



**NASCLA RFP FOR 3RD PARTY HOSTING COMPANY
QUESTIONS/ANSWERS
APRIL 7, 2017**

1. Question: How many items are in each form?

Answer: The NASCLA Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) determined that each examination form should consist of 100 scored questions and fifteen (15) pilot questions, all timed questions. There should be a minimum of five (5) forms used at any one time. With three (3) separate examinations, with five (5) forms each, there will be at least fifteen (15) total forms used at any time.

2. Question: Does NASCLA expect to author items and create test forms in the vendor's item banking system, or is the vendor expected to perform these tasks?

Answer: NASCLA will be using the respondent's item banking system and creating test forms in the respondent's testing system. NASCLA has already authored a number of items and will be creating the test forms and/or test form criteria. NASCLA will author all subsequent items and criteria for any test forms. The selected vendor will not be expected to author any items or create test forms.

3. Question: If NASCLA selects a vendor other than PSI (who currently administers the NASCLA Accredited Examination for Commercial General Building Contractors), will the examinations continue to be delivered in PSI testing centers?

Answer: The examinations for each state agency utilizing the examination will continue to be delivered using the testing center(s) and test provider(s) of their choice. The state agencies that currently use PSI would likely continue to use PSI testing centers in their state, but that decision is left to each state agency to determine. Conversely, if a state licensing agency uses another provider, that agency would likely continue to use those providers' testing centers. Similarly, if a state licensing agency provides or administers their own exams, such agency would continue to use its own testing center(s).

4. Question: If the winning bidder is selected on September 1, 2017, when would the vendor be expected to commence providing test delivery?

Answer: NASCLA expects that the winning respondent should be prepared to have the necessary infrastructure in place so that participating state agencies may begin testing by October 15, 2017, or as soon as possible afterwards.

5. Question: Is the exam offered continuously (or an annual window?) or during delivery windows throughout the year?

Answer: Continuously.

6. Question: Can NASCLA provide the details of their exam administrations? Specifically, it would be great to know the anticipated number of exams delivered annually, as well as the location requirements for test centers across the US?

Answer: The number of test centers is unknown. Based on a conservative estimate from state agencies that have said that they will most likely participate in this program from the start, we are estimating approximately 1,616 Electrical Contractor exams per year, 1,534 Journeyman Electrician exams per year, and 323 Residential Contractor exams per year. Depending on market/economic and other diverse and dynamic factors, the actual amount could vary. There is no guarantee, though, as to the numbers. Most states have three (3) to six (6) testing locations in their network; some have more. Most state-operated test centers also give exams for other agencies. The respondent chosen will not be expected to provide any test centers; however, they are free to apply to be an accredited administration provider. To clarify, this RFP does not require you to interface with a testing provider or state agency's examination software. Rather, they will simply be using their own computers, which are also used for other testing vendors, to access the exam(s), which will be hosted on the selected vendor's servers.

7. Question: Can NASCLA provide information on the delivery of its exams? Specifically, whether exams are delivered on an on-demand basis, or if there are specific examination windows that candidates will be scheduled into.

Answer: The examinations will be delivered on an "on-demand" basis. Scheduling will be handled independently by each participating state agency and/or their normal accredited testing providers.

8. Question: Upon reading the RFP, it appears as though you are proposing that whomever wins this contract, will also do all of the delivery of the content for these examinations for vendors that already have existing contracts? Is that your understanding? If that is the case, then we'd need to also have scheduling access into the winning vendor's system so that we could schedule a candidate for the other exam portions (e.g. Business), at the same time we'd schedule them for the electrical exam. Would you mind clarifying the intended scope?

Answer: NASCLA will provide the actual tests. The purpose of the RFP is so that whoever maintains the server for the electrical exams would provide the test (electronically) to whoever is administering the exam for each state. The state would maintain its current relationship with its testing providers/administrators, but for these electrical exams, each provider/administrator would use the NASCLA exam (hosted on the vendor's server) instead of the one they are currently using.

The primary thing that the server provider will be doing is setting things up so that access to the NASCLA test is available to whoever gives the test for the state, whether it is the state itself or a company that the state uses to administer the exams. The exams would be available 24/7 to the testing administrators, so scheduling would not be an issue on your end. Each individual state agency or test provider would continue to schedule things as they do today. The server provider would set things up so that their system is compatible with the computers used by the testing administrators, and the testing administrators would "tap in" to the server each time a person

takes a test, by following the protocols set up by the server provider. The selected respondent will not act as a testing administrator – rather you are just providing the actual tests for use by the administrators.

