



## **ELPA21 ASSESSMENT CONSORTIUM**

### **REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

**JANUARY 21, 2015**

**REQUEST TITLE:** English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Partnership Affiliation

**RESPONSE DUE DATE:** 4:00 PM, Pacific Standard Time (PST) on **Friday, February 20, 2015**

**SUBMIT RESPONSES VIA EMAIL TO:** **Margaret Ho**  
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## Overview of ELPA21 and the Sustainability Effort

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The English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (ELPA21) is a consortium of ten states producing tests to measure the language development of English language learners (ELLs). ELPA21 was awarded a \$6.3 million, four-year Enhanced Assessment Grant from the U.S. Department of Education in September 2012, and an additional \$2.8 million in supplemental funding in 2013. The goal of the consortium is to provide assessments that best measure ELLs' mastery of the communication demands experienced through instruction using states' rigorous academic standards. The consortium is collaborating with the Understanding Language initiative of Stanford University; the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) of the University of California, Los Angeles; the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) of the University of Minnesota; and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The Oregon Department of Education is the lead state agency, and CCSSO is the project management partner.

The ELPA21 consortium (hereafter referenced as the "Consortium"), is currently operating through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by Chief State School Officers ("Chiefs") from its member states. The MOU establishes operational principles through the U.S. Department of Education grant period, which expires on September 30, 2016. In order to continue to provide services to its member states after that date, the Consortium needs to establish an organizational structure and sustainability plan for its ongoing operations. To this end, the Consortium has established a *Sustainability Task Force* that is charged with exploring options for future operation.

One possible arrangement for ELPA21 is to affiliate with a public entity, such as a university, as a partner organization to "host" the Consortium. ELPA21 would be housed within the public entity and would have access to a set of services (see section: "Supporting Information for Interested Host Partner Organizations") in exchange for a pre-negotiated fee or indirect cost.

The *Sustainability Task Force* is working to compile and recommend a comprehensive Sustainability Plan for member states to endorse. Member states will vote on this plan at a Consortium Council meeting in March 2015. The Consortium aims to recommend a preferred Partner Organization affiliate for the Consortium in its Sustainability Plan.

Interested partners are asked to respond to a key set of questions via a Request for Information that member states will evaluate to make an informed decision. Following the Consortium Council's vote, the Executive Board will move forward to complete negotiations with the preferred Partner Organization (see: "Supporting Information for Interested Host Partner Organizations" for a full description of the timeline).

## Information Request for Interested Host Partner Organizations

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Organizations interested in serving as a host for the Consortium are asked to respond to the following questions, which are ordered by relative importance (per category). **Responses must be limited to a total of ten pages.**

### **GENERAL** (1 page in response)

1) Why is the Partner Organization interested in hosting the Consortium?

### **SERVICES AND CAPACITY** (3 pages in response)

2) What services can the host Partner Organization provide to the Consortium? (See Exhibit 1 in following section.) What is the estimated fee or indirect cost rate (or equivalent) that would be charged to the Consortium to access those services? If necessary, provide a narrow range estimate.

3) Can the host Partner Organization engage in Intergovernmental Agreements (IGAs) with other states? Describe the process and possible limitations or constraints associated with the use of IGAs.

4) On an annual basis, the Consortium expects to issue Requests for Proposals and consulting contracts that could total ~\$7M and will collect membership fees from ~10 states that could range from \$40K to \$2M per state. (See Exhibit 2 in next section.) What is the host Partner Organization's capacity to handle this scale of transactions and operations? What assurances of service-level standards can the host Partner Organization provide? For example, can the Consortium depend on timely access to and turnaround time from host functions such as procurement, reimbursement, accounts receivable, and/or legal?

5) Please describe any pending changes at your institution/agency that would have a material impact on the organization's ability to partner effectively with the consortium.

### **POLICIES AND PARAMETERS** (2 pages in response)

6) Within the parameters of the host Partner Organization's human resources (HR), would the Consortium have autonomy to hire, fire, and dictate salary schedules for its employees?

7) Describe the host Partner Organization's approach to compensation, including both qualitative and quantitative benefits included and rate cost.

8) What are the host Partner Organization's Institutional Review Board policies as it relates to the Consortium's capacity to retrieve, store, and use personally-identifiable data?

