



**Questions and Answers
Request for Proposal**

**MAAP-SCI Grade 5 and Grade 8 and
MAAP-EOC Biology and US History**

March 8, 2018

1. Can you clarify what is meant by “with vendor specific evidence” and “without vendor evidence.” Please provide examples. **“With vendor specific evidence” is information submitted in the original proposal that identifies the vendor. “Without vendor evidence” is information submitted in the five (5) copies of the proposal that will not identify the vendor by name, personnel, contracts, samples, addresses, product, materials, etc.**
2. Non-direct information such as names, current positions in resumes, names of customers/contracts, etc. can be used to identify the offeror. Please provide specific directions on how to mask these secondary items of information within the proposal so as not to provide indirect vendor evidence yet provide information that the State can use. **This information must be redacted in the five (5) required copies.**
3. The RFP refers to “the future MS CCRS for Social Studies.” Is there a timeline for completion/finalization of the MS CCRS standards for Social Studies? If so, when are the new standards expected? **The new standards are expected in the summer of 2018.**
4. What tasks are involved in the word “maintain” in the following statement: “...maintain general and appropriate test blueprints.” **The statement refers to the vendor working with the MDE to analyze the alignment of the assessment(s), standards, and blueprints.**
5. Is the use of the State’s educators for item development optional or required? The language in the RFP suggests both, depending on the section. **The use of the state’s educators is required throughout the entire item development process.**
6. Is the contractor responsible for developing sample items that are used for the item bank only and not as field test items or operational items? Is there a number or percentage of sample items that would be expected? **The contractor is responsible for working with Mississippi educators to develop items for the operational bank that have been field tested as well as a bank of sample items that have been field tested.**
7. It appears that materials may be missing in this section because the numbering becomes inconsistent with the previous sections. Can the State verify and provide the complete text if some is missing? **The numbering is correct. No information is missing.**
8. The RFP has the due date of reports and student rosters as July 31, 2017. What is the correct date? **The date should read July 31, 2019.**

9. The RFP has the available date of sample item banks listed as August 2016. What is the correct date? **The date should read August 2018.**
10. Has MDE conducted unit/regression testing before? And if so have you defined specific test cases? **No.**
11. Is the minimum communications infrastructure dial-up or T-1? **The infrastructure is T-1.**
12. Will a vendor still be considered if the online assessment delivery system does not offer proctor caching? **Yes.**
13. Will a vendor still be considered if Windows 7 is their minimum version of the Windows operating system and if Mac 10.11 is their minimum version of the Macintosh operating system? **Yes.**
14. Does MDE want tool tracking based on the item level? **No.**
15. What specific tracking is MDE asking for, tracking between use of tools (i.e. when a student goes from using the line reader tool to using a protractor)? **Tools do not need to be tracked; accommodations need to be tracked.**
16. What does MDE mean by customizable exhibit window? What would be displayed in the window? **Pop-out window for items or tools (i.e. notepad) would be displayed in a customizable window.**
17. What is sign system presentation? And is it built into the system or is it an assistive technology? **Sign system presentation is the format that sign language is presented and it should be built in.**
18. Concerning Caveon Data Forensics what format does Caveon expect the information to be supplied in by the vendor? **Please contact Caveon for questions and pricing pertaining to test security.**
19. How quickly does Caveon expect the information to be delivered in following the test administration? **Please contact Caveon for questions and pricing pertaining to test security.**
20. This section states that the Selected Offeror will subcontract with Caveon. For the proposal, are we expected to contact Caveon so that we can list them as a subcontractor and get costs for their services? Or, since Caveon is a given, can we leave them off the list of subcontractors and leave their costs out of the proposal? **Please contact Caveon to get the cost analysis for their services.**
21. Is the State assuming that each of the 5 years will be not to exceed \$3M each or that the total contract will be not to exceed a total of \$15M over the five-year period. Restricting

the amount to \$3M per year may cause problems given that transition costs and startups of assessments are often more resource intensive than out years of the assessments. **This award is for a 1-year contract with four annual renewable options (5 total years). The contract is for an amount not to exceed \$3M annually.**