9. Question: Is the process for the RFP to be something like the following:

a. At the time of testing, company A (delivery provider), sends a request to company B (hosting org) for the FIRST question on the test.

b. As the testing proceeds, data is exchanged between company A and company B. Company A sends requests for the next item (or a specific item), sends candidate comments, and sends the item responses and response times. Company B sends the next or requested item, and stores the responses to each item, the response times to each item, and stores the comments made on each item.

c. Upon test completion, company B sends a score result to company A, that provides the result to the candidate. Company A then imports the result into its own system for distribution to the customers.

Answer: Although the scenario presented above makes sense, the concept proposed by NASCLA is simpler than that. Simply put, the software would be such that the person taking the exam would sign in at the proctoring provider's computer, which would be connected to the hosting server throughout the duration of the exam. The proctoring provider's server would not be involved; only the proctoring provider's individual computers, through an internet browser connection. It would be the same as if someone were to sit down at a computer, get on the internet, and go to any interactive internet site to answer questions. A good example of this would be the use of an internet personal banking site that would have security sign-in protocols and allow you to make changes to your checking account. The process would be the same no matter what computer the person might use. Also, and as noted in the RFP, there would be a lockdown browser function to prohibit the examinee from getting on the internet independently from the exam or accessing other similar applications or programs.

We are certainly looking for a delivery provider to have a system that is seamless and proven, and able to handle the process as described in the RFP so that when examinations are administered, there will be no complications for any proctoring provider that would be inherent in the setup, other than uncontrollable aspects such as electrical shortages, inclement weather at the proctoring site, or similar unexpected events. We would expect that the delivery provider would have a backup plan such as a generator or alternative host server for such complications as an electrical outage at the server or an internet outage of their primary internet provider. We would also expect that they would have personnel available at any time an exam might be given in case there is an unforeseen technical problem that arises. This could include examination times from early in the morning Atlantic time in Maine to the late afternoon in Hawaii. In addition, we are asking that the delivery provider have a software setup that inherently allows our test developers to generate reports at any time based upon exams that have been delivered to that point. Also, that the software sends a grade report upon each exam completion to both the state and/or their proctoring provider, and to NASCLA.

The proctoring provider that each state uses would continue to perform their current normal duties such as to provide the computer terminals and cubicles, to make sure no one copies or photographs the test or comes in with cheat sheets, to verify the identity of the examinee, to schedule the examinees, etc. The only difference would be that they would be using the NASCLA exam(s) rather than the current one that they use.

10. Question: How many items in the item bank?

Answer: Currently over 1,000. The goal is for 6,000 by the end of the five (5) year period.

11. Question: How are items stored currently, and in what format will they be provided?

Answer: Currently they are scanned in on a hard copy form and in an Excel file.

12. Question: What is your preferred method for communicating candidate registrations, i.e., how often, and in what format?

Answer: We would prefer that the respondent work with each agency to determine the interface that would work best for each agency.

13. Question: For remote proctoring option, how will test date and time data be exchanged?

Answer: (Refer to question #11)

14. Question: How many authorized locations are currently utilized, and how will that information be provided-minimally including location, authorized proctor, and email address?

Answer: The locations that will be authorized will be determined as each state signs on. Information about locations will be provided to examination candidates by the individual agencies. Physical locations will be less important than a secure log on and password allowing access to the hosting server. Each location will have been pre-screened by NASCLA to make sure that they meet all NASCLA standards for security protocols and setup.

15. Question: Are score reports to be provided to candidates upon completion of the test?

Answer: Yes, the preferred method would be for the candidate to receive their pass/fail score report in writing at the testing center.

16. Question: Does your program require Linear-on-the-Fly Testing (LOFT) with equivalent test forms assembled dynamically at the time of delivery?

Answer: This may not be the form of delivery initially; however, as the volume of exam administrations builds and we get a significant enough base of results, we may begin using Linear-on-the-Fly testing, so we would greatly prefer that the software that we are using has the capability for LOFT.

17. Question: Alternatively, is accessing multiple pre-assembled and pre-equated test forms acceptable assigned dynamically, and controlling exposure?

Answer: This would be our preferred format at the beginning and for the foreseeable future. However, NASCLA reserves the right to re-visit this issue through the life of the contract.

18. Question: Please explain your concept of “locked-down” browser requirement, and specifically what issues/challenges you are addressing?

Answer: “Locked-down” browser would mean that when someone is taking an exam, they are unable to access other applications or programs via internet, unable to take screen shots or save any images or words to a jump drive or to the computer drive. This requirement would preferably be integrated as part of the testing software, but alternatively could be another software that works seamlessly in conjunction with the testing software.

