from recruiting individuals, which would include contacting already identified individuals?

Answer: Yes, a deliverable from SBAC RFP 08 will be the identification of specific qualified individuals for item development and review.

Page 25: L1 – 12, bullet 5

Q10 For each CR item will the vendor be required to supply sample responses for all score points or only for top score responses?

Answer: For all score points.

Page 25, 33: L1 – 12, bullet 1

Q11 Page 33 (paragraph 2) says that the number of items per stimulus in an item set is not yet known. However, could SBAC provide a range of items associated with a reading passage in a set for the purpose of estimating the number of texts needed?

Answer: For the purposes of this bid and the purpose of estimating the number of texts needed, the vendors can assume that each passage will need to be supported by a range of items. The number of items per passage will be greater than would be typical for a fixed form test as some adaptivity within passage is desired. Until the test design is known, the exact number of items will not be known.

Page 26: L1 – 18

Q12 There are other apparent overlaps between the contractors for RFP 08 and RFP 14. Please clarify which contractor is financially responsible for payments for which aspects of all item development and review meetings. See the table below

Task	Financial Responsibilities	
	of Contractor for RFP 08	of Contractor for RFP 14
Preparation of training materials	X	
Training of stimulus developers		X
Training of item writers		X
Training of content reviewers		X
Training of bias reviewers		X
Training of accessibility reviewers		X
Conduct of item development meetings		X
Conduct of item review meetings		X
Reporting on outcomes of review meetings		X

Answer: See the above table.

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Page 26: L1 – 18

- Q13 Has SBAC established the number of item development and review committees, numbers of members per committees, numbers of meetings per committee, and total estimated number of person days devoted to development/review meetings? If not, will establishing these numbers be the responsibility of the vendor for RFP 08 or for RFP 14?

Answer: No, this has not yet been done. Establishing these numbers will be the responsibility of the vendor for RFP 08.

Page 26: L1 – 18

L1 – 19

- Q14 Does SBAC have an expectation for the minimum number of content, accessibility, or bias/sensitivity reviewers for each content area and grade or grade span committee?

Answer: No.

Page 26: L1 – 18, bullet 3 and others

- Q15 Assuming “required methods” refers to attributes of the Item/Task Authoring System, when does SBAC anticipate that these requirements will be defined?

Answer: This assumption is wrong. It is anticipated that all item development and review work for RFP 14 will be done external to the SBAC Item/Task Authoring System. The methods referred to will be identified as part of the work done under RFP 08, and refined as part of RFP 14.

Page 26: L1 – 18, bullet 6 and others

- Q16 Will all metadata requirements be specified in the Item/Task specifications developed under SBAC 04?

Answer: Yes. And in SBAC 07

Page 26: L1-19:

- Q17 Is Vendor 08 identifying a pool of possible developers and reviewers from which Vendor 14 will select at will, or are there constraints or limitations to the freedom of Vendor 14 to select from the pool identified by Vendor 08?

Answer: There may be constraints, which would be identified as part of the work done under RFP 08.

Page 26: L – 19, bullet 5

- Q18 By maintaining “all meta data and review histories for items/tasks,” does SBAC expect that the vendor should keep a version of the item as it exists at every state in the item development process?

Answer: Not necessarily. There should be “benchmark” versions of the items maintained. Defining “benchmarks” can be proposed by the vendor.

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Page 27: L1 – 20

- Q19 With regard to implementing Consortium-specified edits, will that be the extent of the vendor’s responsibility, or will it also be the responsibility of the vendor to edit items to meet generally accepted practice, even though no reviewer has requested such an edit?

Answer: Vendors should be prepared to apply editing from a multitude of sources. In general, required edits can be derived from determinations made by the vendor using the expectations in item specifications and accepted practices as the foundation, but should also balance the direction and guidance provided by specific edits that come from various formal review activities.

Page 27: L1 – 20:

- Q20 When will inter-operability standards be available?

Answer: The inter-operability standards should be available during the Summer of 2012 prior to the August 2012 delivery date for the Master Work Plan task of “Loading and Review Pilot Test Items and Tasks”.

Page 27: L1 – 20, bullet 6

- Q21 Is it a requirement that every online item/task/stimulus, including technology-enhanced items, have a print version as long as they are available in electronic form?

Answer: No.

Page 27: L1 – 20, bullet 7

- Q22 Is the item development vendor expected to use an internal item authoring system with technology enhanced item template capabilities to author the TE items prior to the entry of these items into the SBAC system? Or are the TE items authored as storyboards and then only become final items once entered into the SBAC system?

Answer: The item development vendor is expected to use an internal item authoring system with technology enhanced item template capabilities to author the TE items prior to the entry of these items into the SBAC system.

Page 27: L1-20 bullet 8

- Q23 When does SBAC expect to provide the “required inter-operability” standards to be considered in item and task reviews?

