

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

ALTERNATE CANADIAN ENTRY-TO-PRACTICE EXAMINATION

Introduction

The College of Optometrists of Ontario (“College”) is inviting proposals from organizations interested in the development and implementation of an alternate Canadian examination to assess entry-level knowledge, skills and judgment of optometric professionals seeking registration to practise optometry in Canada. The results of assessments will be used by the College to determine applicants' eligibility to proceed in the registration process.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is an invitation to organizations to submit proposals. In this RFP, the organization(s) submitting the proposal is the “respondent”.

Background

Established in 1919, the College of Optometrists of Ontario is the regulatory authority responsible for registering (licensing) and governing optometrists in Ontario. The College's authority and the limitations of its powers can be found in legislation including the *Regulated Health Professions Act* and the *Optometry Act*. The College has the legislated duty to protect the public interest and the goal of all our activities is to ensure that patients have access to safe, ethical and high quality optometric care.

Context

It is a non-exemptible requirement that an applicant must successfully complete the standards assessment examinations set or approved by the College (please refer to s. 2(1) 7. of the Registration Regulation as amended (O.Reg. 837/93), under the *Optometry Act, 1991*). Under Section 22.4 (2) of the *Health Professions Procedural Code (HPPC)*, the College is required to take reasonable measures to ensure that any third party who assesses qualifications upon which it relies, makes the assessment in a way that is transparent, objective, impartial and fair. The College has developed a formal process to select a third-party service provider that is qualified to provide transparent, objective, impartial and fair assessment of the knowledge, skills, and judgment of applicants for registration with the College. The College has a responsibility to evaluate and monitor the third party's assessment practices and for the third party to address any potential issues identified in a timely manner, as requested by the College.

Terms and Conditions

1. All submitted proposals will become the property of the College and will not be returned to the respondents.
2. All information provided by or obtained from the College in any form associated with this RFP either before or after the issuance of this RFP:
 - a. is the sole property of the College and must be treated as confidential;
 - b. is not to be used for any purpose other than replying to this RFP and the performance of any subsequent contract;
 - c. must not be disclosed without prior written authorization from the College; and
 - d. shall be returned by the respondents to the College immediately upon the request of the College.
3. All proposals must include an agreement on the confidentiality of the work to be conducted as it relates to the candidates and the College.
4. All proposals must include a statement that the individuals involved in providing services in the proposals are free from any conflict of interest that may compromise the integrity of the services to be provided.
5. All proposals must explain how English and French-speaking applicants will be provided with services, including provision for offering the exam in both official Canadian languages.
6. The College and its advisors make no representation, warranty or guarantee as to the accuracy of the information contained in this RFP or issued by way of addenda. Any quantities shown or data contained in this RFP or provided by way of addenda are estimates only and are for the sole purpose of indicating to respondents the general size of the work.
7. The organization(s) submitting the proposal, otherwise known as the “respondent”, shall bear all costs associated with or incurred in the preparation and presentation of its proposal including, if applicable, costs incurred for travel expenses associated with, preparation for, and attending interviews and/or demonstrations.

8. All of the provisions of this RFP are deemed to be accepted by each respondent and incorporated into each respondent's proposal.
9. The College shall have the right to terminate any contract awarded to a respondent without compensation if the College determines that the respondent submitted any inaccurate or incomplete information to the College. This right shall be in addition to any other remedies the College may have in law or in equity
10. The College shall have the right to terminate any contract awarded to a respondent at any time and for any reason upon providing thirty (30) days written notice to the respondent. And, the College will compensate the respondent for any deliverables provided by the respondent up to the date of the notice of termination.
11. The College reserves the right to:
 - a. make public the names of any or all respondents;
 - b. request written clarification from any respondent and incorporate a respondent's response into the respondent's proposal;
 - c. assess a respondent's proposal on the basis of:
 - i. a financial analysis determining the actual cost of the proposal when considering factors including transition costs arising from the replacement of existing goods, services, practices, methodologies and infrastructure (howsoever originally established);
 - ii. information provided by references;
 - iii. the respondent's past performance on previous contracts;
 - iv. any information provided by a respondent in relation to this RFP process;
or
 - v. other relevant information that arises during this RFP process;
 - d. waive formalities and accept proposals which substantially comply with the requirements of this RFP;
 - e. verify with any respondent or with a third party any information set out in a proposal;
 - f. check references other than those provided by any respondent;

