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October 13, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: Legislative Education Study Committee

FR: Travis Dulany

RE: STAFF BRIEF: HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY ASSESSMENT – REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

INTRODUCTION

On September 24, 2014, Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) staff received notice from the Public Education Department (PED) regarding the release of a request for applications (RFA) soliciting responses for New Mexico's High School Equivalency Test(s). The summary information outlined below discusses some key points of the RFA; however, those interested in reviewing the detailed information contained within the 64-page document may wish to visit the department's website at the following link:

<http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/RFPDocs/2014%20HSE%20RFA%20Final.pdf>

A separate document for the RFA price sheet can be found at the following link:

<http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/RFPDocs/2014%20HSE%20Price%20Sheet.xlsx>

Printed and electronic copies are also available upon request to LESC staff.

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Timeline

The RFA was released on or around September 24, 2014 on the department’s website and specifies:

- applicants must submit responses to PED by 5:00 p.m. on November 10, 2014;
- the selection of a vendor is scheduled to occur by December 3, 2014;
- if selected, an applicant’s assessment must be available commencing January 1, 2015;
- further development of the test after January 1, 2015 is permitted, but “the test must meet New Mexico Common Core State Standards by January 1, 2015”; and
- the term contract is anticipated to begin upon execution of the contract and be effective for three years thereafter, with the ability to renew for up to three, one-year terms.

Criteria for Evaluation

PED notes the following evaluation rubric for applicants:

A. Executive Summary	N/A
B. Qualifications and Experience	10 points
C. Management Plan	10 points
D. Technical Plan	50 points
E. Work Plan	<u>10 points</u>
Total	80 points
F. Price	<u>20 points</u>
Total	20 Points

Additional details on the formula for evaluating the respondent’s price proposal can be found on page 54 of the RFA.

Price

The “Intent” section of the RFA states that an award will be made to the “responsible and responsive respondent(s)” that PED determines to provide the “best value to the state.” The department also notes, “The High School Equivalency Credential Program is supported by fees assessed to test takers for the assessment. This testing fee must include all costs associated with delivery of the high school equivalency assessment, including all accommodations.”

Appendix E of the document, which is the Respondents’ Price Sheet, specifies that the test “price must reflect a minimum of \$40 in test center administration costs per test candidate.” This appears to be consistent with the current GED test pricing structure in which testing centers are compensated \$5.00 per hour for each GED assessment delivered (the entire battery of GED tests takes approximately eight hours to complete, for a total of \$40 in compensation to the testing center). The total cost for the current GED test is \$120 for the entire battery of exams.

As the committee will recall, prior testimony from Educational Testing Service (ETS) and CTB/McGraw-Hill indicated that the companies offer high school equivalency tests at \$50-\$52

per test-taker; however, the cost may vary by state. Students in Massachusetts, for example, are required to pay a \$100 testing fee for the initial battery of the ETS tests, along with a fee of \$9.00 per retest. With a minimum of \$40 for test center administration costs, it is likely that, if the companies choose to submit an application, the ETS and CTB/McGraw-Hill price structure will vary from the \$50-\$52 price points that were previously discussed.

Content Area and Delivery

Tested content must assess college- and career-readiness standards in:

- English/language arts;
- mathematics;
- science; and
- social studies.

The standards must align with the Common Core State Standards and science and social science content standards in the New Mexico Standards for Excellence¹.

Finally, PED is requiring that the test be delivered in a computer-based format to all eligible testing centers; however, respondents may also offer a paper-based version of the test.

¹ [6.29 NMAC]