Questions and Answers
Regarding Smarter Balanced Assessments

Contractors and states have been submitting questions to Smarter Balanced about deployment and certification of the Smarter Balanced assessment system. This document represents a collection of those questions and Smarter Balanced responses to those questions. *Questions are included verbatim* and do not necessarily reflect Smarter Balanced terminology, positions, or intentions; however, the responses provided in this document do utilize current Smarter Balanced terminology and intentions. These responses are not intended to replace or override information provided in state-issued RFPs. In order to provide transparent responses to these questions, Smarter Balanced has posted this document to SmarterApp.org.

Q #	Question	Smarter Balanced Responses	Date of Response
1	a. Will Smarter Balanced provide item/task scoring specifications for the CAT and non-CAT components of the ELA and math summative assessments, including: i. ELA/math ii. CAT/non-CAT component iii. Type, e.g. selected response, constructed response, technology enhanced, performance tasks iv. Rubric or point total for each item type v. Scoring method, e.g. machine score, hand score, AI score b. Number of items: The Test Blueprint available on the Smarter Balanced website online is titled "Preliminary" dated November 28, 2012 and does not accurately reflect the current test design.	a. Yes. As appropriate to the item. i. Yes, as appropriate to the item. ii. Yes, as appropriate to the items and tasks. iii. Yes. Each of the items will have a type code similar to the description in the Estimated Item Counts table provided in the response to question 3. iv. Yes. For items that require a rubric, the rubric will be provided. v. The scoring method recommendation will be provided but is ultimately a state determination. Smarter Balanced will provide expectations for reliability and validity that member states must meet or exceed. Smarter Balanced intends to use reliability and validity criteria that are consistent with industry best practices; these criteria will be established as a deliverable of Smarter Balanced Contract-16/17. b. The test blueprint is presently being updated, and the updated blueprint is expected to be available by April 2014.	4/11/14
2	Vendors have two choices for administering Smarter Balanced assessments. Option 1: They can stand up the open source Test Delivery System developed under SBAC RFP-11, or	a. Smarter Balanced has stood up its open-source community at SmarterApp.org. Smarter Balanced will use this location to make open-source code available. Open-source code for the assessment delivery system is expected to be available by September 2014.	4/11/14

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	Option 2: Vendors can certify their own proprietary systems for delivery by adhering to the certification process established by Smarter Balanced. a. In the case of option 1 above, will Smarter Balanced indicate when the Test Delivery System open-source repository and documentation required under SBAC RFP-11 will be available, thus allowing contractors sufficient time to stand up, host, and deploy the Smarter Balanced open source Test Delivery System if this option is selected by contractors? b. In the case of option 2 above, will Smarter Balanced indicate if the items/tasks in the Smarter Balanced item bank are in a standard industry format, i.e. QTI and APIP, or other format to allow contractors to load, render, and QA the items/tasks in their proprietary systems. c. Will SBAC be ready to certify contractor's proprietary systems in 2014 as required?	b. The item packaging format is only relevant regarding exporting items from the Smarter Balanced item archive tool and the format supported by the Smarter Balanced open-source test application. However, vendors may elect to convert to alternative item formats operationally, as long as vendors do not compromise the comparability of the item. The open-source assessment delivery system will use a new format called the Smarter Balanced Assessment Item Packaging Format. This format has been developed by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) expressly to meet the requirements of the Smarter Balanced item specifications and the Smarter Balanced Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines (found at http://www.smarterbalanced.org/parents-students/support-for-under-represented-students/). This format is also being used in the 2013-14 Smarter Balanced Field Test. A preview of the public specification of the format has been posted to SmarterApp.org under a Creative Commons license. A final version of the specification will be posted shortly. Smarter Balanced has become a member of IMS so that IMS Global may develop a Smarter Balanced Profile of IMS APIP. This profile will have the enhancements needed for APIP to encode all Smarter Balanced assessment items. Although current APIP profiles can encode a majority of Smarter Balanced items, they do not presently support some of the innovative item types in the Smarter Balanced item specifications; thus the need for the enhanced profiles. The Smarter Balanced assessment item archive will be capable of exporting items in both formats. c. Smarter Balanced is developing a certification package that includes all of the specifications, sample data, test harnesses, and test requirements needed for a vendor to demonstrate compliance with the requirements. Components of this package will be released incrementally on SmarterApp.org as they become available. As of March 2014, the posting of specifications has commenced, with the full package expected to be complete in September 2014. Shortly thereafter (anticipated to occur by October 2014), Smarter Balanced	

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		will begin certifying compliance.	
3	Will Smarter Balanced confirm the number of items/tasks in Smarter Balanced summative and interim assessment item banks and what is the scheduled release of items to be available?	See the table below for a list of response types and estimated item counts for each content area. Summative items for operational use will be available by December 2014; the timeline for interim items is still being determined. This table does not reflect the counts and types of items anticipated for embedded field testing purposes. All information provided for field testing purposes in the 2014-15 administration are estimates. There are many factors that will influence the field test plan for 2014-15 (e.g., outcomes of field testing in 2013-14, item availability from development). Additionally, the field test plan for 2014-15 will be adjusted based on need for future years. In the 2014-15 administration, Smarter anticipates embedding an approximate total of 4,000 ELA/literacy items and 4,000 mathematics items across the Consortium, sufficient to obtain a calibration sample for every item. Likely, each 2014-15 administration will have 5-8 embedded field test items.	4/11/14