22. Based on the answer to the previous question about Available Budget, does the State want the Vendor to prioritize the work up to the not to exceed amount should meeting all of the specifications exceed that cost limit? **The expectations of the RFP shall be met within the framework of the budget.**
23. Reference: “Any Information detected in the five (5) copies that identifies or distinguishes the offeror will be rejected and will not be considered for an award.” Does this requirement apply to all sections of the proposal (Parts I through VIII)? **Yes, any identifying information must be redacted in the proposal copies; the original copy is the only copy to disclose vendor information.**
24. Does MDE require that product names, which may distinguish a vendor, be redacted from screenshots and omitted from text? **Yes, any identifying information must be redacted in the proposal copies; the original copy is the only copy to disclose vendor information.**
25. Part II of the proposal requires samples of previous work, and Part III suggests work samples and letters of recommendation be provided. Please advise on providing these materials without disclosing the offeror name or providing distinguishing information. **Any identifying information must be redacted in the proposal copies; the original copy is the only copy to disclose vendor information.**
26. Part III and Section T require name of offeror, location, and place(s) of performance. For the vendor-neutral proposal, are these details to be redacted? **Any identifying information must be redacted in the proposal copies; the original copy is the only copy to disclose vendor information.**
27. Part IV of the proposal requires resumes. Does MDE require that resumes not include current company name, which would identify the offeror? Does MDE further require that employee names be omitted or redacted, since senior level staff would be known in the industry? **Any identifying information must be redacted in the proposal copies; the original copy is the only copy to disclose vendor information.**
28. Sections 1.17 and T require a list of contracts with similar scope, size, or discipline to the required RFP; this contracts list will clearly distinguish the offeror even if the company names is redacted, since the state assessment contractor is likely known. How does MDE suggest handling this data? **Any identifying information must be redacted in the proposal copies; the original copy is the only copy to disclose vendor information.**

29. Similarly, Part V of the proposal requires references. How does MDE recommend satisfying this requirement without disclosing the offeror? **Any identifying information must be redacted in the proposal copies; the original copy is the only copy to disclose vendor information.**
30. The past Mississippi practice for reporting science scale scores at both grades 5 and 8 has been to set proficiency at 150. Please confirm, despite the language in section 3.a, that this type of reporting of scale scores (setting the proficiency score to the same number for grades 5 and 8) will continue as the science assessments are administered, scaled, divided into proficiency levels (via standard setting), and reported in 2019. **A new scale will be created to align with the current MAAP scale for ELA and Math with proficiency levels anchored at corresponding score points.**
31. Part III calls for Corporate Experience and Capacity. Please confirm that SOW requirements in D2-4, 1 (Corporate Capacity) found on pages 23–27, should be part of the Part III response (not Part II, Production Proposal). If not, please call out sections that are to be included in Part II as opposed to Part III. **Corporate Experience and Capacity should be included in Part II of the RFP.**
32. Samples are referenced throughout the RFP. In particular, samples are called out in the instructions for Parts II and III. Is it acceptable to instead place samples in Part VII, Additional Data, with cross-references where appropriate in the body of the proposal? **Samples must be included in the RFP where requested.**
33. Reference: “Given that there will be standard setting in Year 1, the reports and student rosters listed above will be due to districts by July 31, 2017. Offeror’s should address the feasibility of this date in their responses to the RFP.” Could MDE please clarify the date for these deliverables? **The date should read July 31, 2019.**
34. In addition to using existing products, is MDE open to using alternative solutions for development of items in Year 1 of the contract? **No.**
35. Are there retest requirements? Appeals requirements? **Yes, students will have the opportunity to retest. The MDE does not allow student rescues.**
36. Does MS prefer Human-scoring or AI for EOC- CR Items? **The MDE prefers human scoring; however, the MDE is open to the exploration of AI scoring in the future.**
37. What is the size/number of people in the “super-group” for item writing(summer). Should the contractor be at these meetings? Active role or is that you? **The Super Group comprises 6 individuals for Science and 2 for US History. Yes, the contractor is required to be at item writing. It is a cooperative effort between the contractor and the MDE.**