- g. solely determine whether any situation or circumstance constitutes a conflict of interest;
- h. disqualify any respondent and/or rescind any contract awarded to a respondent whose proposal contains misrepresentations or any other inaccurate or misleading information;
- i. disqualify any respondent or the proposal of any respondent who has engaged in conduct prohibited by this RFP;
- j. make changes, including substantial changes, to this RFP, by way of addenda;
- k. accept any proposal and not necessarily the proposal that reflects the lowest cost to the College.
- l. cancel this RFP process at any stage;
- m. cancel this RFP process at any stage and issue a new RFP for the same or similar deliverables;
- n. negotiate with any or all respondents;
- o. accept any proposal in whole or in part; or
- p. reject any or all proposals.

These reserved rights are in addition to any other express rights or any other rights which may be implied in the circumstances.

The College shall not be liable for any expenses, costs, losses or any direct or indirect damages incurred or suffered by any respondent or any third party resulting from the College exercising any of its express or implied rights under this RFP.

- 12. By submitting its proposal, the respondent authorizes the collection by the College of the information set out under paragraphs 11 (e) and (f) in the manner contemplated in those paragraphs.
- 13. Any resulting contract signed by the College and the respondent, shall be interpreted and governed, and the relations between the parties involved determined, by the laws in force in the Province of Ontario, Canada.
- 14. If a contract is awarded, payment to the successful respondent would be made according to the terms of the contract. A payment schedule is to be negotiated with the successful respondent as part of the contracting process.

15. Once the alternate Canadian entry-to-practice exam is developed and subsequently updated on a regular basis, the exam and its updated versions remain the sole property of the College unless approval is obtained from the College Council.

Evaluation of Proposals

Proposals will be evaluated in accordance with the following evaluation criteria.

1. Work plan (50%)
 - Understanding of requirements – the proposal demonstrates that the respondent has a clear understanding of the scope and nature of the work required
 - Knowledge and awareness of the Canadian optometric regulatory environment
 - Suitability of the proposed methods/approach and appropriateness of associated timelines
 - Understanding of challenges and feasibility of proposed solutions
 - Organization's organizational chart
 - Ensuring the security of the examination
 - How and within what timeframe potential concerns would be addressed if brought forward by the College
 - How the College will be assured that potential concerns would be addressed
 - Strength of organization
2. Qualifications of respondent (40%)
 - Understanding of issues
 - Overall qualifications and related experience of both the organization and individuals assigned to the project
 - Experience working with diverse stakeholders
 - Demonstrated ability to work well with College staff
 - At least 3 references from clients
3. Costs (10%)
 - Costs to be shown only in Canadian funds with the total estimated amount of GST or HST to be shown separately, as applicable
 - Costs to be realistic for each component of work plan
 - Budget including minimum and maximum candidate numbers and proposed funding sources

Proposal Submission Format

To facilitate the RFP review process, proposals must include an executive summary, a contact page, a realistic commencement date for service delivery, and be a maximum of 15 pages excluding appendices. The proposal is to be submitted on 8 1/2 x 11 pages in soft copy.

The following table of contents should be used:

- Executive summary
- Contact page
- Introduction
- Description of the respondents' qualifications (resumes to be included in an appendix)
- Proposed work plan including how the College would be involved to ensure that it has the necessary oversight, and how potential concerns by the College in the future would be addressed and within what timeframe
- Deliverables
- Anticipated challenges and solution
- Costs (budget to be included in an appendix) with a detailed breakdown, indicating clearly how they are derived

INSTRUCTIONS, INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

1. **The closing date for all proposals is 12:00 noon, Friday, May 12, 2017. The College reserves the right to extend this closing date. All proposals are to be addressed to the attention of Ms. Hanan Jibry, Assistant Registrar, only via e-mail at HJibry@collegeoptom.on.ca. Respondents shall be prepared to provide at least two hard copies of the full proposals upon request.**

2. The information on the Certification page (page number 9 of this package), must be completed and signed by the respondent or by an authorized representative of the respondent. The signature indicates that the respondent agrees to be bound by the instructions, information and conditions in their entirety as they appear in this RFP. No other terms and conditions included in the respondent's proposal will be applicable to the resulting contract should that take place, notwithstanding the fact that the respondent's proposal may become part of the resulting contract.

