

RFP Questions and Clarifications Memorandum

To: Vendors Responding to RFP Number 4642 Mississippi Academic Assessment Program and Mississippi Academic Assessment Program – Alternate for the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE)

From: Craig P. Orgeron, CPM, Ph.D

Date: March 27, 2025

Subject: Responses to Questions Submitted and Clarifications to Specifications

Contact Name: Solicitations Team

Contact E-mail Address: RFP@its.ms.gov

RFP Number 4642 is hereby amended as follows:

1. Title page, INVITATION is modified as follows:

INVITATION: Proposals, subject to the attached conditions, will be received at this office until ~~Thursday, April 10,~~ Monday, April 14, 2025 @ 3:00 p.m. Central Time for the acquisition of the products/services described below for Mississippi Department of Education.

2. Title page, third box is modified as follows:

**PROPOSAL, SUBMITTED IN RESPONSE TO
RFP NO. 4642
DUE Monday, April 14 ~~Thursday, April 10,~~ 2025 @ 3:00 p.m.,
ATTENTION: Solicitations Team**

3. RFP, Section VII Technical Specifications, Item 1 Procurement Project Schedule is amended as follows:

Task	Date
Deadline for Questions Answered and Posted to ITS Web Site	03/20/2025 <u>03/27/2025</u>
Open Proposals	04/10/2025 <u>04/14/2025</u> at 3:00 p.m. Central Time
Evaluation of Proposals	04/10/2025 <u>04/14/2025</u>
ITS Board Presentation	05/15/205
Begin Contract Negotiation	May 2025
Project Go-Live Deadline	07/01/2025

4. **Attachment A, Section II Functional Requirements, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 29 is being modified to read:**

Grade	# of Operational Items	# of Field Test Items	Writing Prompt	Total Items
ELA Grade 3	40	9	1	50
ELA Grade 4	40	9	1	50
ELA Grade 5	40	9	1	50
ELA Grade 6	50	10	1	61
ELA Grade 7	50	10	1	61
ELA Grade 8	50	10	1	61
Math Grade 3	49	9	N/A	58
Math Grade 4	49	9	N/A	58
Math Grade 5	49	9	N/A	58
Math Grade 6	61	10	N/A	71
Math Grade 7	61	10	N/A	71
Math Grade 8	61	10	N/A	71
Science Grade 5	45 40	10	N/A	55 50
Science Grade 8	45	10	N/A	55
Algebra I	60	10	N/A	70
English II	50	10	1	61
Biology	55	10	N/A	65
U.S. History	55	10	N/A	65

5. **Attachment A, Section II Functional Requirements, G. MAAP: Item Development, Item 35 is being modified to read:**

Propose how to handle copyrighted materials in items. Secure all permissions for unlimited use in perpetuity. Wherever possible, the use of copyrighted materials in the development of assessment items shall be avoided, and original work or material available in the public domain shall be used. MDE is interested in measuring text complexity through Lexile level information for passages, and difficulty of math concepts through Quantile levels. Include this price in optional in the “Other” classification cost in the appropriate areas of the budget sheets.

6. **Attachment A, Section II Functional Requirements, I. MAAP: Processing, Scoring, Reporting, Psychometric Work, Item 56 is being modified to read:**

Provide an option ~~the price~~ for adding Lexile and Quantile measures in student results for parents and for classroom use.

7. **Attachment A, Section II Functional Requirements, I. MAAP: Processing, Scoring, Reporting, Psychometric Work, Item 64 is being modified to read:**

Provide details of how reporting of standard errors (a requirement per the AERA/APA/NCME joint standards) will be provided. This report may include error band graphics (such as a bar chart displaying student scale score, school scale score means, and district scale score mean) and explanatory narrative desirable on all reports where appropriate. MDE is open to innovations in reporting approaches, so Vendor may propose new ideas for the score reports and parent interactions. Include an option to add validating a price in the "Other" classification to add validating Lexile and Quantile levels.

8. Attachment A, Section II Functional Requirements, I. MAAP: Processing, Scoring, Reporting, Psychometric Work, Item 67 is being modified to read:

A Standard Setting meeting may be required at some point during this contract for MAAP. ~~Provide a price in the optional part of the budget summary sheet for these meetings.~~ Provide a price in the "Other" classification of the budget summary sheet for these meetings. Include an estimate of materials preparation, travel costs, stipends for participating educators, written reports upon conclusion of the meeting.

9. Attachment A, Section II Functional Requirements, L. MAAP- A Requirements, Information is being modified to read:

Information: The MDE requests that this work may be done by the Vendor or a subcontractor if the Vendor cannot meet the requirements detailed below. The MAAP-A is required in Grades 3-8 in ELA and Mathematics and Grade 5 and Grade 8 in science. The high school assessments are offered when the SCD student takes the course in Alternate Biology, Alternate English II, Alternate Algebra I, and a new test will be the Alternate U.S. History, an End-of-Course (EOC) test to mirror MAAP. The standards for each subject may be found on the MDE website here:

ELA: 2019 Mississippi Alternate Academic Achievement Standards for English Language Arts;

Math: 2019 Mississippi Alternate Academic Achievement Standards for Mathematics

Science: 2018 Mississippi Alternate Academic Achievement Standards for Science

U.S. History: 2019 Mississippi Alternate Academic Achievement Standards – Alternate History

Note that the ELA and Math standards are based on the Dynamic Learning Maps Essential Elements (DLM EE), with additional edits and clarifications to better support the needs of Mississippi teachers and students. The Science and History standards are not based on DLM standards. The MDE is willing to utilize tests that are currently developed for SCD students even if it means tweaking Mississippi standards for the grades and subjects.

The current MAAP-A assessments are paper-based assessments and have been custom developed. MDE currently owns passages, scenarios, and task questions that are scaffolded from 4 points for a more advanced answer to 1 point for a basic response. For the first year of the contract, the current item bank may be utilized as needed.

For future years, MDE desires an online, web-based testing platform for MAAP-A; however, some students may not be able to utilize an online assessment and may require a paper-based test in which answers will be transcribed into the system. Items shall be scored in the online system rather than teacher judgements.

In the past, we have not had the U.S. History test as part of the MAAP-A assessments. The U.S. History test does not have previously developed materials and items in the

current item bank. This test may be developed, field-tested, and added in year 2 of the contract. An online adaptive test is an option.

Standard Setting may be required to transfer from paper-pencil to online presentations. It will also be required for the addition of the U.S. History MAAP-A test. Provide a price for these meetings in the ~~optional areas~~ “Other” classification in the budget sheet. It is also MDE’s desire to share an item bank with other states that utilize online Alternate Assessments.

10. Attachment A, Section II Functional Requirements, M. MAAP- A Processing, Scoring, Reporting, Psychometric Work, Item 102 is being modified to read:

If the solution for MAAP-A is not a pre-designed and developed assessment, a Standard Setting meeting may be required at some point during this contract for MAAP-A. Provide a price in the ~~optional part of~~ “Other” classification in the budget summary sheet for these meetings. Include an estimate of materials preparation, travel costs, stipends for participating educators, written reports upon conclusion of the meeting.

11. Attachment A, Section III Support Materials and Training, R. MAAP Customer Support and Maintenance, Item 135 is being modified to read:

135. The Vendor shall provide unlimited email and toll-free telephone technical support in the operation of the Software Products ~~twenty-four (24) hours a day, seven (7) days a week~~ when the test preparation period begins until each test administration ends. Vendor shall respond by telephone within one (1) hour to requests for support services. The Vendor shall also provide a Help Desk and Technical Support Desk that will respond to e-mail, web-based chat or telephone queries from teachers and administrators, depending on the area of inquiry. The hours of operation must be 7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Central Time (CT) on Monday-Friday during the operational test dates. Vendors must respond to queries within one (1) business day or less. All telephone customer support shall originate in the Continental United States, and all support staff shall be able to communicate clearly in English. Districts shall be given priority placement in the support queue for all system locking situations or problems claimed by districts to be a mission critical process. Upon receipt of district’s call, Vendor will (a) create an error report, (b) assign a severity level and (c) attempt to resolve the Software problem in accordance with the procedures and processes for problem resolution. It is understood by the parties that the MDE and the vendor must mutually agree on whether an error is classified as a Severity Level 1, 2, or 3 error.

