
3B

Action

Professional Services Committee

Request for Approval to Release a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Administration and Further Development of the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST), the California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET), the California Teacher of English Learners (CTEL) Examination and the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA)

Executive Summary: Current contracts for administration of the CBEST, CSET, CTET, and RICA examinations will expire by October 31, 2010. The Commission needs to conduct a competitive bid process to secure a contractor for these examinations for the next five year period from 2010-2016. In addition, development of new test items is needed to have sufficient items for these examinations to potentially be made available in a computer-based format. Finally, development of new items is also needed for some of the CSET examinations in order to assure the continued alignment of these examinations with updated K-12 student academic content standards.

Recommended Action: Staff recommends that the Commission authorize the development and release of an RFP for administration and further development of the CBEST, the CSET, the CTET, and the RICA examinations for the period from 2010-2016.

Presenters: Phyllis Jacobson, Administrator, and Michael Taylor, Consultant, Professional Services Division

Strategic Plan Goal: 1

Promote educational excellence through the preparation and certification of professional educators

- ◆ Sustain high quality standards for the preparation and performance of professional educators and for the accreditation of credential programs
- ◆ Conduct, monitor, and evaluate the programs and systems the Commission operates to maintain quality and assure the systems align with each other and other state systems

**Request for Approval to Release a Request for Proposals
(RFP) for Administration and Further Development of the
California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST), the
California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET), the
California Teacher of English Learners (CTEL)
Examination and the Reading Instruction Competence
Assessment (RICA)**

Introduction

Education Code Section 44259 requires that credential candidates verify competence in basic skills, subject matter, and reading instruction, as applicable to the particular credential sought by the candidate. In addition, teachers not prepared through an SB 2042 teacher preparation program who need to earn an English Learner (EL) authorization may do so via examination. The Commission's current examinations for these purposes are the following:

- California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST)
- California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET)
- California Teacher of English Learners (CTEL) examination
- Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA)

The Commission is charged with the responsibility to ensure that these examinations are offered continuously and in a timely manner to meet candidate needs. Current contracts for the administration of these examinations will expire by October 2010. It is timely that staff undertakes a competitive bid process to secure a contractor for the administration and further development of these examinations, as specified below, in order to assure the continuous availability of these examinations for candidates. This agenda item presents a request for Commission approval for staff to move forward with developing and releasing an RFP for the administration and further development of these four Commission-owned examinations for the period of 2010-2016.

Staff had planned to request permission earlier this year for the release of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a multi-year contract to administer and further develop these examinations. This work might have included the revalidation of CSET tests based on the California Department of Education's published K-12 Framework revision schedule. Staff decided to delay this RFP request because of the uncertainty of the future of the framework revisions. At the end of July, all framework revisions were suspended until the 2013-14 school year. The timing of this decision and subsequent announcement left insufficient time to secure a contractor to begin the needed work to prepare for the upcoming testing year, 2010-2011. Work needed beyond the 2010-2011 testing year will be based on the outcome of the competitive bidding process.

Since the current contract to administer the CBEST, CSET, and RICA examinations expires on October 31, 2010, the current contract pertaining to the CTEL examination expires on June 30, 2010, and the new contract to be awarded through the RFP process will not be effective until approximately November 2010, staff also requests Commission approval to extend the two current contracts described above until October 31, 2011, to allow completion of work related to the 2010-2011 CBEST, CSET, RICA, and CTEL test administrations.

Background

The CBEST is offered six times a year, every other month, in paper-based format, and twelve times per year in computer-based format, in testing locations across California as well as several other states. The CSET is offered in thirty credential subject areas in testing locations across California, with the more highly subscribed subject areas available six times a year and the remainder available two or four times annually, depending on the specific CSET examination. The CTEL is offered twice per year in locations across California. The RICA Written Examination is offered six times a year, traditionally on the same date as the CBEST, in testing locations across California. The RICA Video Performance Assessment offers submission opportunities three times a year. Information about each of these examinations, including rules of test participation, test guides, sample test questions, scoring information, and test locations, is available through the examinations portal website at www.ctcexams.nesinc.com.

