

Collaborative for Educational Services &
Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual School
Request for Proposal
Full-time & Supplemental Online Learning Provider

Questions & Answers

The following questions were received by email and during the conference call held on July 30, 2013. Any additional questions should be directed to Casey Daigle-Matos cdaiglematos@collaborative.org.

Are you going to have a public bid opening?

By law, we will follow the Massachusetts Procurement Laws for this process. Once the certificate has been awarded, we will issue a RFP. We will seek guidance from the state on any requirements regarding the specifics of this process for the Commonwealth Virtual School.

From Page 5 of 18 – Please clarify the Model B and C statement. “Collaborative will provide administrative and supplemental services to students.” Can you define, with examples, supplemental services?

An example of supplemental services would be Special Education services. Administrative services could include things like guidance, student registration.

From Page 5 of 18 – Please clarify the Model D statement. “... supplemental courses.” Could you define supplemental courses with examples?

A supplemental course would be an elective, core, credit recovery, or AP course. This course would be integrated into or in addition to the student’s existing schedule at their home district. It could be any situation in which a student would not be enrolled in full-time virtual, but would take one or more courses to supplement their face-to-face instruction.

For example, a student may want to take Arabic. Her school does not offer Arabic, so she will need to take this as an online, supplemental course.

From Page 5 of 18 – “The respondent to this RFP is requested to address one or more of the Models...” If we submit Model B and Model C, do we submit 2 separate and complete proposals? Or do we submit both options within one proposal? If more than one option is allowed in a single proposal submission, do you have a preference for presentation?

Please submit one proposal. The organization of your proposal is at your discretion to select the clearest format.

From Page 6 of 18, 2.4.d – Please expand on the drug testing requirement. Does the provider test? Does the Collaborative test? Where are the tests conducted? Who pays for the tests? Who pays for travel? Who determines who is drug tested? Who determines the frequency of the tests?

Is it possible for the provider to have teachers drug tested at local sites rather than requiring travel?

Drug testing is not a requirement of employment, though we will reserve the right to require a drug test if deemed necessary. Please indicate your preferred model for handling this situation should it arise. We do not have a set system in place currently and instead hope to see you outline in brief how you would proposed handling this situation.

From Page 7 of 18, 2.7.b – Does this mean students register themselves or the registration is completed online by administration?

This issue is open for discussion. As we finalize our model, it may be that once a student is approved they self-register or work with a face-to-face administrator to do the online enrollment. If you have a preferred workflow for student registration, please share it.

From Page 7 of 18, 2.7.d – For Models B, C, and/or D, is this a requirement? Does delivery of exams mean the provider sets a physical location, or could the provider place students in public facilities that accept all students to take AP, SAT exams?

We would like you to address your capacity to handle logistics. This is not a requirement, but if you have experience, we would like to know what systems you have in place.

3.2.1.4 – Does the Collaborative plan to have F2F teachers? How do F2F teachers fit into the RFP?

Our long-term vision is to increase online learning in our region and across the state. We want to explore the possibility that teachers in our service area may want to blend their classrooms to include online content in a face-to-face course (e.g. flipping the classroom, blending or augmenting). It is our hope that eventually, we will have more teachers from our region trained and able to offer instruction for and development of online courses.

3.2.7.2 – If the content is not 100% in alignment, does that disqualify the provider?

If the content is not 100% in alignment, that does not disqualify the provider, but they must address how the content will become aligned to the new Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

3.2.7 – What type of evidence would you like us to provide to show alignment?

We would like to see your scope and sequence showing alignment to Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. If your courses are not aligned, we will request that you provide us with a “cross-walk” to Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

We will seek guidance from the state on this topic as well.

3.5.7 – Does the Collaborative require the provider to hire special education teachers? Or does the Collaborative require the provider to make accommodations from the district special education teachers? Who is responsible for developing the IEP under Models A-D?

Whether the collaborative requires SPED teachers or does the vendor provide IEPs?

In Model A, we are looking for the provider to handle the students' online experience, everything from soup to nuts including special education services. In Models B, C, and D, the Collaborative will be responsible for coordinating these services.

3.5.10 – Please clarify which area of the regulations the Collaborative is referencing?

Referring to Model A, since the provider handles everything related to the student's online experience, they are required to follow any federal and state laws. According to these guidelines, free and reduced lunch must be met under Title I. All providers need to provide a plan for these aspects. If we receive additional information from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, we will amend this response.

3.9.8 – Is this a requirement? (Has the provider been approved and is on the vendor list.)

At this point in the process, we do not know if this is a requirement. Please submit a proposal anyway. We cannot fully answer this question at this time, until we receive guidance from the state.

From Page 14 of 18, 4.4 – The instructions request Word files; however, on Page 18, the RFP states PDF format. Which is required, Word or PDF? Do you accept Dropbox files for the submission?

It is our preference that all submissions be Word files or Google Documents. Dropbox files are acceptable if they are in .doc / .docx or compatible with Word.

Clarification on the grade range: Grade 6 – 12

The RFP stated both grades K-12 and 6-12 in different places. This was an error. This was a mistake in our RFP. Our focus is on 6-12 at this stage of development. It is our eventual goal to serve K-12 students. This was a decision based on capacity, not legal regulation. Additionally, the 100 students we estimate are full-time enrollments. Supplemental enrollments will be in addition to that. We do not have an estimate for supplemental enrollments.

The RFP states that the implementation is for 2014-2015. Is there an estimated award date?

The anticipated timeline (for Model A) from the state is as follows:

- August 16: Letter of Intent
- November 2013: Final applications Submitted to the State
- November-December 2013: Panel Review of Applications and Public Hearings on Final Applications
- January 2014: Interview with Applicant Groups / Proposed Boards of Trustees
- February 2014: Commissioner Makes Recommendations to Board of Elementary & Secondary Education
- February 2014: Board of Elementary & Secondary Education Votes to Grant Certificates

In the event we are not awarded a full time certificate, we will still move forward with Models B, C, and D.

Logistical Clarification on Page 14: It says all queries are due Friday, August 1st. August 1st is a Thursday. Is the deadline August 1st or 2nd?

All inquiries should be received by the Thursday, August 1st deadline.

Blended Learning Question [question not audible on recording]:

We would like all details up front regarding possibilities for blended learning. Please present all aspects of your services and the costs associated with those services. Please be as specific and clear as possible about your product and services as well as any additional fees that would come with your services. What sets your content and courses apart from your peers? Please state all of these details.

It is my understanding that legislation has to approve online courses. What about this approval process that is scheduled to happen by January 14th?

Please assume the legislation will go into affect, and if approved in February 2014, then we will be required to follow the legislation. We will share additional details as they are made available.

Are teachers provided for this program or will the Collaborative provide instructors.

We would like the provider to provide instructors for Models A, B, and D. Over time, the Collaborative would like to provide instructors for certain courses and, in some cases, to develop courses locally.

Would the attached letter meet the requirement of 3.1.7 that states “A copy of your last annual report and audit report or a certification letter from a CPA firm attesting to the solvency of your company”?

Yes.

Does the Collaborative prefer to have a single provider for grades 6-12 or would you consider two providers; one for 6-8 and another for 9-12?

Can a provider submit for certain grade levels instead of the complete 6-12? Does the answer vary by Model?

The Collaborative is interested in providing the best possible solutions for our students in terms of content and instruction. We are not wedded to any one model.