



**STATE OF TENNESSEE
Department of Education**

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
FOR**

English Language Arts (ELA) and Math Assessment options for students with significant cognitive disabilities in grades 3-8 and 11, with options for additional subjects and grades

**RFI # 2010633111FAF5
May 5, 2020**

1. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

The State of Tennessee, Department of Education issues this Request for Information ("RFI") for the purpose of gathering information as we consider options for procuring a state-wide alternative assessment for English Language Arts (ELA) and Math for students with cognitive disabilities in grades 3-8 and 11. Additional subjects and grades may be needed.

Through this Request for Information (RFI), the State seeks to better understand:

1. Vendor's availability to meet the needs and timelines (2020-21 assessment and 2021-22 assessment) associated with development of the state-wide alternative assessment.
2. Vendor's availability to meet the needs and timelines associated with the delivery and reporting of the alternative state-wide assessment.

The information collected through this RFI will be used to inform the State's development of a future procurement for these services. This may include issuing an RFP or participating in a consortium of states.

2. BACKGROUND:

The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires states to measure student academic performance with assessments. This includes students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. To serve these students, States can either develop their own alternate assessment on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAS), contract with a third-party vendor, or work with other states via a consortia to develop one. Tennessee began working with a consortium in the 2015-16 school year, which supports reduced costs of developing and reporting the assessments. Currently, Tennessee gives a summative ELA and Math alternative assessment in the spring of the academic year for grades 3-8 and grade 11 for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Tennessee has an estimated alternate assessment population of approximately 7,000 students spanning all grades K-12. This puts a small number of students in each grade, which inhibits our ability to field test and verify test items specific to this unique student population without the support of a third-party vendor or consortia.

Given the possibility that the marketplace has changed since Tennessee joined its consortium, Tennessee is interested in gathering information about currently available options for this assessment. This includes identifying vendors that either offer these services via direct contracts with states or via a consortium. The assessment, at a minimum, should align with TN standards and cover ELA and Math grades 3-8 and 11, (<https://www.tn.gov/education/instruction/academic-standards.html>) with a preference for options for additional subjects and grades. We are looking for an assessment that provides the option of a year-end assessment or an instructionally embedded assessment that aligns with our current state standards in those respective subjects and grades.

3. COMMUNICATIONS:

- 3.1. Please submit your response to this RFI via e-mail to:
Nancy E. Williams, Ed.S., NBCT | Special Populations Coordinator, MSAA & WIDA
Tennessee Department of Education
710 James Robertson Parkway,
Nashville, TN, 37243
615-795-7981
Nancy.E.Williams@tn.gov
- 3.2. Please feel free to contact the Tennessee Department of Education with any questions regarding this RFI. The main point of contact will be:
Nancy E. Williams, Ed.S., NBCT | Special Populations Coordinator, MSAA & WIDA
Tennessee Department of Education
710 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, TN, 37243
615-795-7981
Nancy.E.Williams@tn.gov
- 3.3. Please reference RFI # **2010633111FAF5** with all communications to this RFI.

4. RFI SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

| EVENT | | TIME (Central Time Zone) | DATE (all dates are State business days) |
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| 1. | RFI Issued | | May 5, 2020 |
| 2. | Written Questions and Comments deadline | | May 20, 2020 |
| 3. | State response to Questions and Comments | | May 27, 2020 |
| 4. | RFI Response Deadline | | June 10, 2020 |

5. GENERAL INFORMATION:

- 5.1. Please note that responding to this RFI is not a prerequisite for responding to any future solicitations related to this project and a response to this RFI will not create any contract rights. Responses to this RFI will become property of the State.
- 5.2. The information gathered during this RFI is part of an ongoing procurement. In order to prevent an unfair advantage among potential respondents, the RFI responses will not be available until after the completion of evaluation of any responses, proposals, or bids resulting from a Request for Qualifications, Request for Proposals, Invitation to Bid or other procurement method. In the event that the state chooses not to go further in the procurement process and responses are never evaluated, the responses to the procurement including the responses to the RFI, will be considered confidential by the State.
- 5.3. The State will not pay for any costs associated with responding to this RFI.