38. Could the MDE provide information on the format of existing items (i.e., QTI 2.1 Final, APIP 1.0 Final)? **The existing items are QTI and APIP compliant.**
39. There are several instances in the RFP where 2016 or 2017 due dates are listed for deliverables. Can we assume the month and day are accurate, but we should adjust to the appropriate contract year? **Yes.**
40. Please provide an example of how this would occur for an incorporated (Inc.) entity. **This contract shall be terminated if any of the employees of contractor furnishing or performing any of the services specified under this agreement become employees of the MDE.**
41. Is it possible to be provided a copy of the MOU for review prior to award? **The specific MOU for this RFP has not been prepared.**
42. How many years of data will be transferred from current vendor to offeror? **Approximately five years of data will be transferred from the current vendor to the offeror.**
43. Where on the Pricing Worksheet does the MDE want human scoring costs noted? **Scoring costs should be placed in the Other category under Psychometrics. Please provide a detailed explanation (i.e. Human scoring, AI scoring (if utilized), etc.).**
44. Please confirm the annual Biology and U.S. History form is used for both the fall and spring administrations. If so, does the MDE link Fall and Spring of the same school year (e.g., Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 are the same test) or Spring and the subsequent Fall in the same calendar year (e.g., Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 are the same test)? **A separate core form is used for Fall and Spring administrations. (Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 are the same school year, but separate core forms are used for each administration.)**
45. Please confirm that the first Data Review meeting is July 2018 and that this review is of items administered by the previous vendor. Given this is the month the contract starts, is the previous vendor committed to quickly handing off all materials needed to conduct the Data Review? **Yes.**
46. Is Mississippi expecting reports to be printed and shipped? If so, which reports? Most areas of the RFP speak to the desire for electronic reports being issued as PDFs. However, pg. 21 (6.4) and pg. 22 (6.7) mention printed individual score reports. Please clarify MDE's expectations for the printing and shipping of reports. **No. All reports will be electronic with the exception of student labels (to be placed on student cumulative folders) which must be printed and shipped.**

47. Please confirm that the date for delivery of EOC practice items should be August 2018. Is this also the date for delivery of science 5 & 8 practice items? Are there existing practice items to use for this first delivery? **Sample items should be available for review in August 2018. These are items that belong to the offeror. These are sample items for the MDE to review the product of the offeror. These are not to be included on a practice test.**

48. Please provide the page count for the current DTC/STC manual, TAM, and Interpretive Guides.

3-8 TAM	72 pages
3-8 TCM	52 pages
EOC TAM	56 pages
EOC TCM	52 pages
Interpretive Guide	16 pages

49. What is the expected number of attendees at each DTC training (Sept & Feb)? Please confirm that vendors should plan on a single session rather than regional sessions. **There are approximately 200 MS educators at each training. The offeror is invited to attend but not required to present.**

50. Is the Fall 2018 Biology test aligned to the old standards or to the new standards? Is new vendor responsible for constructing, producing, administering, scoring, and reporting the Fall 2018 Biology test? Also, for both Biology and U.S. History, please indicate during which year and administration (Fall or Spring) should the first assessment aligned to the new standards be administered? **Yes. The Biology I assessment aligned to the new standards will be administered for the first time in the Fall of 2018. The US History assessment aligned to the new standards will be administered in the Fall of 2020.**

51. Once new high school assessments (Biology, U.S. History) aligned to the MS CCR standards are administered for the first time, will the contractor be responsible for administering tests based on the current test blueprint? If so, for how many administrations will the contractor be responsible and what is the estimated student count for these administrations? **No.**

52. How many new items (aligned to the MS CCR standards) is Mississippi field testing this spring 2018, per test? **Eighty (80) items per grade will be field tested this spring.**

53. This section states: “MDE wishes to have equating and scaling done in a manner that produces accurate results and produces a vertical scale for these tests.” **The offeror will be responsible for proposing a methodology for this.**

54. Subsequent text on scaling, equating, and score reporting does not mention vertical scales. Is the MDE asking for a vertical scale for science grades 5 and 8 and high school biology? **Yes.**