Answer: The inter-operability standards should be available during the Summer of 2012 prior to the August 2012 delivery date for the Master Work Plan task of “Loading and Review Pilot Test Items and Tasks”.

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Page 27: L1 – 20, bullet 3

Q24 Does “multiple rounds of editing/revision, as needed” refer to review rounds between the vendor and SBAC? Does SBAC envision making revision suggestions beyond those obtained from the three review committees?

Answer: “Multiple rounds of editing/revision, as needed” refers to the three specified review committees and the resulting specified edits.

Page 27: L1 – 20, bullet 7

Q25 Given that the final deliverables (items/tasks/stimuli, etc.) will need to be exported from the vendor’s system into the SBAC system, when will the import requirements into the SBAC Item/Task Authoring and Pooling System be available? Will the RFP 14 vendor have any responsibilities beyond delivery of the final approved items/tasks/stimuli and other identified elements in the required format , such as upload activities, review of items in the SBAC application, further editing of items in the application, etc.)?

Answer: The vendor for RFP 14 will need to work with the vendor for Item Authoring and Pool system to assure final delivery is complete. The inter-operability standards should be available during the Summer of 2012 prior to the August 2012 delivery date for the Master Work Plan task of “Loading and Review Pilot Test Items and Tasks”. The vendor for RFP 14 will have responsibility to ensure that the final deliverable have been uploaded and are fully functional in the SBAC Item Authoring and Item Pool application.

Q26 Page 28 and elsewhere requires: “meet all required interoperability standards.” Please identify the required interoperability standards.

Answer: The inter-operability standards should be available during the Summer of 2012 prior to the August 2012 delivery date for the Master Work Plan task of “Loading and Review Pilot Test Items and Tasks”. For some insight on the current thinking, the Phase A Architecture deliverable has the proposed inter-operability standards that have been suggested by the systems architect. This deliverable can be accessed at the following location:
<http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Jobs-Contracts.aspx>

Q27 The RFP envisions automated scoring engines being “trained” or “calibrated” on a corpus of student responses to each item. The plan calls for only approximately 150-200 students per item. Most existing systems that calibrate scoring engines based on a set of responses require a larger sample, and best practice requires that scoring results be confirmed on an independent sample. Would SBAC please consider expanding the number of responses per item, and making appropriate adjustments in the budget for the project?

Answer: Yes. The number of responses per item will ultimately be determined by the capacity of the automated system. This will vary depending on the engine itself and the number of response

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categories for the item. As for the budget, no plans are under consideration to adjust accordingly, though the potential for additional resource demand is acknowledged.

Page 29

Q28 Are we correct in assuming that the vendor must “develop and review multiple prototypes for new/innovative stimulus type and item/task type by content area and grade level” prior to the cognitive labs?

Answer: This can be part of the cognitive lab and small scale trial processes.

Page 29

Q29 Would SBAC consider a proposal for the cognitive labs to be conducted remotely?

Answer: Yes.

Page 29: L1 – 13 & 14, bullet 13

Q30 The RFP states that the number of items (minimum of 3200) SR, TE and CR along with 64 PTs are not considered part of the total specified in part 1. Is this accurate?

Answer: Yes, this is accurate.

Page 29: L1 – 13 & 14, last sentence

Q31 Did you mean cognitive labs or small-scale trials?

Answer: This sentence should have read “small-scale trials”, not “cognitive labs.”

Page 29: L1 – 13 & 14

Q32 Will the small scale pilots be conducted online only, or are paper/Pencil pilots also expected or required?

Answer: The structure of the small-scale pilots is left to the vendor to propose. All aspects of the small-scale pilot will be conducted by the contractor. Validity of outcomes of the small-scale pilots is the most important aspect to consider.

Page 30: L1 – 11

Q33 Please clarify “independent evaluation.” Is the independent evaluation to be conducted by an individual or agency outside the control of the vendor, or may the vendor conduct the evaluation?

Answer: Both are possible, however, if the vendor conducts the evaluation, acceptable assurances must be made that the evaluation is truly independent.

Page 30: L1 – 11

Q34 Is this trial to be conducted prior to large-scale item development, simultaneously, or retrospectively?

Answer: Any is acceptable.

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Page 30: L1 – 11

- Q35 Will SBAC provide specific criteria for judging success, or will the vendor be responsible for identifying evaluation criteria? We understand the necessity to use specifications and procedures developed by other vendors. What we refer to in our question are the final criteria by which we will judge this method superior to that method or identify the relative strengths and weaknesses of each method.

Answer: The vendor is responsible for recommending evaluation criteria.

Page 30: L1 – 11, bullet 2

- Q36 What is the anticipated timing of the procurement study in Task 4? Is it expected that the items obtained for the study will be included on the pilot test?

