

SBAC RFP-07
Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
Item Authoring and Item Pool Application, Questions & Answers
PROJECT TITLE: SMARTER Balanced Assessment CONSORTIUM Request for Proposals for Item Authoring and Item Pool Application

Section A INTRODUCTION **pg. 6-10**

Q1 RFP states “SMARTER Balanced’s goal is to acquire and implement an application that can support item authoring and development activities as well as store and retrieve the pool of items available for use by the summative and interim assessment system.”

Please describe what you mean by a “Summative” assessment and “Interim” assessment systems in the context of this RFP. How are the requirements different for each assessment system?

Answer: Summative assessments are mandatory comprehensive accountability measures that include computer adaptive assessments and performance tasks, administered in the last 12 weeks of the school year in grades 3–8 and high school for English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. These assessments are designed to provide valid, reliable, and fair measures of students’ progress toward and attainment of the knowledge and skills required to be college and career ready.

Interim assessments are optional comprehensive and content-cluster measures that afford teachers and administrators the flexibility to administer these assessments at strategic points in the instructional year and use the results to better understand students’ strengths and limitations in relation to the standards. They are designed as item sets that can provide actionable information about student progress.

Summative Assessment test items and tasks that have been exposed to the extent that they cannot be used for high stakes Summative Assessments can be re-purposed for Interim Assessments. Interim Assessment test items are publicly released items and tasks.

For more information, please reference the SMARTER Balanced website at www.smarterbalanced.org.

In the context of this RFP, the distinguishing feature is that the bank needs to support groups of items that have different purposes, different levels of security, and different users.

Q2 RFP states “Assessment systems developed with Comprehensive Assessment Systems grants must include one or more summative assessment components in mathematics and in English language arts that are administered at least once during the academic year in grades 3 through 8 and at least once in high school;”

Will the summative assessments be administered by each individual State to assess the students in the respective State (OR)

Will the summative assessments be administered by the consortium to assess the students in ALL States?

Answer: By 2014–15 all states in the Consortium will eliminate their current ELA and mathematics summative assessments in favor of the new SBAC assessments for the purposes of Title I designations delineated in the current authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as the No Child Left Behind Act. Each state will continue to administer the summative assessment test to their respective student populations. Please refer to the Race to the Top Assessment Program Application for more details: http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/pubdocs/SBAC_Narrative.pdf

Q3 Will the Interim Assessments be administered by each individual State to assess the students in the respective State (OR)

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Will the interim assessments be administered by the consortium to assess the students in ALL States?

Answer: Interim assessment will fall under the purview of the states to determine use with each state's respective schools. The states will determine to what extent interim assessments are mandatory.

Q4 If a COTS application is chosen over the State of Michigan Item Bank System, will the new application be used to develop items and tests for say the State of Michigan MEAP, MME and ELPA assessments, in the future?

Answer: The solution chosen for the SBAC Item Authoring and Item Pool application will be used for common core assessments. Michigan will continue to use the Michigan Item Banking system for assessments not supported by SBAC.

Q5 RFP states "Assessment systems developed with Comprehensive Assessment Systems grants must include one or more summative assessment components in mathematics and in English language arts that are administered at least once during the academic year in grades 3 through 8 and at least once in high school;"

Please confirm that the Math and ELA are the content areas that will primarily be used with the SMARTER BALANCED Item Authoring tool.

Answer: The Item Authoring and Item Pool application must support all content areas and all grade levels. The system must be flexible to support additional content areas and grade levels without requiring coding changes.

Q6 RFP states "Note that SMARTER Balanced is in the early stages of defining requirements and systems architecture and recommends that vendors consider planning for an approximate 10% increase in the requirements as currently defined in Appendix A"

Please confirm that the vendor should factor to accommodate 10% of additional time during the Requirements Definitions phase of the project and this is the only item that should be factored into the vendors cost proposal.

Answer: The 10% increase in requirements reflects our best guess at the amount of additional clarifications that will result from Requirements Definition. The vendor should take into account the total project impact with cost and time with regard to this 10% increase in requirements.

Q7 Will the awarded vendor for this RFP be precluded from bidding on subsequent or related RFPs (i.e. Separate RFP for The Test Delivery Application for Pilot and Field Test Execution)?

Answer: We do not anticipate that the awarded vendor will be excluded from RFP-11 Test Engine Development or RFP-18 Test Engine Delivery or other RFPs except as otherwise described in the RFP or if it appears that the vendor's solution precludes competition for other RFPs.

Q8 In the Gantt chart provided in the Page 9 of the RFP, "Ongoing Item Authoring" is listed as one of the tasks.

Is Item Authoring in scope of the services to be provided by the vendor in response to this RFP? In other words, is the awarded vendor responsible for authoring items using the new system?

Answer: No, writing items for the Pilot Test and the Field Test will be provided by the contractors of RFP-14 Item/Task Writing/Review—Pilot and RFP-16 Item/Task Writing/Review—Field.

Q9 What is the rationale behind the August 2012 timeline for Deployment of the Item Authoring tool?

Answer: The intent and desire is to have the Item Authoring and Item Pool available for the Pilot Test activities. Please reference the Master Work Plan document at:
http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/pubdocs/SMARTER_SummativeAssessment_MasterWorkPlan.pdf

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Q10 With an expected March 27, 2012 start date and August 2012 deployment date, it leaves only about 5 months for requirements gathering, design, development, testing and implementation of this large initiative with 105 requirements.

Will the Consortium consider alternative schedules to complete all the in-scope activities with the project allowing Pilot Test Execution in Feb 2013 and Field Test Execution in March 2014?

Answer: Vendors must propose a work plan that is consistent with the Master Work Plan and the dates in the RFP. Vendors may propose additional alternative schedules with descriptions as to their advantages. The Master Work Plan can be found at:
http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/pubdocs/SMARTER_SummativeAssessment_MasterWorkPlan.pdf

Q11 RFP states “The Test Delivery Application for Pilot and Field Test Execution will be provided under a separate RFP and is scheduled to be completed and available in time for systems integration with the Item Authoring and Item Pool Application.”

Please confirm that both *Pilot Test Execution requiring integration with the Test Delivery Application* for computer based testing and *Field Test Execution requiring integration with the Test Delivery Application* for computer based testing will be out of scope of the current RFP.

Since the Test Delivery Application has not been identified yet, the vendors will not be able to estimate the integration efforts, hence the question.

Answer: The system will be expected to import and export test items flexibly and dynamically into one or more standardized formats including items with rendered graphics at variable levels of resolution and image size. The Test Delivery Applications will be expected to be able to make service calls to the Item Authoring and Item Pool application to access an exported data set.

Q12 Please clarify the actual start date of the project

The Gantt chart provided in page 9 of the RFP indicates a start date in Feb 2012, however the table provided in Page 11 states a Contract start date of March 27, 2012, hence the question.

Answer: Start date is targeted for March 27, 2012 as described on page 1 of the RFP. This RFP release was delayed so the Gantt chart reflects an incorrect date.

Q13 Has the Consortium identified the Test Engine systems contractor? If yes, please specify the name of the contractor.

Answer: The Test Delivery Application Contractor will be procured with RFP-11 Test Engine Development and RFP-18 Test Engine Delivery and can be referenced at the following Procurement schedule:
http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/pubdocs/SMARTER_SummativeAssessment_ProcurementSchedule.pdf). Estimated contract start date of RFP-11 Test Engine Development is June 6, 2012.

Q14 As a follow up to the above question if the Test Engine systems contractor has not been identified, when is a contractor expected to be selected?

Answer: The Test Delivery Application Contractor will be procured with RFP-11 Test Engine Development and RFP-18 Test Engine Delivery and can be referenced here:
http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/pubdocs/SMARTER_SummativeAssessment_ProcurementSchedule.pdf). Estimated contract start date of RFP-11 Test Engine Development is June 6, 2012.

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Q15 RFP states “Data Loading of Pilot Items - Deployment of the application to support the Pilot Test. This will include functionality to mass import, review, and edit items/tasks and their associated stimuli, multimedia, interoperability tagging (e.g., text-to-speech tags), and translations (Braille, languages).”

What is the present format of the data to be converted?