In the event of a proposal submitted by a consortium, the proposal shall either be signed by all members of the consortium or a statement shall be provided to the effect that the signatory represents all parties of the consortium.

3. To ensure the integrity of the competitive procurement process, enquiries and other communication regarding the process are to be directed **only** to Ms. Jibry in writing. Enquiries and other communication are not to be directed to any other official(s). Failure to comply with this condition during the procurement process, may result in the disqualification of the associated proposal.
4. Enquiries **must** be received **no later than seven (7) calendar days** prior to the procurement closing date to allow sufficient time to provide a response. Enquiries received after that time, may not be answered prior to the procurement closing date.
5. To ensure consistency and quality of information provided to respondents, provision will be made to post on the College website, any information with respect to significant inquiries received and the replies to such inquiries without revealing the sources of the inquiries.
6. No costs incurred before the receipt of a signed contract or specified written authorization from Ms. Jibry, can be charged to any resulting contract should that take place.

7. The respondent shall have the legal capacity to contract. If the respondent is a sole proprietorship, a partnership or a corporation, the respondent shall provide a statement indicating the laws under which it is registered or incorporated together with the registered or corporate name and place of business. In the case of a joint venture, the names and addresses of each member of the joint venture, must be provided and the proposal must clearly indicate that it is being submitted as a joint venture.

8. The respondent hereby certifies that all information provided in the respondent's proposal including but not limited to the following:
 - The personnel proposed in the proposal is capable of satisfactorily performing the requirement described in the RFP;
 - Individuals proposed will be available until the completion of the work required, and any individuals proposed will only be replaced with the express approval of the College;
 - The work specified can be met in a timely manner, and will be achieved within the time frame and budget allocated;
 - The proposal will remain firm for a period of 90 calendar days after the proposal closing date;
 - The information provided in the resumes and supporting material submitted with the proposal, particularly as this information pertains to educational achievements, experience and work history, has been verified by the respondent to be true and accurate;
 - Should a verification by the College disclose untrue statements, the College shall have the right to terminate the resulting contract should it occur, for default; and
 - The respondent certifies that, should it be requested to provide services under any contract resulting from this procurement, the persons proposed in its proposal will be available to commence performance of the work as required by the College and within the time specified within or agreed to with College.

CERTIFICATION

Respondent Company Name(s), address(es), contact number(s), e-mail address(es), and fax number(s):

The name and title of person authorized to sign on behalf of respondent (please print):

Signature below indicates acceptance of the terms and conditions set out herein:

Signature

Date

PROPOSALS FOR ALTERNATE CANADIAN ENTRY-TO-PRACTICE EXAMINATION

Objective of the Service

Working with the College, the respondent will develop and deliver a quality-focused alternate Canadian entry-to-practice examination for applicants for registration with the College.

The examination process will include:

1. A two-part 'examination' consisting of a) a theoretical (written) component and b) a clinical component comprised of an objective structured clinical examination (OSCE);
2. Development of an appropriate exam blue print based on a validated competency profile for the profession;
3. Testing for the reliability of the examination;
4. Clinical component to include assessment of critical technical optometry skills in the clinical exam component;
5. Outcomes that clearly demonstrate candidates' knowledge, skills and judgment in relation to competency-based practice of optometry in Ontario and future learning requirements;
6. Assessors who are experts in optometry and are experienced in assessing candidates' knowledge, skills and judgement;
7. Training for assessors;
8. Clinical assessment methods and tools that meet the principle of 'fitness for purpose'; and
9. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Service Provider(s)

Services can be provided by one organization or a consortium of organizations. The proposal is to include details on the service provider team members' background knowledge and experience. The proposal is also to provide clear evidence of the service provider's technical capacity to deliver the described services including the minimum and maximum number of candidates it will be able to serve annually, and realistic plans for sustainability.

