

Office of Child Development and Early Learning
Request for Information
February 3, 2015

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

A. PURPOSE OF THIS REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) within the Pennsylvania Departments of Human Services and Education (Department) is issuing this Request for Information (RFI) to seek input from the publishers of evidence-based authentic assessments that are interested in submitting authentic assessment tools for approval and use by specific OCDEL-funded programs. To clarify, this RFI is a way to solicit interest from potential vendors to be added to the list of approved assessment tools. This RFI will not transition into a competitive procurement.

B. TIMELINE FOR RESPONSE SUBMISSIONS

Respondents must submit RFI responses no later than April 1, 2015 to become approved for the 2016-2017 school year. Responses may be submitted electronically or in writing to the following email account and address:

RA-eln@pa.gov

Outcomes Reporting RFI Response
Office of Child Development and Early Learning
333 Market Street, 6th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126

Questions may be submitted in writing to the above email account.

C. RESPONSE SUBMISSION

The Department encourages all interested parties to submit responses, including all approved vendors for 2014-2015 and 2015-2016. Respondents must submit their response in the format requested in Part III of this RFI. The feedback from this RFI will initiate further communication between OCDEL and the interested party.

The Department shall own any response submitted for this RFI.

D. DISCLAIMER

This RFI is issued solely for information and planning purposes and does not constitute a procurement solicitation. Responses to this notice are not offers and cannot be accepted by Department or the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to form a binding contract.

Respondents are solely responsible for all expenses associated with responding to this RFI.

Respondents requiring confidential treatment for any proprietary information they furnish must clearly identify that in their respective responses. All information received in response to this RFI that is marked “proprietary” will be handled in accordance with applicable laws including the Commonwealth’s Right to Know Law, as amended.

Responses to this RFI will not be returned. Respondents will not be notified of the result of the review, nor will they be provided copies of it.

Respondents to this RFI shall not be deemed to be an advisor or consultant to the Department. The Department will evaluate the information presented and determine any subsequent course of action.

No specific cost or pricing information should be submitted in response to this RFI.

PART II: WORK STATEMENT

A. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Pennsylvania continues to promote authentic assessment for young children. Teachers observe a child through all activities in the day that yield the necessary information to determine skill levels. Teachers and caregivers are the most qualified to assess a young child because they observe the child in authentic environments, and are most familiar with each child’s development and learning expectations.

The goals of authentic assessment in Pennsylvania are to:

- understand the status of children across a broad range of cognitive and non-cognitive domains;
- adapt instruction to meet individualized student and group needs;
- track achievement and developmental gains over time; and
- Inform policy by providing a picture of student outcomes in the classroom and across the Commonwealth.

The goal of the new early learning outcomes reporting strategy is to link high quality learning standards with assessment and instruction, provide teacher tools to drive instruction and quality improvements, and to continue to collect child outcomes to inform sound policy decisions.

RFI Goal – Request information from early childhood assessment companies interested in submitting authentic assessments to be considered as an approved assessment tool for 2016-2017.

RFI Objectives

- Identify interest from assessment companies that want to participate in the Early Learning Outcomes Reporting strategy for 2016-2017 and beyond.
- Begin work with OCDEL to meet assessment and alignment criteria.
- Increase quality and collaboration for early childhood programs to report valid and reliable child outcomes and use this information to inform instruction and improve quality.

B. BACKGROUND

This RFI is concerned with the use of authentic assessment tools to collect child outcomes from OCDEL programs, specifically Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, Keystone STAR 3, 4 and 4A centers, to include group homes and family childcare homes, and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Programs.

Pennsylvania has developed a standards-based early learning outcome reporting framework for children ages birth to age 5. This framework is built upon the state's early learning standards. It does not replace an assessment of a child, but rather will be informed by it.