Answer: One of the requirements of this contract is for the vendor to develop a mass import process that can be used at any time to upload items into the Item Authoring and Item Pool application. This is not a one-time conversion process. Items could be submitted from multiple sources at any time. States and vendors submitting items that have been created outside the Item Authoring and Item Pool application must meet the requirements of the mass import process.

Q16 As a follow up to the previous question, what is the volume of data to be converted {i.e. number of files, number of items in the files}?

Answer: Yet to be determined. However, the import process should be robust enough that volume is not an issue.

Q17 Please confirm that the budget of \$1,988,000 is for vendor services and that any proposal responses that exceed this amount will be rejected and not considered.

Answer: Confirmed.

Q18 Please confirm that the budget of \$1,988,000 does not include:

- Application Hosting Cost
- Application maintenance cost
- Pilot and Field Test Execution – integration with Test Delivery Application

Answer: The budget does include Application Hosting, Application Maintenance, and Integration to the Test Delivery Application as described in question 25.

Q19 For Ongoing Application Hosting and Maintenance, through what date should the vendor's cost proposal cover services through?

Answer: Through September 2014, as specified in the RFP.

Q20 What is the time period provided for defining, designing, developing and deploying the application for Pilot? Is it from project commencement till Aug 2012? Approximately how many months?

Answer: Vendors must propose a work plan that is consistent with the Master Work Plan and the dates in the RFP. Vendors may propose additional alternative schedules with descriptions as to their advantages. The master work plan can be found at:

http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/pubdocs/SMARTER_SummativeAssessment_MasterWorkPlan.pdf

Q21 RFP states “The Contractor will be required to have the application completed and available for use at multiple key milestones over the duration of the contract period:”

Are there any business drivers behind the dates provided in this section? If so, please provide the same so that we understand the constraints if any surrounding these date requirements.

Answer: As stated in the RFP, the system needs to be functional for the Data Loading of Pilot Items, Item Development process for writing Field Test items and implementation activities for Pilot Test and Field Test Execution. If we do not meet these dates, SBAC will not be operational with the assessment system according to our established Master Work Plan.

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Q22 RFP states “Test items will be initially developed and stored using external application platform(s) and must be loaded into the new Item Authoring and Item Pool Application starting August 1, 2012.”

What is the format in which this information will be provided to vendor? Who is responsible for developing the test items using the external application platform?

Answer: The format is the SBAC standard as defined by the SBAC Architecture. This standard will be defined by March 1, 2012. There will be a successful contractor on RFP-14 Item/Task Writing/Review—Pilot and RFP-16 Item/Task Writing/Review—Field that will develop test items.

Q23 RFP states “The Test Delivery Application for Pilot and Field Test Execution will be provided under a separate RFP and is scheduled to be completed and available in time for systems integration with the Item Authoring and Item Pool Application.”

What is this Test Delivery Application? Who developed the application? What are the integration requirements?

Answer: The Test Delivery Application will utilize an adaptive engine and AI scoring is to securely deliver the assessment to the student in the proper accessible format that the student needs, store the student response and score the assessment. The contractor for the Test Delivery Application is still under acquisition per our procurement schedule. This RFP will be expected to be posted in February 2012.

The SBAC architecture has defined high-level interoperability standards that allow state systems to interface with the SBAC Item Authoring and Item Pool application via mass import and export. The interoperability standards will also define integration points between the SBAC Item Authoring and Item Pool application and other SBAC system components. See Appendix G

Q24 RFP states that “the Contractor implementing the Item Authoring and Item Pool application is expected to work closely with the SMARTER Balanced Test Engine Systems Contractor”

Who is the Test Engine Systems Contractor? What are the areas where collaboration is needed?

Answer: This RFP is yet to be released. The Master Work Plan can be found at:
http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/pubdocs/SMARTER_SummativeAssessment_MasterWorkPlan.pdf

Q25 As a follow up to the previous question, what are the integration requirements between Item Authoring application and the Test Engine?

Answer: The Item Bank should be able to export items in multiple formats. In addition, the Item Authoring and Item Pool should support system service requests as defined in the systems architecture from Test Delivery Applications to access Item Authoring and Item Pool information.

Q26 RFP states “The period of performance of any contract resulting from this RFP is tentatively scheduled to begin on or about March 27, 2012”.

Based on this start date, defining and implementing the system with all the new enhancements seems too aggressive. Is OSPI open to alternate schedules for various milestones based on our assessment of size and complexity of scope of implementation?

Answer: Vendors must propose a work plan that is consistent with the Master Work Plan and the dates in the RFP. Vendors may propose additional alternative schedules with descriptions as to their advantages. The Master Work Plan can be found at:
http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/pubdocs/SMARTER_SummativeAssessment_MasterWorkPlan.pdf

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Q27 Please confirm that OSPI assessed ADA requirements conformance on the State of Michigan Item Bank System.

Answer: Michigan reviewed the system for ADA compliance. OSPI has not done an independent evaluation.

Section B GENERAL INFORMATION FOR CONSULTANTS pg. 12
4. Submission of Proposals

Q28 Please clarify the inclusion of resumes. Submission of Proposal, it states that the Technical Proposal has a 200 page limit and the limit includes resumes. But the resumes are actually requested in the Management Proposal under 3. Staff Qualifications/Experience.

Answer: Technical Proposals are to be limited to 200 pages. Resumes, under the Management Proposal, are limited to a 5-page maximum for any single resume.

Section C PROPOSAL CONTENTS pg. 16-23

Q29 In the Letter of Submittal instructions, you have listed six items you request of the Consultant and you request of any proposed subcontracts. Can you please clarify what of the six items you require of the subcontractor since most questions are directed specifically to the Consultant (i.e. legal status of Consultant, location of the facility from which Consultant would operate)?

Answer: The Consultant should provide responses for 1 through 5 with regards to a subcontractor.

Q30 The RFP requires the Work Plan to complete the application lifecycle activities to be described in one section, however the components of the application life cycle such as requirements, design, development and testing are in later sections.

Can the vendor provide ALL the information desired with the Technical Proposal with the same headings in a different order, while providing a crosswalk table for the Consortium review?

Answer: Vendors are expected to follow the directions of the RFP (Section C., Proposal Content). For readability purposes, if duplicating the information seems appropriate vendors may do so as long as the technical proposal remains within the established page limit count.

Q31 The RFP document has the Functional Requirements and Technical Requirements grouped under the Application Requirements (indented).

Please clarify that this is how the vendors are supposed to respond to these items. Can we follow the same structure for the components in Services 2 and 3 also?

Answer: Confirmed

Q32 RFP states project likely to start on March 27, 2012.
RFP states that system must be available for pilot test loading by Aug 2012. This means 4-5 months for development and testing before release of system for pilot.

Here RFP seems to indicate that functionalities will be delivered over six months.

Can you please clarify OSPI's expectation here?

Answer: Vendors must propose a work plan that is consistent with the Master Work Plan and the dates in the RFP. Vendors may propose additional alternative schedules with descriptions as to their advantages. The Master Work Plan can be found at:

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Q33 RFP states “The Contractor will need to deliver a solution that accommodates the SMARTER Balanced architecture and interoperability standards that will be established by the IT Systems Architecture, scheduled to be completed by January 2012.”

Has OSPI assessed the application architecture of SOM Item Bank system and ensured acceptability and conformance to OSPI's expectations?

Answer: The noted list of upgrades and enhancements needed for SBAC are listed in the Appendices of the RFP.

Q34 RFP states “Deliverable: Software includes, but is not limited to, software product, development tools, support tools, data migration software, integration software, and installation software.”

Please clarify what you mean by delivering Development and support tools.

The tools typically used are industry standard software development and support tools such as Microsoft Visual Studio.NET, which we presume OSPI already has, hence the question.

Answer: Development and support tools are the developer tools required to build, test, implement and support the Item Authoring application. If the contractor is enhancing the Michigan Item Bank as the solution, developer tools will be provided to the contractor. If the contractor is proposing an alternative solution, the contractor will need to provide the software developer tools as part of their bid.

Q35 RFP states “Although the first implementation of the item and stimulus data mass import process will be to support the Pilot Test, the mass import functionality must be fully functional from that point forward.”

How many rounds of mass import are to be performed before system goes live?

Answer: Yet to be determined.

Q36 Please specify which functionalities must be provided for the Pilot Load?