19. Question: Do you test in both dedicated test sites and workplace settings?

Answer: The testing will always take place in dedicated proctored test sites. Also, see answer to Question 13, above.

20. Question: Do you approach item development as an ongoing process, with modifications to the active item bank on a defined managed cycle?

Answer: Yes. Items will be developed on a minimum of a yearly basis. Items will be reviewed throughout the year and modified as needed as a result of item analysis and/or examinee comments and/or general review of items.

21. Question: What is NASCLA’s preferred method for test development and test publishing? Do you have/desire an item-banking/item-authoring solution?

Answer: This RFP is requesting exactly that: an item-banking/item-authoring solution which provides test delivery capability.

22. Question: Do you prefer to provide exam content for Respondent to publish?

Answer: Candidate Information Bulletins for each agency will be provided by each agency based on information provided by NASCLA.

23. Question: What, if any, psychometric services are desired, beyond management/reporting of psychometric data? What is the nature of the psychometric auditor?

Answer: The psychometric auditor will be tasked with auditing the respondent as well as the various Accredited Examination Providers. The psychometric auditor will also be in charge of the maintenance of the item bank content and of regular item development and analysis.

24. Question: Financials - Is a financial statement from accountant indicating healthy financials, and perhaps insurance acceptable?

Answer: Yes. It should include a balance sheet and an income (profit and loss) statement. The balance sheet should be recent and the income statement within the past quarter.

25. Question: If awarded the test delivery contract, will Respondent be sole provider? If not, what is guaranteed volume?

Answer: The respondent will be the sole test delivery provider and item bank software provider. There is no guaranteed volume.

26. Question: In the RFP, Under Section I, General Information, Section C, Key Action Dates: RFP Response Submission due is listed as May 15th. But earlier on page 2 it is listed as May 1st (electronic) with hardcopy on May 15th. Please restate/confirm due date.

Answer: The electronic version is due on Monday, May 1st, with a follow up hard copy due on Tuesday, May 15th.

27. Question: How many forms are associated with an administration?

Answer: From all active forms, randomly delivered. There could be any number of examinees from one (1) to many.

28. Question: Please provide the “Approved Administration Providers”, “Accredited Examination Providers”, and appropriate computer based testing vendors, both current and anticipated/planned? Any international deliveries? If so, where?

Answer: There will be no “NASCLA Accredited Examination Providers” for these exams, as NASCLA is acting as its own examination provider. Currently, the NASCLA Approved Administration Providers are Prov, Inc., and PSI Services, LLC. We anticipate that there will be more in the future. We do not anticipate at the current time any international deliveries. There could be deliveries to U.S. territories.

29. Question: Is a mixed / multiple “Approved Administration Provider” model a requirement?

Answer: There will be multiple “NASCLA Approved Administration Providers”. PSI Services, LLC, PROV, Inc., and any others that apply and are approved. Several state agencies administer their own examination using their own facilities and/or colleges within their state, such as California, Florida, Louisiana, Oregon, Nebraska, Minnesota, and others. This does not necessarily mean that all of these states will apply for NASCLA Approved Administration Provider status or sign on for this exam, but it is a potential.

30. Question: In the RFP, under Section II - Project Requirements Statement of Work, Section B.1. - Are remote meetings (e.g. GotoMeeting, conference calls) sufficient to meet this requirement?

Answer: In most cases, remote meetings would be fine. However, there may be requests to meet in person if necessary. NASCLA would pay for the expenses of such in person meetings if travel is necessary.

31. Question: Under Section B.6. - Does “two means of electronic authentication” mean one for the proctor and one for the examinee or two for the proctor and two for the examinee?

Answer: Two means of electronic authentication means: (1) the proctor name and password, and (2) the examinee name or number assigned when registering for the exam and the last 4 digits of their social security number.

32. Question: Under Section B.11. - We host with a Tier 1 hosting company that provides physical security in addition to network and software security. It is not normal to provide on-site inspections. By “review the hosting site”, do you mean an in-person inspection or simply a review of the provider’s security compliance documents and our security measures on top of that?

Answer: This means a physical inspection of the facility and room housing the server. If this is not possible, please explain in the RFP the reasons that this is not possible and any alternative approaches you suggest for our determining that the facility is secure.