Approved assessment companies have to:

1. demonstrate that the assessment tool is observation-based;
2. demonstrate that the observation-based tool is valid and reliable;
3. demonstrate that their tool is designed for use as BOTH a formative AND a summative assessment with an electronic mechanism for finalization and submission of assessments data
4. demonstrate that the tool provides reliable coverage across the cognitive and non-cognitive domains related to the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards;
(comprehensive)
5. have the capacity to follow the established protocol for submitting daily electronic data updates to the Early Learning Network
6. have the capacity to follow the established protocol for online accessibility for Pennsylvania's providers
7. develop an alignment analysis of their tool with Pennsylvania's Early Learning Standards;
8. develop a scoring method that produces individual outcomes for each framework indicator; and
9. demonstrate the willingness and ability to partner with OCDEL to provide free or low cost professional development to Pennsylvania's providers.

PART III: REQUEST FOR INFORMATION FORMAT

The Department is requesting the following information from early childhood assessment companies interested in submitting assessments for approval to begin determining whether these assessments meet the Department's criteria.

A. COVER LETTER

Respondents must provide a cover letter with the RFI response. Please include the following information:

- An introduction to the respondent's organization.
- The reason for the respondent's interest in this RFI.
- The name, agency, address, telephone number and e-mail address of the person to be contacted and others who are authorized to represent the responding entity relating to this RFI submission.
- The name(s) of the assessment tools you wish to submit for approval.

B. RESPONSE TO CRITERIA FOR SUBMITTING ASSESSMENT TOOLS

In this section, please answer the questions below for each assessment tool you are submitting for consideration:

1. Is the assessment tool an observation-based assessment?

“Two sharply contrasting measurement approaches can be used with children under age 5: direct assessments and observation-based (often called authentic) measures. A direct assessment involves an adult, possibly a familiar adult but sometimes a stranger, sitting with a child and asking him or her to respond to a number of requests, such as pointing to a picture or counting objects. The conditions for administration, such as the directions and how the materials are presented, are standardized to ensure that each child is being presented with identical testing conditions. Observation-based measures...use regularly occurring classroom activities and products as evidence for what children know and can do. Observation-based measures encompass a variety of tools, including checklists...classroom-based observation tools...samples of children's work...Teachers and caregivers collect data over a variety of contexts and over time to gain a more valid and reliable picture of what children know and do. Observation-based assessment approaches also are consistent with recommended practices for the assessment of young children. *National Research Council of the National Academies (2008), Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, and How? Page 7-11 and 7-12*

2. Is the assessment tool valid and reliable? What is the evidence for this?
3. Is the tool designed for the purposes of BOTH formative AND summative assessment? What is the evidence for this? Describe the electronic mechanism that ensures a finalization of outcomes occurs.

Summative assessment (or summative evaluation) refers to the assessment of participants, and summarizes their development at a particular time. In contrast to formative assessment, the focus is on the outcome of a program. Summative assessment

is characterized as assessment of learning and is contrasted with formative assessment, which is assessment for learning.

4. Does the assessment tool provide reliable coverage across the cognitive and non-cognitive domains related to the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards?
 - a. Infant/Toddler
 - Approaches to Learning through Play
 - Language and Literacy Development
 - Mathematical Thinking and Expression
 - Scientific Thinking
 - Social Studies Thinking
 - Creative Thinking and Expression
 - Health, Wellness and Physical Development
 - Social and Emotional Development
 - b. Pre-Kindergarten
 - Approaches to Learning through Play
 - Language and Literacy Development
 - Mathematical Thinking and Expression
 - Scientific Thinking
 - Social Studies Thinking
 - Creative Thinking and Expression
 - Health, Wellness and Physical Development
 - Social and Emotional Development
5. Is there currently an Information Technology process to follow the established protocol for submitting daily electronic data updates to the Early Learning Network. If the response is “no,” please provide a description, including a timeline, for how this requirement might be met.
6. Is the assessment available online? What is the evidence for this?
7. Describe your ability to develop an alignment analysis of their tool with Pennsylvania’s Early Learning Standards;
8. Describe your ability to develop a scoring method that produces individual outcomes for each framework indicator; and
9. Describe your ability to partner with OCDEL to provide free or low cost professional development to Pennsylvania’s providers. Please include information on Professional Development related to assessment content as well as system use.