Answer: Refer to response to Q11

Q37 What is the scope of this application deployment as it pertains to OSPI member States? Will all States data be loaded or only selected States? Or is the plan to develop a common database of test items to be shared by all member States? This business aspect is not very clear in the RFP. Please explain.

Answer: There will be two types of test items developed: (1) SMARTER Balanced developed test items and (2) test items provided by the states. It is not a one-time load and the import process will be an ongoing process.

The system will need to support Multi-Tenancy options for each state. The system should provide test items that will be shared by all member states but also provide access to test items for each individual state. Please refer to the Architecture section 6.2 Application Architecture on Multi-Tenancy options: See Appendix G

Q38 RFP states “This will include efforts to load items/tasks and their associated stimuli, multimedia, interoperability tagging (e.g. text-to-speech tags) and translations (Braille, languages);”

Please confirm that OSPI/State is responsible for the translation. Please confirm that the vendor's responsibility is to load the items and associated content into the new system database.

Answer: No. The Item Authoring and Item Pool system must provide this functionality for translation to occur.

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Q39 RFP states “The scope should include, but not be limited to, application management, help desk, systems enhancements,”

Please confirm that the Help Desk support requested from the chosen vendor is only Level 2 support, meaning OSPI/State will handle the initial calls (Level 1) and forward the calls that require vendor support to the chosen vendor (Level 2 support)?

Answer: We need the contractor to provide all levels of help desk support for the item authoring bank.

Q40 The RFP states “Describe the impacts/outcomes the Vendor proposes to achieve as a result of the delivery of these services including how these outcomes would be monitored, measured and reported to SMARTER Balanced. “

This RFP seeks the development of an Item Authoring tool that will be used by the consortium to develop Items to be used in the respective State’s assessment. What impacts/outcomes does the Consortium expect the Vendor to monitor, measure and report with the above proposal requirement.

Answer: Vendors are expected to be able to describe for reviewers how the deliverables of the Item Authoring project will fulfill the objectives of the SMARTER Balanced consortium, and in doing so describe the methods of communicating—through monitoring, measuring and reporting—to Consortium leadership the achievement/fulfillment of the stated objectives.

Q41 RFP states that “The contractor shall conduct a thorough requirements definition process to gather both functional and technical systems requirements.”

At which location (city and state) should the vendors expect to conduct the requirements gathering sessions?

Answer: SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium is a geographically-dispersed entity. The contractor will need to conduct structured discussions and effective interactive online workshops through a contractor-provided web-conferencing service.

Q42 As a follow up to the previous question, please specify who from the consortium will be responsible to provide detailed requirements at the above location during the requirement gathering sessions.

This information is necessary to formalize the requirements gathering plan requested with this RFP, hence the question.

Answer: Technology Approach Work Group will be the point of contact.

Q43 How many subject matter experts (SMEs) will be allocated to this project for the purpose of detailed requirements gathering?

Answer: SBAC will utilize the work group structure to provide the needed resources. Please reference the SBAC organizational structure and work group structure at the following website:
<http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Governance.aspx>

Q44 As a follow up to the previous question, please list the names of the subject matter experts that will provide the requirements for the “Item Authoring and Item Pool” application, if available.

Answer: Yet to be determined.

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Q45 How many hours per week of each SME is the Consortium planning to allocate for the Detailed Requirements Gathering?

This information is necessary to estimate the duration and cost of the requirements gathering phase, hence the question.

Answer: The amount of effort from the SBAC work groups will be negotiated with the successful contractor. SBAC is expecting a vendor recommendation for the duration and cost of this phase.

Q46 Please confirm that there will be one set of functional and technical requirements for the Item Authoring and Item Pool application for all the States in the consortium.

Answer: Confirmed.

Q47 At which location (city and state) will the consortium conduct User Acceptance Testing?

Answer: Yet to determined between SBAC and Contractor.

Q48 How many business days of User Acceptance Testing does the Consortium expect to perform?

Answer: Vendor needs to propose an amount of effort and time that both meets industry standards and is acceptable to SBAC leadership.

Q49 RFP states "Beginning with delivery of the Item Authoring and Item Pool Application in August 2012, the Contractor will provide staff for enhancements and production support on the system as needed, in addition to the ongoing development activities for the remaining deliverables."

Please clarify what "ongoing development activities" are being referred to after the delivery and deployment of the Item Authoring and Item Pool application.

Answer: Systems Maintenance and Enhancements

Q50 RFP states "Beginning with delivery of the Item Authoring and Item Pool Application in August 2012, the Contractor will provide staff for enhancements and production support on the system as needed, in addition to the ongoing development activities for the remaining deliverables."

Please clarify what "remaining deliverables" are being referred to after the delivery and deployment of the Item Authoring and Item Pool application.

Answer: Systems Maintenance and Enhancements

Q51 RFP states "The Contractor will be responsible for the design and development of a data portability mass import module to upload items, tasks and stimuli that will be written by external entities such as member states and contractors. The mapping structure to the target format will be utilized by multiple input sources, so it must define all data fields, and specifically identify required data fields."

Please confirm that the Consortium will undertake to obtain the above data for loading from their current systems and formats in to the "target format" specified by the vendor.

The vendor will then load the data in the "target format" into the new system with necessary transformation.

Answer: No. The data will exist in multiple formats. The contractor will create a module that supports the dynamic development (e.g., table-driven) of multiple import and export formats that serves to address data formatted in its "native" state and export into multiple formats.

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Q52 Please confirm that consortium will perform the necessary data cleansing prior to providing the data to the chosen vendor.

Answer: The import module should check for format consistency and should have a series of checks that either prevents record uploads or batch uploads depending on the severity of issues. In addition, there should be a staging process to review the data prior to uploading into the bank. Finally, there should be a method of rolling back an upload if there appears to be a significant batch issue. Further, the data will not be provided to the chosen vendor. The mass import should be user friendly and allow the consortium to initiate the upload with support from the vendor.

Q53 Are there any Technology Enhanced (TE) items to be migrated?

If there are any TE items to be migrated, the data elements for the vendor's target format for these items cannot be identified until the "Submit Item" requirements sessions for the item type are completed, hence the question.

Answer: A different platform will be used initially to create some of the Technology Enhanced items. The Item Authoring and Item Pool system will need to be able to import, store, and export the Technology Enhanced items. Standards will be defined at a later date.

Q54 Are there any Performance task clusters to be migrated?

If there are any Performance task clusters to be migrated, the data elements for the vendor's target format for these cannot be identified until the requirements sessions for them are completed, hence the question.

Answer: Yes. There will be Performance task clusters to be migrated.

Q55 Are there any Stimuli Clusters to be migrated?

If there are any Stimuli Clusters to be migrated, the data elements for the vendor's target format for these cannot be identified until the requirements sessions for them are completed, hence the question.

Answer: Yes. . There will be stimuli clusters to be migrated.

Q56 Please indicate number of Consortium and State personnel to be trained?

Answer: The contractor will need to provide user manuals, associated documentation, and pre-recorded training videos necessary to support training. The number of personnel to be trained is not relevant, as the recorded training will mitigate the number-of-trainees issue.

Q57 Can the vendors propose a Train-The-Trainer approach?

Answer: Not needed. Refer to response for Q56.

Q58 Please provide approximate number of training sessions to be provided.

Answer: Not applicable. Refer to response for Q56.

Q59 Would training require travelling to different parts of the US or will it be at one specific location?

Answer: Not needed. Refer to response for Q56.

Q60 As a follow up to the previous question, please specify the location (city and State) where training is to be provided from.

Answer: Not needed. Refer to response for Q56.

Q61 Please confirm that the Consortium will provide the training facilities/conference rooms, etc.

Answer: Not needed. Refer to response for Q56.

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Q62 How many months of Application Maintenance and Support does the Consortium require with the vendors' cost proposal?

Answer: From August 2012 to end of the contract.

Q63 How many months of Application Hosting services does the Consortium require with the vendors' cost proposal?

Answer: From August 2012 to end of the contract.

Q64 RFP states "The contractor will be responsible for travel costs associated with four annual meetings supporting project-specific and cross-consortium contractor engagements. Contractors will be expected to allocate a reasonable sum of the proposed budget to support this task"

At which location (City and State) will these annual meetings be conducted? This is information is required so the vendors can allocate a reasonable sum of budget for the travel.