Answer: If the items obtained through the study referenced in L1-11 are of sufficient quality, then it is expected that they would be included in the pilot test. However, the primary purpose of the study is to determine the relative success and feedback for each strategy. The vendor is expected to propose a valid research plan to answer the key questions.

Page 30, last paragraph

- Q37 Understanding that the item/task specifications are still under development and given that vendors are expected to cost for item development processes, can SBAC provide sample specifications to assist vendors in designing those processes and to provide all vendors with equal information about the item specifications?

Answer: A webinar was hosted on 1/6/12 detailing the current status of SBAC 04. A recording of this webinar can be found at the following link:

<https://ccsso.webex.com/ccsso/lsr.php?AT=pb&SP=MC&rID=52232672&rKey=e464c7350f7e2852>

The pertinent materials referenced in the webinar, such as the draft general specifications for the performance tasks are available on the SBAC website:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Resources.aspx>

In addition, the ELA and Mathematics Content Specifications, SBAC RFP-04, and Appendix D of the ELA Content specifications offer more information and task specifications.

Section C	PROPOSAL CONTENTS	pg. 32-35
	Expected Work Statement	
	Part 1: Oversight, Item/Task/Stimulus Development and Reviews	

- Q38 Does SBAC anticipate that the item/task specifications will call for published stimulus materials in Mathematics?

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Answer: This is not currently anticipated.

- Q39 What is the estimated average number of ELA items per stimuli and the approximate total number of ELA stimuli estimated for the trial and pilot assessments combined?
- What percent of total item development should be technology-enhanced (TE) items?
 - Will the contractor be responsible for any programming associated with the application of TE items?
 - Are translated versions of test items or performance tasks part of the deliverables under this RFP?

Answer: For the purposes of this bid and the purpose of estimating the number of texts needed, the vendors can assume enough items per stimuli to allow some adaptivity within the stimulus. Estimated number of ELA stimuli for the trial and pilot assessments combined is 800. In regards to the total number of TE items for RFP 14, for the pilot item set, see the tables on page 34 of the RFP. As for small-scale trials, it will be left to the vendors to propose. Exact numbers and distribution of items needed will not be known until test designs are finalized, so all information should be regarded as estimates subject to change.

It should be noted that less is known in the field about TE items, and one of the purposes of the small-scale trials to determine the effectiveness of items not yet known. The contractor will be responsible for full development of TE items including the development of scoring methods.

Validation of scoring will be done by the Psychometric Services contractor. Translated versions of test items and performance items are not part of the deliverables under RFP 14. This work is anticipated to be covered under RFP # 13 as per the procurement schedule.

- Q40 Is the reference to scoring rules for all SR items intended to be scoring rules for all CR items?

Answer: On page 32 of 83, second to last sentence, "SR items" should be "CR items."

- Q41 Please clarify that technology-enhanced is not a separate item type. Technology-enhanced items will be either selected-response, constructed response, or performance tasks with technology enhancements.

Answer: Technology enhanced items (TEIs) can be enhanced SR, CR, or PTs items, or may be completely new stand-alone items. Specifics around this distinction will be determined as part of the work done under contract for SBAC RFP-04.

- Q42 Does SBAC anticipate pilot testing the 3754 items developed under Task 3? Should they be included in the content, bias, and accessibility reviews?

Answer: It is not anticipated that these items will all be pilot tested. These items will be primarily produced for research purposes. However, the possibility remains that successful items may be pilot tested. Full content, bias, and accessibility reviews are not necessary for these items to be used in cognitive labs or small scale trials, however, the general expectations of these

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review criteria should be considered in preparing these items. Further, if any of these items were designated for fuller piloting, then each would need to be put through the full review process.

Q43 To clarify, are there seven grade levels 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and a single level for High School?

Answer: Specific test designs have yet to be finalized. However, in general, the CAT is expected to be administered for grade levels 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and HS, with PTs administered for all grades 3-11.

Q44 How many items have SBAC member states already developed (cf. footnote 4, p. 33)?

Answer: This is not yet known. Information is being gathered from SBAC states to inform this answer. The survey results are expected by the end of January.

Q45 Tables 1 and 2: It is not clear why the items for the cognitive labs and small-scale trials are not to be included in the numbers for large-scale field testing. What becomes of these items? If any of these cognitive lab and small-scale trial items advance to large-scale field testing, do the totals for that activity go up or stay the same?

Answer: It is not anticipated that items developed for cognitive labs and small-scale trials will all be pilot tested. These items will be primarily produced for research purposes. However, the possibility remains that successful items may be pilot tested. If items developed for cognitive labs and small-scale trials are pilot tested, then the totals for that activity would go up.

Q46 Are we correct in interpreting Table 1 on page 34 as requiring the vendor to include 260 English Language Arts and 260 math items in the early spring 2012 cognitive labs?