55. Have new PLDs been established yet? **No.**
56. On Page 16 of the RFP, it states in 1.13: “one core form and a separately costed option for two core forms.” Is the core form used for both the Fall and Spring Administrations of Biology and US History? **A separate core form is used for Fall and Spring administrations. (Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 are the same school year, but separate core forms are used for each administration.)**
57. Please expand on what is meant by technical support, logistical support, content leadership, training materials development, and training. **The offeror will be responsible for securing a location, meeting space, travel reimbursement, stipend and substitute teacher reimbursement, food, logistical organization, material development (i.e. training on authoring tools, ancillary materials, etc.), content specialists, and program management. These meetings will be a coordinated effort between the MDE and the offeror.**
58. Sections 1.5, 1.7, and 1.8 state that Mississippi can or may be involved in item writing. Section 3.6 states that the contractor is responsible for developing training for its contract item writers. Please clarify your expectations for Mississippi educator involvement in writing new test items. **MS Educators will author test items with support from the offeror.**
59. Is the contractor expected to refine/revise teacher developed items to meet MDE criteria before MDE review and/or committee review meetings? **The offeror will support the Super Group in triage of the items written by MS Educators.**
60. Given the 3-dimensional nature of the Mississippi science standards (cross cutting concepts, practices, and core content), items/tasks may require more time than is typical for multiple-choice items. Standards may be best assessed in clusters with science scenario stimuli. Can the bidder propose designs that fit with new standards or should bidder use existing Mississippi test designs as a primary factor in developing a draft design for the proposal? **Yes. The offeror may propose designs that fit the new standards; however, the MDE holds final approval of all item designs.**
61. Section 1.18 indicates that “offeror will propose a plan to efficiently develop a total of three practice tests over a three-year period for each content area...”; however, section 1.18 also states that “One practice test must be available for use prior to operational testing in 2019. Plans for the development of new practice test forms based on the new items will be developed should be proposed along with a separate price for this as a cost option.” Does this mean that the bidder will include only the one practice test per grade and content area in the base bid and price the development of 2 additional as a cost option? **A practice test must be included in Year One. Two additional practice tests must be included in the remaining four years of the contract.**

62. Question: What is the purpose of the two additional core forms? Will the two additional core forms be used for breach and for the additional form developed in the first three years? Or are the forms as follows (using grade 5 science as an example): **Embedded field testing should support the creation of one form in addition to the operational form being administered.**
- Grade 5 Science
- 1 core form x 5 years = 5 core forms
 - 2 additional core forms x 5 years = 10 additional core forms
 - 1 breach form for life of contract
 - 1 additional form developed during years 1-3.
 - Total: 17 forms for grade 5 science.
63. Are students taking the fall high school assessments (Biology and U.S. History) for the first time representative of the overall population of first-time test taking students? **Yes.**
64. Has the MDE replaced Webb’s Depth of Knowledge with a different structure for classifying the cognitive complexity of items? If so, what is the taxonomy currently being used? **No.**
65. Some of the minimum technical standards provided on page 38, Section 6.5.d are out-of-date. For example, Windows 98 and Windows Vista are no longer supported by Microsoft, and in turn, are not fully supported by most software applications, including online test delivery platforms. Should Offerors provide their currently supported minimum technical standards? **Yes.**
66. Are districts to have the option of ordering printed versions of paper reports? The RFP indicates that reports are delivered electronically, but this section sets a requirement for reprints of reports. **No. Electronic reports will be required and available for each year of the contract.**
67. Within the description of Part II, Production Proposal, what is meant by “The description shall encompass the requirements of Part I and Part III of this RFP.”? This seems different to the proposal topics/general requirements presented between pages 23-70 of the RFP (1.1 – 16.3). Please confirm that the basis of the Production Proposal is responses to requirements 1.1 through 16.3. of D2-4 General Requirements for All Assessment Components (pages 23-70 of the RFP). **Yes.**
68. Section D2(2b) notes that “For costing purposes vendors should assume enough items to develop one additional form per grade and subject area will be developed over the first three years to populate the item bank.” We assume “one additional form” means that in a given year, embedded field testing should support the creation of one form in addition to the operational form being administered (as opposed to “develop one additional form,

above and beyond the one form's worth of embedded field testing that would typically be planned as a matter of course"). Is our assumption correct? **Yes.**