Please provide sample activities and agenda items of the annual meetings. This information is required so the vendors can plan on the appropriate number of attendees and associated cost for the travel?

Answer: The Consortium cannot provide exact information regarding the location of said meetings, but will look to convene these meetings in cities that have good airport access and low per diem rates. As for sample activities or agendas, the crux of the meetings is providing collaborative interactions in a planning and status check-in opportunity.

Q65 RFP states "Ability to provide coherent web conferencing service for effective interactive online workshops for structured discussions or brainstorming with collaborating meeting attendees and to deliver engaging webinar presentations"

How many consortium or State attendees should the vendor estimate for in planning to provide this web conferencing service?

Answer: Estimate 50 attendees.

Q66 RFP states "Note: Upon contract execution, the selected Contractor will be required to integrate its project management deliverables with the project management deliverables and templates utilized by SMARTER Balanced's Project Management Partner. Specific details and templates will be provided upon contract commencement."

Please provide a list of the project management deliverables and templates that must be integrated. We understand that the actual templates will be provided upon the contract commencement.

Answer: The list of project management deliverables and expectations that SBAC expects are listed in the RFP under Section C. Proposal Contents, Level 3 Management Proposal, (2) Project Management Deliverables.

Q67 Please confirm that the Consortium is responsible for Hardware and Software licenses required to host the application.

Answer: All technology provided for adequate hosting is the contractor's responsibility.

Q68 For how many different environments (Dev, Test and Production) should the vendors provide cost estimates in their Cost Proposal?

Answer: SBAC needs a development, test, and production environment to support systems development and implementation activities.

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Q69 RFP states “The hosting environment must provide integration with other SMARTER Balanced technology components, regardless of where those components may reside.”

Please list the set of SMARTER Balanced technology components, applications or systems that the “Item Authoring and Item Pool” application must interface with.

This information is necessary so the vendors can provide appropriate solutions for the interfaces with the external systems.

Answer: Please see systems architecture for the list of system components and their integration points. See Appendix G

Q70 Please provide the following configuration details of the State of Michigan web server(s) that support the current Item Bank System

- Server Type (for example Dell/IBM/Sun)
- # of cores (for example Dual Core/Quad Core):
- Core Model and clock speed (for example Intel Xeon 2.9 GHz):
- RAM size (in GB):

Answer: Web servers (2—load-balanced cluster):

- Server type: HEWLETT PACKARD PROLIANT DL380
- # of cores: 2 x 4
- Core model and clock speed: Intel Xeon 2.33 GHz
- RAM size: 4096 MB

Q71 Please provide the following configuration details of the State of Michigan application server(s) that support the current Item Bank System

- Server Type (for example Dell/IBM/Sun)
- # of cores (for example Dual Core/Quad Core):
- Core Model and clock speed (for example Intel Xeon 2.9 GHz):
- RAM size (in GB):

Answer: Application server (1):

- Server type: HEWLETT PACKARD PROLIANT DL380
- # of cores: 2 x 1
- Core model and clock speed: Intel Xeon 3.0 GHz
- RAM size: 4096 MB

Q72 Please provide the following configuration details of the State of Michigan database server(s) that support the current Item Bank System

- Server Type (for example Dell/IBM/Sun)
- # of cores (for example Dual Core/Quad Core):
- Core Model and clock speed (for example Intel Xeon 2.9 GHz):
- RAM size (in GB):

Answer: Database servers (2—SQL server failover cluster):

- Server type: HEWLETT PACKARD PROLIANT DL580
- # of cores: 4 x 4
- Core model and clock speed: Intel Xeon 2.33 GHz
- RAM size: 32,768 MB

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- Q73 Please provide the following configuration details of the State of Michigan SAS server(s) that support the current Item Bank System
- Server Type (for example Dell/IBM/Sun)
 - # of cores (for example Dual Core/Quad Core):
 - Core Model and clock speed (for example Intel Xeon 2.9 GHz):
 - RAM size (in GB):

Answer: The SAS server is out of scope for this RFP.

Web services server (1):

- Server type: HEWLETT PACKARD PROLIANT DL380
- # of cores: 2 x 4
- Core model and clock speed: Intel Xeon 2.33 GHz
- RAM size: 4,096 MB

- Q74 Please provide the following configuration details of the State of Michigan web services server(s) that support the current Item Bank System
- Server Type (for example Dell/IBM/Sun)
 - # of cores (for example Dual Core/Quad Core):
 - Core Model and clock speed (for example Intel Xeon 2.9 GHz):
 - RAM size (in GB):

Answer: Web services server (1):

- Server type: HEWLETT PACKARD PROLIANT DL380
- # of cores: 2 x 4
- Core model and clock speed: Intel Xeon 2.33 GHz
- RAM size: 4,096 MB

- Q75 Please provide the following configuration details of the State of Michigan Tivoli server(s) that support the current Item Bank System
- Server Type (for example Dell/IBM/Sun)
 - # of cores (for example Dual Core/Quad Core):
 - Core Model and clock speed (for example Intel Xeon 2.9 GHz):
 - RAM size (in GB):

Answer: Tivoli server (4—TSIEM cluster):

- Server type: DELL POWEREDGE R910
- # of cores: 4 x 10
- Core model and clock speed: Intel Xeon 2.13GHz
- RAM size: 131,072 MB

- Q76 Is the Consortium expecting one installation of the “Item Authoring and Item Pool” application or multiple installations that each support a few States?

Answer: In general, vendors should review the SBAC architecture and propose how their solution best fits and supports the larger system.

SBAC needs to share at least one single common set of items. SBAC is open to multiple instances of the application, if from the users’ perspective the required common content is secure and is exactly the same within a minimum window (approximately 15 minutes or so). A single instance and/or multiple instances of the application may also have different state-specific content in addition to the common content as long as security concerns are addressed.

- Q77 Who will be recipients of this Knowledge Transfer (KT)?

Answer: Yet to be determined. These will be the personnel selected to support the application beyond the contract.

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Q78 How many people must be provided KT?

Answer: Yet to be determined. These will be the personnel selected to support the application beyond the contract.

Q79 Typically Hosting services are provided as one time and recurring costs.

How should we represent recurring costs towards hosting?

For many years would the hosting cost projections be provided?

Answer: Hosting is required through the end of the contract in September 2014. The Hosting cost should be detailed in the bid to delineate one-time costs and recurring costs during the contact.

Section E	EXHIBIT C	pg. 34-35
Service Level Expectations		

Q80 RFP states "Requests from Consortium Membership (including individual members, Work Group, Project Management Partner, and leadership): Requests responded to in a timely manner "

What types of requests are being referred to here? The time provided for response is too aggressive without specific details on the kind of requests.

Most times it might take more than a day to assess a response for the request. Also, the body of individuals that could originate requests seems very broad, hence the question.

Answer: The intent of this service-level expectation is that the contractor is responsive to Consortium membership requests within 1 business day. It seems reasonable and good business practice for the contractor to acknowledge the request, describe the process that will be used to work on the request, and then provide an anticipated completion date. The contractor should have a good backfill plan to ensure coverage to support this service level.

If more time is needed to fulfill this task for more complex requests, the contractor should notify the Technology Approach Work Group on the delay and provide updates as appropriate.

Q81 Who from the consortium will be responsible to manage and execute the Service Level Expectations and associated remedies?

Answer: The State of Washington is responsible in consultation with the Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer.

Q82 RFP states "Unless otherwise authorized in advance, CONSORTIUM leadership is provided a minimum of three (3) complete business days response time to review and edit draft postings and products."

Who or which committee/group from the Consortium will be responsible for the sign-off on the deliverables submitted by the contractor?

Answer: Generally, the Technology Approach and Item Development workgroups will be most involved in a review of these deliverables.

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Section F	APPENDICES	pg. 56-85
	Appendix A	

Q83 Please confirm that if the vendor proposes a solution that is based on the Michigan Item Bank System, then all the requirements with “Yes” in the “Included in Michigan Item Bank System” column will be available and used AS-IS from within the Item Bank System and no changes will be required.

Answer: Correct. Please see notations in the comment section in Appendix A for exceptions (e.g. #8, #12)

Q84 RFP states “Item Authoring and Item Pool Application must facilitate within one web-based system that support Multi-Tenancy, the workflow functionality to track the creation, development, review, and approval processes of items, tasks, and stimuli for inclusion in the item/task selection pool”

We understand Items and Stimuli (contexts). Please clarify what you mean by “tasks” in the context of this project.