33. Question: In the RFP, under Appendix B (Requirements for Software), Section A.2. - Is it acceptable to dictate the exact hardware (vendor, model, etc.), operating system, and other software that must be installed on an exam computer? Or, to include in the proposal an “appliance” that we can provide that prepackages all necessary software to lock down the system per this requirement? If neither of those options are acceptable, please provide the exact system specifications (hardware, operating system, other software) our software is expected to run on and how that system handles the issues outlined in this requirement (e.g. browser blocker, etc.)

Answer: The software must be compatible with PCs. It should be compatible with at least Internet Explorer 8 and above, in interaction with Windows XP, or 32 or 64 bit versions of Windows 7, 8, or 10. It would be preferable if the software is compatible also with the last three (3) versions of Chrome, Firefox, Safari and the OS system for Macs and/or with Windows 95/98. It need not be compatible with mobile devices or tablets (IPads, etc.). Most testing centers would use a local area network server, but there could be exceptions.

34. Question: Under Section A.3. - Does NASCLA and/or licensing agencies have an existing standard for how score, pass/fail, and strength/weakness data are to be reported, or is this to be specified by us in our proposal? For example, if left to us we might specify that the data be in CSV, XML, or JSON format and dictate exactly what the field names and datatypes are. If we are to specify the format, will NASCLA and licensing agencies agree to abide by that standard?

Answer: Currently, we have a secure FTP site that we transfer the candidate information and scores into the database; we would prefer to keep this same format. We would expect exam score, Pass or Fail, and domain report only as the fields for score reporting purposes only.

Domain scores would be limited to strong or weak. Strong would be set at domain scores above the same percentage as the cut score; weak would be set for any percentage lower than the cut score. The report would list those domains in which the examinee was strong, separated from and followed by a list of those domains in which the examinee was weak. (See also the answer to question number 40.)

35. Question: Under Section A.4.h. - Will NASCLA and/or the psychometric auditor provide the precise requirements for automated assembly of exam forms? The requirements listed are not complete (e.g. iv says “any other psychometrically determined rating or criteria as needed”). Please provide this information.

Answer: This answer might best be described through examples. One example might be that the specifications would call for ten (10) items that have illustrations. So, when the software chooses the items for a test form, it would automatically incorporate this feature, so that throughout the exam form there would be ten (10) items that are marked as having illustrations that would be used. Another example might be that the exam might call for 20% of the items from each content domain to be marked at a cognitive level of “application level”, or alternatively, 20% of all items on the exam, without regard to the domains.

36. Question: Under Section A.4.s. - How high are the resolution requirements for drawings or illustrations? Please provide example resolutions and what screen sizes are expected to be sufficient to view such images (e.g. 17”, 24”, etc.).

Answer: The software should be compatible with any screen size of 17 inches or larger. Resolution for a 17-inch screen should be 1024 x 768. Other screen sizes should achieve similar or better resolutions.

37. Question: Under Section A.4.u. - Will NASCLA and/or the psychometric auditor provide the precise mathematical specifications of the data that must be produced for this requirement? Some of these items are self-explanatory. Others need more precise definition (e.g. “statistics to indicate the performance of non-graded pilot items”). Please provide details.

Answer: NASCLA will provide the specifications for the data that must be produced for this requirement. Statistics for the pilot items would be the same statistics as for the other items, which should be able to be determined as though the pilot item were one of the regular items. We would also expect that a table for each exam form would be accessible showing columns with the answer chosen for each item in order under each examinee’s number, and the first column showing the keyed answer. The table should be able to be accessed on demand current to the last examination administration date. As an example of the desired format for this table, please see below:

	Key	201	203	204	207	208	209	Examinee #s
647	A	A	A	A	A	D	A	
723	A	A	B	A	A	C	D	
146	B	C	A	B	A	D	B	
13	C	C	A	C	B	C	D	
19	B	D	D	A	C	A	B	
1045	D	D	D	C	D	A	D	
831	A	A	A	C	D	B	A	
Item #s								

38. Question: Is NASCLA aware of any ADA issues other than possibly providing for audible reading of questions on screen? And is that actually required? Hopefully without sounding harsh, for example, can someone with a vision problem become an electrical contractor?

Answer: We would expect that the software would be compatible with a program that would allow audible reading of the screen or that the software would have such a program integrated internally within the software. We would prefer that the software would also be compatible with a program that would allow the screen, or portions of the screen, to be magnified, or have such magnification a feature of the software itself.