Estimated Item Counts

Content Area	Response Type	# of Score Points	Anticipated Scoring Method	Est. # of Summative Items	Est. # of Interim Items
ELA/ Literacy	Multiple choice	0–2	Machine	4325	1708
	Hot text	0–2	Machine	609	241
	Matching tables	0–2	Tech.-enhanced (TE) (simple)	609	241
	Short text	0–2	Hand-scored	1,199	473

![Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium logo]

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			Performance task (PT)—essay	0–10 (3-trait rubric: 2 traits with 0–4 and 1 trait with 0–2)	AI essay engines	254	100
				0–2	Machine	45	18
			PT—constructed response	0–2	Hand-scored	897	354
			SUBTOTAL			7,938	3,135
		Mathematics	Multiple choice	0–2	Machine	2,718	1,062
			Matching tables	0–2	Machine	272	106
			Hot spot	0–1	TE (simple)	272	106
			Hot text—drag and drop	0–2, 0–4	TE (complex)	815	319
			Equation/numeric	0–1	Equation response	815	319
			Graphing	0–4	Graphical response	544	212
			Short text	0–3	Hand scored	377	148
			PT—constructed response	0–2,3,4	Hand scored	1,118	437
					Equation response	372	146
					Graphing	372	146
			SUBTOTAL			7,675	3,001
		TOTAL				15,613	6,136

| 4 | When will Smarter Balanced provide more information about the certification process? When does Smarter Balanced expect the certification process to begin? | See answer to part (c) of Question 2. | 4/11/14 |

Q #	Question	Smarter Balanced Responses	Date of Response
5	Can Smarter Balanced identify the number of items by item type that vendors should expect to have to support at any one time? Please provide this information for each grade/content. For instance, Gd3 ELA; Assuming each student will respond to 5 ELA CRs, how many unique Gd3 ELA CRs will be available for administration, and therefore require the vendor to support hand scoring?	All values provided below are projections and should be considered estimates. See the answer to question 3 for proportions of response types within each grade. The partitioning for summative and interim is approximately 2/3 summative and 1/3 interim. In addition, the Consortium is anticipating a 25% attrition rate following data review. Math: The total numbers of items available for administration are 825 for each of grades 3–8 and 3,135 for grade 11. ELA/literacy: The total numbers of items available for administration are: <table><tr><td></td><td>Each of Grades 3–8</td><td>Grade 11</td></tr><tr><td>Items</td><td>990</td><td>3,465</td></tr><tr><td>PT Tasks</td><td>47</td><td>138</td></tr><tr><td>PT # of Items</td><td>186</td><td>552</td></tr><tr><td>Reading Passages</td><td>44</td><td>154</td></tr><tr><td>Items with Reading Passages</td><td>440</td><td>1544</td></tr><tr><td>Listening Stimuli</td><td>66</td><td>231</td></tr></table>	4/11/14
6	RFPs are being released for the delivery and processing of the Smarter Balanced assessments. Smarter Balanced contracted with organizations to develop several systems which are to be available via open source systems (includes Open Source Licensing, Open Code Repository, and Community Coordination). Vendors who did not bid or get selected to build these systems for Smarter Balanced are now competing with the vendors that Smarter Balanced contracted with to develop these systems. It seems that the vendors who won these contracts, but have not delivered the open source component of their contracts, have an advantage in the state bidding process.	All code continues to be developed and refined. Please see the answer to part (c) of question 2. Vendors are encouraged to monitor SmarterApp.org for updates and code/specifications releases. Current contractors for code development are obligated to deliver code to Smarter Balanced by September 30, 2014.	4/11/14

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	What is the current status and the availability of the following as open source systems? When will these be available as open source?
	
	1.Test Delivery System, includes:
	    a. Registration
	    b. Test Delivery
	    c. Scoring
	    d. Integration of item scores into overall scores
	    e. Deliver of score to Data Warehouse
	2. Secure Browser: Specifies web browser that limits student access to authorized applications for duration of test and also facilitates accommodations for students with special needs.
	3. Report Delivery System/Data Warehouse
	4. Digital Formative Library		

7	Last fall, Smarter Balanced released an RFI related to certification, and Smarter Balanced has been talking about having a certification process for vendors to deliver the Smarter Balanced assessments. What requirements will vendors have to meet to gain certification? Does Smarter Balanced intend to put this certification process in place after vendors have already been working on these programs?	Smarter Balanced has recently awarded a contract to develop the certification package for assessment delivery systems. Work on this contract is expected to begin in April 2014. Supports for certification, including specifications, sample data, test harnesses, and requirements, are being posted progressively at SmarterApp.org, starting in March 2014, with the full package to be completed by September 2014. Certification support services will continue thereafter. The certification package is designed to support and enhance, but not replace, states' and vendors' quality control processes. The package will provide detailed requirements that will allow vendors to affirm the quality of their technology deployment and implementation. Smarter Balanced will make available, upon a state's request, a verification of the certification elements. For more detail, please see the "Smarter Balanced Applications	4/11/14

Q #	Question	Smarter Balanced Responses	Date of Response
		[Deployment and Technology Certification](#)" document, available at [SmarterApp.org](#)	
8	When will the Smarter Balanced item pools for interim and summative assessments be available for vendors to prepare for testing during the 2014–15 school year?	Items, partitioned into summative and interim item pools, will be available Dec. 2014. A pool of items (from which the interim pool will be drawn) will be available by June 2014. Information about which items should be used for interim purposes will be provided in October 2014. A subset of the interim pool to support a fixed-form version of the Interim Comprehensive Assessment is scheduled for release in October 2014.	4/11/14
9	How many items, by item type and content strand, are included in the Smarter Balanced summative assessment pool? For item types, please separate into the following: • Multiple-choice • Technology-enhanced (assumes item can be machine scored) Constructed-response (assumes item requires a short response that needs to be scored via human or AI scoring) Extended-response (assumes item requires an essay length response that needs to be scored via human or AI scoring)	See the answer to question 3.	4/11/14
10	How many items, by item type and content strand, are included in the Smarter Balanced interim assessment pool? For item types, please separate into the following: • Multiple-choice • Technology-enhanced (assumes item can be machine scored)	See the answer to question 3.	4/11/14

