

# Bidder's Conference

## Questions

FAU# 0612180236

1. Is the DOH only interested in hard copy tests, or are they also interested in electronic/online testing?

Response: Hard copy (paper pencil) exams only at this time.

2. Section B of the RFP refers to 225 examination sites; are these owned/controlled by DOH?

Response: These sites are locations where the course is held and the exam is given. DOH does not own these sites.

3. Section B refers to developing written examination using an examination item bank; is the item bank complete?

Response: The item bank is complete, but may need to be updated with recent changes.

Who owns the databank?

Response: DOH owns all questions contained within the databank.

Are there stats available regarding the item bank?

Response: Some statistics may be obtainable, but we would need additional information to appropriately answer this question.

4. Section B refers to shipping examination material; who pays the cost of the shipping, DOH or the vendor?

Response: The vendor.

5. Page 5 of the RFP refers to the 5 certification levels; have competencies already been identified and validated for each of these levels?

Response: Yes.

6. How old is the exam blueprint?

Response: The blueprint was last changed in 2002.

7. Page 6 of the RFP states that the exam shall be developed in the state of New York. Does this mean DOH is only looking for New York vendors?

Response: No. The writing and development workshops need to be held within the state of New York.

8. Please describe in detail the overall model for evaluating and scoring financial proposals.

Response: The financial proposals will be scored as is described in the Detailed Bid Form that can be found within the RFP document. The financial section will account for 30% of the overall score for each bidder. The total bid cost by a bidder must be for one year of the contract. That one year dollar amount will be multiplied by 3 to come up with that portion of the final cost of the bid. Scoring fees will be part of the final bid process..

9. Section 2.C (page 8) states, "The special examination fee to provide this service will be included as part of the overall cost of the contract and the proposed special examination administrative fee will be scored as part of the financial evaluation." Please explain how this fee will factor into the evaluation of the financial proposal, and any assumptions DOH will make in calculating the impact of the special examination fee on overall cost.

Response: The special examination fee and the on-site scoring fees will be evaluated and scored for each bid as part of the overall final cost for each bid. The dollar amount bid will be evaluated and scored for all three sections of the financial proposal that will be tabulated to come up with a final score.

10. Section 2.G (page 11) states, "The per-candidate-fee to provide this [on-site scoring] service will be included as part of the overall cost of the contract and the proposed per-candidate-fee will be scored as part of the financial evaluation." Please explain how the on-site scoring fee will factor into the evaluation of the financial proposal, and any assumptions DOH will make in calculating the impact of the on-site scoring fee on overall cost. As stated above.

Response: The special examination fee and the on-site scoring fees will be evaluated and scored for each bid as part of the overall final cost for each bid. The dollar amount bid will be evaluated and scored for all three sections of the financial proposal that will be tabulated to come up with a final score.

11. Section 2.B (page 7) states, "The contractor shall establish a payment rate for all non-state employee consultants, which will include honorarium, lodging, food and travel. The expenses related to these deliverables must be considered when preparing the cost proposal." Please confirm our understanding that these expenses must be borne by the contractor and should be included within the fee for examination development and scoring.

Yes that is correct.

Response: These fees are payable by the vendor and must be figured in to the overall per candidate cost proposal that is bid.

12. RFP Page 5, Paragraph C.2.A (Examination Development) states, "In each year of the Contract, the Contractor will provide DOH with new forms of multiple-choice written examinations..."

- In what format will the existing item banks be made available to the selected vendor?

Response: There has been no uniform computer format for the item bank in past contracts. The new vendor and previous vendor are expected to work together to develop a smooth transition of the item bank. In the past, the item bank has been provided in an ASCII type file. For this new RFP there are requirements for computerized files of the item bank.

- What are the sizes of the existing item banks for each examination category required in this RFP?

Response: There is one item bank, which contains all items. The item bank consists of approximately 6,000 items.

- Will the Department make item performance statistics available to the selected vendor for the existing item banks?

Response: It is the Department's hope that all performance statistics will be transferred as part of the item bank computer file. This has been the standard in the past.

- What is the process for form review and approval under the current contract?

Response: Once a form has been developed, the Department in conjunction with the contractor review the form. The Department has the final say as to the approval of the form.

Does the Department anticipate that the same process will be used in the new contract?

Response: Yes

- Does the Department expect the selected vendor to provide additional and/or new test specification development during the term of the

proposed contract?