12. Attachment A, Section III Support Materials and Training, S. MAAP-A Customer Support and Maintenance, Item 144 is being modified to read:

144. The Vendor shall provide unlimited email and toll-free telephone technical support in the operation of the Software Products ~~twenty-four (24) hours a day, seven (7) days a week~~ when the test preparation period begins until each test administration ends. Vendor shall respond by telephone within one (1) hour to requests for support services. The Vendor shall also provide a Help Desk and Technical Support Desk that will respond to e-mail, web-based chat or telephone queries from teachers and administrators, depending on the area of inquiry. The hours of operation must be 7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Central Time (CT) on Monday-Friday during the operational test dates. Vendors must respond to queries within one (1) business day or less. All telephone customer support shall originate in the

Continental United States, and all support staff shall be able to communicate clearly in English. Districts shall be given priority placement in the support queue for all system locking situations or problems claimed by districts to be a mission critical process. Upon receipt of district's call, Vendor will (a) create an error report, (b) assign a severity level and (c) attempt to resolve the Software problem in accordance with the procedures and processes for problem resolution. It is understood by the parties that the MDE and the vendor must mutually agree on whether an error is classified as a Severity Level 1, 2, or 3 error.

- 13. Appendix A - MAAP and MAAP-A Budget Summary Form shall be and hereby is deleted and replaced with the attached Appendix A-1 - MAAP and MAAP-A Budget Summary. All references in the RFP and Attachment A to "Appendix A – MAAP and MAAP-A Budget Summary form" shall now mean "Appendix A-1 MAAP and MAAP-A Budget Summary form".**

Vendor must include in their proposal a response to each amended requirement as listed above. Vendor must respond using the same terminology as provided in the original requirements.

The following questions were submitted to ITS and are being presented as they were submitted, except to remove any reference to a specific vendor. This information should assist you in formulating your response.

Question 1: Attachment A, L. MAAP-A Requirements: The RFP indicates that a new test will be the Alternate U.S. History, an End-of-Course (EOC) test to mirror the MAAP. On page 16, the RFP indicates that the U.S. History test does not have previously developed materials and items in the current item bank for MAAP-A and that this test may be developed, field-tested and added in year 2 of the contract.

Can you please confirm that an administration of the US History Alternate EOC is not expected in year 1 of the contract given the development that must occur?

Response: **The U.S. History high school assessment for MAAP-A would be needed in the future for the Alternate Diploma and should be proposed in Vendor's response to this RFP. MDE will mirror the MAAP requirements that currently includes U.S. History as a requirement for graduation. MDE will work with the selected vendor to determine an acceptable timeline to add this into the MAAP-A assessment for high school. More information about the alternate diploma may be found in the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards* (https://mdek12.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2025/03/Mississippi-Public-School-Accountability-Standards_2024.pdf) on pages 69-71.**

Question 2: Attachment A, L. MAAP-A Requirements: For the MAAP-A administrations, is there a typical grade level each EOC is administered given students with significant cognitive disabilities course-taking patterns can differ from their general-education peers?

Response: **No. The high school MAAP-A EOC assessments are taken whenever an SCD student is enrolled in the corresponding course. The EOC**

assessments may be repeated until the student meets a passing performance level for a student seeking the Alternate Diploma Option.

Question 3: Attachment A, I. MAAP: Processing, Scoring, Reporting, Psychometric Work, Item 58 and Attachment A, M: MAAP-A: Processing, Scoring, Reporting, Psychometric Work, Item 96: The RFP requests a solution for a non-English parent guide that will allow parents to understand the student's test results. Please clarify that only the parent guide needs to be translated.

Response: **Yes, only the parent guide needs to be translated. The top 5 languages in MS are (1) Spanish, (2) Arabic, (3) Vietnamese, (4) Chinese, (5) Gujarati.**

Question 4: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 30 and Attachment A, M. MAAP-A: Processing, Scoring, Reporting, Psychometric Work, Item 103: The RFP indicates that practice tests, both online and PDF versions, are required and that the costs should be for at least three (3) tests in each grade/subject and high school course. Can you please confirm that MDE requires three (3) unique practice test form for each grade/content area for the MAAP-A?

Response: **MDE would like at least three rounds of practice items for the MAAP-A during the period of this contract until we obtain a sample of most of the standards and objectives that could be on the assessment. If using a pre-constructed assessment, the sample items may already be available.**

Question 5: Appendix A – MAAP and MAAP-A Budget Summary form: The budget sheet states to include pricing for 5 total years, does this represent the total number of years of this contract, are there options for extensions?

Response: **See RFP Exhibit A: Standard Contract, Article 2.1.**

Question 6: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 29: Please clarify the requirement for the total number of operational science items in grade 5, table shows a different amount from the online test design documents?

Response: **Grade 5 science is currently 40 operational items and 10 embedded field test items that total 50 items. Please see Amendment 4 above.**

Question 7: RFP, Section II: Proposal Submission Requirements, Item 9.1: Does the state require a "hard copy" printer version of the proposal in its entirety?

Response: **No. A complete proposal must be submitted to the ITS Office via a USB flash drive by the deadline set forth in the Procurement Project Schedule.**

Question 8: Attachment A, W. Other Requirements, Item 157.b: Can MDE clarify what it means by "Categorized Performance Level Descriptors to measure student abilities in determining intervention for review?"

Can MDE clarify what sample materials are required for the “Categorized Performance Level Descriptors to measure student abilities in determining intervention for review (samples for MAAP-A)?”

Response: MDE is exploring using an online pre-constructed assessment that is established and used successfully for SCD students. This test should have categorized performance level descriptors outlined that can measure student abilities to aid teachers in determining intervention strategies. Any sample performance levels used in other assessments may be included that categorizes level descriptions of student performance.

Question 9: Attachment A, D. The Assessment – MAAP: Can MDE clarify the number of existing, state-owned items available for use in each grade and content area for both MAPP and MAAP-A? Specifically, how many operational and field-test items are currently available in the item bank per grade and subject?

Response: These are rough estimates. ELA is passage based; operational items may total 500 per grade and English II; Math operational items total 400 per grade; Science operational items total 225 per grades 5 & 8 and Biology; U.S. History operational items total 225.

Field Test ready item estimates: ELA and Math total 200 per grade and 200 for English II and Algebra I; science totals 150 items for grades 5 & 8 and Biology; U.S. History totals 200 field test ready items.

Question 10: Attachment A, P. Technical Requirements – MAAP and MAAP-A, Item o.1): What proof is acceptable for compliance to FedRAMP Low controls? What options are available for securely sharing confidential compliance evidence?

Response: MDE will accept a signed written statement from your company that verifies your Fed Ramp Low compliance.

Question 11: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 26: Can you confirm whether two operational forms of G3 ELA/Reading are required? What, if any, overlap is allowed?

Response: There are three Literacy Based Promotion Act (LBPA) testing opportunities required by law. Therefore, one full G3 ELA form and two retest forms are utilized each year. New forms are needed to rotate through and limit item/passage exposure. Overlap is possible if the bank is limited.