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	Constructed-response (assumes item requires a short response that needs to be scored via human or AI scoring) Extended-response (assumes item requires an essay length response that needs to be scored via human or AI scoring)		
11	For administration of both interim and summative assessments, how many constructed-response or extended-response items per content area per student will require human or AI scoring?	See the answer to question 5.	4/11/14
12	Please provide a list of all language translations and accommodated versions for items that will be provided by Smarter Balanced (e.g., Spanish, Arabic, Braille, American Sign Language, etc.).	A full description of accessibility tools is available at http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/SmarterBalanced_Guidelines_091113.pdf The languages for accommodated versions of items are Arabic, Cantonese, Filipino, Korean, Mandarin, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, braille, and American Sign Language.	4/11/14
13	On page 6 of the document posted at this web address— https://www.k12.wa.us/RFP/pubdocs/SBAC-31/RFI2013-31TestDeliveryCertificationPkg.pdf— it says "Smarter Balanced will deploy and operate the Item Authoring, Item Bank and Data Warehouse services. States are responsible for deploying and operating Test Delivery Systems. Smarter Balanced expects most states to procure test administration services from vendors whose products are certified to deliver Smarter Balanced assessments." If Smarter Balanced plans to deploy and operate Item Authoring, Item Bank and Data Warehouse services, why are some of the Smarter Balanced member states asking for these same services to be provided by vendors within Smarter Balanced test delivery RFPs?	State hosting responsibilities are described in the "Smarter Balanced Applications Deployment and Technology Certification" document, available at SmarterApp.org. States may choose not to share student identity information with Smarter Balanced, in which case they will have to operate their own data warehouses in order to deliver Individual Student Reports. They may also choose to operate their own data warehouse for other reasons.	4/11/14

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14	When will the infrastructure specifications for open source test delivery system (load test results) be available?	State hosting responsibilities are described in the "Smarter Balanced Applications Deployment and Technology Certification" document, available at SmarterApp.org.	4/11/14
16	When will we be provided sample items in Smarter Balanced format or APIP format?	See SmarterApp.org for the preview items which are already available. Those will be updated progressively.	4/11/14
17	Please provide specifications for the vendor interfaces to the Smarter Balanced Student and Proctor applications and Secure Browser for the following option: Adapt an existing test delivery system using Smarter Balanced components.	Information will be provided at SmarterApp.org as it is available.

State hosting responsibilities are described in the "Smarter Balanced Applications Deployment and Technology Certification" document, available at SmarterApp.org. | 4/11/14 |
| 18 | Please provide specifications for the file format for loading student data into the Test Registration application and for exporting / transferring data to the data warehouse. | State hosting responsibilities are described in the "Smarter Balanced Applications Deployment and Technology Certification" document, available at SmarterApp.org. | 4/11/14 |
| 19 | Will Smarter Balanced provide all vendors the opportunity to ask questions? Can Smarter Balanced provide information it has given other vendors to all vendors? | As a matter of practice, Smarter Balanced will publish all answers so that they are accessible to all vendors. This document is the first example.

See also the answer to question 7. | 4/11/14 |
| 20 | What materials will be made available for hand-scoring items? | At the conclusion of the spring 2014 Field Test, scoring training materials, including range-finding sets and validity papers, will be provided to Smarter Balanced by its scoring contractor. Those materials will be made available to member states for use by service providers that are under contract to provide scoring services. | 4/11/14 |

Questions and Answers
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22	What is the process for verifying that a vendor's implementation of Smarter Balanced testing on behalf of a state client is compliant with Smarter Balanced expectations?	See the answer to question 7.	4/11/14
23	Is the per pupil rate of $17 intended to apply to new item development as well as operational administration, scoring, and reporting?	No.	4/11/14
24	What is the specific process that a vendor must follow to get their test engine certified?	See the answer to question 7.	4/11/14
25	Who is the certifying agency	See the answer to question 7.	4/11/14
26	When can a vendor begin this process and how long does the process take?	See the answer to question 7.	4/11/14
27	Which test engines have already been certified?	None. However, the certification requirements will be based on the open-source solution.	4/11/14
30	What are the expectations around artificial-intelligence scoring?	States may choose to utilize AI scoring or hand-scoring models for scoring. Smarter Balanced will provide to states all AI resources that it develops through field testing.	4/11/14
31	How will the Consortium provide the sample papers for CR scoring to vendors?	This exchange path is still being determined.	4/11/14
32	How will fixed forms for paper-based tests be selected and provided to	Smarter Balanced will produce a single fixed form for each of grades	4/11/14