The submission should include a work plan with proposed timelines for implementation, the service provider's staff assigned responsibilities, and detailed explanations of how the RFP requirements will be achieved.

Statement of Work

The service provider(s) will undertake two main activities: A) development of the examination and B) implementation and administration of the examination.

A. Examination Development

In developing examination, the service provider(s) will demonstrate how it will establish the infrastructure, policies, and procedures; develop the necessary assessment methods and

tools; train personnel; pilot and validate the examination; and establish effective collaborative working relationships with key stakeholders such as assessors and the College. The details are to include a process for regularly reviewing exam questions to ensure that they test appropriately for candidate optometric knowledge and skills, in addition to developing new questions for different exam administrations. The services of a psychometrician are to be used on a regular basis for the purposes of ensuring continuous validation of the exam. A clear timeline not to exceed one and a half years and commencing as early as the fall 2017, must be provided. The examination, once partially or fully developed, remains the sole property of the College.

The knowledge content would be developed by several working groups of optometrists, all in good standing with the College. Each group would develop a defined number of multiple-choice questions and corresponding answers using an appropriate exam blue print and competency profile and update the questions in a timely manner when the appropriate competency profile is updated in the future.

B. Examination Implementation and Administration

The implementation of the examination will be in accordance with established protocols for examination security and provide the College with written assessment reports on each candidate's optometric knowledge, skills and judgment as required within an agreed upon time frame.

Specifically, the service provider(s) will undertake the following activities:

1. Develop a detailed model including principles, policies and procedures, assessment tool development, assessor and advisor training, examination monitoring and evaluation.
2. Develop the necessary assessment tools for the theoretical and clinical components based on the principle of 'fitness for purpose'. The clinical component is only to be open to candidates who successfully pass the theoretical component. The clinical component is to involve standardized patients and trained assessors in an objective structured clinical examination (OSCE) format.
3. Develop a process for initial and continuing validation of assessment tools in addition to other quality measures.
4. Develop assessment preparation tools for candidates including reading resource lists on optometry and assessment methodologies, practice questions and answers, and practice demonstrations.
5. Develop guidelines and training for assessors.
6. Create job descriptions, hire and train administrative, assessor and advisory staff.
7. Arrange physical space and equipment for the service and specify how security monitoring is to be implemented.
8. Develop text and web-based communications tools for informing the public about the service.

9. Develop policies in consultation with the College, prior to promoting the examination.
10. Establish start-up and annual operating budgets and identify sources of funding.
11. Participate with the College in developing a protocol outlining the service provider(s)' responsibilities and relationship with the College.

a) Theoretical (Written) Component

Questions to be answered in the proposal are to include:

1. Where is the component administered? What are the administrative costs of producing and delivering the test?
2. Who would inform candidates of the results of their performance in the theoretical component? How would they be informed?
3. What level of meaningful feedback would be given to candidates about their performance on the theoretical component? Who would provide that feedback?

b) Clinical Component

Questions to be answered in the proposal are to include:

1. Where is the component administered?
2. What logistics are involved in developing the clinical assessment? What is the cost of developing it?
3. Who would develop the clinical assessment?
4. How would it be piloted? What is the cost?
5. How would supervisors/mentors be recruited?
6. Who would recruit them?
7. What would the cost be to train them?
8. Who would organize and develop the training? What is the cost?
9. Who would inform candidates of the results of their clinical assessment?
10. How would the potential for subjectivity be addressed?
11. How would the safety of patients be assured?
12. What type of supports would be provided to candidates in preparation for, during and in follow-up to the clinical assessment? Who would provide them? What is the cost? Is there potential for partnership with another organization to provide this support?
13. How would the clinical assessment be evaluated?
14. How would standardized patients be found/established?

Deliverables

A. Examination Development

The service provider(s) will consult regularly with the College during development. The service provider(s) will deliver in addition to a fully developed, piloted, and validated examination within

one and a half years of commencing development: an initial report, an interim report on progress on all work activities, and a final report outlining the examination's details and costs.

B. Examination Implementation and Administration

The service provider(s) will consult regularly with the College and as required during implementation activities. The service provider(s) will propose implementation dates and provide the College with an annual report on the examination administrations conducted including any challenges faced and potential breaches, and efforts made to resolve them.