69. Who will be on the evaluation committee for this project? **The evaluation committee consists of internal and external professionals with relevant experience necessary to evaluate the proposals.**
70. Please clarify what is meant by "with vendor specific evidence" and "without vendor evidence."
- Is it sufficient for vendors to redact identifying text (e.g. company name and trademarks)? **Yes**
 - How does MS want corporate capabilities and resumes handled? Should those only be included in the original copy? **"With vendor specific evidence" is information submitted in the original proposal that identifies the vendor. "Without vendor evidence" is information submitted in the five (5) copies of the proposal that will not identify the vendor by name, personnel, contracts, samples, addresses, product, materials, etc.**
 - How does MS prefer vendors manage branding colors, fonts, etc.? **Any information detected in the five (5) copies that identifies or distinguishes the offeror will be rejected and will not be considered for an award.**
71. Bullet point number two ("Part II") indicates that the Production Proposal "shall encompass the requirements of Part I and Part III of this RFP." Please verify that Part II should include Part I (transmittal form and management summary), Part II (Sections D2 and D2-4) and Part III (Corporate Experience, which was already covered in Section D2-4), and therefore separate Part I and Part III sections are not required. **Corporate Experience and Capacity should be included in Part II of the RFP.**
72. This requirement references grades 3-8. Please clarify the grades or assessments for this requirement. **Grade 5 Science and Grade 8 Science are assessed.**
73. Do the districts have access to Tiger Embossers? **Not known.**
74. Please clarify the required format for reports – electronic or paper. Section D2(6.7) calls for printing of reports and D2-4(12.7) references reprinting of reports section indicating paper reporting. However, Section D2-4(11.18) requests score reports in digital PDF and the note in Section D2(6.10) indicates MDE will not receive paper reports. Would MS be agreeable to delivery of online/electronic reporting only? **Yes.**
75. Please clarify MDE's wish for vertical scaling indicated in Section 3(a) as opposed to other scaling options for grades that are not contiguous. **The RFP requests that vertical scaling is used.**

76. Please update the required due date that is currently listed as July 31, 2017. **The date should read July 31, 2019.**
77. Please clarify MDE's needs for performance level descriptor development. Particularly, does the MDE anticipate the need for vendors to facilitate the creation of the performance level descriptors? **The MDE anticipates working with the vendor to create Performance Level Descriptors.**
78. How does MDE distinguish between item clusters and performance tasks, or are they the same? **Item clusters and performance tasks are the same.**
79. Is MDE receptive to discussions regarding the Science 5 and 8 form length to accommodate the addition of performance tasks and assure that there is the right mix of items and performance tasks within the given timeframe? **The MDE has created blueprints that dictate the length of forms which include the item types and performance tasks to be included on said forms.**
80. When does MDE expect the final USH standards to be approved, so that item development can begin? **The new standards are expected in the summer of 2018.**
81. For costing purposes, please confirm the type of reports to be printed and shipped to districts and schools after each test administration? **Student labels must be printed and shipped to districts.**
82. What procedures does the state require to ensure consistency in the work of scorers across years? **The vendor will be responsible for ensuring that scorers are trained to meet the needs of the project.**
83. Confirming that all PT and open-ended items will be double scored (100% second reading). **Yes, the MDE desires a double score plus a 10% read-behind.**
84. Can the 10% read-behind rate include validity responses? **No.**
85. Does the 10% read-behind rate apply to each scorer or a cumulative average across all scorers? **The 10% read-behind rate will apply to each scorer.**
86. Section D2-4(13.5) states the the MDE is currently contracting with Caveon Investigative Services. Will MDE maintain this contract, or will the vendor be responsible for the contract with Caveon, including the associated costs? **The vendor will be responsible for the contract with Caveon including the associated costs.**
87. Would the MDE be agreeable to online-only format for Read-Aloud Forms? **The MDE is open to exploring this option.**