Q #	Question	Smarter Balanced Responses	Date of Response
	states/vendors? Will there be new paper tests each year for the first three operational administrations?	3–8 and high school. For mathematics, Smarter Balanced will produce a single form for each of grades 3–8 and high school in side-by-side Spanish and English. For both mathematics and ELA/literacy, Smarter Balanced will produce a single braille form for each of grades 3–8 and high school. Smarter Balanced will try to use the same forms for the first three years, but this will depend upon the extent of the exposure of forms. The forms will be blueline-ready. Cover pages, state-specific cover art, and scanning marks will be added by the service provider.	
33	How will braille forms be handled with respect to creating a master for brailling and how frequently will new braille forms be provided?	Braille forms are administered online using a refreshable braille embosser. Also see the answer to question 32.	4/11/14
35	Can Smarter Balanced confirm that the test delivery and reporting products being developed for the Consortium will be open license or open source software? When will the software be available to vendors and states?	Information about source code and open licenses is available at SmarterApp.org. The full source code package will be delivered in September 2014.	4/11/14
36	We have heard conflicting information about certification of vendor systems for delivery and reporting. Can Smarter Balanced confirm the requirements for certification and the availability of the certification details?	See the answer to question 7.	4/11/14
37	In what format and by what process will items be made available to vendors for administration? Will all items be in interoperable APIP QTI format? How will vendors access items for both the Smarter Balanced assessments at grades 3-8 and 11 and for off-grade testing (grades 9 and 10) or EOC testing for specific states?	Items will be delivered to states (and their vendors) in the form of a test package. A preview test package with items from the Smarter Balanced Training Tests and information about the Smarter Balanced item formats is presently available on SmarterApp.org.	4/11/14

Q #	Question	Smarter Balanced Responses	Date of Response
38	When will the CAT algorithm be available (and in what format) for vendors to be able to replicate in their systems?	It will be available on September 30, 2014. The algorithm will be posted on SmarterApp.org.	4/11/14
39	What is the plan for the remainder of the item development in the 16/17 contract and the field testing of these items? Who will be responsible for the field-testing and scoring of these items?	Starting with the 2014-15 school year, field testing is a state responsibility, and scoring field test items is a Consortium responsibility.	4/11/14
40	If vendors are to be prepared to administer and score these items in operational assessments in 2016 and beyond, please provide information on the number of items that will be added to the pool (by item type and scoring type preferably).	See the answer to question 39.\n\nSmarter Balanced estimates that about 20–25% of operational items will need to be replaced yearly. The exact proportions of items and item types will be determined by weaknesses in the overall pools, relative to test design. These proportions will not be known until field test scoring from the previous year is complete.	4/11/14
41	What student/test data will states be required to provide to the consortium from annual operational administrations and what is the expected format?	The registration file will be in CSV/spreadsheet format and will consist of student name, birth date, state-issued student ID, optional alternate ID, and demographic information, including ethnicity. The exact file specification will be posted on SmarterApp.org.	4/11/14
42	Please clarify how the Digital Library will be made available to states—hosted by a Smarter Balanced vendor or by the state vendor with hosting services paid by individual states? How will vendors link to the Digital Library if hosted by Smarter Balanced?	The Digital Library will be hosted by Smarter Balanced. Vendors will be able to link directly to public content in the Digital Library and to make references to content that requires a login. In the future, content from the Digital Library will be made available to other applications by way of the Learning Registry (see http://learningregistry.org).\n\nSmarter Balanced will host the Digital Library on behalf of states. States do not need to procure Digital Library services from independent vendors.\n\nStates are responsible for providing Tier 1 help-desk support for Digital	4/11/14

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		Library users.	
43	What is the sustainability plan after the 16/17 contract is complete for item development and field testing? Who will be responsible for the field-testing and scoring for new FT items, as well as the item analysis and data review of new FT items? Will there be any CR item type that is not field tested again for a while, like the long essay?	See the answers to questions 39 and 40.	4/11/14
44	In order for vendors to be prepared, what is the current plan for annual numbers of items that will be added to the operational pool (per item and scoring type preferably)?	See the answer to questions 39 and 40.	4/11/14
45	How are permissions and passage development being handled for state-managed item development?	This is a state responsibility. States have access to content licensed by the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC).	4/11/14
46	Can you talk through the deliverables and timeline for 2014 with respect to what the consortium will provide to state vendors—CR scoring samples, summative item pool for fall and spring testing, interim assessments, Digital Library?	All current contracts require product delivery by September 30, 2014. See answers to other questions throughout this document for more specifics about individual deliverables.	4/11/14
47	When states license the summative and interim item banks from Smarter Balanced, do they have a choice of choosing an item packaging format (Smarter Balanced Item packaging format vs. IMS APIP format)?	Ultimately, states will be able to choose between the formats. Work on the Smarter Balanced profile for IMS APIP commenced in April 2014 because the relevant information was not available beforehand. That profile must be complete before Smarter Balanced can build export capacity for certain advanced item types. Accordingly, it is expected that only the Smarter Balanced format will be available in 2014-15. See also the "Assessment Item Packaging Format Brief" and the "Smarter Balanced Applications Deployment and Technology Certification" both available on SmarterApp.org.	4/11/14