1. Full G3 ELA form with both sessions (session 1 reading and session 2 writing) for grade level MAAP/Accountability. Session 1 Reading is the "initial" LBPA assessment.
2. Retest 1- reading items without field test (FT) items
3. Retest 2- reading items without FT items

For more information see Mississippi Literacy-Based Promotion Act, page 6, numbers 1-3.

https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/Offices/MDE/OA/OSA/LPBA/bpa_faq_new_format_final.pdf

Question 12: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 30: Practice tests: Are practice tests required to be full length, blueprint adhering assessments? If not, what are the requirements for length and coverage for practice tests.

Response: **No, a representative sampling of the blueprint will suffice. Teachers/students would need as many objectives/standards included on the three tests, including samples of technology enhanced items for online versions. Current practice has been to release 25 items or more each year or every other year rather than one full-length sample test. The same objectives do not need to be covered repeatedly.**

Question 13: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 31: Practice tests: Please describe the item bank Mississippi currently has to use in practice tests.

Response: **Requirement 30 discusses practice tests - all available practice items are publicly available. We may have some Do Not Use (DNU) items that could be revised.**

Question 14: Attachment A, Q. MAAP Manuals and Training, Item 135 and Attachment A, S. MAAP-A Manuals and Training, Item 144: Service Desk hours: Please clarify when the Help Desk and Technical Support Desk must be in operation for Mississippi educators. Is it 24 hours a day, 7 days a week OR is it 7am – 5pm, Mon-Fri?

Response: **Both requirements, 135 and 144, have been revised in the Attachment A document. Please see Amendments 11 and 12 above.**

Question 15: Attachment A, O. Online Platform and Technology – MAAP and MAAP-A: Do you use/support industry-standard data exchange formats like OneRoster or Ed-Fi, or do you ONLY use custom APIs for data exchange?

Response: **MDE uses CEDS-based APIs, which are custom to Mississippi at this time. However, the APIs for Assessment Rostering have yet to be developed, and MDE would be open to discussing the possibility of aligning to or utilizing a standard format such as OneRoster. MSIS is incompatible with Ed-Fi.**

Question 16: Attachment A, D. The Assessment – MAAP: How are open-ended items on the ELA assessments field tested?

Response: **MDE previously used two writing prompts, one live and one field test, in every ELA session 2 (Writing) for the first five years of the contract. MDE will consider other methods of field testing (i.e., stand-alone field tests, cognitive labs).**

- Question 17:** Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 17: Is there a target number of items to release each year?
- Response:** **MDE does not release items from the operational tests.**
- Question 18:** Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Items 22 and 23: Do you field test items on your Braille or sign language forms?
- Response:** **MAAP has one accommodated form (Braille, LP, p/p, etc.) that includes FT items if a new form and “No Score” items if a reuse form.**
- Question 19:** RFP, Section VIII: Cost Information Submission: Does this RFP allow indirect costs?
- Response:** **All costs associated with providing a fully functional system that meets the requirements of RFP No. 4642 should be provided in the Attachment A-1.**
- Question 20:** Attachment A, L. MAAP-A REQUIREMENTS: Please confirm the number of standard-setting meetings required. Does MDE expect a standard meeting for each EOC alternate assessment: Alternate English II, Alternate Biology, Alternate Algebra I, and Alternate US History?
- Response:** **"Standard Setting may be required..." The MDE would like to change the MAAP-A assessment to an online, pre-constructed assessment. Standard setting will likely be required for such significant changes. If a standard setting is required for this process, propose the methodology with costs.**
- Question 21:** Attachment A, L. MAAP-A REQUIREMENTS, Item 88: Does MDE expect the twice-per-year planning meetings to be conducted in person or virtually? If in person, please provide specifications for the number of MDE participants, meeting location, and any other requirements that would impact costs and logistic planning.
- Response:** **In the past, MDE has used both in-person and virtual planning meetings. The MDE will consider either format. For in-person meetings, 5-6 MDE staff would be present, and the location could be provided by MDE or by the vendor at an off-site location.**
- Question 22:** RFP, Exhibit A: Standard Contract: If the successful proposal entity is a state government agency, would that change the type of contract awarded/negotiated, i.e., an Inter-Governmental Agency Agreement?
- Response:** **It is the State’s intent to negotiate the Standard Contract included as Exhibit A to the RFP. If the responding Vendor feels that certain terms and conditions do not apply or additional terms and conditions would be needed, they should be included in RFP, Section V: *Proposal Exception Summary*.**

Question 23: Attachment A, M. MAAP-A: Processing, Scoring, Reporting, Psychometric Work, Item 102: Please confirm MDE’s stipend policy

Response: Financial support to committee members includes the payment of a stipend of One Hundred Fifty Dollars (\$150.00) for teachers who are not under contract the days the meetings are held or One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00) per day substitute teacher reimbursement, along with travel-related and other relevant expenses for teachers at the rates agreed upon by MDE.

Question 24: Attachment A, L. MAAP-A REQUIREMENTS, M. MAAP-A: Processing, Scoring, Reporting, Psychometric Work, N. Test Security – MAAP-A, and O. Online Platform and Technology - MAAP and MAAP-A: For the alternate assessment, would MDE be interested in a instructionally embedded through year assessment model in lieu of a year-end adaptive summative assessment?

Response: Yes, please see Amendment 13 above.

Question 25: Attachment A, M. MAAP-A: Processing, Scoring, Reporting, Psychometric Work, Item 95: Could MDE please confirm the number of students (records) per grade and content?

Response: For MAAP, roughly 30,000 students per grade/content (public school enrollment). For MAAP-A, roughly 600 students per grade/subject and End-of-Course.

Question 26: Attachment A, M. MAAP-A: Processing, Scoring, Reporting, Psychometric Work, Item 95: Could MDE please confirm the number of districts that printed recorded labels should be budgeted for shipment? How many labels are needed per record?

Response: Mississippi has approximately 150 Districts/900 Schools. The MDE requests that the Individual Student Reports (ISRs) and labels are shipped to the districts but packaged by schools/subjects/grades or courses. [Principal-Schools and District Information](#)

Question 27: Is there any information on the size of the item banks by grade and subject that can be shared (for example, as reported in the technical report)?

Response: These are rough estimates. ELA is passage based; operational items may total 500 per grade and English II; Math operational items total 400 per grade; Science operational items total 225 per grades 5 & 8 and Biology; U.S. History Operational Items total 225.

Field Test ready item estimates: ELA and Math total 200 per grade and 200 for English II and Algebra I; science totals 150 items for grades 5 & 8 and Biology; U.S. History totals 200 field test ready items. To access the MDE technical reports from years 2015-2016 through 2023-2024, please follow the steps outlined in the response to Question 28.

Question 28: Is there a publicly available manual that contains information on the current psychometric methods and research that supports the validity of the intended test use?

Response: We have our technical reports on a special webpage “K-12 STUDENT ASSESSMENT TECHNICAL REPORTS.” Only people with the URL and password can access this webpage.

Follow these steps exactly to log in.

1. Click <https://mdek12.org/studentassessment/k-12-student-assessment-technical-reports/>
2. Type Password: MAAP1234! and click Enter. (It will take you to the MDE homepage.)
3. Copy the initial URL from step 1 and place in the address bar on the MDE homepage.
4. You will arrive at the “Protected: K-12 Student Assessment Technical Reports” and may access years 2015-2016 through 2023-2024.

Question 29: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 17: Can the State please elaborate on what additional information they are seeking in the vendor’s reply? This particular section does not have language such as “propose” or “outline”, so we would appreciate some guidance on what elaboration the state is seeking.

Response: Vendor must respond, as described in Attachment A, A. How to Respond to This Section, to the manner and degree in which they can meet the requirement as it is listed.

Question 30: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 19: How many different arrangements of the core items need to be provided at a minimum?