Answer: Yes, the vendor is expected to include 240 English Language Arts items, 20 ELA tasks, 240 math item, and 20 math tasks in the planned spring-time 2012 cognitive labs.

Q47 Are we correct in interpreting Table 1 on page 34 as requiring the vendor to include 1,632 English Language Arts and 1,632 math items in the late spring 2012 small scale trials?

Answer: Yes, the vendor is expected to to include 1,600 English Language Arts items, 32 ELA tasks, 1,600 math items, and 32 math tasks, in the planned spring-time 2012 small-scale trials.

Q48 Can SBAC provide information on requirements for the length of the copyright permissions for copyrighted materials?

Answer: No, the vendor should make a recommendation.

Q49 Are paying the permissions fees for using copyrighted content in the pilot tests a contractor responsibility under this RFP or is just identifying the costs to be paid by others all that is required?

Answer: Paying the permissions for using copyrighted content in the pilot tests is a contractor responsibility under this RFP. The vendor pays the copyright holder on behalf of SBAC. The exposures and limitations would be within the context of both summative test use and interim test use.

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Q50 Please describe the scope of a typical mathematics and ELA performance task for costing purposes.

Answer: A webinar was hosted on 1/6/12 detailing the current status of SBAC 04. A recording of this webinar can be found at the following link:

<https://ccsso.webex.com/ccsso/lr.php?AT=pb&SP=MC&rID=52232672&rKey=e464c7350f7e2852>

The pertinent materials referenced in the webinar, such as the draft general specifications for the performance tasks are available on the SBAC website:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Resources.aspx>

In addition, the ELA and Mathematics Content Specifications, SBAC RFP-04, and Appendix D of the ELA Content specifications offer more information and task specifications.

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	Expected Work Statement	
	Content, Bias/Sensitivity, and Accessibility Reviews:	

Q51 “Vendors should budget for appropriate funding to compensate individuals who serve on each of the review committees.” For comparability of cost estimates by vendors, please provide an estimate, or at least a range, for SBAC’s expectation for the daily stipend that reviewers would be paid.

Answer: For comparability of cost estimates by vendors, the daily compensation should be considered to be \$150 to cover the cost of a substitute teacher for the work done during the school year, or as a daily stipend for work done outside of the school year.

Q52 “The Contractor will arrange for meetings during which representatives from SBAC member states evaluate reviewer comments and make final decisions about revisions and about which stimulus materials and items/tasks will qualify for the pilot test pool.” Are online meetings acceptable for conducting reconciliation of reviewers’ comments about items?

Answer: Yes.

Q53 The RFP requires the Contractor to arrange meetings “during which representatives from SBAC member states evaluate reviewer comments...” Are these meetings face-to-face or may the Contractor propose virtual meetings? If both are desired, which meetings would SBAC expect to take place in a face-to-face setting, and which in a virtual setting?

Answer: These meetings may be virtual. If the vendor proposes a combination, the vendor should make a supported recommendation.

Q54 Should the vendor budget for travel of SBAC personnel for face-to-face meetings? And if so, what is the number of travelers for each event?

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Answer: If face-to-face meetings are proposed, the vendor should both budget for and recommend the make-up of the attendees from SMARTER Balanced.

Page 36, 38, 39 and 41 Summaries

Q55 There are several Technical Proposals Appendices prescribed for Parts 1 through 4. Is it correct that these Appendices only need address or demonstrate the capabilities of the prime contractor submitting the proposal, or could they also potentially cover other organizations which may be involved in providing the work solution?

Answer: The appendices should demonstrate the capabilities of all vendors (prime and sub) proposed for the work.

Section C	PROPOSAL CONTENTS Expected Work Statement Part 2: Automated Scoring and Scoring Models	pg. 37
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Q56 Please clarify the reference to “buy versus build” in the last full paragraph on page 37. It seems to suggest that the vendor should use the format created by the systems architect contractor to evaluate “buy versus build” decisions. Please confirm that the contractor will not be bound by the architect’s “buy versus build” recommendations in the application of scoring approaches for the pilot test.

Answer: The contractor for RFP-14 will not be bound by the architect’s “buy versus build” recommendations, but must be able to demonstrate the merits of a recommendation to SMARTER Balanced’s satisfaction.

Q57 Is the “comprehensive scoring system” (RFP, p. 37), which spans the breadth of all scoring sources (human, computer, hybrid), a deliverable document only, or does it also include architectural specifications and/or some software components? Can OSPI provide further discussion as to the scope of this document?

Answer: This is a deliverable document only.

Q58 Regarding the “buy-versus-build format” recommendation for automated scoring, what is the timeframe for the Systems Architect Contractor deliverable to SBAC?

Answer: The “buy versus build format” recommendation for automated scoring will be delivered in the next Period B phase of the IT Systems Architecture. The exact timeframe has yet to be determined. The contractor for RFP-14 will not be bound by the architect’s “buy versus build” recommendation (refer to response for Q56).