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48	Will the certification program also certify vendor-supplied test delivery systems that support IMS APIP format instead of the Smarter Balanced Item packaging format?	Yes. Internally, systems can use whatever format they choose, as long as they are able to import Smarter Balanced items. However, Smarter Balanced will not be able to supply all items in IMS APIP until the Smarter Balanced profile for IMS APIP is complete. Also see the answer to question 47.	4/11/14
49	When will the CAT specifications be published? Going forward, is www.smarterapp.org the website that we should be monitoring for all Smarter Balanced specifications?	See the answer to question 38 for information about CAT specifications. Yes, future Smarter Balanced specifications will be posted to SmarterApp.org.	4/11/14
50	When will the open source version of the Smarter Balanced test delivery system be made available for public?	See the answer to question 35.	4/11/14
51	Is Smarter Balanced planning to provide an environment comprising of the digital library and all the associated resources for vendors to test the integration with our systems? If not, how can vendors prepare for integration with the digital library?	See the answer to question 42.	4/11/14
52	RFPs are indicating that the items for the interim assessments are to be administered in November of 2014. Please verify the timeline and please indicate the number of items that will be available for the interim assessments.	See the answers to questions 3, 8, and 46.	4/11/14
53	Are the Smarter Balanced items currently being housed in the consortium item bank or in the bank of another vendor? What is the plan and timeline for the transfer of those items to a supporting vendor's item bank?	The items are presently housed in AIR's ITS item bank. Prior to September 30, 2014, the items will be fully transferred to the Smarter Balanced item archive. Transfer to state assessment delivery systems will be in the form of a test package. Preview specifications and a sample test package are available on SmarterApp.org.	4/11/14

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54	States that are not part of the consortium may lease the Smarter Balanced items. We understand there is a link that outlines the arrangement. When will more specific detail about that arrangement be available?	See "Non-member Access to Smarter Balanced Resources" at http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Jobs-Contracts.aspx. States need to contact Smarter Balanced regarding additional details.	4/11/14
55	What item characteristics and item data will be provided with each item?	The Smarter Balanced Item Metadata Specification will be posted on SmarterApp.org in May 2014.	4/11/14
56	In what format will the items be delivered to a vendor who is certified to deliver the items?	See the following links at SmarterApp.org: http://www.smarterapp.org/spec/2013/11/25/specs-AssessmentItemFormatBrief.html http://www.smarterapp.org/spec/2014/03/04/specs-AssessmentItemFormat.html http://www.smarterapp.org/spec/2014/02/28/specs-AssessmentItemPackage.html Also see the answer to question 37.	4/11/14
57	What are the plans for the phase 2 items and the replenishment plan?	Phase 2 items are a deliverable of existing contracts. They will constitute the pool from which field test items will be drawn starting in the 2014-15 school year. Also see the answers to questions 39 and 40.	4/11/14
58	What item bank is to be used with states providing teacher developed items as a part of a state-specific replenishment plan? May a vendor's item bank be used?	At present, not all item types can be developed within the item authoring tool. A vendor may use the Smarter Balanced authoring tool for those item types that can be developed in the item authoring tool, or the vendor may use the vendor's item authoring tool and import items into the Smarter Balanced item archive using Smarter Balanced	4/11/14

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		item formats.	
59	Will Smarter Balanced provide scoring rubrics and training materials from the Field Test?	Yes.	4/11/14
60	Will the items be on a common metric and will they be grade-based or otherwise vertically aligned?	Smarter Balanced will scale all items. All items, including performance task items, will be on a common vertical scale. Items are written for a specified grade.	4/11/14
61	Will the items be scaled and if so, on what will the norms be based?	See the answer to question 60.	4/11/14
62	Depending on the answer to the above, how can we ensure a stable, common metric for phase 2 development going forward?	See the answer to question 60.	4/11/14
63	Will validity data and research be shared across states?	Yes.	4/11/14
64	Will college and career readiness benchmarks be provided? The same question, but applied to predictive information in terms of expected growth?	Preliminary achievement level standards will be set through the standard setting process in fall 2014 and then verified in fall 2015.	4/11/14
65	RFPs are requiring that the online engine for delivering consortium items is Smarter Balanced "Certified" by July 2014. Please clarify the requirements for that certification and the process for becoming certified.	State hosting responsibilities are described in the "Smarter Balanced Applications Deployment and Technology Certification" document, available at SmarterApp.org.	4/11/14

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66	Is there a hosting contract for the consortium? How is the product getting open sourced? Are there plans for an open source community/ownership once delivered?	State hosting responsibilities are described in the "Smarter Balanced Applications Deployment and Technology Certification" document, available at SmarterApp.org. Source code will be posted on the SmarterApp section of the GitHub open source repository, at https://github.com/SmarterApp. Beginning in September 2014, Smarter Balanced will actively cultivate a community of users and contributors to the assessment system. These activities will operate under the SmarterApp branding. Contributions from the community of software vendors will be welcome, and Smarter Balanced will also commission new features and software maintenance.	4/11/14
67	In their RFPs states are requesting reports in addition to those received from the Consortium. Is there or will there be a mock-up of the report that will be provided by the consortium?	Yes. The reporting system is in the final stages of design, development, and user testing. Once this process is complete, mock-ups of the reports will be made available by September 30, 2014.	4/11/14
68	States are indicating that the Consortium will develop a "fixed form" test that vendors can print for paper/pencil testers. In what format will that paper test be?	Test forms will be available in EPS format.	4/11/14
69	Will Smarter Balanced provide administration training and materials (i.e., test administration and coordinator manuals) for online or paper/pencil?	Yes, there will be a template available for states to modify.	4/11/14
70	What languages will the Smarter Balanced engine require vendors need to support for testing and reporting?	For testing, the following languages will need to be supported for accommodated versions of items: Arabic, Cantonese, Filipino, Korean, Mandarin, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, braille, and American Sign Language. For Individual Student Reports, Spanish and Vietnamese need to be	4/11/14