Response: The vendor will be required to develop and implement new forms each year of the contract as specified in the RFP. The vendor will be required to hold item writing workshops annually. The content of the items and forms will be developed by the Department and at the workshops.

13. RFP Page 6 Paragraph C.2.A states, "New forms of multiple-choice written examinations must be available for use by DOH within 30 days of a delivered signed Contract."

- In light of the fact that the Department desires new examination forms within 30 days of a delivered signed contract, is it the Department's expectation that, for the first year of the contract, new examination forms will be created using the Department's existing item banks?

Response: Yes.

- "Within 30 days of a delivered signed Contract" seems to conflict with RFP Page 18 which indicates that the initial term will be from January 1, 2009 through December 31, 2011. Please clarify.

Response: The RFP is developed with the hope that a contract can be approved and signed prior to 30 days of the contract start date. However, since that is not possible at this time, it is expected that the new vendor would be able to have new forms available within 30 days of a signed contract. Before that 30 day period the Department and the vendor will work together to assure that adequate forms are in place for use on the first exam administration under the new contract.

- What is the current percentage of item overlap between forms for each required examination category?

Response: The exact percentage is unknown. However, there is overlap between forms.

- Approximately how many days after contract signing does the Department intend to make existing item banks (and any associated item performance statistics) available to the selected vendor?

Response: It is the Department's hope that work between a new vendor and previous vendor will begin immediately after it is known which vendor has won the bidding process, but definitely the same day the contract is signed.

14. RFP Page 6 Paragraph C.2.A states, "The Contractor will develop and have approved by DOH a standardized answer sheet that will be used for all examination levels. This standardized answer sheet must be made available to DOH within 30 days of a delivered signed Contract." "Within 30 days of a delivered signed Contract" seems to conflict with RFP Page 18 which indicates that the initial term will be from January 1, 2009 through December 31, 2011. Please clarify.

Response: As stated above, it is hoped the vendor will begin work on this immediately, but this greatly depends on when a signed contract is in place. The vendor must have an answer sheet developed and approved by the Department within 30 days of a signed approved contract.

15. RFP Page 6, Paragraph C.2.B requires the vendor to conduct item development workshops for basic level (CFR/EMT-B) and advanced level (EMT-1, EMT-CC, EMT-P) exams each year.

What is the typical duration of each type of item development workshop?

Response: 2 days or approximately 16 hours.

How many items are typically developed at each workshop?

Response: Very variable, but on average 50 items.

How many EMS content experts are typically invited to each workshop?

Response: Variable, but on average no more than 8 – 12.

What is the current process for pre-testing new items?

Response: Most new items are placed on the appropriate form as "pilot questions". There are 10 pilot question on each exam form excluding CFR.

Who owns the new items that are developed?

Response: The Department.

16. RFP Page 8, (third paragraph) states, "The Contractor, upon approval of DOH will conduct 'special' examination administrations that are not included within and are in addition to the seven (7) aforementioned regularly scheduled examination administrations."

- During the current contract, how many special examination administrations have been scheduled each year?

Response: 5

- What is the current fee for "special examination administrations"?

Response: \$1,000.00

17. RFP Page 10, Paragraph C.2.E requires an item analysis and review with a BEMS representative prior to forwarding results to DOH.

- Based on the results of the item analysis, does BEMS anticipate the need to adjust scores prior to submitting results to DOH?

Response: That is always a slim possibility. BEMS wants to assure that all items and their answers are final prior to receiving the results.

- If so, are extra days beyond the 15 business day period provided to accomplish the rescoring?

Response: There has never been a need for this in the past, but would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

- If so, what is the current process to address score changes for candidates receiving on-site scoring?

Response: The letter the candidate receives at on-site scoring states that this score is not final until they receive their results from BEMS and that the score may change. No additional correspondence should be needed between the vendor and the candidate.

18. RFP Page 11, Paragraph C.2.F states, "The Contractor will maintain hard copy and back-up software of current examination items (examination questions) for all examination levels and current usable copies of all examination forms for all examination levels in a secure facility other than their office." If a vendor maintains multiple offices in geographically diverse locations, would the Department allow the selected vendor to maintain hard copy and back-up software of current examination items in separate, secure vendor facilities?

Response: Yes, but the Department would need to review the vendor's plan.

19. RFP Page 11, Paragraph C.2.G states, "The Contractor shall provide on-site scoring of examinations in at least three locations...on a schedule mutually agreed upon by the Contractor and DOH, which will include the seven (7) aforementioned scheduled examination dates."