Current contracts for the administration only of the CBEST, CSET, CTEL, and RICA examinations were awarded to the Evaluation Systems group of Pearson, Inc. as a result of competitive bid processes held in 2007 and 2008. The current contracts include test administrations from 2007-2008 through 2009-2010. Because these contracts will expire by October 2010, Commission staff is requesting approval for one-year extensions for these administration-only contracts until October 31, 2011 to allow sufficient time for release of the proposed RFP and completion of the contract award process according to the provisions of the *State Contracting Manual*. As of that date, if a new contract is not in place, there will be no administrations of the CBEST, the CSET, the CTEL and the RICA examinations available for candidates.

In order to ensure that these examinations are available for candidates starting in the 2011-12 testing year and that candidates have sufficient time to register for the first administration under the new contract in summer 2011, the new contract must be in place by December 2010 to allow the contractor time to develop implementation procedures, contract with testing sites, create registration bulletins, and complete a number of other activities required prior to an initial test administration. To do this, an RFP needs to be released early in 2010. The proposed schedule for the RFP process would be as follows:

RFP Activity	Completion Date
RFP information item presented to the Commission	December 2009
RFP released to public	February 2010
Telephone bidders conference	Early March 2010
Written question period	Mid March 2010
Proposals due to CTC	May 2010

Proposal review and scoring	August 2010
Contract award recommendation to the Commission	September 2010
Contract sent to DGS-OLS for approval	October/November 2010
Contractor's work begins	December 2010
New candidate bulletins available	June 2011
First administrations	August 2011

Proposed Scope of Work for the RFP for Administration and Further Development of the CBEST, CSET, CTEL and RICA Examinations

The proposed RFP would include the following scope of work over the period from December 2010-October 31, 2016:

- Planning for the administration of and administering the CBEST, CSET, CTEL and RICA examinations for testing years 2011-12 through 2015-16.
- Planning for and implementing computer-based administrations for the RICA Written Examination, the CSET: Multiple Subjects and the CSET: Writing Skills examinations, including the development of new test items as needed. It is the Commission's intent to move these three examinations to a computer-based only administration format during the lifetime of the contract to be awarded pursuant to this RFP.
- Planning for and implementing a content validation study for the CSET: Multiple Subjects examination and the CSET Single Subject examinations in English, Mathematics, Science, and History/Social Science to assure the continued alignment of these examinations with the most current K-12 student academic content standards in the areas measured by these examinations, including development of new test items as needed.

The test administration and development work called for in the RFP would address the unique needs of each of the four testing programs. It would also cover the general work needed for successful administrations, requiring contractor proficiency in such key areas as test security, program communications, program materials production, examination registration processes, examination administration, item data management, scoring and score reports, examination materials maintenance, and technical reports.

The proposed RFP will ask bidders to describe their significant experience and competence in large-scale educational test development and will also require the potential key personnel to have recent experience in a comparable capacity with similar types of examination programs. Bidders will also be asked to respond to all aspects of the test development and administration work described in the RFP and encouraged to propose enhancements, improvements, or innovations to any or all parts of the scope of work. The contract term would be from approximately December 2010 through October 2016. In the RFP, bidders will be asked to describe how they will accomplish the required work with high quality and in a timely manner.

All of the resulting examination materials, including examination test items, scoring scales, performance characteristics, and procedures that are developed under the terms of the contract, as well as all data collected, will be owned by the Commission.

Cost Considerations

The RFP for the administration of Commission-owned examinations asks the contractor to provide cost information based on the scope of work identified in the RFP. The costs proposed by a successful bidder who is awarded a contract for examinations administration and development are recovered by the contractor subsequently through candidate fees as applicants register with the contractor for the various examinations. No Commission funds are paid to the contractor. Commission staff time to oversee and monitor the process, and to monitor and process the revenue received from the contractor, is paid through the program management fee portion of the examinees' fees.

The table below indicates for the four examinations (CBEST, CSET, CTEL and RICA) the most recent history of the volume of registrations and the fee structure. The fee structure below reflects the costs proposed by the winning bidder of the current examinations contracts.