Response: This would be based on your psychometric analysis of what is possible without losing the validity and reliability of the assessment.

Question 31: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 19: Is there any information available on the current specifications on what constitutes ‘psychometric approved arrangements’ in a technical report or other documentation? What are the psychometric constraints?

Response: To access the MDE technical reports from years 2015-2016 through 2023-2024, please follow the steps outlined in the response to Question 28.

Question 32: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 20: Can the state please elaborate on what they mean by “test options”? Does the state mean answer options (e.g., in a multiple-choice question), which items/questions students receive in their test, or something else?

Response: Test options should be interpreted as answer choices/answer options.

Question 33: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 26: Attachment A states “Grade 3 reading session is taken early in the spring window and scored quickly for student feedback (preferably within two (2) weeks or less).” Is this within two weeks of the student taking the test?

Response: **Initial scores must be returned prior to each retest window/opportunity.**

Question 34: RFP, ITS RFP Response Checklist: Should the required proposal elements listed by provided as separate files on the USB drive? Or is the preference for bidders to combine elements into a single file?

If the preference is to combine, please confirm that the completed pricing workbook (*Appendix A Budget Summary Form*) should be provided in its native Excel format.

Response: **Yes, Vendors must provide one single USB flash drive that consists of individual files for each item outlined in the *ITS RFP Response Checklist* It is preferred that the Appendix A be provided in Excel format.**

Question 35: RFP, Section IV: Legal and Contractual Information, Item 38 and Attachment A, U. Vendor Qualifications, Item 151: Please confirm that a Performance Bond and/or Irrevocable Bank Letter of Credit is not required at the time of proposal submission and instead would be handled as part of the contract award process. The RFP document and Attachment A appear to have a discrepancy.

Response: **Yes, the Performance Bond or Irrevocable Letter of Credit must be procured at the Vendor’s expense before the execution of the contract. It is not required to have a Performance Bond or Irrevocable Letter of Credit at the time of proposal submission.**

Question 36: Appendix A – MAAP and MAAP-A Budget Summary form and RFP, Section VII: Technical Specifications, Item 4.2.3: Will options be included in the “total lifecycle cost” for evaluation purposes?

Should Middle School EOC Fall Admin, Benchmark Assessments Through-Year Assessments, and Lexile/Quantile pricing be moved to Options instead of other in the budget sheet?

Response: **Total lifecycle cost will be determined by the costs provided in the “Grand Total with Options”. Please see Amendment 13 above.**

Question 37: RFP, Section VII: Technical Specifications, Item 4.2.5.1: Does the provision for site visits apply to this procurement? If so, how should this be handled given the sites would be individual schools being serviced under a SEA contract?

Response: **Site visits are typically conducted for the State’s benefit, not for Vendors. The State reserves the right to conduct site visits, but it is not foreseeable for this RFP.**

Question 38: Attachment A: Please confirm whether bidders are permitted to recreate Attachment A, items 17-169, for their response, provided that the requirement text and numbering remain unchanged.

Response: **Yes, please see RFP, Section II: Proposal Submission Requirements, Item 8.**

Question 39: Attachment A, G. MAAP: Item Development, Item 42: The RFP states that preexisting item banks may be utilized in Year 1. What are the State's specifications for transfer and ingestion of those item banks to a new vendor? Will the State provide items as QTI, and if so, which version?

Response: **PDF, XML, and in industry recognized format such as QTI 2.0**

Question 40: Appendix A – MAAP and MAAP-A Budget Summary form and Attachment A, L. MAAP-A REQUIREMENTS, Item 76: Should the line-item Cognitive Labs/Item Tryout include the label "if needed" for the MAAP 3-8 pricing sheet tab if the only reference for cognitive labs in Attachment A is related to an Alternate U.S. History test?

Response: **Item 76 only applies to the Alternate U.S. History test. Yes, please include this solution and price which may include stand-alone field tests/cognitive labs.**

Question 41: Appendix A – MAAP and MAAP-A Budget Summary form, Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 29, Attachment A, I. MAAP: Processing, Scoring, Reporting, Psychometric Work, Item 67, and Attachment A, M. MAAP-A: Processing, Scoring, Reporting, Psychometric Work, Item 102: Please confirm all costs for Standard Setting should be added to the optional pricing line items and not included in the Psychometrics section Other-Standard Setting.

Response: **Please see Amendment 13 above.**

Question 42: Appendix A – MAAP and MAAP-A Budget Summary form and Attachment A, I. MAAP: Processing, Scoring, Reporting, Psychometric Work, Item 49: Where should bidders include human scoring and AI scoring on the cost sheet?

Response: **Please see Amendment 13 above.**

Question 43: Appendix A – MAAP and MAAP-A Budget Summary form and Attachment A, I. MAAP: Processing, Scoring, Reporting, Psychometric Work, Item 56: There are two identical line items in the cost sheets for both 3-8 and EOC for Quantile and Lexile information levels. Please identify which category bidders should use, Reporting or Other, or if the pricing should be moved under Options.

Response: **Please see Amendment 13 above. Vendors could put similar categories on one sheet and leave the others as 0, especially with grades 3-8 MAAP and EOC MAAP.**

Question 44: Attachment A, S. MAAP-A Manuals and Training, Item 144: Can you provide the inbound support contacts for the highest volume day, as well as the end of the month summary for inbound support contacts?

Response: **For a normal day of testing, we could have approximately 150 calls. For emergencies, this could cause an increase of up to 300-350 calls a day. The number of calls to a vendor for a recent test administration window was approximately 3,000.**

Question 45: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards Item 17: Item #17 states that for the EOC tests, "The fall test form may be a previously used form provided no items have been released as practice/sample items or test security breach to the public." Please confirm that form re-use applies for any year of the contract/contract extension and not just for Fall 2025.

Does MDE have a previously administered form unreleased for each EOC available to use as-is for Fall 2025?

Response: **Yes, there are EOC forms available for reuse for Fall 2025.**

Question 46: Attachment A, G. MAAP Item Development, Items 39 and 42: Please confirm that while MDE has already-field tested, operational eligible items to use to build the operational core forms for Spring 2026, MDE expects the selected Vendor to develop or provide new items for the field test slots in the Spring 2026 forms (i.e. MDE does **not** have field-test eligible content to use).

Will this new content (newly developed or vendor licensed) need to be brought to an item review meeting with Mississippi teachers before the items are put into forms for Spring of 2026?

Response: **MAAP Math and ELA will have FT eligible items. The current vendor will have a Content and Bias review for these items the week of June 2. The MDE has a strong science item bank and U.S. History item bank for MAAP.**

Question 47: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 26: Are the new retest forms for Gr 3 reading built each year? Where do the items come from? Do the retest forms have the same test design and blueprint as the MAAP Grade 3 ELA reading session?

Response: **(1) No, but MDE requires a new form build to rotate tests for retest 1 and retest 2.
(2) Items are located in the item bank; it can be an intact grade 3 reading test with removal of the field test items.
(3) Yes, to both; MDE requires separate scoring tables for all retests used for grade 3.**

Question 48: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 30: Are the 3 practice tests in each grade/subject all to be available in AY 25-26, or is MDE asking for 3 practice test forms to be built over the life of the contract + extensions?

Is each practice test expected to be full operational (core) length?

Where are the items for the practice test supposed to come from? For example: newly developed but not field tested; or field tested and/or used operationally and then removed from bank for practice test use, or either?

Does all the same apply to the MAAP-A practice tests?