6. POTENTIAL SCOPE OF SERVICES

- 6.1. Provide an Alternate Assessment program to help educators facilitate student success by illustrating the interrelation among the knowledge, skills, and understandings necessary to meet academic content standards.
- 6.2. Provide Tennessee with the option of instructionally embedded or year-end assessments. Instructionally embedded assessments are computer-delivered alternate assessments that are intended to integrate classroom instruction and assessment in a cycle throughout the year.
- 6.3. Provide a secure web-based platform that accommodates test and item development and student accounts for the assessments. With the approval of the State, these may be separate platforms.
- 6.4. Provide yearly updated online teacher training modules including: test administrator training and instructional best practices for teachers.
- 6.5. Provide parental access to additional resources to support their child's learning including instructional modules, a variety of instructional resources including books to read as a family, writing tools if a child cannot use a standard pencil or computer keyboard, communication supports if a student struggles to use speech to communicate, and a virtual community of practice to interact with other families.
- 6.6. Provide assessments that are built to allow multiple ways for students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and understandings.
- 6.7. Provide all services related to test design, item development and review, item banking, and test production for the alternative assessments. The Contractor may propose customized products and services derived from existing products developed and published by the Contractor or developed as part of other initiatives as long as they align with Tennessee academic standards.
- 6.8. Provide complete item banking services, including all content and statistical information on all items in a format that is accessible and useful for Tennessee.

- 6.9.** Provide a process that allows for State approval process for newly developed test items and/or reports.
- 6.10.** In all phases of test development use accepted validity, reliability, and other testing principles, including Universal Design, that ensure assessments are clear and comprehensible for all students. The Contractor's test development plan shall include a description of their understanding and application of Universal Design principles including available tools and features that enable accessibility for a wide range of learner preferences and needs.
- 6.11.** Maintain assessment specifications documents as needed or required and deliver updated documents each year.
- 6.12.** Ensure that all items that are currently used on operational tests and new items are developed in the Contractor's assessment system and/or imported to the system such that each renders and functions as intended.
- 6.13.** Provide a secure working environment ensuring that only authorized individuals have access to the test development process and test items at all times, including during the transmission of any test items and during stakeholder committee reviews. Follow stringent test security procedures during all stages of test development.

7. INFORMATIONAL FORMS:

The State is requesting the following information from all interested parties. Please fill out the following forms:

| RFI #2010633111FAF5 TECHNICAL INFORMATIONAL FORM | |
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| 1. | RESPONDENT LEGAL ENTITY NAME: |
| 2. | RESPONDENT CONTACT PERSON: Name, Title: Address: Phone Number: Email: |
| 3. | Brief description of experience providing similar scope of services/products. Please identify all subjects and grades that you provide. Please also include any services that are currently in development and the timeline for completion. |
| 4. | Provide a brief description of ability to provide an instructionally embedded model and a year-end model. |

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| 5. Provide a brief description of your website user interface, including any features that make it “user-friendly” for users, including the State, local education agencies (LEAs), and teachers. |
| 6. Provide a brief description of the expected commitments from the State to support the assessment. This includes time, especially relating to hours per week for reviewing new item development, any required committee membership, materials, and facilities for trainings. |
| 7. Provide a brief description of estimated timeline involved in training teachers and rolling out each assessment model. |
| 8. Provide a brief description of the research used to build your assessments. |
| 9. How often do you update your assessment? Please describe. |
| 10. Do you offer customization of your assessment program for individual states (i.e. alignment to specific state requirements and standards)? If so, what does this entail? |
| 11. Do you currently provide similar services via any consortia of states? If yes, provide detail, including what states you serve through the consortia. If no, please identify the states that you serve directly. |

| COST INFORMATIONAL FORM |
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| 1. Describe what pricing units you typically utilize for similar services or goods (e.g., per hour, each, etc.): |
| 2. Describe the typical price range for different assessment models (year-end and instructionally embedded). |
| 3. If you offer customization of your assessment program for individual states (i.e. alignment to specific state requirements and standards), describe the typical pricing model. |
| 4. Describe any additional costs associated with the assessment (e.g., teacher training modules, storage of data, etc.): |

| ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS |
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| 1. Please provide input on alternative approaches or additional things to consider that might benefit the State: |