- When on-site scoring is provided, does the Department require/prefer testing vendor personnel to perform examination scoring?

Response: Vendor personnel are required to handle on-site scoring of exams and distribution of results.

- Who performs on-site scoring under the current contract – testing vendor staff or per diem staff hired by the Department?

Response: Vendor staff.

- Is the on-site scoring considered an official result or is it a preliminary result?

Response: Preliminary.

- Who bears liability for examination answer keys when on site scoring is performed?

Response: The vendor.

- What is the current process for and what type of equipment is used for conducting on-site scoring under the current contract?

Response: Laptop and printer used by the vendor. Answer sheets are scanned, computed by the software on the laptop and results are printed. A proctor will bring a candidate's answer sheet to the vendor's staff where it will be processed. Vendor is responsible for collecting on-site scoring fees prior to the start of the exam at the exam location.

- In the past year, how many candidates have requested on-site scoring for each exam type?

Response: On average approximately 2,000 candidates per year based on 3 sites. We currently do not have data broken down by exam type since the fee is uniform across all levels.

20. RFP Page 11, Paragraph C.2.G states, "Candidates who successfully pass the examination at the on-site scoring, receive a Contractor issued, DOH approved temporary EMS certification at the examination site."

- Please describe the format of the current temporary certification.

Response: Results are printed on an 8 ½ x 11" paper, which states their results and what will happen if the results are changed and that they are not final until they receive their results from BEMS.

- Is the temporary certification provided in paper or plastic form?

Response: Paper.

- Does the Department issue the permanent certification in these cases?

Response: All final certifications are issued by the Department.

21. RFP Page 11, Paragraph C.2.G states, "A plan for the development of additional sites (i.e., Buffalo, Syracuse and Long Island) is to be included with this bid."

- Please clarify what is meant by the development of additional sites. Does the Department expect the selected vendor to plan for the provision of on-site scoring at sites in addition to the required three locations?

Response: Yes.

- Does the Department expect the selected vendor to participate in the identification of additional test sites in the state of New York beyond those already identified by the Department?

Response: The Department would locate the sites and in conjunction with the vendor, approve the site for use.

22. Please verify that the current fee is \$12.50 per candidate.

Response: The current fee is \$12.00 per candidate.

23. Please verify that the current on-site scoring fee is \$35.00 per candidate.

Response: That is correct.

24. Are there any fee caps?

Response: The fees that are specified in the vendor's bid are the final fees for the duration of the contract. If so, what are they? Unsure what "fees" the question is referring to.

25. Page 8, Pilot study - how does the Pilot Recertification program affect the current volume of candidates?

Response: BEMS expected to have seen a decrease in the number of candidates testing over the years. However, the number of candidates testing has not dramatically decreased. The Pilot Recertification program has

been in existence for more than 10 years now. BEMS can not predict future numbers, but the number of candidates testing on a yearly basis has stayed fairly level on average.

26. Page 11 - how many on-site scoring locations are provided by the current vendor?

Response: 3

27. Since the DOH currently allows on-site scoring for an additional fee, would the DOH also be willing to allow candidates to test at computer-based test centers throughout the state on a daily basis with immediate scoring for a competitive fee?

Response: The current RFP does not allow for that. However, the Department is open to receiving information on this type of testing.

28. Page 2 and page 16 - Page 2 lists Andrew Johnson for submission of proposals; page 16 lists Karen Meggenhofen - who gets the proposal submission?

Response: Andrew Johnson.

## **Post Bidder's Conference Questions**

1. Please confirm our understanding that it is the contractor's responsibility to provide the necessary equipment (i.e. laptop, scanner, printer) for each on-site scoring location.

Response: That is correct. The contractor is to supply all equipment at the site.

2. For a four-hour testing event in which on-site scoring is offered, what are DOH's expectations regarding the number of hours a contractor's on-site scoring staff will be present?

Response: The expectation is that the contractor will set-up their equipment without interfering with candidates taking their exam and in a timely manner as to where the equipment is ready to score the first candidates answer sheet. Depending on the location of the exam, DOH feels that it is appropriate for the contractor to arrive within 30 minutes after the exam begins as long as this process does not interfere with the candidates taking their exam.

3. What are DOH's expectations regarding the minimum number of contractor staff assigned to an on-site scoring event?

Response: There are no minimum expectations as long as the contractor is able to process the answer sheets, produce results and deliver those results to all candidates in a timely manner so candidates are not waiting for more than 15 minutes after they have completed their exam to receive their results.