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		supported. Additional languages will be the responsibility of the states.	
71	Have there been any changes to the deliverables as described in the response to RFP 11?	See answer to question 85.	4/11/14
73	Based upon RFP 11, we believe that the open source code for the platform will be delivered ready for use by states and their contracted vendors on or before September 30, 2014. Is this information up to date?	Yes.	4/11/14
74	Will the released code be able to stand up a Smarter Balanced testing environment without additional programming? (Delivery of the testing environment would be required rapidly after the release of the code, in order to work with states on their transition, and the need for additional programming would impact the availability of the system for states.)	Yes, the released source code will be a complete solution sufficient for a vendor to build and deploy an assessment delivery system, with the exception that the source code does not include a human scoring module. See the answer to question 7 for more detail.	4/11/14
75	Is the open source license available?	Yes. See: http://www.smarterapp.org/spec/2014/03/28/specs-SourceCodeAndContentLicenses.html and http://www.smarterapp.org/spec/2014/03/28/specs-American_Institutes_for_Research_Open_Source_Software_License.html	4/11/14
76	Has Smarter Balanced made any steps towards integration of the platform with the other Smarter Balanced solutions (item bank, adaptive algorithm, etc.)?	All components will be tested independently and together before release in September 2014. More detailed information can be found at	4/11/14

Q #	Question	Smarter Balanced Responses	Date of Response
		http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Jobs-Contracts.aspx; see the "SBAC RFP No. 11" row.	
77	If a state requests their vendor to use the open source platform, will the content (items and meta-data/statistics) already be available within the engine, or will the vendor be responsible for importing the items to the open source platform?	Smarter Balanced will deliver the content (assessment items and related metadata) in the form of a test package. The open-source solution will be capable of importing this package in the format delivered by Smarter Balanced.	4/11/14
78	If the vendor will be required to import the items, is it clear where this information will be coming from (Smarter Balanced item bank; AIR field test platform; separate bulk file)?	See the answers to questions 7 and 37.	4/11/14
80	When states decide to use the open source platform that Smarter Balanced is offering, it seems likely to us that they will want all of their content to be presented using one platform, to ease the burden on student test takers and local educators. To facilitate this: will a state be able to request that a contracted vendor utilize the open source platform for delivery of additional content (Science, Social Studies, End of Course)?	Yes.	4/11/14
82	Will the code delivered for #11 enable a vendor to stand up a Smarter Balanced Open Source Platform testing environment without additional programming? If not what components will need enhancements to deliver the Smarter Balanced program?	See the answer to question 74.	4/11/14
83	Is a fully functioning adaptive engine a part of the Smarter Balanced Open Source Platform?	Yes.	4/11/14

Q #	Question	Smarter Balanced Responses	Date of Response
84	Will the deliverables for SBAC #11 Smarter Balanced Open Source Platform be fully integrated into the Smarter balanced item banking systems by September 30, 2014? If a state requests their vendor to use the open source platform, will the content (items and meta-data/statistics) already be available within the engine, or will the vendor be responsible for importing the items to the open source platform?	See the answers to questions 37 and 77.	4/11/14
85	What changes have been made to the deliverables as articulated in the Smarter Balanced RFP #11 response? Can these be made available to the industry prior to the deadlines for proposal responses to current RFPs?	Smarter Balanced has added a score integration component that coordinates scoring of items by multiple test engines and then integrating those scores into the overall test score. The contracts information at http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Jobs-Contracts.aspx is the source of publicly available information for Smarter Balanced contracts.	4/11/14
87	Will a state be able to request that a contracted vendor utilize the open source platform for delivery of additional content (Science, Social Studies, End of Course)?	See answer to question 80.	4/11/14
88	Will the open source platform be able to present fixed forms for the purpose of Smarter Balanced practice testing or other content testing?	Yes.	4/11/14
89	When do you expect that the Smarter Balanced open source test engine will be ready for implementation?	The original contract we signed for the open source engine had a delivery date of September 2014. While we are largely on schedule, some capabilities and components may be released later. For example, a functional version of the adaptive algorithm will be included in the September release; however, the code will have to be updated according to the results of our achievement level setting project, which concludes in November. Accordingly, the final version of the adaptive algorithm code will be delivered in December. Hence, the	9/24/14

Q #	Question	Smarter Balanced Responses	Date of Response
		majority of the code will be released in September, but a handful of components will be updated in October, November, and December.	
90	Will there be a process for Smarter Balanced to determine that member states' computer adaptive test systems meet applicable requirements? Would the current guidance to member states be replaced by or supplemented by a certification system; if so, can you provide the timing of the certification system?	Smarter Balanced is deploying an "Implementation Readiness" program, in partnership with UCLA CRESST, as an alternative to a certification program. The Implementation Readiness package will include all specifications, sample data, test specifications, and test harnesses that are necessary for a vendor to determine that their systems meet all Smarter Balanced requirements and to demonstrate that readiness to their client state(s). Upon request, Smarter Balanced will review the test results and affirm the readiness of the application. However, review and affirmation from Smarter Balanced are not required. Details of the Implementation Readiness program can be found here: http://www.smarterapp.org/spec/2014/07/21/specs-TechImplementationReadiness.html. All specifications, sample data, source code, and other related content and related resources will be progressively released on SmarterApp.org. Source code to the test delivery application will be released on SmarterApp.org beginning at the end of September. All specifications, including item formats, data formats, protocols, APIs, and so forth, will be released before the end of September 2014. Source code to the hand scoring module, for schools or districts to use for interim assessments, will be released in December 2014. Sample data, test harnesses, and testing scripts needed for Implementation Readiness are being released progressively between the beginning of September 2014 and the end of December 2014.	9/24/14
91	When will Smarter Balanced share information on how to access assessment content (i.e. assessments and assessment items) with	Assessments and their associated items will be delivered to vendors in the form of a Test Package. The package is a .zip file compliant with the IMS Content Packaging standard. A preview package has been	9/24/14