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Part 3: Item/Task/Stimulus Research and Development

Q59 Has SBAC solicited cooperating districts/schools who will voluntarily participate in the cognitive labs and/or online trial assessments?

Answer: SBAC has not completed this task; however, it will be done in advance of the necessary work.

Q60 Which online testing engine should be used for the small-scale trial assessments? If the SBAC testing engine is used, when will it be available for testing online forms, scoring engines, and tech enhanced items?

Answer: The vendor is expected to provide all administration requirements for the small-scale trials.

Q61 Will paper/pencil versions of test forms and any accommodations (e.g., large print, Braille, translated forms, audio) be necessary for the trial assessments?

Answer: This is left to the vendor to make a recommendation. The vendor should consider the stated purposes for the cognitive labs and small-scale trials in devising recommendations.

Q62 Would SBAC please provide the references for this sentence on page 39: "Past research suggests that 150-200 students are needed to generate valid scoring algorithms and to validate their use."

Answer: This reference came from one of SBAC's advisors. There is a large body of research on the topic of AI engine training with varying recommendations. The primary concern is providing sufficient scored responses to provide an adequate training and validation set.

Q63 Page 39 of the RFP states that the cognitive labs are to occur in the early spring of 2012 and the small scale trials are to occur in the late spring of 2012. Given that the contract start date is March 27, what is your definition of "early spring 2012" and "late spring 2012"?

Answer: "Early spring 2012" is as soon as the contract starts through the end of the school year. "Late spring 2012" is May 2012 through mid-summer. The most important timeline component to emphasize is that item development needs to be complete to allow for pilot test administration in 2013, and small-scale trials and cognitive labs are intended to inform item development. It should not be expected that timelines and dependencies are linear, but rather have significant overlap.

Q64 Page 39 notes that "it is expected that small scale trials will involve computer-administered assessments."

- a. Please provide details of the technology platform that SBAC intends to use for the computer-administration of the small scale trials.
- b. Will the vendor selected for RFP #14 be responsible for the successful computer-administered delivery of these items to students? If not, which of SBAC's vendors will have this responsibility?

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Answer: The vendor selected for RFP 14 will be responsible for the successful computer-administered delivery of these items to students.

Q65 The expected contract start date of 3/27/12, along with the desire to hold cognitive labs in early spring 2012 and small scale trials in late spring 2012, seems to compress time for development, review, and deployment of items as well as recruiting for the labs in particular. Is it correct that the Vendor is expected to develop the items, and would an alternative schedule for the labs that still allows for feedback to the item development effort for pilot tests be considered responsive?

Answer: An alternative schedule for the labs would still be considered responsive. The two research endeavors must occur before any large scale item writing so that the item writing efforts generate usable items for the 2012-2013 pilot tests.

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	Expected Work Statement	
	Part 4: Study of Item Procurement Options	
	and	
	Twice Annual Contractor Meetings	

Q66 Is the contractor responsible for soliciting participation from member states in this study for the two procurement options: state- managed items and state-submitted items? Or has/will the SBAC perform this function?

Answer: SBAC will have performed this function via a preliminary survey.

Q67 Is the contractor responsible for uploading to the SBAC Item/Task Authoring and Pooling System all items generated via these procurement options? If yes, will the items/tasks submitted/procured by states be compatibly formatted for uploading to the Authoring and Pooling System?

Answer: If items provided via the procurement study are deemed viable for SBAC use, then yes, the contractor will be responsible for uploading these items to the SBAC Item/Task Authoring and Pooling System. One of the study objectives (and procurement option expectations) is that items are compatibly formatted for uploading into SBAC's Authoring and Pooling System.

Q68 Can SBAC provide an estimate of the number of states likely to participate in the state-managed and state-submitted procurement options? Will SBAC be responsible for recruiting states to participate in these options?

Answer: It is anticipated that up to two states would participate in each of the state-managed and state-submitted procurement options for the purposes of this study. SBAC will have determined interested states as a result of a preliminary survey.

Q69 Will states providing items through the state-managed procurement option bear the costs of the development of items so that relative costs can be compared as part of the study?

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Answer: The expectation of the state-managed procurement option is for SBAC to fund the state, to complete the development of items. For the purposes of this study, the contractor will provide funding to the state for this purpose.

Q70 Is the reference in line 2 to RFP 08 correct?

Answer: Yes, the reference to RFP 08 on page 41, first paragraph is correct.

Q71 Please verify that contractor meetings should be planned four times a year in both 2012 and 2013.

Answer: This is a correction. The contractor meetings should be planned for two times a year, in both 2012 and 2013. A kick-off Contractor/Work Group (WG) Collaboration meeting for this contract, should happen immediately following the contract negotiations with the entire WG plus PMP and EC liaisons. Participation in the subsequent Collaboration meeting would then happen with reduced WG attendance.

