Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI)
Source Selection Information – See FAR 2.101 & FAR 3.104.

JUSTIFICATION

For

SOLE SOURCE, FAR PART 12 > SAT and < $9

Consortium Membership and Assessment Licensing

1. Contracting Agency

   Department of War Education Activity (DoWEA)

2. Description of Action

   The Government intends to award a sole-source IDIQ contract for a 1-year base period and four 1-year option periods, with a total estimated value of $1,188,945.00, inclusive of all options. FY26 funds in the amount of $237,789.00 are currently available for the base period. This requirement is being acquired as a commercial service implementing simplified acquisition procedures.

3. Description of Supplies and Services Required to Meet the Need

   Requirement for Psychometric Validity, Longitudinal Data Continuity, and Military Student Mobility: Under 10 U.S.C. § 2164 and DoD Directive 1342.20, DoWEA is mandated to establish a rigorous, measurable academic program for military dependents. As such, DoWEA requires assessments to measure students' mastery of their academic progress.

   Previously, DoDEA was a member of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consortium. The members of the PARCC consortium jointly developed K-12 assessments for English language arts/literacy and mathematics. The PARCC consortium disbanded and the assessments are no longer updated.

   The Assessment Program in the Education Directorate requires services that include membership in an Assessment System Consortium with member participation in policy decisions. The membership must also include the provision of assessment licenses for computer-based adaptive assessment program in ELA/literacy and mathematics that can be administered to students in grades 3-7 beginning SY26-27.

4. Authority

   10 U.S.C. 3204(a), as implemented in FAR 6.103(a)

5. Demonstration of Contractor's Unique Qualifications or Nature of Acquisition Requiring the Authority Cited:

   DoWEA requires membership to an assessment consortium that can deliver assessment licenses for adaptive tests. The Regents of the University of California (UCLA) acting as the operational and fiscal agent for Smarter Balanced, is the only source capable of satisfying this requirement.

   1. ***The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium is the Only Responsible Source***
      The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium is currently the only state-led consortium that exists for the purpose of providing world-class leadership and resources to improve teaching and learning by creating and maintaining a balanced suite of formative, interim and summative assessment tools aligned to college and career ready targets in mathematics and English language arts/literacy.

2. ***Member Participation in Policy Decisions***
The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium membership allows DoWEA to have one representative on the Governing Board.

3. ***Proprietary Nature and Intellectual Property (IP) Ownership***
The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessment system, including its proprietary computer adaptive testing algorithms, test blueprints, and its secure digital repository of psychometrically validated test items, is protected by strict copyright and intellectual property rights held exclusively by the University of California. No other vendor or educational testing entity possesses the legal right or technical ability to license, modify, or provide direct source-level management of the authentic SBAC item banks.

4. ***Requirement for Psychometric Validity, Longitudinal Data Continuity, and Military Student Mobility***
The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessment system provides: .
- *Immediate Baseline and Validity: Implementing the pre-validated SBAC framework allows DoWEA to establish an immediate, psychometrically sound data baseline at launch. Developing a custom alternative or attempting to align a disparate commercial system would require extensive field-testing, delaying operational readiness and preventing DoWEA from meeting immediate DoD reporting mandates.*
- *Immediate Portability for Mobile Students: Highly mobile military families undergoing Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves require immediate score portability to and from SBAC-aligned states. Procuring this specific framework ensures that upon operational launch, transitioning dependents can be seamlessly integrated, placed, and tracked across global defense school districts without instructional or administrative delay.*

5. ***Unacceptable Delays and Substantial Duplication of Costs***
Procuring an alternative assessment solution through open competition would result in a severe, unacceptable disruption to the academic calendar and substantial duplication of public funds that could not be recovered through competition.
- *Substantial Cost Duplication: The Smarter Balanced system provides a fully mature, ready-to-use assessment infrastructure. To compete this requirement, DoWEA would need to solicit an independently developed or customized assessment system. Independent customization or development, field-testing, and psychometrically validating a non-SBAC alternative mapped to DoWEA's curriculum would require significant funding that DoWEA does not have.*
- *Severe Launch Delays: Utilizing an alternative framework would require extensive system alignment and psychometric blue-printing before initial deployment. This would excessively delay DoWEA's operational launch window, resulting in an inability to fulfill its statutory student tracking and assessment mandates. Such a mission failure would adversely impact the education of DoWEA's students.*

6. Effort to Obtain Competition

- ***Review of Existing Contract Vehicles:*** *A review of available government-wide acquisition contracts (GWACs) and Federal Supply Schedules (GSA Multiple Award Schedule) was conducted. While various commercial educational testing vendors exist (e.g., Pearson, NWEA, Curriculum Associates), these platforms operate on independent, proprietary psychometric scales. They do not grant membership into an assessment consortium with policy-making participation, nor can they legally license the specific Smarter Balanced framework necessary for state-to-state longitudinal data continuity for transitioning military students.*
- ***Industry Surveillance:*** *DoWEA subject matter experts actively monitored national educational assessment frameworks and psychometric literature throughout FY25 and FY26. This surveillance confirmed that the Regents of the University of California (UCLA), acting as the operational and fiscal agent for Smarter Balanced, remains the sole entity authorized to license the authentic SBAC adaptive testing algorithms and secure item banks.*

Consequently, no other competitive sources were identified that could meet DoWEA's minimum operational, legal, and structural requirements without causing substantial duplication of costs and severe delays to the academic testing calendar.

7. Fair and Reasonable Determination

The contracting officer has determined the anticipated costs will be fair and reasonable based on the results of market research.

8. Market Research
Refer to #6 above.

9. Other Supporting Facts

10. Interested Sources
- *University of California, Smarter Balanced Consortium (SBAC)*

11. Effort to Remove Barriers to Increase Competition:
To ensure that future requirements are as competitive as possible, DoWEA will take the following actions during the performance of this contract:
- *Ongoing Market Surveillance: DoWEA will continue to conduct market research at least annually to monitor the existence of assessment consortiums and their capabilities for adaptive assessment licensing.*
- *Industry Engagement: The Government will participate in national educational assessment conferences and forums to communicate DoWEA's specific needs to the broader vendor community.*

Consortium Membership and Assessment Licensing

CERTIFICATION

In accordance with FAR 6.104(b), I certify this justification completely and accurately conveys the Government's minimum needs or requirements and the rational for other than full and open competition, including supporting data, to the best of my knowledge and belief.

[redacted]

APPROVAL

Approval is granted subject to the availability of funds and provided that the products/services described herein have otherwise been authorized for acquisition.

Contracting Officer: In accordance with FAR 6.104-1(a)(12), I certify that the justification is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief. In addition, I hereby determine that entering a sole-source contract with The Regents of the University of California (UCLA) acting as the operational and fiscal agent for The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) will result in a price that will be fair and reasonable to the Government.

[redacted]