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	vendors?	available since last winter at http://www.smarterapp.org/spec/2014/02/28/specs-AssessmentItemPackage.html. The preview package is missing certain components, including the test definition, certain metadata, and scoring rubrics, because specifications for those components are still being finalized. Once the specifications are final, the sample test package will be updated and its status updated from "preview" to "release." The format of the assessment items is specified here: http://www.smarterapp.org/spec/2014/06/07/specs-AssessmentItemFormat.html. Test packages will be delivered to vendors either by secure file download (e.g., FTPS) or on physical media (e.g., DVD), depending on the convenience and needs of each vendor.	
92	What item bank will contain the Smarter Balanced items for use in spring 2015?	Items for the spring 2015 tests will be stored in the Smarter Balanced Item Bank. However, that bank will not be accessible to vendors. Vendors will take delivery by way of the test package described in the previous response.	9/24/14
93	Will all items in the Smarter Balanced item bank be interoperable with other systems or will some require a proprietary technology to be rendered with fidelity? If the latter, please provide the details vendors need in order to develop and price solutions.	The Smarter Balanced item authoring system will be capable of exporting items into QTI format for which there is an existing QTI equivalent. According to the most recent analysis by the IMS Smarter Balanced Profile Working Group, this seems to include all item types except equation interactions and graphic interactions. Certain of the graphic interaction items could be translated into QTI drag-and-drop interactions, but they may require a manual translation. However, the analysis is not yet complete or official, so the conclusions may change. The working group will specify extensions to APIP to handle the remaining Smarter Balanced item types. However, it will be up to the appropriate IMS committees to decide whether those extensions are	9/24/14

Q #	Question	Smarter Balanced Responses	Date of Response
		adopted into the core IMS standards. In the meantime, all of the information that vendors need to develop compatible applications is already available. Specifically: • The preview item package (http://www.smarterapp.org/spec/2014/02/28/specs-AssessmentItemPackage.html) contains instances of every Smarter Balanced assessment item type. • The Smarter Balanced Assessment Item Format specification (http://www.smarterapp.org/spec/2014/06/07/specs-AssessmentItemFormat.html) details how each item type is encoded. • The training test item package (http://www.smarterapp.org/spec/2014/05/20/specs-TrainingTestItemPackageCrossReference.html) cross-reference indicates where each item in the preview package appears in the publicly available Training Test, so that vendors can see how items are rendered and how the interactions behave. Development of compatible applications will be greatly facilitated by the release of source code next month and by the subsequent release of the Implementation Readiness package.	
94	Will the Smarter Balanced open source test engine be able to score all the items in the item bank, or will licenses for proprietary technology be required? If the latter, please provide details that will allow testing companies to plan accordingly.	The Smarter Balanced contract with the American Institutes for Research (AIR), and the corresponding commitment to the field, was only to provide machine scoring for selected response items and items in which the rubrics were represented as a table of values to match. Of course, the Smarter Balanced item pool includes many items that are scored using a variety of artificial intelligence (AI) techniques, including symbolic algebra processing and graphical feature analysis. In support of Smarter Balanced's mission and its own, AIR has developed, and released into open source, a symbolic-algebra AI scoring engine, and is working on delivering a graphic-response	9/24/14

Q #	Question	Smarter Balanced Responses	Date of Response
		scoring engine capable of scoring most or all of the Smarter Balanced items that AIR originally scored using its proprietary artificial intelligence engine. This code will be incorporated into the open source test delivery solution that Smarter Balanced will release on SmarterApp.org. Certain constructed response items, mostly essay questions, will not be machine-scorable by the open source solution. States seeking machine scoring of essays can select from a number of open-source and proprietary solutions. For hand-scoring, Smarter Balanced will provide scoring standards, including training sets, validity sets, and required agreement rates on back-reads and on validity papers. For machine scoring, Smarter Balanced will provide a training set of pre-scored responses. States can choose to machine-score or hand-score any item, so long as the state can demonstrate reliable results that are consistent with Smarter Balanced standards.	
95	In whose item bank will Smarter Balanced items be housed for the 2015 testing export? (Where should vendors to expect to receive from?)	Smarter Balanced will compose test packages that will include all eligible 2014-15 operational and field test items. Smarter Balanced will distribute test packages to authorized service providers via secure FTP.	9/24/14
96	When will the items be available for export?	See materials availability table.	9/24/14
97	Is the SBAC CAT engine done, or when is it expected to be completed?	See answer to question 89.	9/24/14
98	Will the 2014-2015 assessment be CAT or fixed form?	The 2014-2015 summative assessment will be CAT.	9/24/14
99	When is the interim assessment expected for delivery? How many	See materials availability table for expected timeline.	9/24/14

Q #	Question	Smarter Balanced Responses	Date of Response
	forms will be available?	The number of blocks will depend on item availability as described in the materials availability table. The maximum number of blocks are described in the Interim Statement of Purpose and Structure and Understandings document.	
100	What format will the Items be Exported in (QTI or Other)?	See answer to question 93.	9/24/14
101	What item types will be available for the 2015 assessment?	See answer to question 3.	9/24/14
102	If 2015 assessment will be a CAT, will the entire item pool be available for export?	See answer to question 95.	9/24/14
103	When can vendors get access to final blueprints/test maps? (file layouts, how many AI/Hand Scored items to expect)	The most current versions of the blueprints can be found here for ELA and here for mathematics. The blueprints may need to be adjusted slightly after simulations are completed, to ensure that the tests are sufficiently reliable. Any adjustments to the blueprint will be encoded in the test packages.	9/24/14
104	States need a statement about comparability of test scores across the testing window.	The Executive Committee is currently discussing this issue.	9/24/14
105	Can we discuss the notion of a "single sign on" and what that actually means, especially in terms of the Digital Library sign-on.	This will require a comprehensive conversation, since single sign on will differ for states that elect to use a combination of services hosted by Smarter Balanced and their service providers.	9/24/14
106	Please provide additional guidance regarding the transition of the Digital Library provisioning after 9/30.	The interim Digital Library provisioning system will continue until October 7, at which point Digital Library provisioning will use the	9/24/14