Q72 Should the budget for the four (4) annual meetings include SBAC travel and Vendor travel, or only Vendor travel?

Answer: This is a correction, the contractor meetings should be planned for TWO times a year, in both 2012 and 2013. Vendors are only responsible for costs associated with attendance by their own staff; SMARTER Balanced will manage the costs associated with their own members.

Q73 If SBAC travel is to be included, how many SBAC members should be budgeted to attend each meeting?

Answer: SBAC travel should not be included.

Q74 Given that this contract spans over 18 months, should the Vendor plan for a total of four (4) or six (6) meetings?

Answer: The vendor should plan for a total of four (4) meetings.

Section C	PROPOSAL CONTENTS	pg. 43
	Expected Work Statement	
	SBAC Guides and Documents	

Q75 Given the revised availability of the Item Specifications to Feb. 29, 2012, does SBAC anticipate that the participation policies, training materials, and other deliverables from SBAC RFP #08 will still be available on the original due dates?

Answer: The final deliverable dates for materials generated from RFP08 will be finalized within the first month of the contract award.

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Section E **RFP EXHIBITS** **pg. 71**
EXHIBIT F Evaluation Criteria

Q76 What is SBAC’s expectation regarding monetary compensation of educators who serve as item writers? Are member states expected to either underwrite or “donate” educators’ time? Would non-monetary compensation (i.e., continuing education or professional development credit) be an acceptable form of compensation for educator item writers?

Answer: For the purposes of consistency for bids related to this RFP, it should be anticipated that educator participants in writing and review activities will receive daily compensation of \$150 per day.

General Questions

Q77 Is it permissible to submit a bid on a section of the RFP? For instance, the assessment item writing portion?

Answer: No.

Q78 Is the RFP calling for items to be written in the Spanish language as well as in English?

Answer: No.

Q79 Given that the contract award date coincides with the timeframe stated in the RFP for the cognitive labs and small-scale trials to occur, will you clarify the dates by which the cognitive labs and small-scale trials are expected to occur?

Answer: The two research endeavors must occur before any large scale item writing so that the item writing efforts generate usable items for the 2012-2013 pilot tests. Acknowledging that the timeframe is very compressed, the vendor may propose an alternative schedule that still accomplishes this outcome.

Q80 For the cognitive labs and small-scale trials, the RFP does not state the percentage of SR, CR, and Performance items that are to be technology enhanced. Can you provide guidance on the expected number of TE items, or is it being left to the vendor to make a recommendation?

Answer: SMARTER Balanced is open to vendor recommendations.

Q81 Are Performance Tasks being developed within this RFP primarily to investigate the applicability of AI scoring for this item type?

Answer: The purposes for each item type, as related to the study purposes (i.e., cognitive labs, small-scale trials, and pilot testing) are stated throughout the RFP.

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Q82 Please confirm that the vendor selected in RFP #14 is not responsible for scoring of any pilot test responses (based on tasks #33 and #45 of the SBAC Procurement Schedule).

Answer: Confirmed.

Q83 As a result of the work from RFP #08, will the participation guidelines also include direction relative to state member participation in range finding activities as a part of field testing and assessment administration?

Answer: Yes.

Q84 Are item-development activities underway in any of the SBAC states?

Answer: Not specifically for the purposes of the three SBAC procurement options.

Q85 RFP 08 stipulates (pp. 11-12) that the contractor for that project pays for all review meetings. Does this obligation extend only to review of training materials or to actual item development/review meetings? Also, according to the Scope of Work section of RFP 08, it appears that all developers and reviewers should come to later development and review meetings covered under RFP 14 fully trained and ready to perform. Please confirm this assumption.

Answer: The formal reviews and review cycles referenced in pages 11-12 of RFP 08 are specific to the review of the materials produced as a part of RFP 08, not the reviews that those materials will be used for (e.g., content, accessibility). Actual training of developers and reviewers is the responsibility of the contractor for RFP 14.

Q86 In as much as the vendor for RFP 14 will be using procedures and materials developed by the vendor for RFP 08, will there be any opportunity for Vendor 14 to modify or augment procedures and materials developed by Vendor 08 prior to or after their use in meetings with developers and reviewers?

Answer: Yes. See #6, page 12 of 83 in RFP 14

Q87 Published experience from various States indicates the development of more than 13,000 items, including committees, would consume all of the available \$19m budget, without considering the costs associated with technology enhanced and/or highly interactive items, conducting the cognitive labs and tryouts, or Tasks 2 and 4. Will SBAC consider a significant increase in the level of effort for this contract? We note that the re-release of SBAC-4 with a price ceiling over twice the original value established a precedent for this sort of adjustment.

Answer: There is no current plan for such a consideration.