88. Part V calls for three specific references, and Section D2-4(1.17) calls for reference information for all relevant experience. Are the three references in Part V sufficient? If not, and reference information is required for all relevant experience, how would MS like vendors to address circumstances where reference information is no longer available? **Section D2-4 asks for current contracts. Part V asks for references. It is up to the vendor to address circumstances where reference information is no longer available.**
89. Please clarify where, in Parts I-VII, MS would like Attachments B, C, and D to be located within the vendor response. **Locate attachment B, C, and D after Part VI –the Acceptance of Conditions and before Part VII – Additional Data.**
90. Should sample items submitted as a part of the RFP include stand-alone MC, TEI, CR, items as well as item sets? **Yes.**
91. Section D1-1(3b) notes that new PLDs will be written by 2019, but Sections D2(2b) and D2-4(11.11) indicate that items need to be written to performance levels as well as content standards. May items developed in 2018-2019 be aligned to the new PLDs after new PLDs are written? **Items are to be aligned to the state standards for Science and US History.**
92. The RFP notes that if new/innovative/unique items are proposed, they may need to undergo limited item tryouts. If we are using item types that have been used in other states, must item tryouts still be performed? **Yes.**
93. Please clarify what “with vendor evidence” and “without vendor evidence” means in terms of vendors submitting two separate proposals. **Any identifying information must be redacted in the proposal copies; the original copy is the only copy to disclose vendor information.**
94. Please confirm that MDE has existing forms for US History that will be used for administration in 2018-19. **Yes.**
95. Please confirm whether newly developed Mississippi-owned items must be written by Mississippi teachers or not. The RFP sections 1.1.a, 1.5, and 1.7 seem to indicate that all newly developed items will be written by Mississippi teachers, but then RFP section 1.8 states that the contractor may (emphasis added) use Mississippi educators to assist in the item development process but must use Mississippi educators in the item review and bias review. Please clarify the role of Mississippi educators and the role of the vendor in item development for this RFP. **The use of Mississippi educators is required throughout the entire item development process.**

96. Please confirm that MDE does not intend for a vertical scale for the science and EOC assessments. **MDE wishes to have equating and scaling done in a manner that produces accurate results and produces a vertical scale for these tests. The offeror will be responsible for proposing a methodology for this.**
97. Please confirm the timeline for reporting results for Biology and US History. In this section of the RFP it seems to indicate that results are needed by May 15, however it appears that the test window for these subjects has gone longer than May 15 in the past (including this spring 2018). Everywhere else in the RFP, it indicates that reports are to be posted by May 31. **Scoring for some students will need to be completed prior to May 15th for graduation purposes.**
98. How many schools and districts administer the MAAP-SCI and MAAP-EOC? **In Mississippi, 146 districts, including 737 schools, administer the MAAP-SCI and/or MAAP-EOC.**
99. The RFP states that vendors will propose a plan for use of one core form and a separately costed option for two core forms. Please provide additional detail regarding this request. Does this apply to both grades 5 and 8 and EOC, or just EOC? Is there currently just one core form used for both admins (fall and spring) for EOC? Is the request for a separately costed option for two core forms the same as the request for a breach form (on page 18 under 1.22), or would the breach form potentially act as a third form? **There is one core form for Fall and one core form for Spring in each EOC assessment. The MDE would like a cost option for the development of a breach form.**
100. Please confirm that the due date for reports for science in year 1 is July 31, 2018 due to standard setting (RFP states July 31, 2017). **The date should read July 31, 2019.**
101. Can the MDE provide more background on the request for a sample items bank with statistics that teachers can use to build practice tests? Is this in addition to the practice forms that are already required? Why do the items in the sample bank need statistics? Does MDE currently offer this capability for teachers to create their own practice tests under the current science and EOC contract? What about under the ELA and math contract? **The sample item bank will be used to develop practice tests by the vendor and the MDE. The sample item bank must include field tested items in order to create practice tests that are valid and reliable. The MDE does not currently offer teachers the ability to create their own practice tests. The ELA and Math practice tests include field tested items.**
102. Do the current science grades 5 and 8 and Biology assessments include human-scored constructed response items? Were any human scored CR items field tested in spring 2018? **No.**



103. For any human scored CR items, please confirm that MDE is expecting responses to be double-scored PLUS a 10% read-behind. **Yes, the MDE desires a double score plus a 10% read-behind.**