

**Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of Education**

**Request for Application:
6100049898**

High School Equivalency Records

Term of Contract: One (1) year base term with four (4) annual options to review.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) is seeking a solution for the generation, distribution and secure storage of high school equivalency records. The purpose of this Request for Application(RFA) is to solicit submissions concerning these services and to provide customer service and assistance to record holders and requesters; receive daily data transfers from PDE approved publishers; transfer data to PDE upon request; provide statistical reports upon request; provide real-time (live) database authorization to authorized PDE staff; and communicate with PDE regarding irregularities and solutions at no cost to the Commonwealth. The approximate number of records and or communications is as follows:

- 1500 emails per year.
- 2500 live chats per year.
- 500 phone calls per year.
- 35,000 document request distributions per year.
- 110,000 document uploads from testing vendors per year.

Eligible applicants must provide evidence they meet the following criteria:

- Successful vendor must be able to generate high school equivalency diplomas and transcripts that meet all PDE requirements, including those awarded under the grandfathering option and the 30 College Credit option.
- Successful vendor must provide one official complementary (free) initial/original diploma and transcript to test takers.
- Successful vendor must provide duplicate official diplomas and transcript services.
- Successful vendor must provide document distribution by email, fax, US mail, and next day delivery.
- Successful vendor must provide a process whereby qualified/authorized third-party agencies can purchase test takers documents.
- Successful vendor must research state approved high school equivalency data as necessary to satisfy customer requests.
- Successful vendor must provide routine customer assistance at no cost to the customer. Customer requested researches for tests may be assessed fees.
- Successful vendor must receive daily data transfers from all publishers authorized by PDE to provide state approved high school equivalency assessments. The publishers are responsible for transmitting the data to a secure FTP site provided and maintained by the contractor.
 - a. Data is transmitted as XML files or another agreed upon format.
 - b. The daily transfer is scheduled at a mutually agreed time.

- c. There are no costs associated with data transmission.
- Successful vendor must transfer test taker data to PDE at a frequency and format requested by PDE.
- Successful vendor must receive, manage, secure, and store high school equivalency assessment data for all publishers of high school equivalency assessment tests for the sole purpose of providing comprehensive secure document services.
- Successful vendor must have a transfer system to receive all historical data files (electronic and/or paper).
 - a. Vendor will accept transfers of historic records throughout the contract period.
 - d. Vendor will be the final repository for high school equivalency assessment records and is solely liable for the security of the records unless PDE retains possession of the documents.
- Successful vendor must provide general statistical, volume, and data reports as needed.
- Successful vendor must provide PDE's authorized staff with access to a real-time (live) database for updating, inserting, reviewing, verifying, and reporting.
- Successful vendor must provide the combining, past status determination, credential determination, of all test takers regardless of publisher, and at the request of PDE to combine test results across the 2002 Series GED test and the 2014 GED test and to provide a transcript and diploma as a result of the combined test results.
- Successful vendor will be the database of record for the PDE high school equivalency assessment test data and is the centralized and legal storage of information of all PDE high school equivalency assessment test data for all publishers and all test series data from 1942 to the present. The vendor will be the exclusive provider of document fulfillment for PDE for all publishers.
- Successful vendor must communicate with PDE regarding issues and concerns with requested documents.
- Successful vendor must provide and manage a secure individual self-service website accessible 24/7 for testers to access their records and request documents.
- Successful vendor must ensure its website and documents conform with the current version of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines including Level A and AA for web-based technology and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act standards.
- Successful vendor must email all new high school equivalency passers regarding the process to obtain their initial free diploma and transcript.
- Successful vendor must use currently approved PDE transcripts, diplomas, and documents.
- Successful vendor must provide bulk mail delivery for institutional diplomas and transcripts upon request.
- Successful vendor must be able to respond within one hour to PDE/HSE office during normal business hours.
- Successful vendor must provide secure and fraud protection on all diplomas including a tracking method and a unique diploma number.
- Successful vendor must communicate directly with the test vendor regarding issues with the test vendor daily uploads.