Answer: Please see Appendix E: Draft Guidelines for Development of Performance Tasks

Q85 As a follow up to the above question, the Michigan Item Bank has a development process defined for Items and Stimuli (Context).

What is the workflow functionality to track the creation, development, review, and approval processes of tasks?

Answer: Items and contexts associated with a performance task will follow the same development process flow as other items and contexts, with the additional functionality of clustering items and stimuli to create the Performance Task.

Q86 As a follow up to the previous question, please provide a sample task.

Answer: Please see the Appendix F: Sample Performance Task

Q87 RFP states “Users can only access Programs/Content/Grade Levels to which they have been granted access.”

Please confirm that an assessment Program will be unique to one State.

Answer: See question 76. In addition, supporting multiple tenancies (multiple states using the same Item Bank) is an enhancement to the Michigan Item Bank that has been requested. Common Core will be applicable to all states, but states may also use the Item Authoring and Item Pool application for items unique to their own state.

Q88 Will there be any role that will require access to items across all States?

Answer: We foresee this being applicable only to a Database Administrator.

Q89 Please confirm with the use of Common Core State Standards within the Item Authoring and Item Pool application one set of content standards will be applied across all States.

Answer: Confirmed

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Q90 Please provide a sample library of Item Specification documents that must be linked with an item.
Answer: See Item Specification documents posted at <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/ContentSpecs/MathContentSpecifications.pdf>

Requirement ID #5

Q91 Please clarify what you mean by reporting group.

Answer: The reporting group is how the item score will be reported. Please see the Proposed Reporting Categories in the draft Content Content Specifications for CCSS Mathematics at <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/ContentSpecs/MathContentSpecifications.pdf> for additional information.

Requirement ID #5

Q92 Please provide a sample library of the reporting group that must be linked with an item.

Answer: This will not be a separate library, but will be a field within the content standard library.

Requirement ID #6

Q93 RFP states “System needs to support the following item and stimulus types stored in non-rendered format suitable for efficient storage and dynamic rendering:

- Selected Response
- Selected Response with answer options and a scoring rubric
- Constructed Response
- ...

What is the difference between bullet items 1 and 2 in this requirement?

By the first bullet point (“Selected Response”) are you referring to the multiple choice items in the Michigan Item Bank system?

Answer: The difference between bullet items 1 and 2 in this requirement are as follows:
Bullet 1 includes answer options, but no scoring rubric. Yes, the SBAC “Selected Response” item type is the same as a “Multiple Choice” item type in the Michigan Item Bank. This item type does not include a scoring rubric. Bullet 2 includes BOTH answer options and a scoring rubric.

Requirement ID #6

Q94 Please provide a list of Item types that must be supported within the Item Authoring and Item Pool application.

The list provided in req ID# 6 includes BOTH Item and Stimuli types, hence the question.

Answer: The Item Authoring and Item Pool application must support the following item types:
Selected-Response (Multiple-Choice in the Michigan Item Bank)
Selected-Response with a scoring rubric (Name for this item type is to be determined by SBAC)
Constructed-Response (Short-Answer and Extended-Response)
Activity-Based Observation

Performance Tasks

Technology-Enhanced Items

Requirement ID #6

Q95 Please provide a list of Stimulus types that must be supported within the Item Authoring and Item Pool application.

The list provided in req ID# 6 includes BOTH Item and Stimuli types, hence the question.

Answer: A stimulus may be a passage, chart, graph, video, animation, computer simulation, etc. that is not an item in and of itself, but to which multiple items can be written. The item bank needs to support the functionality to cluster two or more stimuli.

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Requirement ID #6
Q96 Please confirm that items with the new item types will still follow the same Item Development Workflow process (with changes requested in this RFP) as in the Michigan Item Bank system.
Answer: Confirmed with the additional changes requested in this RFP.

Requirement ID #6
Q97 Please confirm that stimuli with the new stimulus types will still follow the same Context Development Workflow process (with changes requested in this RFP) as in the Michigan Item Bank system.
Answer: Confirmed with the additional changes requested in this RFP.

Requirement ID #6
Q98 Please provide a sample Technology Enhanced Item that will be used in the new “Item Authoring and Item Pool” application.

Technology Enhanced Item is not available with the current Michigan Item Bank system, hence the question.
Answer: There are no samples of TE items available at this time.

Requirement ID #6
Q99 Please confirm that the Technology Enhanced (TE) Items will be used only with Computer Based Testing.

One-Per PDF rendering of TE items for Paper Based Testing does not make sense, hence the question.
Answer: Confirmed

Requirement ID #6
Q100 Please provide a sample Performance Task Cluster that will be used in the new “Item Authoring and Item Pool” application.

Performance Task Cluster is not available with the current Michigan Item Bank system, hence the question.
Answer: See response to Q86.

Requirement ID #6
Q101 Please provide a sample Stimuli Cluster that will be used in the new “Item Authoring and Item Pool” application.

Stimuli Cluster is not available with the current Michigan Item Bank system, hence the question.
Answer: The only difference between a Paired Context and a Stimuli Cluster is that a Stimuli Cluster can include more than two stimuli.

Requirement ID #7
Q102 Please provide a sample Technology Enhancement Item template that will be used in the new “Item Authoring and Item Pool” application.
Answer: This has not yet been defined.

Requirement ID #8
Q103 Please clarify what you mean by Performance Task Cluster linking?
Answer: Associating multiple stimuli and items as a single Performance Task. For example, stimulus #123, stimulus #234, and stimulus #345 may be linked as a Performance Task Cluster #456. Items associated with the Performance Task Cluster would be assigned to Cluster #456. Items associated with a single stimulus would be assigned to that single stimulus ID (e.g., #234).

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Requirement ID #8
Q104 RFP states “When an item/task/cluster/stimulus is assigned, system must assign a unique identifier for each item/task/cluster/stimulus and link the Item Specifications version to the item/task/cluster/stimulus.”

Will there be an assignment of a cluster? In the Michigan Item Bank system, a paired stimuli is created by the Content/Development Lead as need arises (without a formal assignment), hence the question.

Answer: That determination will be made during requirements gathering.

Requirement ID #8
Q105 Who will create a Performance Task cluster – the item writer or the context author or the SMARTER BALANCED content lead?

In the Michigan Item Bank system a paired stimuli is created by the Content/Development Lead only, hence the question.

Answer: That determination will be made during requirements gathering.

Requirement ID #8
Q106 At what maturity of the stimuli will these clusters be created?

In the Michigan Item Bank system a paired stimuli can be created with a stimulus of “Banked” maturity or higher, hence the question.

Answer: That determination will be made during requirements gathering.

Requirement ID #8
Q107 What is the workflow functionality to track the creation, development, review, and approval processes of clusters? Does it follow the Item Development Workflow or the Context Development workflow process?

Answer: See response to Q85.

Requirement ID #10
Q108 Please provide a sample item with Computer simulation.

Answer: No sample TE items are available at this time.

Requirement ID #10
Q109 Please provide one sample item that require each of the following Technology Tools - calculator, drawing tool, drag and drop, hot spots.

Answer: No sample TE items are available at this time.

Requirement ID #12
Q110 RFP states “Michigan IBS will require modification to support Performance Task Clusters if the Performance Task Clusters contain more than two stimuli.”

Please confirm that a Performance Task Cluster is created only from a combination of stimuli.

Answer: Confirmed— see response to Q103.

Requirement ID #12
Q111 Please specify the maximum number of stimuli that can be combined together.

While theoretically any number of stimuli can be combined together, there is functionality in the blueprint and test development module that will be impacted by the number of stimuli that are combined together, hence the question.

Answer: That determination will be made during requirements gathering.

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Requirement ID #13

- Q112 RFP states "System must provide Consortium with capability to track the performance of each individual item writer.
- Performance Statistics
 - o Quality
 - o Timeliness
 - State or vendor affiliation"

This requirement is listed as included in the Michigan Item Bank system. However upon review of the Michigan Item Bank system there are no reports or screens where the performance statistics or State/Vendor affiliation is tracked. Can you please elaborate which features in the Michigan Item Bank System you are referring to?