Response:

- (1) Practice tests may be developed over the life of the contract.**
- (2) A representative sampling of the blueprint is an alternative to a full-length practice test.**
- (3) The MDE has found that releasing 25 items or more each year or every other year is better than one full-length sample test.**
- (4) Practice items have come from retired operational items, teacher-written items that have been edited, revamped items lost in data review, etc. The plan should include a breadth of objectives/standards with samples of technology enhanced items to use in online and paper-based testing (so students can see differences. The same objectives do not need to be covered repeatedly.**
- (5) Yes, MAAP-A would also be developed over the life of the contract. If using a pre-constructed assessment, hopefully sample items will already be part of this platform.**

Question 49:

Attachment A, G. MAAP: Item Development, Item 38: It is noted that items to be reviewed by Mississippi teachers should “Include level of difficulty and Lexile levels for these items.”

For Lexile levels, do you mean for ELA passages only?

For level of difficulty, do you mean a pre-field testing estimate such as “easy, medium, hard”?

Response:

Items and passages should be reviewed for alignment with the Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards for ELA, level of difficulty, and Lexile levels. The level of difficulty could be easy, medium, and hard.

Question 50:

Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 29: There is 1 operational writing prompt. It appears from the table and blueprints online that there is not also a field test writing prompt embedded. Is that correct?

How is the operational writing prompt refreshed each year (particularly if there is no current field testing)?

Response:

A rotation plan for using writing prompts is required. Stand-alone field-test (FT) writing prompts may be necessary at some point.

Question 51:

Attachment A, L. MAAP-A REQUIREMENTS, Item 76: Please clarify the timeline for the development of the U.S. History test for MAAP-A as no items or resources currently exist for that assessment.

Namely, is the test expected to be operational in year 2 (AY26-27)? Or is the expectation that the test blueprint will be designed and items will be developed

in year 1 and then field tested in year 2 (which would put operational testing in year 3)?

Response: **The MDE would expect a new MAAP-A U.S. History assessment to be operational in year 2.**

Question 52: Attachment A, L. MAAP-A REQUIREMENTS, Item 73: Please confirm that the fall and spring MAAP-A test for the EOCs (Alternate English II, Alternate Algebra I, Alternate Biology, Alternate U.S. History) should be different forms? Is any overlap of items allowed from fall to spring of the same academic year for the alternate assessment?

Response: **We have less than 100 students taking the fall EOC alternate assessment. MDE would consider reusing a test; however, MDE would like to move to an online format for the assessment, not totally paper based. MDE is very interested in a pre-constructed test in the future.**

Question 53: Attachment A, G. MAAP: Item Development, Item 35: Does MDE allow the use of any commissioned texts in addition to published works for its ELA passages?

Response: **Yes. Commissioned texts are allowed provided they are useable through the life of the assessment.**

Question 54: Attachment A, G. MAAP: Item Development, Item 40: Is it a requirement for Mississippi teachers to write at least some percentage of new items each year for annual new item development?

Response: **The MDE plans to continue to incorporate Mississippi teachers in the item writing process, but a percentage is not specified.**

Question 55: Attachment A, D. The Assessment – MAAP: The online U.S. History blueprint linked in this section lists the following as an item type:

Constructed Response (CR): Text Entry/Short Response items consist of multi-select 2-4 answers/many options and multipart items.

Is it correct to interpret that these “CR” items are to be machine-scored, but they are written as multi-select items or composite (multi-part items) in order to require higher-order thinking and more sophisticated responses?

Are these CR items worth 2 points?

Response: **U.S. History CR items require very short text and are machine scored. Rubrics from the item developers determine if these are 1-point or 2-point items.**

Question 56: Attachment A, L. MAAP-A REQUIREMENTS: (L) MAAP-A Requirements state that for year 1 for MAAP-A, “the current item bank may be utilized as needed” to build the tests. Will only 1 form per grade/content be built for each administration in year 1? Does the form contain only core/operational task (as we assume are represented in the online MAAP-A blueprint interpretive guide),

or are field test tasks also included? If yes, please provide the number of additional field test tasks for each grade/content to bidders understand the full form to be constructed.

Response: Yes, the MDE currently has passage or scenario paper-based tests for all subjects. Each test has one scenario and develops tasks that are scored on scales of 0-4 with 4 being the highest. There are several "core" tasks with multiple questions on the forms with one field test slot. The current tests have 12 tasks per grade in math, EOC Algebra I; grades 5 & 8 science, EOC Biology I. There are 15 tasks per grade in ELA and EOC English II. The MDE has ELA passages developed that never had items developed; however, the MDE is interested in moving away from the current format of these assessments.

Question 57: Attachment A, W. Other Requirements, Item 157.b: Attachment A notes providing "categorized Performance Level Descriptors to measure student abilities in determining intervention for review." When providing samples, what is the grade and content requirement? Is one sample (one grade of one content area) sufficient?

Please provide the intent and clarification regarding "determining intervention for review" and the type of information to satisfy this requirement.

Response: MDE is exploring using an online, pre-constructed assessment that is established and used successfully for the SCD population. The assessment should have categorized performance level descriptors outlined that can measure student abilities and aid teachers in determining intervention strategies. Any sample performance levels used in other assessments may be included that categorizes level descriptions of student performance.

Question 58: Attachment A, I. MAAP: Processing, Scoring, Reporting, Psychometric Work, Item 67: Attachment A notes "A Standard Setting may be required at some point... provide a price in the optional part of the budget summary sheet for these meetings."

Should the price be provided based on all content areas and grades, or a particular content area and grade(s) as an example?

Response: Standard setting was established in 2016 for the math and ELA. These subjects will likely need to be revisited within the life of this contract for validity and reliability purposes.

Question 59: Attachment A, I. MAAP: Processing, Scoring, Reporting, Psychometric Work, Item 66: It is noted that "An existing outline for a technical manual is in place for Mississippi."

Can MDE please provide this outline for reference?

Response: To access the MDE technical reports from years 2015-2016 through 2023-2024, please follow the steps outlined in the response to Question 28.

Question 60: Attachment A, I. MAAP: Processing, Scoring, Reporting, Psychometric Work, Item 66: Can the State please provide a recent technical report with all appendices for MAAP and MAAP-A?

If a recent tech report is not available, please provide any other technical documentation available that describes the current technical specifications (i.e., measurement models, performance level scale score ranges, etc.) as well as examples of recent score reports for reference.

Response: **To access the MDE technical reports from years 2015-2016 through 2023-2024, please follow the steps outlined in the response to Question 28.**

Question 61: Attachment A, V. Deliverables, Item 154, table “MAAP and MAPPA-A Meeting References”: For consistency between vendor proposals and assistance with calculating expenses (e.g., facility rental, overnight accommodations, provided meals, stipend, participant reimbursement, etc.), can the State please provide the anticipated duration for each of the meetings listed within the provided table?

E.g., The MAAP Bias Review would run 2 days; The MAAP-A Bias Review would run 1 day, etc.

Response: **These durations are not set. Question 62 provides an example of estimates that may be proposed.**

Question 62: Attachment A, V. Deliverables, Item 154, table “MAAP and MAPPA-A Meeting References”: For consistency between vendor proposals and assistance with calculating expenses, can the State advise the number of individual groups and durations that should be used for the Content and Bias review meetings?

E.g., 10 Total Groups:

- ELA 3-5: budget for 4 days.
- ELA 6-8: budget for 4 days.
- Math 3-5: budget for 4 days.
- Math 6-8: budget for 4 days.
- Science 5: budget for 2 days.
- Science 8: budget for 2 days.
- Algebra I: budget for 2 days.
- English II: budget for 2 days.
- Biology: budget for 2 days.
- U.S. History: budget for 2 days

Response: **These estimates are in line with what we've used before. It depends on the item bank needs and number of forms needed.**

Question 63: Attachment A, V. Deliverables, Item 154, table “MAAP and MAPPA-A Meeting References” and G. MAAP: Item Development, Item 43: For consistency between vendor proposals and assistance with calculating expenses, can the

State please advise which meetings should be calculated using the stipend of \$150.00/day and the substitute reimbursement of \$100.00/day?