- Successful vendor must immediately contact PDE/HSE office with any issues communicating with the test vendors.
- Successful vendor must use a database that does not solely rely on SSNs.
- Successful vendor must provide a database that identifies potential tester matches and corrects identified and reported errors.
- Successful vendor must use a database system that allows for the entry of comments in individual tester records by the vendor or PDE.
- Successful vendor must provide a portal for editing state specific business rules and current PDE document signatures.
- Successful vendor must provide a real-time (live) chat and phone option for customer support.
- Successful vendor must provide a visible transaction history to all test takers.
- Successful vendor must provide pricing for all documents and any anticipated increases to those prices within the contract period. Price increases must be communicated to PDE and to the customer no later than six months prior to the increases.
- Successful vendor must provide weekly reports to PDE identifying irregularities in the daily uploads or other irregularities identified using its own internal system.
- Successful vendor must assist testers who have issues with information in records by providing guidance and contacting PDE for approval prior to making corrections.
- Successful vendor will make corrections to tester records only when approved and authorized by PDE.
- Successful vendor must provide a reporting system to allow authorized PDE staff to enter 30 College Credit application and data into its system.
- Successful vendor must provide jurisdiction interstate access for corrections.

Additional information for applicant:

PDE is not to be liable for lost or mishandled records during vendor transport. Custodial authority does not equate ownership but assumes that PDE maintains ownership of the records, because PDE is the legal agency that authorizes the credential and authorizes the publishers, all test taker personal data and test results are the property of PDE to include credentials and transcripts.

PDE will replace all references to the current high school equivalency assessment test document process with vendor links.

PDE will update its webpages that provides information on how to attain duplicate documents and link to the vendor website.

The vendor shall not disseminate or publish any data related to test takers without the prior approval of PDE. The vendor shall not utilize any such data for marketing, or any other purpose, without PDE's prior written consent.

Confidentiality/Information Security:

a. _____ The vendor shall maintain the confidentiality of all PDE and student data. The vendor shall have a written plan to maintain the confidentiality of such data and monitor, prevent and deter unauthorized disclosure of such data. In the event of any impermissible disclosure, loss or destruction of confidential information, the vendor must immediately notify PDE and take all reasonable steps to mitigate any potential harm or further disclosure, loss or destruction of such confidential information. In addition, pertaining to the unauthorized access, use, release, or disclosure of data, the vendor shall comply with state and federal data breach notifications regulations and is to report security incidents to PDE within one business day of when vendor knew of such unauthorized access, use, release, or disclosure of data.

b. _____ The Vendor shall comply with the Commonwealth’s Requirements for Non-Commonwealth Hosted Applications/Services, which is attached hereto as Appendix A.

Turnover Tasks:

a. _____ Vendor must assist PDE with all activities required to transfer all records and materials, both pre-existing and newly developed, to PDE or Successor Contractor upon termination or expiration of the contract.

b. _____ Vendor must provide, in its proposal, a Turnover Plan that addresses the tasks outlined above. The final Turnover Plans will be subject to the review and approval of PDE.

Due Dates: Written RFAs must be received by June 8, 2020 at 4:00 PM Eastern Standard Time. Timing for evaluating responses and scheduling of presentations depends on the quantity and quality of responses received.

To be considered for this solicitation, the vendor must submit an electronic copy emailed to the PDE’s Procurement Office. Email submissions should be sent to Michele Warford Procurement Manager PDE, who will serve as Point of Contact on this RFA at:

mametranow@pa.gov. If you choose to submit in hardcopy form, please mail to:

PA Department of Education
Bureau of Management Services
333 Market Street, 15th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333
Attn: Michele Warford, Procurement Manager

Once the Commonwealth has received the RFA, it will contact all respondents determined reasonably responsive and may require additional points of clarification at that time. Responses should be succinct, preferably no more than 150 pages, but must include all information requested, cover sheet, attachments and any appendix. A technical manual can also be submitted as a separate document and not be included in the initial 150 pages for your submission.

Questions and Answers: We request that you submit any questions regarding this solicitation

by 2:00 PM, Wednesday, May 27, 2020. An Addendum will be posted to the DGS website with the answers to the questions by COB Friday, May 29, 2020. Questions should be emailed to Michele Warford (mametranow@pa.gov). Please reference the solicitation number in the subject matter area.