Answer: This requirement may require an enhancement to the Michigan Item Bank System depending on the metrics desired by SBAC. Currently the Michigan Item Bank has an Item Writer Production Report used to monitor the status of assigned items through acceptance. The status of items can also be viewed in the Item Work Queue.

Requirement ID #14

- Q113 Please clarify what you mean by "The import file must include data fields for review history in the event that the item meets criteria to bypass one or more of the review processes."

Please specify the data fields that you are referring to?

Answer: That determination will be made during requirements gathering. However, the intent is that items will be imported into the system at different levels of review. Some may not need to be reviewed upon import and the system will support such a process.

Requirement ID #14

- Q114 In what circumstances will a review process be bypassed?

Answer: The option to allow a bypass needs to be provided in the system functionality. The reason for a bypass will be set by SBAC policy.

Requirement ID #17

- Q115 RFP states "Specified Consortium user roles must be able to apply item specification styling, presentation formatting, and item accessibility tags required to meet SMARTER Balanced universal accessibility standards".

Please provide samples of the item accessibility tags referred to in the above requirement.

Answer: These tags are based on interoperability standards.

Requirement ID #17

- Q116 RFP states "Item must be rendered in the Item Authoring and Item Pool Application as it will be presented to the student in the test delivery system. This also includes foreign language, sign language, and Braille translations."

Please clarify how the sign language rendering will be presented to the student. Is the sign language rendering represented as a PDF file or a video file?

Answer: This could be a video file or something similar to provide the same functionality.

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Requirement ID #17

- Q117 RFP states "System must provide functionality to render an item in the bank and make adjustments that would serve to reduce the "footprint" of the item."

Please elaborate on what kind of functionality is desired to reduce the "footprint" of the item.

Answer: Conserving client system resources, network bandwidth, and memory in storage and transport of the item elements.

Requirement ID #18

- Q118 RFP states "System will route item/task/stimulus to QC review of student presentation (item rendering) before being submitted to committee review".

Please confirm that this new step is being proposed between steps 8 and 9 in the Item Development Process workflow provided with the RFP.

Answer: That determination will be made during requirements gathering.

Requirement ID #18

- Q119 As a follow up to the above question, what is rationale behind a QC review at this step?

Answer: Committee members will need to view each item, as it will be presented to the student in an online administration (e.g., TE items, accessibility).

Requirement ID #18

- Q120 As a follow up to the above question, which role within the application will perform this QC review?

Answer: That determination will be made during requirements gathering.

Requirement ID #18

- Q121 As a follow up to the above question, what actions (for example accept or reject or revise) can be performed on the item during a QC review?

Answer: That determination will be made during requirements gathering.

Requirement ID #18

- Q122 As a follow up to the above question, what actions (for example Content Lead review or committee review) can be performed on the item after a QC review?

Answer: That determination will be made during requirements gathering.

Requirement ID #19

- Q123 RFP states "Upon completion of the media, technology, and tagging fulfillment, the item is routed through the system for subsequent Consortium review before being routed for committee review."

Please specify where in the Item Development process "tagging fulfillment" will be completed.

Answer: That determination will be made during requirements gathering.

Requirement ID #19

- Q124 As a follow up to the previous question, which role (Content Lead or Item writer or media designer) will perform the "tagging fulfillment"?

Answer: That determination will be made during requirements gathering.

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Requirement ID #20

- Q125 The RFP calls for 3 committee review processes:
- Bias and Sensitivity Review
 - Content Advisory Review
 - Accessibility Review

Michigan Item Bank System currently supports only 2 committee reviews (BSC and CAC). However the RFP requirement states that this requirement is fully supported by the Michigan Item Bank System.

Does this mean that the Accessibility Review will be completed by either the Bias Sensitivity committee or the Content Advisory Committee?

Answer: Review structure has not yet been determined.

Requirement ID #23

- Q126 RFP states “Michigan IBS will require modification to route the item back to the original item writer – currently any modification to an item after committee is done by the content lead.”

Please confirm that from the item confidentiality standpoint, the routing of items back to the original item writer after committee review is only until the item is “Banked”.

Answer: That determination will be made during requirements gathering.

Requirement ID #28

- Q127 RFP states “System must provide capability for an item or task to be field-reviewed or tested in a cog lab for feedback”

Please confirm that the item review within the cog lab is exactly similar to the Field Review functionality currently available within the Michigan Item Bank System.

Answer: Confirmed

Requirement ID #30

- Q128 The RFP calls for 3 committee review processes after Pilot testing:
- Bias and Sensitivity Review
 - Content Advisory Review
 - Accessibility Review

Michigan Item Bank System currently supports only 2 committee reviews (BSC and CAC). However the RFP requirement states that this requirement is fully supported by the Michigan Item Bank System.

Does this mean that the Accessibility Review will be completed by either the Bias Sensitivity committee or the Content Advisory Committee?

Answer: Review structure has not yet been determined.

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Requirement ID #36
Q129 RFP states “Released items will be actively used in the interim system.”

Does this mean that interim assessments will be developed from “Released” items only?

In the current Item Bank System, the “released” items are excluded in the Test Development process. Developing Interim Assessments from “Released” items will mean a change to the existing application, hence the question.

Answer: No. Items could be entered into the Interim Assessment program directly. Active items in the Summative Assessments will not be available for the Interim item pool. Please see Requirements 37 and 57 in Appendix A of the RFP.

Requirement ID #37
Q130 RFP states “System must have flexibility to move an item across programs (from Summative to Interim Benchmark or Formative Instruction); across grade levels/spans; or from and to state-specific item/task/stimulus pools.”

With this requirement, would you like to copy the item across programs, grade levels and “DNU” the original item (OR)

Would you like to change the Program, Grade level of the original item?

If the second option is the requirement, there will be issues (or holes) in the blueprints and test maps where the original item was used, hence the question.

Answer: Review structure has not yet been determined.

Requirement ID #40
Q131 RFP states “SMARTER Balanced must be able to dynamically create test packages for all summative and interim assessments”

Please confirm that the test package development is exactly the same for both the Summative and Interim assessments.

Answer: That determination will be made during requirements gathering.

Requirement ID #43
Q132 RFP states “Michigan Item Bank may require modification to support Adaptive Testing blueprint.”

Please confirm that the Adaptive Test Engine will be available with the Test Delivery application.

Answer: Confirmed, but the Item Authoring and Item Pool application will be used to supply items (test package) to the Test Bank that will be utilized by the adaptive Test Engine.

Requirement ID #43
Q133 RFP states “Consortium users must be able to identify the algorithm used in this test package (algorithm is built in the adaptive engine);”

Please confirm that the algorithm referred to will be available with the Test Delivery application.

Answer: Confirmed

Requirement ID #43
Q134 How many external algorithms (available in the Test Delivery application) should the vendors expect to integrate with in the Item Authoring and Item Pool application?

Answer: Yet to be determined—please see the system architecture for integration points.

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Requirement ID #43

Q135 Please elaborate what you mean by “store the results of the test simulation and pool analysis for this test package”.

Answer: This is similar to the Test Information Curves and Statistical information that are stored with a test map in the Michigan Item Banking system. The items available for a test event will be exported to the test bank as a “test package.”

Requirement ID #47

Q136 RFP states “All the associated information for the item (graphics, directions, statistics, etc.) must be included in the OnePer XML export.”

Please clarify why the OnePer XML export requires the export of statistics, since the OnePer XML is being used to generate a PDF rendering of the item for a paper based test.

Answer: Correct—the item statistics are NOT included in the xml export for creation of the OnePer.

Requirement ID #51

Q137 RFP states “Additional calibration information will need to be captured along with the statistics. This information will include when the items were calibrated, with what items, sample size, and source of sample. When items are recalibrated, old values should be retained in addition to the new values.”

Please provide samples of the calibration information that must be captured.

Answer: This would include standard calibration information required to deliver an adaptive test. Final determination will be made during requirements gathering. Examples of the statistics to be stored in the Item Bank are provided in Requirement ID #51.

Requirement ID #51

Q138 As a follow up to the previous question, who performs the item calibration and when?

Answer: The Psychometric Services contractor performs the item calibration and will be responsible for providing the data to be uploaded into the Item Bank.

Requirement ID #50, 51 and 52

Q139 Please confirm that the data values for all the statistics fields listed with these requirements (50, 51 and 52) will be provided by the psychometric services provider.

