

RFP #TA-10: Implementation of the Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness

Questions and Answers

FISCAL

- 1. Question:** Is there a budget range allocated to this initiative? If a budget has been allocated, please provide the approximate maximum amount for the total initiative.

Answer: NYSED's budget for this initiative will not be shared at this time. Bidders should develop budgets based on the anticipated expenses associated with carrying out the deliverables that are outlined in this RFP.

- 2. Question:** Does NYS have a specific range of hourly rates that educational consultants can be paid?

Answer: NYS does not have a specific range of hourly rates for educational consultants. However, please keep in mind that the financial portion of the proposal will be scored pursuant to a formula that awards the highest score to the lowest overall cost.

- 3. Question:** Except for key positions, our organization does not employ staff, we use consultants. In this project budget, are these consultants (individuals) to be treated as personnel or sub-contractors?

Answer: As stated in the RFP, subcontracting is defined as non-employee direct personal services and related incidental expenses, including travel. Therefore, consultants are considered subcontractors, not personnel.

- 4. Question:** Is there a fixed indirect cost rate?

Answer: There is no fixed indirect cost rate.

- 5. Question:** May consultants be reimbursed for travel expenses?

Answer: Yes, consultants may be reimbursed for travel expenses. Those expenses should be included in the Total Subcontractor/Consultant Travel line in the Travel section of the Cost Proposal Form.

- 6. Question:** Does there need to be a Budget Narrative to accompany the Cost Proposal Form?

Answer: No, this RFP does not require a budget narrative.

7. **Question:** Are expenses such as rent, internet, phones, etc. to be included in non-personal services?

Answer: These expenses may be included under non-personal services or indirect costs, as appropriate.

8. **Question:** Are meals/snacks an allowable expense for vendor meetings with staff and reviewers?

Answer: No.

9. **Question:** The Cost Proposal Form requires costs by deliverable for each type of review. Do you want the costs for the full time Project Director, Calibration Liaison, and the Logistics Liaison included in the individual deliverable costs.

Answer: Expenses associated with employees and consultants should be included in the individual deliverable costs.

10. **Question:** Are there limitations, or can you define what can be included in fringe costs/indirect costs?

Answer: Fringe benefits refer to those non-salary expenditures that benefit employees, including retirement plans, social security, health insurance, dental insurance, worker's compensation, survivor's benefits, and unemployment insurance.

Indirect costs are those expenses that benefit more than one initiative and therefore cannot easily be attributable to a specific program. They might include, but are not limited to, physical overhead, utilities, payroll services, and/or information technology. If there are such costs, bidders should calculate the portion of those expenses that benefit this particular project using methods that are generally accepted and used throughout the organization.

11. **Question:** Are we to submit travel costs with each invoice? Will those charges be at GSA rates (or actuals)?

Answer: All employee and consultant travel will be reimbursed on a monthly basis upon receipt and approval of an invoice, and will be based on actual expenses incurred. Any vendor staff travel must be in accordance with the approved NYS rates. New York State rates are available at: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21287>.

PROGRAM

12. Question: Please clarify the role of the Logistics Liaison.

Answer: The role of the vendor's Logistics Liaison will be to liaise with the NYSED logistics team to ensure that the vendor reviewers adhere to the logistical components of the review as outlined in the RFP. The Logistics Liaison must participate in one to two meetings with NYSED staff each month during the contract period, either by phone or video conference. No more than 8 meetings (one day each) will occur at the NYSED Offices in Albany, NY over the contract period. The vendor's Logistics Liaison will not be scheduling the visits—NYSED will provide the review schedule.

13. Question: NYSED expects that the DTSDE will be implemented with fidelity. Will NYSED provide any materials (on-line, print, video, etc.) for the ongoing tutorials and professional development of reviewers?

Answer: As stated on page 8 of the RFP, under Description of Services to be Performed, reviewers will receive initial professional development in late October or early November 2013, in New York City. For the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, additional professional development will be provided to vendor reviewers in Albany, New York, during the months of November, February and May. This professional development will be focused on development of IIT members' inter-rater reliability, calibration and alignment to the DTSDE rubric.

Materials to support implementation also exist within the DTSDE Handbook, posted at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/diagnostic-tool-institute/DTSDEHandbook.html>, which includes links to online tutorials located at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/diagnostic-tool-institute/Tutorials.html>.

Finally, it is expected that the vendor will have in place an internal method and/or set of strategies for ensuring that vendor reviewers implement the DTSDE with fidelity. Vendors are expected to outline their system within Section II of the Technical Proposal, entitled "Monitoring Implementation and Ensuring Quality."

14. Question: Does the vendor reviewer submit the draft review directly to the NYSED Calibration Team or is the draft first reviewed by the vendor's Calibration Liaison?

Answer: The vendor reviewer is responsible for producing a draft DTSDE Visit Final Report and submitting it to NYSED's Calibration Assurance Team (CAT) no more than 10 business days after the last day of the visit. The vendor reviewer, along with the vendor's Calibration Liaison, is then responsible for addressing any question or feedback given by CAT in a second draft.