Q88 Would SBAC please make the draft item specifications available or exclude the firms creating those specifications from bidding. Access to the draft specifications dramatically reduces the

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risk and enables bidders to better design proposals and identify potential costs. Currently, only firms working with SBAC have access to these draft documents.

Answer: A webinar was hosted on 1/6/12 detailing the current status of SBAC 04. A recording of this webinar can be found at the following link:

<https://ccsso.webex.com/ccsso/lr.php?AT=pb&SP=MC&rID=52232672&rKey=e464c7350f7e2852>

The pertinent materials referenced in the webinar, such as the draft general specifications for the performance tasks are available on the SBAC website:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Resources.aspx>

In addition, the ELA and Mathematics Content Specifications, SBAC RFP-04, and Appendix D of the ELA Content specifications offer more information and task specifications.

- Q89 Fixed prices are associated with fixed scope, and yet so much is unknown at this point. Different assumptions about technology architecture requirements, Specifications (SBAC 04), Accessibility and Accommodations Policies and Materials (SBAC 06), Participation Guidelines/Training Materials (SBAC 08) and Test Blueprints (SBAC 09) will yield vastly different vendor costs.
- A. Should vendors make assumptions about these to-be-defined requirements?

Answer: Yes, vendors can make reasonable assumptions about to-be-defined requirements, with assumptions being explicitly articulated in the response.

- B. What if the actual final requirements from these documents significantly increase costs over the assumptions?

Answer: This risk is mitigated to some extent by the reasonableness of the assumptions, which will be carefully scrutinized.

- C. Since SBAC and some vendors are, or will be, working on many of these documents during evaluation of proposals, will vendors who are not {currently contracted with SMARTER Balanced} be penalized if their assumptions are different from these working drafts?

Answer: Vendors will not be penalized for making reasonable assumptions.

A webinar was hosted on 1/6/12 detailing the current status of SBAC 04. A recording of this webinar can be found at the following link:

<https://ccsso.webex.com/ccsso/lr.php?AT=pb&SP=MC&rID=52232672&rKey=e464c7350f7e2852>

The pertinent materials referenced in the webinar, such as the draft general specifications for the performance tasks are available on the SBAC website:

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Q90 Based on our reading of the RFP and published SBAC schedules, the pilot test items need to be ready for January/February 2013. Is this correct?

Answer: Yes.

Q91 What test delivery system should the vendor use for the cognitive labs and the small scale tryouts of the items requiring technology? Or is this part of SBAC-11?

Answer: The vendor is expected to use their own delivery system for cognitive labs and small-scale trials.

Q92 How does SBAC envision teacher/educators will develop technology-enhanced items? Interactive items?

Answer: The details of this work are to be determined based on outcomes of RFP-04 and -08. It is currently anticipated that teachers/educators will be instructed as to the ideas and concepts behind the TE items, and participate in their reviews.

Q93 Please describe the types of performance tasks currently under consideration, and the method of task delivery and response collection. Please identify the types of response data that you envision may be scorable through automated methods, and the standardized collection methods that will make such automated scoring feasible.

Answer: A webinar was hosted on 1/6/12 detailing the current status of SBAC 04. A recording of this webinar can be found at the following link:

<https://ccsso.webex.com/ccsso/lsr.php?AT=pb&SP=MC&rID=52232672&rKey=e464c7350f7e2852>

The pertinent materials referenced in the webinar, such as the draft general specifications for the performance tasks are available on the SBAC website:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Resources.aspx>

In addition, the ELA and Mathematics Content Specifications, SBAC RFP-04, and Appendix D of the ELA Content specifications offer more information and task specifications.

Given the draft general specifications, the SBAC proposal, and sample tasks, the vendor is charged with deciding what may be scorable through automated scoring and the design for a collection method that would make such automated scoring feasible.

Q94 The language of the SBAC RFP #14 uses the terms “scoring methodology” (RFP, p. 28) and “automated scoring strategies...using methodologies” (RFP, p. 36) which could refer to a set of technical specifications or could refer to an actual implementation (i.e., developed software). Could OSPI please clarify what is expected as the deliverable--specifications or both specifications and the software itself?

Answer: Technical specifications are the deliverable for this RFP, however it is expected that scoring of the small-scale trials will be included in this scope of work and will inform the scoring specifications and item development process.

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Q95 Are architectural specifications for the comprehensive scoring system and automated scoring to be delivered to the winning vendor as part of the ongoing architectural contract (RFP #3) work or do these specifications fall under this contract (RFP #14)?

Answer: The systems architect contractor (RFP-03 – IT Systems Architecture) will provide the guidelines and architecture for all system components include scoring and automated scoring. The contractor for RFP-14 will develop the detail level specifications to support the development and implementation of the application. All specifications are subject to review and will need approval from the Architecture Review Board.