39. Question: In the RFP, under Attachment A - Examination of Services, is NASCLA, open to other pricing models?

Answer: In accordance with Attachment A, we would expect that there would be a cost per exam, and in addition certain charges that would be independent of the per-exam charges, such as set-up charges and maintenance charges. The cost per exam might be stated in a schedule based upon the number of exams given during the five (5) year period. For example, 1-100 exams, \$X. 101-500 exams, \$Y, 501-1,000 exams, \$Z. This leaves a great deal of flexibility. If the price will be the same per exam regardless of the number of exams given, then that should be stated. It will be up to each respondent to make sure that their costs are stated in such a way that their true costs will be covered for any number of exams given. This would be the only pricing model that we will consider.

40. Question: In the RFP, on Page 3, Section I – General Information, Purpose of the RFP - What is the format of the electronic receipt? What is it sending or how do you envision it being sent? Does NED offer any application programming interfaces (APIs) for the transmission of

scores? If so, can we see the documentation? If not, then what is the format in which the scores are required to be communicated? What level of scoring is required to be communicated?

Answer: The current examination scores received from the NASCLA Accredited Examination for Commercial General Building Contractors testing provider is sent through a secure FTP site into the NED Database. This includes the unique candidate/examination ID, candidate's full name and contact information, email, phone number, passing score, date of birth, last 4 digits of the social security number, examination date and testing location, etc. For the electrical exams, we would expect exam score, Pass or Fail, and domain report only. Domain scores would be limited to strong or weak. Strong would be set for domain scores equal to or above the same percentage as the cut score; weak would be set for any percentage lower than the cut score.

41. Question: In the same section, is this for a specific state or will it be offered nationally?

Answer: Nationally.

42. Question: In the same section, who are NASCLA approved computer-based test administrators? Are they places of employment? Are they all colleges or other facilities?

Answer: Currently there are two (2) NASCLA Approved Administration Providers: PSI Services, LLC and PROV, Inc. They use their own facilities and/or the facilities of colleges or other approved subcontractors.

43. In the same section, what are the NASCLA Approved Administration Providers required to do in terms of providing technology or labs? What are the NASCLA Approved Administration Providers required to do in terms of proctoring exams?

Answer: NASCLA Approved Administrator Providers provide testing centers with cubicles, computer stations, monitoring cameras, in-person proctors, etc., which adhere to the NASCLA Procedures to Become a NASCLA Approved Administration Provider or Accredited Examination Provider located here: <http://www.nascla.org/page/ResourcesforExamProv>

44. Question: In the RFP, Page 8 - Section O, Legal Defense Plan - What does this plan expect to address? What form would you expect such plan to take, and the approximate level of detail/length do you need to see here?

Answer: This would be the plan on how the respondent will defend themselves if a security breach occurs, what insurances or other safety nets they might utilize, and what if any legal team would be employed and their experience in such matters. It would also need to state how NASCLA and its legal team would fit into this scenario. The response to this question only needs to be long enough to fully describe your plan.

45. In the RFP, Page 17 - Appendix B - How do candidates register for exams? What system is used to authenticate a candidate and confirm that the candidate is eligible to take the selected exam? How will candidate identity and eligibility be transmitted to the exam delivery system?

What is the typical candidate journey in terms of – registration, authorization, scheduling exam, taking exam, and receiving the score report?

Answer: Every state is different and has a different registration system. This would have to be a process wherein the respondent would set this up with each agency and testing center, working within the bounds of each state's process. Typically, there is a specific identifying number for each exam administration, a number for each examinee, and a verifying number such as the last 4 digits of a social security number to corroborate the exam and that the person has permission and is the right person. Normally a candidate will apply for a license for the specific state for which they are applying for a license. When the state approves them, the state gives them a mechanism through which to register, such as an online registration program. The registration will allow them to choose from a set of pre-determined locations and times and dates. This information is available to the state and to the proctoring site personnel on a common database that they use.

46. Question: Under Section A – 1, What type of proctoring is required? 1) on-site proctoring at approved computer-based test administrators, 2) online proctoring, with a live proctor (person) observing the candidate via audio/video and chat, 3) automated proctoring that records mouse-clicks, keystrokes, eye-gaze tracking and other client side events to ensure test security, 4) all of the above.

Answer: 1) On-site proctoring at approved computer-based examination administrators.

47. Question: Under the same section, when methodology of grade reporting is expected? Is each score transmitted individually? Or can scores be sent in batches? What method of transmissions is envisioned? Web services or file based transmission like secure FTP?

Answer: Scores should be transmitted daily in batches into the NASCLA National Examination Database (NED) each night. We would prefer file based transmissions through a secure FTP.

48. Question: What if we are unable to meet some of the requirements in the RFP?

Answer: We would still consider your proposal. We are looking for the proposal that would show the best combination of features that would meet our needs, and realize that there may be not be a "perfect" combination.