15. Question: Please clarify this statement (p.14)

"Bidders should specify all details and dates required to evaluate the technical proposal and should limit aspects of the project plan that are to be determined only after the award of the contract. No optional deliverables to be provided only at an additional cost should be included and will not be considered in the evaluation of the technical proposal."

Answer: This is to state that clarity and detail in the project proposal are strongly preferred and will be rated higher in the technical review. The bidder should leave as little as possible unspecified within their proposal. This statement is also intended to ensure that vendor applicants focus their proposal only on those deliverables and activities that are outlined in the RFP.

16. Question: Does this contract require any feedback from the vendor on what does or does not work in the implementation of the protocol and use of the review document?

Answer: No, it does not require feedback from the vendor.

17. Question: Is there a specific date when we will know if we've been granted the award?

Answer: It is anticipated that an award determination will be made by September 2013.

18. Question: When will a schedule of training and meeting dates be available?

Answer: Once the vendor has received an award, NYSED will provide the exact training (professional development) dates. The months and number of days for trainings are identified in the RFP as follows:

- 8 days in late October or early November 2013, in New York City
- 2 days each in November, February, and May, 2013-2015, in Albany, New York
- 1 day each in November 2014, February 2015, and May 2015, in Albany, New York

The meeting dates for the monthly meetings between NYSED and vendor's Project Director, Calibration Liaison and Logistics Liaison will be coordinated by NYSED staff, in consultation with the vendor. The monthly meeting dates will most likely be finalized prior to the start of visits each year of the contract.

The pre-review meetings with the IIT, and any post-visit meetings associated with the drafting of the report, will be determined by the NYSED co-lead in consultation with the vendor reviewer, based on the schedule of visits provided by NYSED.

19. Question: What hours will comprise a business day for reviewers?

Answer: Reviewers are expected to work sufficient hours as necessary to meet the timelines for completion and submission of reports. The sample schedule in the DTSDE handbook, pages 76-77 at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/diagnostic-tool-institute/DTSDEHandbook.html>, notes that when on-site on a school or district review, reviewers are expected to be at the school or district site based on the following schedule: for a one-day review (8am-4pm), two day review (8am-4pm) and three day review (8am-3:15 for 2 days and 1 day at 8:00 am-1:15pm). Reviewers should expect that following the on-site portion of the review, additional time will be needed to synthesize the results of the day's activities and/or prepare for the next day's activities. There will be slight variations in the schedule depending on the size of the school or district.

20. Question: Under Description of Services, the RFP notes the vendor will not be expected to conduct more than 10 visits a week, and that each reviewer will not be scheduled for more than two visits per month? Do the 2 visits per month include both school reviews and district reviews?

Answer: Yes.

21. Question: The RFP mentions that NYSED will provide the deployment schedule. Are we correct in assuming that NYSED will only indicate which districts / schools need to be reviewed on any specific day and that the Vendor will be able to deploy their reviewers to those reviews?

Answer: Yes. At the time of award, NYSED will provide the vendor with a schedule for the visits that details when and where the visits will take place. The vendor will be responsible for providing vendor reviewers to serve as Outside Educational Experts on 105 district level and 270 school level DTSDE IIT New York State reviews over the two year contract period.

22. Question: If any individual reviewer has the capacity to deliver more than two in a month, can the vendor schedule them to do so?

Answer: No. The schedules of the other members of the IIT prevent the scheduling of more than two visits in a month.

23. Question: The RFP mentions a minimum of 15 vendor reviewers. However, is there a limit to the number of reviewers the vendor can send to the mandatory training events?

Answer: All vendor reviewers are required to attend the training. Therefore, the vendor may send more than the minimum required number of vendor reviewers.

24. Question: The Mandatory Bid Requirements list one designated full-time Project Director, one full-time Calibration Assurance Liaison and one .50 FTE Logistics Liaison. Can you please define the term "full-time." Are the two full time employees expected to dedicate 100% time to this project, and the Logistics Liaison 50%?

Answer: Yes. The Project Director and Calibration Assurance Liaison are expected to dedicate 100% time to this project and the Logistics Liaison at least 50% time.

25. Question: Is it an expectation for the full time Project Director, Calibration Assurance Liaison and the Logistics Liaison to be permanently located in either Albany or New York City for the duration of the project?

Answer: No.

26. Question: Please articulate the specific responsibilities of the Project Director.

Answer: The Project Director will be a full-time staff member dedicated to this project and will serve as the lead point of contact with NYSED. The Project Director must participate in one meeting with NYSED staff each month during the contract period (monthly meetings may be by telephone or video conference). No more than 8 meetings (each one day) will occur at the NYSED Offices in Albany, NY over the contract period. The responsibilities of the Project Director include, but are not limited to, working with NYSED staff, including planning and coordinating status meetings developing status reports, notifying NYSED of any potential problems or changes to dates or deliverables, and ensuring that all deliverables are submitted according to the agreed upon schedule with appropriate time for NYSED review and approval.