Response: **If meeting is hosted during the school year (teachers are on contract) then the district receives a stipend of \$100 per day (substitute reimbursement). If meeting is held outside of the school calendars (after hours, summer break), a \$150 per day stipend is paid directly to the participant.**

Question 64: Attachment A, Q. MAAP Manuals and Training, Item 130: For consistency between vendor proposals and assistance with calculating expenses, can the State please advise on the following:

- In year 1 will both the Spring and Fall DTC Training be in-person?
- How many locations will the in-person training(s) be held in?
- How many days should be planned for the trainings?
- Are any expenses (mileage/stipend/sub reimbursement/meals) paid to attendees?
- How many DTCs attend each session (Spring/Fall) of the DTC Training?

Response: **If a new platform is selected, then in-person training for the first year would be important, especially for the spring administration. After the Vendor system is established, virtual training should be sufficient.**

In the past the MDE has used and paid for facilities around the Jackson area and had 2-training sessions per day; this is normally done for 4 days. The MDE allows two or three per district (DTC plus two others) to attend. No expenses are paid to the attendees.

This training would only be for the new technology; the MDE still plans to use virtual modules to train for MDE policies. The vendor can work with the MDE to have additional virtual training sessions. The DTCs will need to train their school personnel so having video demonstrations and detailed manuals/guides are very helpful.

Question 65: Attachment A, S. MAAP-A Manuals and Training, Item 139: For consistency between vendor proposals and assistance with calculating expenses, can the State please advise on the following:

- In year 1 will both the Spring and Fall DTC Training be in-person?
- How many locations will the in-person training(s) be held in?
- How many days should be planned for the trainings?
- Are any expenses (mileage/stipend/sub reimbursement/meals) paid to attendees?
- How many DTCs attend each session (Spring/Fall) of the DTC Training?

Response: **See response to number 64.**

Question 66: Attachment A, G. MAAP: Item Development, Items 37, 41, 43, and 45: Throughout these sections, there is reference to Item Writing Workshops that include MS Teachers.

For consistency between vendor proposals and assistance with calculating expenses, can the State please include these meetings within the table on page 44 and/or advise on the following:

- The number of meetings held annually?
- How many days are the workshops held for?
- How many educators would be in attendance?
- How many SES Staff members will attend?
- Are any expenses (mileage/stipend/sub reimbursement/meals) paid to attendees?

Response: **This information may vary depending on the need for additional items for the items bank. MDE is considering using leased items, shared banks, etc., and the custom-written items numbers may decline. The MDE would like MS teachers to be involved in these reviews.**

In previous contracts, these sessions have ranged from 2-4 days maximum and usually held during the summer. The stipend and expenses are explained in Item 43 on page 11. See Question 62 and the State's response.

Question 67: RFP, Section II: Proposal Submission Requirements, Item 9.11: There are questions for MAAP-A in which vendor's responses may be the same as their responses provided for MAAP.

Would ITS prefer vendors repeat responses (when they are the same), or would ITS prefer vendors state that the process is the same as described in the MAAP response?

Response: **To ease the evaluation process, the State prefers that Vendors repeat responses.**

Question 68: RFP, Section VII: Technical Specifications, Item 4.1.3: Are the following sections of Attachment A included in the scored Management Factors?

- U. Vendor Qualifications
- V. Deliverables
- W. Other Requirements
- X. Reports and Dashboards
- Y. Issue Tracking
- Z. Data Management for MAAP and MAAP-A

Response: **Yes.**

Question 69: RFP, Exhibit A: Standard Contract, Article 43.3: **Change Order Rate and Procedure:** The RFP text talks about vendors providing hourly rates for change orders and references Exhibit A. Exhibit A (page 65) is titled "Payment Schedule" and the page is blank. Would MDE please update Exhibit A?

Response: The Standard Contract, included as Exhibit A to the RFP, is a sample contract and will be the terms and conditions that the State will negotiate with the awarded Vendor. In the final negotiated contract, the payment schedule, derived from the Appendix A, will be inserted as Exhibit A, Payment Schedule.

Question 70: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 19 and Appendix A, MAAP and MAAP-A Budget Summary form: **Additional Core Form:** The text indicates that an additional core form is an option, and the Budget Summary Form has rows for both “Optional – One core form spiraled within each session” and “Optional – spiraled answers in items – security” under “Test Delivery System.”

If these are options, should vendors put pricing for this in the “Options” section below the grand total?

Response: Please see Amendment 13 above.

Question 71: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 117 and Appendix A, MAAP and MAAP-A Budget Summary form: **Video Sign Language:** The text indicates that video sign language is an option for MAAP (pg. 7), but the Budget Summary Form lists video sign language under “Ancillary Development.” If this is an option, should vendors put pricing for this in the “Options” section below the grand total?

Is video sign language also required for MAAP-A? If so, please confirm that pricing should also be included in the “Options” section.

Response: Please see Amendment 13 above.

Question 72: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 24, Attachment A, O. Online Platform and Technology - MAAP and MAAP-A. Item 117, and Appendix A, MAAP and MAAP-A Budget Summary form: **Bi-Lingual Glossing:** Item #24 (pg. 7) references bi-lingual glossing for the MAAP. Item #117 (pg. 22) mentions the same for the MAAP-A, but with additional requirements: “in a minimum of the top five (5) languages in the state.”

Since bi-lingual glossing can be expensive, would MDE please clarify the requirements? If bi-lingual glossing is required in 5 languages for both programs, please provide the five different languages needed in Mississippi. (Pricing can vary depending on the language(s).)

Also, this is currently on the Budget Summary Form under “Ancillary Development.” Should vendors provide pricing in the “Options” section?

Response: The top 5 languages in Mississippi are (1) Spanish, (2) Arabic, (3) Vietnamese, (4) Chinese, (5) Gujarati. Please see Amendment 13 above.

Question 73: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 26: **Grade 3 Reading Retest:** Please confirm there are two unique, separate forms for the grade 3 reading retest opportunities. If so, are PDF, Braille, and

large print versions needed? Are these shipped out separately from the main shipment?

Response: Please see Amendment 13 above. General Education students take the test online. All accommodated booklets, including Braille, paper and large print, are shipped out prior to the retest window(s) opening. Quantities are provided directly to vendor through an additional materials order.

Question 74: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 29: Field Test Writing Prompts: Are writing prompts included in the field test count in the table? If so, how many unique field test writing prompts are included in each form? Does the department have items that are written and ready to be field tested?

If writing prompts will be field tested, will MDE require rangefinding? If so, will educators be involved? Will RF be in-person or virtual? Are there rangefinding specifications such as number committee participants by grade?

Response:

- (1) There are no available FT writing prompts.
- (2) If FT writing prompts, range finding is required using teacher committees.
- (3) Virtual RF is an option; however, keeping materials secure is a concern.
- (4) Standard industry practice is acceptable (possibly find committee requirements in earlier tech manuals).

Question 75: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 29, Attachment A, MAAP: Test Security, and Attachment A, L. MAAP-A REQUIREMENTS: Item Bank Counts: Would MDE please provide the counts of items by grade and subject for MAAP and MAAP-A that are currently in the item bank and available to use on future assessments?

For all grade and content areas, considering recent exposure issues discussed in the RFP on page 15, does MDE have confidence in the item bank as a whole and the ability to select existing items to build new core forms for 2025-2026?

Response: These are rough estimates. ELA is passage based; operational items may total 500 per grade and English II; Math operational items total 400 per grade; Science operational items total 225 per grades 5 & 8 and Biology; U.S. History Operational Items total 225.