The chosen vendor with this RFP is only responsible for ensuring that the data values for these fields are stored and available from within the “Item Authoring and Item Pool” application.

Answer: Confirmed

Requirement ID #52

Q140 SAS Enterprise Guide was used to develop the Psychometric reports on the Michigan Item Bank System.

Considering the cost with SAS licenses and servers needed to host SAS, is the Consortium open to replacing SAS with other reporting tools to address the psychometric reports in scope of this RFP?

Answer: Yes

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Requirement ID #57

Q141 RFP states “The Item Authoring and Item Pool Application must provide separate environments for the Summative and Interim Assessments.”

Please clarify what you mean by separate environments for the summative and interim assessments. Would you like to have 2 applications hosted, one to support summative assessment and the other to support interim assessments?

Answer: No, these assessments will be supported within the same application.

Requirement ID #57

Q 142 Please clarify what you mean by SEAs?

Is this the State Education Agencies such as Michigan Department of Education?

Answer: Yes

Requirement ID #57

Q143 RFP states “The Item Authoring and Item Pool Application must provide separate environments for the Summative and Interim Assessments.

- Summative Assessment items must remain secure.
- Interim Assessment items must be available to SEAs.”

Does the consortium expect to export the items and make it available to the SEAs for inclusion in their State specific assessments?

Does the consortium expect a separate set of Dev, Test and Production environments for the Summative and Interim assessments?

Answer: Please see Requirement ID #90 regarding mass export functionality. SBAC Policy relating to exporting items to SEAs has yet to be determined. The consortium does expect separate Dev, QA, and Production environments; but the Summative and Interim Assessments will be supported in the same application.

Requirement ID #58

Q144 Please provide detailed description of what you mean by “Enemy Item Tagging”.

There is no additional detail provided with this requirement for estimation purposes, hence the question.

Answer: In an online adaptive environment items that cannot appear in the same test must be tagged as an enemy item so that the adaptive engine will not select more than one of those items for a specific student in a single test event.

Requirement ID #59

Q145 Please elaborate on what details must be captured for “digital rights management” within the application.

Answer: This will be similar to copyright information stored with a passage or media, but will define terms for electronic use of the item, passage, or media.

Requirement ID #60

Q146 Please confirm that by “Functionality to support Readability Index” the Consortium expects the application to store the readability index scores within the application.

Answer: Confirmed

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Requirement ID #60

Q147 Is the “Functionality to support Readability Index” to assess the readability of the text based stimuli?

Answer: Confirmed

Requirement ID #90

Q148 RFP states “The system has the ability to exchange data with other systems using the following mechanisms: online application-to-application, web services interface, FTP and SFTP, to and from magnetic media, and using data interface utilities.”

In the context of mass data exchange please clarify what you mean by data exchange via magnetic media?

Answer: The RFP has been modified to remove the magnetic media requirement for data exchanges with other systems.

Requirement ID #92

Q149 Capacity Requirements - Approximately how many total users are expected to use the application across all States?

Answer: There could be more than 100 users per state, though a more refined estimate should be reviewed during the requirements gathering period. However, we do not expect that states will be primary users of the item authoring application. Rather, item writers (teachers) in states will be writing items.

Requirement ID #92

Q150 How many concurrent users are expected to use the application at any given point in time?

Answer: This has not yet been determined.

Requirement ID #92

Q151 Has the consortium performed any Capacity Planning activities for Item Authoring and Item Pool application? If yes, please provide a copy of the report that details your analysis and findings.

Answer: No

Requirement ID #100

Q152 In order for the vendors to provide hosting service (with backup and recovery services similar to the current Michigan Item Bank System), please provide the following information pertaining to backup, if the below details are different for each server, please repeat this information for each server:

- Backup hardware used
- Backup Software used with version details
- Types of tapes used to take backup
- Tape rotation policy

Answer: The Michigan Item Bank backup information is as follows:

Backup Hardware: SUN Sparc T5220

Backup Software: Symantec Veritas NetBackup version 7.0

Tapes: Backups are made to a virtual tape library (EMC Disk Library). Physical tapes are used for backups with a retention period greater than 30 days. Since the Item Bank retention policy is only 30 days, no physical tapes are used.

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Requirement ID #100

Q153 In order for the vendors to provide hosting service (with backup and recovery services similar to the current Michigan Item Bank System), please provide the current Disaster Recovery Plan.

Answer: The Disaster Recovery Plan will be determined by the SBAC System Architecture subject to approval by the Architecture Review Board.

The Disaster Recovery Plan for the Michigan Item Bank is as follows:

The State of Michigan has architected our critical IT solutions to run in a highly available (HA) environment 7 x 24 x 365 with a 2 hour Recovery Time Objective (RTO), and a zero Recovery Point Objective (RPO). Michigan Hosting Centers are designed as Tier 3 facilities with redundant power and network capability. The Hosting Centers are protected by redundant fiber networks and backup diesel Generators. Michigan solutions are architected with a Hosting primary production site and a Disaster Recovery site in place.

Michigan solutions utilize enterprise Level I Storage for their data, and is replicated from the production site to the Disaster Recovery Site. Michigan Data is also backed up to tape at an alternative site.

Q154 The RFP specifies support of the following item types: Technology Enhanced, Activity Based Observation, Performance Task Clusters. Does this support refer to the system's ability to store these item types, or does the system also need to support item creation?

Answer: The system also needs to support item creation.

Q155 The RFP refers to item "templates." Are these templates meant to be external from the item authoring system, or contained within it?

Answer: The templates will be the User Interface screens within the application.

Q156 The RFP specifies that items "must be rendered in the Item Authoring and Item Pool Application as it will be presented to the student in the test delivery system. This also includes foreign language, sign language, and Braille translations." Does this mean the system must present and store renderings of items in both Braille and Sign Language?

Answer: The Item Authoring and Item Pool application must have the capability to store renderings of alternate translations of the items and their respective accessibility tags. Creating the Braille and Sign Language renderings of these items is out of scope for this RFP.

Q157 ID#5: What is a Reporting Group? Is it a group of data elements or a group of people?

Answer: The Reporting Group is a reporting label that identifies how the item score will be reported out to SEAs and LEAs. Please see response to Q91.

Q158 ID#6: What is the expectation for the system for an "Activity Based Observation?" Is this a UI to permit a teacher or other observe to input evaluation into the system? What are Performance Task Clusters? Are these several items that prompt a student to do something outside of the system that is then observed by an evaluator?

Answer: An Activity-Based Observation is an item that has a scoring rubric. The system must allow for the development of the item and storage of its attributes throughout the life cycle of the item. The student score would not be entered into the Item Authoring and Item Pool application.

Please see responses to Q84–86 for definition of a Performance Task.

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Q159 ID#7: What is the difference between a task and an item?

Answer: Please see responses to Q84–86 for definition of a Performance Task..

Q160 ID#21: What is test administration type? Is this, formative, interim, summative or something similar?

Answer: Pilot Test, Field Test, Operational Test

Q161 ID#48: Has a specific audio file format been decided?

Answer: No, this will be determined during Requirements Gathering.

Q162 ID#54: What is a found data set? What is an item card? What is an orphaned item?

Answer: A found data set is the result of a search process. An item card is a report that displays an item preview and the associated item statistics. An orphaned item is an item for which the associated content expectation is deleted from the content library.

Q163 ID#92: What is the maximum number of *simultaneous* users that must be supported during the life of the contract?

Answer: This has not yet been determined.

Section F APPENDICES
Appendix B

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Q164 RFP states “The Contractor will need to deliver a solution that accommodates the SMARTER Balanced architecture and interoperability standards that will be established by the IT Systems Architecture, scheduled to be completed by January 2012.”

Since a solution based on the Michigan Item Bank system is an option for the vendors responding to this RFP, can the vendors assume that the Consortium has reviewed and considered the Architecture of the Michigan Item Bank system in the development of its standards.

The SMARTER Balanced architecture and IT standards are due after the vendors respond to this RFP, hence the question.

Answer: Yes, the Consortium has reviewed and considered the Architecture of the Michigan Item Bank system in the development of its standards, and considers a proposed solution that is an enhancement to the Michigan Item Banking system to be a viable option

General Questions

Q165 SBAC has expressed the intention to provide interim assessments and formative tools. Is the Item Authoring and Item Pool system in this solicitation meant to interoperate with SBAC-developed systems, state-procured systems, or district-procured systems to support the administration of these types of assessments by teachers?