27. Question: Please articulate the specific responsibilities of the Logistics Liaison, and describe how they differ from those of the Project Director.

Answer: The Logistic Liaison is a half-time position, with responsibilities that are focused only on working with the NYSED logistics team to ensure that the vendor reviewers adhere to the logistical components of the review as outlined in the RFP. The Project Director will play more of a leadership role to ensure timely and quality completion of all deliverables. Please see the answer provided for question #12, for more information on the responsibilities of the Logistics Liaison, and question #26 for more information about the role of the Project Director.

28. Question: Please articulate the specific responsibilities of the Calibration Assurance Liaison.

Answer: The liaison to the Calibration Team is expected to ensure that all reports submitted by a vendor reviewer meet State Education Department's approval. The vendor reviewer is responsible for producing a draft DTSDE Visit Final Report and submitting it to NYSED's Calibration Assurance Team (CAT) no more than 10 business days after the last day of the visit. The vendor reviewer, with the vendor's Calibration Liaison, is then responsible for addressing any questions or feedback given by CAT in a second draft. The second draft is due to the CAT two weeks after receiving the initial feedback. The report must be completed for submission to the district for final verification no later than 60 calendar days after the last day of the visit.

The CAT liaison must also participate in one to two meetings with NYSED staff each month during the contract period, either by phone or video conference. They may also participate in no more than 8 meetings (each one day) that will occur at the NYSED Offices in Brooklyn, NY over the contract period.

29. Question: Is it permissible to suggest the Project Director and Logistics Liaison as Vendor Reviewers, or is NYSED expecting that the 15 Vendor Reviewers would not include the Project Director and Logistics Liaison?

Answer: The 15 vendor reviewers must not include the Project Director or the Calibration Liaison, but the Logistics Liaison may serve as a reviewer, as they are only required to serve part-time (minimum of .50 FTE) in the liaison capacity.

30. Question: Is the Vendor Reviewer also to serve as the team leader (including the fulfillment of responsibilities such as the design of the school-specific visit schedule, managing all communication with school leader(s), etc.)?

Answer: In general, the vendor reviewer will serve as the team co-lead with the NYSED staff person. Please refer to Appendix E, Vendor Reviewer Responsibilities as OEE on DTSDE Visits, for the specific description of vendor reviewer responsibilities.

31. Question: Is it the expectation of NYSED that the Vendor Reviewer will participate/facilitate joint pre-review preparation activities, or are these activities to be completed by each IIT member individually?

Answer: Both will occur. The vendor reviewer will participate in and facilitate joint pre-review preparation activities, and also conduct his or her own individual review of the documents, as described in Appendix E.

32. Question: Is it the expectation of NYSED that all proposed 15 Vendor Reviewers, the Project Director, the Calibration Liaison, and the Logistics Liaison participate in all proposed professional development days?

Answer: It is NYSED's expectation that all project staff be knowledgeable about the material covered in the training. All vendor reviewers are required to attend the training.

33. Question: Are vendor reviewers (all 15 of them) expected to attend monthly meetings with the Calibration Assurance Team?

Answer: No. The vendor will be responsible for ensuring quality control and fidelity to the DTSDE process through supervision of all identified vendor reviewers. The vendor must also ensure that the resulting reports are calibrated by the vendor's Calibration Liaison, in collaboration with NYSED's Calibration Assurance Team and according to the timeline and report quality standards set forth in this RFP.

34. Question: Is there a district review report template that NYSED is able to share? If so, please post it.

Answer: Please refer to Section 6 of the DTSDE Handbook, under District Debriefing Documents and open the District Final Report Template at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/diagnostic-tool-institute/DTSDEHandbook.html>.

35. Question: How do pre-review activities conducted in Albany differ from those that will occur in vendor offices?

Answer: In the chart on page 10 of the RFP, entitled “Summary/Overview of Deliverables,” the designation of Albany as the geographic location for this activity refers only to the meetings with NYSED that the Logistics Liaison attends to provide status updates, some of which may be held in Albany over the course of the contract.

The pre-review activities taking place at the vendor offices are those related to the individual vendor reviewers’ responsibilities related to preparing for the visit and facilitating a pre-review meeting with other members of the IIT.

36. Question: The RFP requests a staffing plan. Is this for the vendor organization (as a whole) or a proposed staffing plan for the project?

Answer: The staffing plan should provide details about the proposed staffing plan specifically for the project, but it should also include a diagram that outlines staffing for the organization as a whole, and provide organization-wide historical staff retention rates. Vendors should also provide the following information as it relates only to the project staff: whether staff are full- or part-time and the current quantity of available staff.

37. Question: The RFP requests staff retention data. Please provide a timeframe for which you are requesting this data.

Answer: Staff retention data should be provided for at least the past three years.