



Office of Inspector General
Bureau of Postsecondary Assessment Test Scoring and Reporting

Report #A-1819DOE-014

June 2019

Executive Summary

In accordance with the Department of Education's fiscal year (FY) 2018-2019 audit plan, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted an audit of Contract #18-652 between the Bureau of Postsecondary Assessment and NCS Pearson, Inc. The audit focused on the scoring and reporting of the Florida Teacher Certification Examinations (FTCE) and Florida Educational Leadership Examinations (FELE). The purpose of this audit was to determine if the Bureau of Postsecondary Assessment has sufficient internal controls in place to monitor test scoring and reporting deliverables in compliance with contract terms.

During the audit, we found that the Bureau of Postsecondary Assessment has sufficient controls in place to monitor test scoring and reporting deliverables. We reviewed the procurement process, compliance with contract terms, and information technology security controls. During the course of the audit, we did not identify any instances of material deficiencies. However, while not rising to the level of a material deficiency, we noted two areas where improvements could be made to strengthen contract compliance and security controls. For example, we cited one instance where deliverable requirements were not met in a timely manner and identified an opportunity to strengthen a security control.

To comply with Contract #18-652, Pearson is required to provide the department with deliverables outlined in Section I.B of Attachment A (Scope of Work), and provide evidence of successful completion for each deliverable according to designated timing or no later than when an invoice is submitted for payment. After review of documentation provided by the Bureau of Postsecondary Assessment, we found Pearson and the Bureau of Postsecondary Assessment did not develop and approve a new field testing items plan and an annual multiple-form rotation plan within the timeframe designated in Contract #18-652. In both instances, Postsecondary Assessment and Pearson continued to use plans developed in the previous contract term, updating and reapproving the plans as necessary. As discussed with Postsecondary Assessment staff, it may be beneficial to include specific language related to critical deliverables in future Invitations to Negotiate (ITN) for incumbent vendors who are awarded subsequent contracts. Postsecondary Assessment could also request and reapprove original documents for the new contractual period.

We additionally noted Contract #18-652 does not require Pearson to maintain certain user access and activity logs. Our tests of security controls determined that security controls were in place,

but could be improved by maintaining certain security logs. User access and activity logs provide a means to help establish several security-related objectives, including individual accountability, reconstruction of events, intrusion detection, and problem identification. Postsecondary Assessment should consider requiring Pearson to develop and implement controls for tracking user access and activity.

Scope, Objectives, and Methodology

The scope of this engagement included an examination of Contract #18-652 between the Bureau of Postsecondary Assessment and NCS Pearson, Inc. for the period of January 1, 2018, through December 31, 2018. We established the following objectives for our audit:

1. Determining if the Bureau of Postsecondary Assessment effectively monitors the provider's achievement of test scoring and reporting deliverables in compliance with contract terms;
2. Determining if the Bureau of Postsecondary Assessment conducted the procurement process in compliance with controlling laws, rules, and agency policies; and
3. Ensuring proper internal information security practices are implemented in the scoring and reporting process.

To accomplish our objectives, we reviewed applicable laws, rules, and regulations; interviewed appropriate staff; reviewed the department's policies and procedures; reviewed Contract #18-652 and associated documents; examined current information security practices in the scoring and reporting process; reviewed a sample of deliverables and supporting documents; and reviewed procurement documentation.

Background

The Bureau of Postsecondary Assessment within the Office of Assessment, Division of Accountability, Research, and Measurement is responsible for all aspects of educator certification examinations, including developing, administering, scoring, and reporting the results for the FTCE/FELE in accordance with Florida Statutes (F.S.) 1012.55 and 1012.56. The purpose of the FTCE and FELE programs is to provide the state of Florida with an assessment tool that allows prospective educators to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in the areas of general knowledge, professional education competence, and subject area knowledge. The tests measure prospective teachers' and school administrators' achievement of the benchmarks established by the Florida State Board of Education as stated in Rules 6A-4.0021 and 6A-4.00821 of the Florida Administrative Code (FAC) and published in the Competencies and Skills Required for Teacher Certification in Florida. The FTCE is administered to educators seeking initial certification in the K-12 system. Educator candidates take one of 42 subject area examinations as well as the General Knowledge Test and the Professional Education Test. The FELE is administered to educators seeking initial certification as educational administrators in the K-12 system. Administrator candidates take the FELE, the General Knowledge Test, and the Professional Education Test.

To provide testing services for the FTCE and FELE programs, the Bureau of Postsecondary Assessment contracts with vendors who assist in developing, administering, scoring, and reporting activities. In accordance with 60A-1.002, FAC and F.S. 287.057, the Bureau of Postsecondary Assessment completes an ITN procurement process to determine a responsible and responsive vendor that will provide the best value to the state. Through ITN #2017-15, the department awarded NCS Pearson, Inc., with Contract #18-652 effective January 1, 2018, through December 31, 2018, to provide testing services for the FTCE/FELE program. Previous to contract #18-652, the department awarded Pearson Contract #12-652 effective January 1, 2012, through December 31, 2017. Contract #18-652 is a cost reimbursement contract not to exceed \$25,318,810.52. The total payment is paid via scheduled progress payments. The Bureau of Postsecondary Assessment amended the contract on June 29, 2018, and increased the maximum payment amount to \$28,057,358.52.

Closing Comments

The Office of the Inspector General would like to recognize and acknowledge the Bureau of Postsecondary Assessment and staff for their assistance during the course of this audit. Our fieldwork was facilitated by the cooperation and assistance extended by all personnel involved.

To promote accountability, integrity, and efficiency in state government, the OIG completes audits and reviews of agency programs, activities, and functions. Our audit was conducted under the authority of section 20.055, F.S., and in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing, published by the Institute of Internal Auditors, and Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General, published by the Association of Inspectors General. The audit was conducted by Louvens Merilien and supervised by Tiffany Hurst, CIA, Audit Director.

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