	2007-08			2008-09		
	Paid Registrations	Examinee Fee	Amount to CTC	Paid Registrations	Examinee Fee	Amount to CTC
CBEST	80,829	\$41.00	\$10.00	75,531	\$41.00	\$10.00
CSET	75,751	\$210.00	\$82.00	73,485	\$210.00	\$82.00
RICA WE	16,351	\$130.00	\$61.00	16,133	\$130.00	\$61.00
RICA Video	65	\$130.00	\$61.00	63	\$130.00	\$61.00
CTEL	6,977	\$303.00	\$44.00	8,034	\$303.00	\$44.00

Past Commission Practice with Respect to Examination RFPs

The established Commission practice when issuing RFPs conforms to the requirements of the *State Contracting Manual*. Commission staff requests approval from the Commission to develop and release the RFP. Following Commission approval, Commission staff develops the RFP and the Executive Director releases the RFP in compliance with public notice requirements as outlined in the *State Contracting Manual*. The RFP itself has not historically been reviewed by the Commission prior to its release.

As required in the *State Contracting Manual*, the RFP provides, among other contents, the purpose of the work to be performed by the contractor, a detailed scope of work, directions to bidders for responding to the scope of work, contractual information and requirements, proposal submission and organization requirements, corporate capability information requirements, and scoring criteria. The Commission's historical practice for conducting the RFP review process once the RFP has been publicly released is explained below.

Following the public release of the RFP, and as indicated in the RFP, potential bidders are encouraged to submit a Notice of Intent to Bid to the Commission staff contact person indicated in the RFP. Potential bidders are informed that submission of a Notice of Intent to Bid does not obligate a potential bidder to submit a proposal, nor does lack of a Notice of Intent to Bid prevent a potential bidder from submitting a proposal. Those submitting a Notice of Intent to Bid, and any other interested parties, are also informed through the RFP of the opportunity to participate in a telephone Bidders Conference conducted by Commission staff.

During the telephone Bidders Conference, potential bidders are informed of the opportunity to submit additional written questions for further response. Following the bidders conference, Commission staff responds in writing to all written questions received, and sends to all potential bidders who submitted a Notice of Intent to Bid a written summary of all the questions that were received from all potential bidders and the answers to those questions.

The Commission's Past Practice with Respect to Proposal Review Process and Results

Proposals submitted in response to the RFP have historically been reviewed in three stages as described in the RFP and below in this item. The proposal review process is conducted according to guidelines established in the *State Contracting Manual* for conducting competitive bidding procedures. A Proposal Review Team comprised of Commission staff with expertise and knowledge in examinations activities participates in the evaluation and scoring of the proposals.

The proposal review is conducted in three stages: the processing of proposals upon receipt to ensure compliance with mandatory eligibility requirements; the initial review of the proposal individually by the members of the review team; and the final review of the proposal collaboratively by the members of the review team.

Responses from bidders are logged as to date and time of arrival. Each response is initially reviewed by Commission staff for compliance with the technical requirements for eligibility, and those responses that meet all of the technical requirements are then moved forward for proposal content review.

After the deadline for receipt of responses has passed, all of the responses that have met the technical requirements are organized for proposal content review by Commission staff. Commission staff who will be serving as reviewers receive extensive training on each aspect of the RFP requirements and on the scoring points criteria. Commission staff then reviews each proposal independently, assigning preliminary score points during this phase of the application review process. In accordance with state contracting requirements, 50% or less of the total score points are assigned within the program-related categories, and at least 50% of the total score points are assigned within the cost category. The reviewers use only the information provided in the written proposal application when considering the application and assigning points during the review process.

Following the independent review, the reviewers meet to discuss the proposals. Because these responses are lengthy and complex, the review process includes a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal so that all reviewers can share their findings based on the information provided in the written proposal application to ensure that each application receives the fullest possible consideration. Following the discussion, reviewers may adjust their score points to reflect the full range of information concerning each application. The final scores are then tallied and the application with the highest total point score is identified. The application with the highest total point score is the application that is then recommended to the Commission for award approval.

Staff Recommendations

Staff recommends that the Commission authorize the development and release of an RFP for the administration and further development of the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST), the California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET), the California Teacher of English Learners (CTEL) examination and the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA) for the period of 2010-2016, as specified, and in accordance with the scope of work and timeline outlined above.

Staff also recommends that the Commission authorize extending the two current contracts pertaining to administration of the CBEST, CSET, RICA, and CETL examinations until October 31, 2011 for work related to the 2010-2011 CBEST, CSET, RICA, and CTETL test administrations in order to assure uninterrupted access for candidates to these examinations.