Answer: The SBAC Item Authoring and Item Pool application will support the Summative and Interim assessments. Formative instruction will be supported by the Digital Library. The SBAC architecture will define clear interoperability standards that allow state systems to interface with the SBAC Item Authoring and Item Pool application via mass import and export. The interoperability standards will also define interfaces between the SBAC Item Authoring and Item Pool application and other SBAC system components.

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Q166 Should this system be designed to support teacher authoring and field use of the system? Are individual teachers expected to use the system on an ongoing basis?

Answer: The SBAC Item Authoring and Item Pool application must be a web-based application that supports an external Item Writer role that could be filled by a classroom teacher. Individuals must be approved as an Item Writer before they can access the system to submit items. Field use of the system (external user roles) includes item authoring and item review processes by approved Item Writers and committee members.

The SBAC Item Authoring and Item Pool application will support the Summative and Interim assessments. Formative instruction will be supported by the Digital Library.

Q167 Will bidders be granted access to the MI item authoring system? Will a demo of the system be given to bidders?

Answer: Bidders will not be granted access to the Michigan Item Authoring systems. A demo is schedule for January 11, 2012 at 11 a.m.. Webinar meeting can be access through the following information:

Topic: SBAC RFP-07 Michigan Item Demo

Date: Wednesday, January 11, 2012

Time: 11:00 am, Pacific Standard Time (San Francisco, GMT-08:00) Meeting Number: 271 529 443

Meeting Password: SBAC

To start or join the online meeting

Go to

<https://wested.webex.com/wested/j.php?ED=18223088&UID=495019002&PW=NZjE0NzZjYjZk&RT=MIM0>

Teleconference information

Provide your phone number when you join the meeting to receive a call back. Alternatively, you can call:
Call-in toll-free number: 1-8774132826 (US) Show global numbers:

<https://www.tcconline.com/offSite/OffSiteController.jspf?cc=4156153225>

Leader PIN: 6415

Conference Code: 415 615 3225

Q168 What percentage of the MI item authoring system development has been completed?

Answer: The Michigan Item Banking system is fully functional and has been in production since July 2011.

Q169 What components of the MI item authoring system are currently functional? What parts of the system have been rewritten, if any?

Answer: The Michigan Item Banking System is fully functional in production mode since July 2011. Since that time Michigan has created approximately 4,000 new items in the system and has used every development and review process functionality in production mode. Michigan has also created test maps and blueprints for their paper-based assessments, uploaded statistics, and conducted data reviews. Rewrites of the application have not occurred, but enhancement modifications to the system are being made through a standard Dev, QA, Production deployment process.

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Q170 What is the current level of usage for the MI Item Authoring system? How many users at the identified levels currently access the system? How many items are stored within the system?

Answer: The Michigan Item Bank currently has 184 users and approximately 30,000 items.

Q171 The proposal requests that a crosswalk table be include. Where should this be located within the response?

Answer: Include your crosswalk table just before the Technical Proposal.

Q172 Please clarify if the signed and dated Contractor Intake Form (Exhibit E to this RFP) along with attached exceptions is to be placed within proposal section 1. Letter of Submittal.

Answer: Confirmed

Q173 Is it expected that Appendix A and Appendix B be located in the Technical Proposal section? Or can Appendix A and Appendix B be located in a main Appendix outside the four major proposal sections?

Answer: Appendix A and Appendix B should be located in the main Appendix outside the four major proposal sections.

Q174 There are no boundaries or specified formats listed to be imported in the RFP.

Many data import formats will likely require some customization – QTI 2.0 has incomplete specifications that forces each entity to customize certain parts (so is a gray area) and so import routines have to be tailored to each vendors custom QTI 2.0 components.

Hopefully QTI 2.1 will improve this but the specs are so new that vendors will not have likely moved to it yet, but will do so over next few years.

Can you give any estimates for the types of data import formats that existing content/item providers will adhere to, in order for the vendor to understand this portion of the requirements and how much custom import work will be needed.

Answer: The data import formats have yet to be determined. As discussed in Q22, the interoperability standards will be defined by March 1, 2012.

Q175 Please provide a MS-Excel version of Appendix A so the vendors can provide responses to the requirements provided.

Answer: Appendix A will be provided in MS-Word

Q176 Please provide a MS-Word version of the RFP so the vendors can complete the necessary RFP Exhibits.

Answer: Appendix A will be provided in MS-Word along with Exhibit H.

Q177 Is there any restriction for vendors to complete coding work from their vendor office location outside the USA?

Answer: As long as the contracted organization is licensed for business in the United States, where and how the work is accomplished is the responsibility of the contractor.

Q178 Will there be a single team based in the State of Washington that will be providing requirements? If not, what location will the Smarter Consortium provide requirements definition/clarity to the awarded vendor?

Answer: No. SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium is a geographically dispersed entity. The contractor will need to conduct structured discussions and effective interactive online workshops through their web conferencing service.

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Q179 Is the awarded vendor responsible for authoring items into the new system?

Answer: No. Awardees of RFP-14 and RFP-16 are responsible for the actual item writing efforts.

Q180 Has OSPI/Consortium identified or evaluated any COTS product for this purpose that seems to mostly meet OSPI's requirement. If yes, please provide a list of the COTS products.

Answer: No.

Q181 We understand that Measured Progress was awarded the "SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium IT Systems Architecture" RFP.

Is Measured Progress allowed to bid on this "Item Authoring and Item Pool Application Development" RFP?

Answer: Measured Progress has not been precluded from bidding on this proposal.

Q182 Can the vendors propose application development and testing services from the vendor's application development centers in Canada?

Answer: Refer to response for Q177.

Q183 Please confirm if the business requirements included in the RFP were developed by an external vendor? If yes, can you share the vendor details?

Answer: State of Michigan developed the initial requirements with their contactor at the time of initial design of the Michigan Item Bank. Those requirements were included as Appendices in this RFP. Additional requirements were developed by SBAC members without external vendor support other than the SBAC's Project Management Partner.

Q184 In relation to the above question, if an external vendor has been used to gather business requirements, please specify if that vendor is eligible to bid for this RFP?

Answer: Yes.

Q185 Please confirm that the Consortium will provide necessary office facilities, phones, cubes, pc, software, etc. to the vendor resources assigned to work onsite during specific stages of the project?

Answer: No; work space needs are the obligation of the winning bidder.

Q186 Please specify the role and the individual that the Contractor's Project Manager will report to (or) work with upon start of the project.

Answer: Technology Approach Work Group will be the point of contact.

Q187 Please share the Organizational structure of the Consortium's team that will manage and oversee the "Item Authoring and Item Pool" application project.

We understand that there are several committees and groups that are part of the Consortium. We would like to understand the individuals or organizations that the vendor will work with to define an appropriate communication management plan, hence the question.

Answer: Technology Approach Work Group will be the point of contact for the contractor and the Item Development Work Group will be another key stakeholder. SBAC will utilize the work group structure to provide the needed resources. Please reference the SBAC organizational structure and work group structure at the following website: <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Governance.aspx>

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Q188 RFP states “Unless otherwise authorized in advance, CONSORTIUM leadership is provided a minimum of three (3) complete business days response time to review and edit draft postings and products.”

Who or which committee/group from the Consortium will be responsible for the sign-off on the deliverables submitted by the contractor?

Answer: Generally, the technology and item development workgroups will be responsible for reviewing these deliverables.

Q189 If a Vendor proposed a solution that is based on the Michigan Item Bank System, please confirm that as part of the Michigan system, will the licenses for the following products also be available from the SMARTER Balanced consortium along with the source code of the State of Michigan Item Bank System:

1. SAS
2. ActivePDF
3. Telerik controls
4. SQL Server 2008 DB
5. Server hardware and OS
6. Tivoli

Answer: No. The contractor is responsible for providing all required server and developer licenses. None of the above require client machine licensing for item bank purposes.

Q190 Please confirm that the Consortium is responsible for the costs of acquiring any 3rd party software.

Answer: No. The contractor is responsible providing a fully functional Item Authoring and Item Bank application. Any additional licensing cost needs to be incorporated in the vendor bid.