Field Test ready item estimates: ELA and Math total 200 per grade and 200 for English II and Algebra I; science totals 150 items for grades 5 & 8 and Biology; U.S. History totals 200 field test ready items.

We have confidence in the custom item banks; however, MDE is still very interested in shared banks, leasing items, etc. The custom development of all items is very time consuming and costly. For MAAP-A, we cannot continue down the road of the custom-developed test that is scored by teachers and totally paper-based. We want to move toward an online pre-constructed test for our SCD population.

Question 76 Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 30: Practice Test: Should writing prompts be included in the practice tests?

Response: **Yes.**

Question 77 Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 31 and Appendix A, MAAP and MAAP-A Budget Summary form: Benchmark Test: The test indicates that a benchmark test is an option, but the Budget Summary Form lists Benchmark Assessments under “Other.” If this is an option, should vendors put pricing for this in the “Options” section below the grand total?

Response: **Please see Amendment 13 above.**

Question 78: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 32 and Appendix A, MAAP and MAAP-A Budget Summary form: Through-Course Assessment: The text indicates that MDE is interested in exploring the option of transitioning to through-course assessments with the “next cycle of assessments.” To ensure consistent RFP responses and pricing, in what year should this transition occur?

Additionally, the text seems to imply that this is an option, yet it is listed in the Budget Summary Form under “Other.” If this is an option, should vendors put pricing for this in the “Options” section below the grand total.

Response: **Please see Amendment 13 above. This would be an option to explore in Years 3-5.**

Question 79 Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 35 and Appendix A, MAAP and MAAP-A Budget Summary form: Lexiles/Quantiles (in the passage/item development process): The text indicates that Lexile/Quantile information during passage/item development is an option, but the Budget Summary Form list Lexile/Quantile information under “Other.” If this is an option, should vendors put pricing for this in the “Options” section below the grand total?

Response: **These are not optional costs. Please see Amendment 13 above.**

Question 80: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 49 and Appendix A, MAAP and MAAP-A Budget Summary form: Writing Prompt Scoring: There is no line item in the Budget Summary Form for scoring of writing prompts. Please include line item in the revised Budget Summary Form.

Also, the text indicates that AI scoring should be included as an option. Can vendors include AI scoring as part of our base proposal, with the understanding the MDE requires at least one year of human scoring as comparison?

Response: **Please see Amendment 13 above. Vendors should be aware that any functionality requested in the Technical Requirements should be costed in the Appendix A regardless of whether it was included as a line item, or**

Vendor may be required to provide those products and/or functionality at no cost to the State or face disqualification.

Question 81: Attachment A, I. MAAP: Processing, Scoring, Reporting, Psychometric Work, Items 56 and 64 and Appendix A, MAAP and MAAP-A Budget Summary form: Lexiles/Quantiles (in reporting): The text indicates that the Lexile/Quantile information in reporting is an option, but the Budget Summary Form lists Lexile/Quantile information under "Reporting." If this is an option, should vendors put pricing for this in the "Options" section below the grand total?

Response: **No. Please see Amendment 13 above.**

Question 82: Attachment A, I. MAAP: Processing, Scoring, Reporting, Psychometric Work, Item 67, Attachment A, L. MAAP-A REQUIREMENTS, and Appendix A, MAAP and MAAP-A Budget Summary form: Standard Setting: The text indicates that standard setting may be needed for the MAAP (pg. 15) and MAAP-A (pg. 16, 20) and pricing should be included as an option, but the Budget Summary Form lists standard setting under "Psychometrics." If this is an option, should vendors put pricing for this in the "Options" section below the grand total?

Response: **No. Please see Amendment 13 above.**

Question 83: Attachment A, J. MAAP: Test Security, Items 70 and 71: Data Forensics: Please confirm that vendors should not be including data forensics scope in their proposals, and that MDE will be contracting separately for this work?

Response: **Vendors must provide a response to these requirements to detail their test security abilities. However, MDE will have a third-party forensic company to conduct an independent validation of student data for MAAP.**

Question 84: Attachment A, L. MAAP-A REQUIREMENTS, Item 78: MAAP-A Adaptive: The RFP mentions that the Department is interested in an option for "an online, adaptive MAAP-A test."

Please clarify if the preference is for the online adaptive functionality to be driven by computer algorithm (sometimes referenced as "computer adaptive"), or if the preference is for the online-delivered adaptive functionality to be controlled by local educator choice (local educators selectively adapt the online assessment by choosing the entry point for each test question so as to be compatible with how an educator perceives an individual student's capabilities)?

Response: **The preference is for a computer algorithm adaptive assessment, not educator-controlled functionality.**

Question 85: Attachment A, Q. MAAP Manuals and Training, Item 135 and Attachment A, MAAP-A Manuals and Training, Item 144: Technical Support: Requirements #135 for MAAP and #144 for MAAP-A indicate that 24/7 technical support is required. However, there is also text in these sections, as well as in the subsequent Customer Support and Maintenance charts, that says support is only required during the hours of 7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Please confirm that 24/7 support is NOT required for the contract, as this would be substantially more expensive than the standard support during the hours of 7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Response: Please see Amendments 11 and 12 above.

Question 86: Attachment A, V. Deliverables, Item 154, table “MAAP and MAPPA-A Meeting References”: **Committee Configurations:** In the column outlining the # of educators attending the content reviews and data reviews, please confirm that the counts are for each grade or grade range.

Response: **ELA (Grades 3-4, Grades 5-6, Grades 7-8, and English II)
Math (Grades 3-5, Grades 6-7, Grade 8 & Algebra I)
This is usually 8-10 people per group and can total to 64-65 people (Math Grades 3-5 could have 9 people, 3 per grade).**

Question 87: Appendix A, MAAP and MAAP-A Budget Summary form: As noted in several of our questions above, we believe that a revised version of the Budget Summary Form is needed to accurately capture the Optional costs that MDE has requested throughout Attachment A. It is important to include these items as Options so that differences in vendor solutions and pricing are not compared against each other in the cost evaluation.

For your reference, we have included a list of the line items that should be moved to the Options section for the MAAQP G3-8 and MAAP EOC Pricing Sheet below:

- Under Ancillary Development, Other-video sign language
- Under Ancillary Development, Other-embedded EL word-to-word glossary
- Under Psychometrics, Other-Standard Setting
- Under Test Delivery System, Optional – One core form spiraled within each session
- Under Test Delivery System, Optional – spiraled answers in items – security
- Under Reporting, Other – Quantile and Lexile information levels
- Under Other, Benchmark Assessments
- Under Other, Through-Year Assessments
- Under Other, Optional Lexile and Quantile level information

In addition, there is no line item currently in the Budget Summary Form Pricing Sheets for MAAP G3-8 and MAAP EOC for the following option as listed in Attachment A, #30, p. 9:

- Option for automated practice test scoring with predicted score

For your reference, we have included a list of the line items that should be moved to the Options section for the MAAP-A Pricing Sheets below:

- Under Content Development, Other – Cognitive Labs/Item Tryout
- Under Ancillary Development, Online Braille Options
- Under Psychometrics, Other – Standard Setting
- Under Test Delivery System, Computer Adaptive Costs

Response: Please see Amendment 13 above.

Question 88: Appendix A, MAAP and MAAP-A Budget Summary form: Cost Evaluation: Please confirm that the proposal pricing evaluation formula will be based on the Grand Total lines on each spreadsheet and not on the Grand Total with Options lines.

Response: Total lifecycle cost will be determined by the costs provided in the “Grand Total with Options”. Vendor should provide a cost for all optional items.

Question 89: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 17: In item 17, MDE mentioned that there may be released items. Is there any requirement to release items from the MAAP assessments?