9) When the Consortium is fully staffed by the end of the 2015-2016 school year, it will likely comprise ~10 – 20 staff remotely located throughout the country. What policies or practical barriers exist, if any, within the host Partner Organization's structure that would adversely affect the functionality of a remote "virtual" organization?

### **GOVERNANCE AND ROLE OF PARTNER ORGANIZATION** (2 pages in response)

10) Please describe how the host Partner Organization would envision its relationship with the Consortium. To what extent will the host Partner Organization require certain governance and/or decision-making control, and to what extent will the Consortium continue to operate as a relatively autonomous entity? For example, will the Consortium be able to continue as a state-led organization, with the host Partner Organization having input into decisions, but with primary decision rights resting with the member states?

**11)** What assurances can the host Partner Organization provide to demonstrate support and/or backing at the administration level (e.g., Provost or Chancellor's Office level)?

**MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL PARTNERSHIP** (*1 page response*)

**12)** Ideally, the host Partner Organization and the Consortium can mutually leverage each other's capacity, expertise, and resources. Please describe the areas in which the host Partner Organization might leverage the resources of the Consortium, and vice-versa. For example, the Consortium may provide access to data for research opportunities, experience administering large-scale assessments, and pervasive understanding of assessment implementation and best practices; the host Partner Organization may provide expertise in the field of test measurement, grant management, and/or Information Technology [IT] capacity.

**13)** The Consortium plans to provide the host Partner Organization with access to assessment data for research studies. Describe the host Partner Organization's propensity to use this access to benefit the larger research community.

## Supporting Information for Interested Host Partner Organizations

### Exhibit 1

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Specific services required or desired by the Consortium from the host Partner Organization:

#### **“Must Provide” Services**

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- **Legal:** provide general legal counsel to the Consortium on an as-needed basis, including contract review.
- **Accounts Payable and Accounts Receivable:** manage the receipt and disbursement of all funds on behalf of the Consortium.
- **Budget/Finance:** support the Consortium’s annual budgeting and finance processes on an as-needed basis.
- **Audit:** provide auditing services, including monitoring the Consortium’s compliance with legislative policies and overall fiscal prudence.
- **Human Resource:** provide and administer benefits for all full-time Consortium staff.
- **Information Technology:** support the Consortium’s operational IT needs, e.g. technical support for staff.
- **Communications and Outreach:** provide communications and outreach services including marketing, media and public engagement, and information sharing such as website hosting and maintenance and newsletter development.
- **Office Space:** provide physical location to house small number of “local” staff. (~2 FTE)
- **Grant Management:** provide support for the Consortium in writing, managing, and reporting of grants.

#### **“Nice-to-Provide” Services**

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- Provide server capacity to host Consortium applications and data.
  - Provide access to larger meeting space facilities for staff and state membership meetings on an as-needed basis.
  - Provide legal expertise/counsel related to intellectual property law.
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Exhibit 2

**ELL POPULATION BY STATE AND GRADE**

	AR 2012- 2013	IA 2013- 2014	KS 2011- 2012	LA	NE 2012- 2013	OH 2011- 2012	OR 2012- 2013	SC 2013- 2014	WA 2011- 2012	WV 2013- 2014
<b>Total for reported year</b>	34114	25275	46956	13042	18009	40231	53597	41038	89152	2516
<b>K</b>	7611	3198	5110		2562	4418	15824	4669	15371	213
<b>1</b>		3083	5053		5507	5418		4839	14671	235
<b>2</b>	6570	2925	4905			5001	14255	4661	11817	218
<b>3</b>		2724	4825		4859	4316		8363	203	
<b>4</b>	6267	2513	4502		4893	4052	10855	3968	7429	186
<b>5</b>		2228	4233			3220		3633	6494	203
<b>6</b>	7345	1815	3953		1991	2473	6868	3137	5468	185
<b>7</b>		1497	3490			2209		2766	4402	184
<b>8</b>		1385	3013			2063		2591	3603	180
<b>9</b>	6321	1196	2770		2052	2337	5795	2665	3994	198
<b>10</b>		994	2292			1571		1721	2985	175
<b>11</b>		906	1603			1460		1206	2405	159
<b>12</b>		799	1207			1150		866	2150	108
<b>Number of Title III students who took the state annual ELPA for the first time*</b>	4548	4627	1844	4424	4887	9880	11056	7193	23674	198
<b>CFR Total*</b>	32814	22425	47040	13952	20304	42824	58580	38553	97397	1865

\*Consolidated Federal Reporting (2011-12)

## General Background on the ELPA21 Consortium

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In 2013, WestEd, the Understanding Language Initiative of Stanford University, and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) developed a set of English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards that correspond to college and career-ready (CCR) standards for English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science. ELPA21 is being developed based on these standards.