Q96 Assuming automated scoring software *per se* is to be a deliverable under RFP #14:

- a. Aside from the Constructed Response Items and Technology-enabled items described in the RFP, should other common item types be scorable with this technology (e.g., traditional writing prompts) or does OSPI see this as a purely custom software package?
- b. It appears that if software is built from scratch under this contract, then SBAC will retain full ownership of that software. Realistically, given the timeframes and development costs of building a scoring engine from scratch, and SBAC’s desire for open source code notwithstanding, does the OSPI have a hybrid ownership/licensing model in mind if software is developed on top of pre-existing code and architecture, or as a customization of pre-existing code and pre-existing architecture?
- c. Can the OSPI provide recommendations as to what open-source practices/licenses the SBAC is planning to follow?
- d. What is the OSPI’s expected timeline for “the future road-map toward open licensing technology” (RFP, p. 38)?
- e. Is it the expectation that the automated scoring software will be used as an operational or live scorer during the pilot?
- f. What deliverables are expected in terms of system documentation and use?
- g. Can the OSPI provide further discussion on what is expected with respect to an “independent validation process” (RFP, p. 37)?
- h. Given the timelines stated in the RFP, is the OSPI expecting automated scoring software to be developed and validated prior to the 2012-2013 pilot, which implies development prior to the opportunity to work with large samples of student response data?

Answer: The assumption is inaccurate. See the answer for Q. 95.

Q97 What proportion of the 5,000 CR items and 420 Performance tasks across mathematics and English-Language Arts planned as part of the 2012-2013 pilot are to have automated scoring models built and ready for use for the pilot?

Answer: All of the CR items. It should be anticipated that parts of each of the PTs will have automated scoring.

Q98 Is there a requirement for vendors to bid on all parts of the RFP?

Answer: Yes.

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Q99 Page 14 of the RFP states that “furthermore, Vendors will be excluded if they propose to use procedures and products that are proprietary or copyrighted.” Page 37 and 38 of the RFP, however, state that “SMARTER Balanced recognizes the current limitations in available open-source software, and, in certain situations, and may accept the use of proprietary components as long as there is a future roadmap toward open licensing technology.” Please provide further discussion of the conditions under which a Vendor will be excluded.

Answer: The statements on page 37 and 38 related to this topic override those on page 14.

Q100 Please confirm that the contractor is responsible for developing and delivering an estimated total of 14,304 items and tasks (520 for cognitive labs; 3,264 for small-scale trials; 10,520 for pilots).

Answer: Confirmed.

Q101 Is the Psychometric Services Vendor responsible for validation/analysis of automated scoring, or should Vendors include this in their proposal responses?

Answer: The Psychometrics Services provider validates the scoring process, verifies that scoring met psychometric criteria and signs off on validity of the method. However, the Psychometric Services vendor does NOT perform the validation stage of scoring engine training. That is, the RFP #14 vendor will need to run the validation sample set through the engine and produce indicators of scoring validity for the Pscychometric Services vendor to analyze.

Q102 Please confirm that it will be acceptable to deliver a single proposal with the following structure:

1. One Technical Proposal covering Parts 1, 2, 3 and 4 within sections A-Project Approach/Methodology, B-Work Plan, C-Project Schedule, D-Deliverables, E-Outcomes and Performance Measurement, and F-Risks.
2. One Management Proposal with differentiations by Part only where needed.
3. One Cost Proposal with costs covering Parts 1, 2, 3, 4, and Total.

Answer: Confirmed.

Q103 Given the scope of the development efforts and the very short timeline across the four sections of this RFP, is there any possibility of an increased budget from SBAC to complete this work?

Answer: There is no current plan for such a consideration.

Q104 Beyond the early spring/late spring timing for the cognitive labs and small scale trials, does SBAC have expectations for the timing of the teacher item authoring and the final delivery of the pilot items and performance tasks for upload into the Item Authoring and Pooling system?

Answer: Pilot testing is scheduled to occur from January to June of 2013. Items must be uploaded in time to allow for this schedule.

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Q105 The work on this RFP is highly dependent on other contracts that have not been awarded yet. Given the short timelines for the deliverables from this RFP, what contingency plans does SBAC have in place if contract awards or other contract deliverables are delayed?

Answer: Vendor responses to this RFP are not required to explore the impact of contingencies of this sort.

Q106 Can SBAC provide the budget by task as was done for SBAC 04? In the absence of pending deliverables from RFPs 04, 08, and 09, budget guidance will assist vendors in crafting innovative solutions.

Answer: SBAC 04 could be bid on by separate components, which is why such a breakdown was provided. RFP 14 is to be bid as a single award contract, so only the total value is being provided.

Q107 What is SBAC's target per item cost for teacher-developed items from authoring through committee reviews?

Answer: There is no target per item cost. It is expected that the full scope of work for RFP 14 be completed within the total budget cap provided.