Response: The RFP states "The fall test form may be a previously used form provided no items have been released as practice/sample items or test security breach to the public." MDE does not release items except for practice test or in a test security breach. If an item is marked "do no use" because of these situations, MDE will not expect this to be on any assessment test in the future unless it was completely revamped.

Question 90: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 19: For the requested cost option of 1 core form that has different arrangements of core items, would these differently arranged forms extend the length of the contract?

Response: The forms would be utilized each year. If this technology is not available for online testing, Vendor should propose any other option that your technology could support.

Question 91: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 19: Please clarify whether MDE desires refreshment of the test forms every year of the contract, or whether MDE hopes to arrive at a set of intact forms that will be put in rotation for the MAAP and MAAP-A assessments (thereby reducing the development needs over time.)

Response: MDE will consider options that will ensure the security and validity of the assessment; however, the MDE is concerned about the compromise of items and/or forms and is looking for a plan that addresses these test security concerns.

Question 92: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 20: Please clarify whether “test options” refers to the options in the multiple-choice items.

Response: Yes, these are the answer choices on the multiple-choice items.

Question 93: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 22a: Are there guidelines for “Culture, race/ethnicity, gender” that were used for the existing item bank?

Response: Items were developed under the premise of Universal Design and to be accessible by all students.
https://nceo.info/Assessments/universal_design

Question 94: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 23: Would the use of a single intact Braille and large print form be acceptable under this contract?

Response: In the past, the MDE has used a rotation for Braille but the Large Print has always matched the core form 1 each year. Vendor should be aware that MDE is seeking Braille technology with traditional Braille Booklets as explained in requirement #23.

Question 95: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 26: For the Grade 3 ELA Reading test, are multiple forms required each year to allow for the retest?

Response: Yes. There are two retest opportunities that would require a different form. Having multiple forms to rotate through is preferred.

Question 96: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 30: Are there existing practice tests?

Response: Yes, see the MAAP website and follow the content resource links: [Mississippi Academic Assessment Program \(MAAP\) – Student Assessment](#)

Question 97: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 30: Does newly developed content for the practice tests need to follow all the same requirements of the assessment content development (for example, teacher committee review)?

Response: Yes, the MDE expects Mississippi teacher input/feedback to ensure the integrity of the items.

Question 98: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 30: On what timeline do the 3 practice tests need to be available for use?

Response: Practice tests would need to be developed during the life of the contract. The expectation is to have as many objectives covered as possible and to include multiple choice with a variation of Technology Enhanced (TE) items for practice.

Question 99: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 30: Do the practice tests match the operational blueprint and can release items be used from the existing operational item bank?

Response: Yes, the current practice tests match the operational blueprints or a smaller subset of the blueprint. This development of three practice tests is over the life of this contract and does not have to be the same length of the operational test.

Question 100: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 31: In which school year would MDE like to have the benchmark test option available?

Response: **Possibly around Year 3 of this contract.**

Question 101: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 31: As part of the cost option, may the operational items in the current item bank be available for the benchmark assessments?

Response: **Yes, if they have not been previously released.**

Question 102: Attachment A, F. MAAP: Test Development and Alignment to Standards, Item 32: As part of the cost option, may the operational items in the current item bank be available for the through-course assessments?

Response: **Yes, if they have not been previously released.**

Question 103: Attachment A, G. MAAP: Item Development: Does MDE object, in principle, to the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) by the vendor or by Mississippi teachers as part of the ideas-generation and development process for passages, stimuli, and item content?

Response: **The MDE does not object.**

Question 104: Attachment A, G. MAAP: Item Development, Item 34: The item types mentioned in item 34 are all machine-scored. However, in the blueprint for U.S. History EOC, a Constructed Response (CR) item type is referenced. Are the CR items in U.S. History also developed as machine-scored, or can they be developed as hand-scored?

Response: **Currently, the U.S. History Constructed Response items are short answer items and are machine scored.**

Question 105: Attachment A, G. MAAP: Item Development, Item 34: Although multiple choice (MC) item options' rationales appear in instruction and assessment guidance materials, are rationales for options required during the development of MC items in ELA, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies?

Response: **In the past, item writers provided rationales for multiple-choice answers to help with the review process and various committees/MDE staff to determine appropriateness of distractors.**

The MDE also provided a "rationales" document for the Algebra I and English II practice test as a remediation/answer key for teachers. This was not completed for grades 3-8.

Question 106: Attachment A, G. MAAP: Item Development, Item 35: At each assessed grade, does MDE have target development percentages of commissioned reading passages ("original work") and public domain reading passages?

Response: **No. MDE needs passages that will extend the life of the item bank/assessment without the possibility of revocation.**

Question 107: Attachment A, G. MAAP: Item Development, Item 35: Recognizing “the use of copyrighted materials in the development of assessment items shall be avoided,” is MDE interested in pursuing reading assessment passages with traditional permissions via a third-party vendor that specializes in arranging cost-effective licensing agreements with a range of publishers?

Response: **Yes. Permissions must be for the life of the passage set/item bank including practice test publishing. We've lost items due to authors revoking their permissions to continue publishing passages/items.**

Question 108: Attachment A, G. MAAP: Item Development, Item 35: Regarding text complexity, besides MDE’s interest in measuring quantitatively via Lexile, is MDE interested in qualitative measurements of text complexity (e.g., via a rubric)?

Response: **Yes, reporting Lexile/Quantile measurements may be used in instructional supports and identifying resources for use in the classroom.**

Question 109: Attachment A, G. MAAP: Item Development, Items 37 and 40: May item writing workshops with teachers take place virtually or should the vendor plan for the workshops to take place in Mississippi?

Response: **The MDE has utilized virtual workshops in the past and is open to this method; however, the MDE would prefer in-person workshops.**

Question 110: Attachment A, G. MAAP: Item Development, Item 38 and Attachment A, V. Deliverables, Item 154, table “MAAP and MAPPA-A Meeting References”: May bias review and content review committee meetings take place virtually or should the vendor plan for the meeting to take place in Mississippi?

Response: **The MDE has utilized virtual meetings in the past and is open to this method; however, the MDE would prefer in-person meetings.**

Question 111: Attachment A, G. MAAP: Item Development, Item 40: Does MDE have a list of teachers from prior committees that the vendor can use to recruit for item development in year 1 of the contract or does MDE expect that teacher involvement will begin after the first teacher committees in the new contract?

Response: **The MDE recruits teacher committees through a survey application and selects members with varying committee experience depending on the task. Selected members and alternates contact information will be provided to the vendor based on committee requirements.**

Question 112: Attachment A, G. MAAP: Item Development, Item 46: Will MDE share any existing Style documentation with the new vendor?

Response: **Yes. Style guides are available. We are open to updates based on the current best practices.**

Question 113: Attachment A, Item I. MAAP: Processing, Scoring, Reporting, Psychometric Work, Item 49: Will the vendor need to plan for a range-finding meetings that involve MDE staff or teachers for hand-scored items?

Response: **Yes, unless the proposal has an alternate way of doing these meetings.**

Question 114: Attachment A, U. Vendor Qualifications, Item 149: Does a presence in Mississippi contribute to the Vendor's score?

Response: **No.**

Question 115: Appendix A – MAAP and MAAP-A Budget Summary form: In order to provide costs for transition activities, could MDE provide information on the current format of the existing item bank, MAAP and MAAP-A forms, practice tests, and other relevant materials?

Response: **All documents are PDF, XML, and in industry recognized format such as QTI 2.0.**

RFP responses are due April 14, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. (Central Time).

If you have any questions about the information above or if we can be of further assistance, please email the Solicitations Team at RFP@its.ms.gov.

cc: ITS Project File Number 48220