The ELPA21 Consortium led by Oregon as the governing state in partnership with states, Stanford University, and CCSSO, was formed to develop an English Language Proficiency Assessment that corresponds to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). ELPA21's proposed assessment design will ensure the valid, reliable, and fair assessment of the critical elements associated with English language acquisition and mastery of the linguistic skills linked to success in mainstream classroom environments.

ELPA21's proposed assessment will reflect ongoing improvements in instruction and learning that are useful for all members of the educational enterprise, including students, parents, teachers, school administrators, members of the public, and policymakers. This assessment will incorporate principles of Universal Design and will comply with Accessible Portable Item Profile (APIP) standards. The development of the ELPA21 assessment will replicate and utilize the successful programs and tools from member states.

The deliverables for the screener and summative components of ELPA21 will include performance level descriptors, item banks for practice and for operational delivery, psychometric scale, performance levels (cut scores), test design and delivery specifications, test specifications and blueprints, professional development resources, and administration and security protocols. Participating states who are currently part of the PARCC, SMARTER Balanced, NCSC, and DLM will work with these consortia to maximize compatibility and interoperability across user platforms. These resources, as well as model RFP language, will be available to states for use (individually or in multi-state partnerships) to contract with vendors for operational assessment in the 2015-2016 school year.

The ELPA21 Consortium is committed to supporting educators, member states, and the public as they adopt and implement the English Language Proficiency Standards and college- and career-ready standards.

**Mission:** Acknowledging the diverse and rich language experiences English language learners (ELLs) bring to school, we recognize their English language proficiency is constantly growing. ELPA21 measures that growth based on the new English Language Proficiency Standards and provides valuable information that informs instruction and facilitates academic English proficiency so that all ELLs leave high school prepared for college and career success.

**Vision:** ELPA21's goal is to provide assessments that best measure ELLs' mastery of the communication demands of states' rigorous academic standards.

These assessments are being developed using an Evidence-Centered Design (ECD) framework. The ECD process begins by clearly defining the domain to be assessed — for ELPA21 the domains are defined by the ELP Standards. Test development continues by identifying and evaluating potential claims about what constitutes student proficiency in that domain, or what students know and can do based on the assessment in terms of identifying evidence (what students might say, do, or produce that will constitute evidence for the claims); and identifying the tasks or items that give students the optimal opportunity to produce the desired evidence. The ELPA21 item specifications provide

guidance on how to craft items that are aligned to the ELP standards. The specifications are tightly linked to the definitions of evidence that stem from the ECD framework and include sample items.

The items for the ELPA21 assessment include interactive item styles for speaking and listening tests. The assessment will be delivered online and will incorporate technology-enhanced items that allow students to indicate their responses in different ways than do traditional item types (e.g., multiple-choice items). The assessment will improve overall efficiency of data collection, management, sharing, and reporting. Turnaround time on reporting results will be reduced, as will administrative burdens on school and district staff.

ELPA21 has also incorporated accessibility and accommodations considerations from the beginning of test design and item development. These considerations are infused throughout the project's work in a number of ways. The Administration, Accessibility, and Accommodations Task Management Team is has participated in training item writers, reviewing the Accessible Portable Item Protocol (APIP), and developing plans for cognitive labs, pilot tests, and field tests. This group has also developed the ELPA21 policies for accessibility features and accommodations.

Throughout the development and operational roll-out of ELPA21, the consortium will actively gather evidence to evaluate the technical rigor of the assessment system and the extent to which planned test uses are justified. The UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) and the ELPA21 Technical Advisory Committee will oversee this evaluation, working with the ELPA21 Task Management Teams and other project partners. Specific areas of focus include the alignment of the assessment system to the ELP Standards; the fairness of test items and performance tasks for all students; the reliability of scores; and the validity of score interpretations (ultimately including determinations of language proficiency and resulting placement decisions).