Q #	Question	Smarter Balanced Responses	Date of Response
		Smarter Balanced Administration and Registration Tool (ART). States may elect to use the Smarter Balanced ART to provision teacher and student access to their instances of the TDS.	
107	Please provide an update regarding the "scoring interface" being developed for educators to score the hand-scored interim assessment items.	This module will be delivered by December 31.	9/24/14
108	2nd Paper Form– we have heard that there may now be 2 paper forms, rather than 1 – can this be confirmed? If so, is the 2nd paper form intended to be a breach form, or intended to be administered in year 2?	This is a contract modification that is in process. However, we do not anticipate any barriers to its execution. If the amendment is executed, the additional form would be a breach form, and Smarter Balanced Governing States will need to establish rules for its use. Hopefully, Smarter Balanced will be able to use this form in year 2 (2015-2016 school year) as the paper pencil operational form. In 2014, the second form will not be available in braille. If the second form becomes the operational form in year 2 (2015-2016 school year), it may be available in braille, depending on states' needs.	9/24/14
109	Scoring of the Full-Write ELA– we understand there has been discussion about collapsing the scoring down to 1 or 2 traits (from the current model of 3) so the student would receive only 1 (or perhaps 2) writing scores – when can we expect this decision to be made? What impact will this have on the training materials/rubrics/samples and the delivery date of these materials?	All three traits must be rated. The test results format describes that each of the traits must have raw scores and the scoring procedures will describe the degree to which the ratings are collapsed as part of test scoring.

If a state elects to report individual traits, such a report would be the raw trait score (items will be calibrated; traits will not). | 9/24/14 |
| 110 | Potential difference in hand scoring materials needed operationally

a. Paper-Pencil. We understand there may be a gap in hand scoring materials needed for paper-pencil administrations. This includes items that are typically machine scored in the online version. For example, items were originally planned for machine-scoring now might need to | Smarter Balanced will have to engage in a discussion with states who are planning to use paper and pencil forms. | 9/24/14 |

Q #	Question	Smarter Balanced Responses	Date of Response
	be hand scored on paper. This particularly will impact Math items. CTB reported that their deliverable to create training materials does not include these types of previously machine-scored items. i. While we understand many of these would be easy to score , is there a plan to create these materials? Our preference is not to create this information (rubrics, anchor and training, qualification sets) at the state level as they will introduce comparability issues and unplanned work for the states and their contractors. If Smarter Balanced provides these samples, when could we receive them? ii. Is Smarter Balanced requiring readers/raters to qualify or certify on these previously machine-scored items? iii. Will any handwritten samples be provided or will we use text samples? iv. If Smarter Balanced provides these samples, when could we receive them? v. Is Smarter Balanced requiring readers/raters to qualify or certify on these previously machine-scored items? vi. When we will have more definitive information on the number of items? b. Validity responses exist in limited quantities at approximately 10-20 per item from the field test per MI. We need approximately 100 per item to avoid having the reader/rater see the same item during scoring. i. Can we create more validity responses ourselves or do we need to submit these to Smarter Balanced for approval? ii. Is Smarter Balanced planning to have larger quantities available and when?	bi. Yes, service providers can create additional validity responses. bii. Not at this time.	
111	Schedule		9/24/14

Q #	Question	Smarter Balanced Responses	Date of Response
	c. When will the final blueprints be available? d. When will the final content specs and item specs become available?	c. See response to question 103. d. Smarter Balanced does not anticipate changes to the content specifications any time soon. New item specifications will continue to be added as required.	
112	Scoring Samples e. What is the format of the samples? f. What are the the types of samples that will be provided and how many of each type can we expect to receive? We expect to receive a unique item identifier, a usage type (classification, e.g., training, validity, qualification), response content, scoring annotations, can you confirm that will happen? g. How much flexibility do we have in repurposing or reusing the samples provided? h. It is possible to use selected samples to supplement the calibration sets?	Smarter Balanced will direct a contractor to make available format, but not content, for scoring samples.	9/24/14
113	Performance Tasks i. How many Performance Tasks (item groupings) will be available for each test? If these items are still being reviewed and analyzed, when do you anticipate having additional information available?	See materials availability timeline.	9/24/14
114	Formative digital Library? j. Will Smarter Balanced and CRESST be responsible for provisioning for school and district for access to digital library or will the state vendor be expected to play a role in this task?	No. It is the responsibility of states and LEAs to provision users for the Digital Library.	9/24/14

Questions and Answers
Regarding Smarter Balanced Assessments

Q #	Question	Smarter Balanced Responses	Date of Response
115	Reporting single sign on and digital library? k. We hear about single signon for reporting and digital library? What are the reports that will be produced by Smarter Consortium? How will the data flow from vendor's system to Smarter system work, in order to facilitate this task?	States who choose to use the Smarter Balanced reporting system can use the same accounts as they use for the Digital Library. Details about the data flows can be found in the earlier draft of the Implementation Readiness doc.	9/24/14

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