

UPDATE ON ASSESSMENT RFI

VDOE Department of Assessment



DIRECTIVE FOR RFI FOR ASSESSMENT

Pursuant to Item 119a of Chapter 2, 2024 Acts of the General Assembly, the Department shall include in its annual report a plan to implement a new state assessment system, including a revised timeframe; estimated short- and long-term costs, including the costs to transition to the new system; staffing and training needs; key milestones; and project deliverables.

The Department shall request the funding needed to implement the new contract for inclusion in the Governor's introduced budget bill for the 2025 Regular Session. The Department may consider issuing a request for information (RFI) as part of the process to better determine the costs and requirements of the new system. The Department shall submit the annual report no later than November 1, 2024.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Based on the General Assembly's directive, VDOE issued a [Request for Information](#) (RFI) for new assessment vendors as part of the process to better determine the costs and requirements of the new system. [Recommendations](#) were provided from various stakeholders including parents, educators, school and division leaders, superintendents, and national experts.

What is an RFI vs. RFP?

A Request for Information (RFI) is:

- a request for general information to **gain an understanding** whether vendors have the capacity to meet the unique needs of company and organization,
- used at the **outset of a project** before the customer's detailed requirements and approach have been ascertained, with a view to subsequently issuing a request for proposal, and
- is **not** legally binding.

A Request for Proposal (RFP) is:

- used when closer to the idea of making a purchase,
- organization already knows what is needed and only needs a vendor to supply the correct tools, and
- is a **formal bid request** sought to be procured, specifying the factors that will be used in **evaluating the proposal**, indicating whether a numerical scoring system will be used in evaluation of the proposal, and containing or incorporating by reference the other applicable **contractual terms and conditions**, including any unique capabilities, specifications or qualifications that will be required.

ASSESSMENT REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

The department used the RFI to gain information in the following categories:

- 1. Rigorous Assessment Item Development** (Questions (Items) are aligned to what students should know and be able to do in their *Standards of Learning*)
- 2. Test Development** (Test items allow students to demonstrate their mastery in multiple ways defined by the HB 585 Report, and the test is accessible for all learners)
- 3. Timely, Clear, and Actionable Reporting** (Easy to use reports for teachers, schools, and families)
- 4. System Coherence** (Assessment system that both measures proficiency and growth and between all K-12 assessments)
- 5. Competency-based Assessments** (The ability to test when a student is ready to show mastery not just during designated testing window)
- 6. Performance Tasks** (The ability to provide interactive and dynamic 5th grade and 8th grade task measuring Virginia's 5 C's and career exploration as defined in the School Performance and Support Framework)
- 7. Budget** (The vendor provided a cost by line item that is inclusive of all above components, and reflects a best-in-class system)

Additionally, the Department asked for follow up information on **teacher training (Criteria 8)**, and this will become an additional reporting category for the General Assembly Report.

ASSESSMENT REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

The Department released the assessment RFI on August 26, 2024, and it closed on September 30, 2024.

There were six vendors who submitted RFI responses by the deadline. The VDOE reviewed each proposal to identify vendors who have implemented statewide comprehensive assessment systems similar to the size of Virginia and provided strong, adequate, or incomplete answers for all of the criteria outlined in the RFI.

Only four responses of the six vendors who submitted RFI responses by the deadline also had enough information to complete an analysis of their ability to meet the below criteria.

RECOMMENDATION 1: RIGOROUS ASSESSMENT ITEM DEVELOPMENT

Vendor	Summary
Cambium Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worked with four states on state-specific content development two states in a consortium which is multi-state content• Committed to providing custom content aligned to Virginia's SOL• Supports a variety of item types within the testing platform
DRC Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worked with two states on state-specific content development and one as a combination of state-specific and consortium (items developed for multiple states and not specific to a state standards).• Committed to developing customized item types aligned to Virginia's SOL• No cost estimate available due to company not submitting pricing worksheet on either initial proposal or follow-up responses
New Meridian Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worked with five states on state-specific content development and two states as a consortium• Will develop items aligned to Virginia's SOL beyond selected responses• Did not indicate a commitment to developing state-specific items for Virginia.• Did not provide a cost estimate to provide state-specific items
Pearson Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worked with six states on innovative custom development programs and two custom, adaptive programs• Currently has a bank of standards-aligned items as part of current contract. Has historically provided Virginia-specific items to align to Virginia's SOL

RECOMMENDATION 2: TEST DEVELOPMENT

Vendor	Summary
Cambium Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worked with a state with new standards and transitioned to adaptive testing for a large state, with an emphasis on custom and state-focused test development and new robust item bank aligned to new standards• Did not indicate the number of tests administered
DRC Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working with a state to administer 945,000 assessments to students and developed new test designs for this state• Offer initial licensing of company-owned items through the transition period• After additional requests, did not provide cost estimate for test development
New Meridian Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worked with a state to conduct a comprehensive analysis of alignment of learning standards• Developed the state's summative assessments and managed the content for of 890,137 students• Company did not indicate number of tests administered
Pearson Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worked with state to offer custom item and test development services for the state assessment system including assessments for students with disabilities• Administers 9.5 million tests annually

RECOMMENDATION 3: TIMELY, CLEAR, AND ACTIONABLE REPORTING

Vendor	Summary
Cambium Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has an online portal for educators and one for families to access data and reports and a variety of reports for different audiences• Committed to offering professional development for educators on data review
DRC Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has a variety of reports through their online dashboard for educators to analyze how students are performing and offers a parent portal that can be customized for Virginia• Included administrator training on report interpretation in proposal• No cost estimate available due to company not submitting pricing worksheet on either initial proposal or follow-up responses
New Meridian Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has an educator portal that provides multiple results to identify student performance trends and a parent portal that provides a variety of reports• Has conducted live training "roadshows," webinars, and office hours to educators on the utilization of reports
Pearson Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes a dashboard that contains a variety of reports for educators and parents that are customized to state needs• Proposal included a commitment to in-person and virtual training sessions and video recording for educators on report interpretation

RECOMMENDATION 4: IMPROVE SYSTEM COHERENCE

Vendor	Summary
Cambium Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has experience in providing a system that includes assessments to monitor progress during the year and summative assessments• Proposal offers aligned performance standards across all grade levels
DRC Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has developed systems that ensure coherence between state and division assessments• Proposal includes a plan for alignment of performance standards across grade levels, starting in the early grades• No cost estimate available due to company not submitting pricing worksheet on either initial proposal or follow-up responses
New Meridian Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recommends the transition of the Virginia Growth and Alternative Growth Assessments to their Progress Guide Assessment system to improve coherence
Pearson Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commits to including a platform where educators can go to access the data from both locally developed and state administered tests• Has an item bank where teachers can go to develop shorter benchmarks to use in the classroom

RECOMMENDATION 5: COMPETENCY-BASED ASSESSMENTS

Vendor	Summary
Cambium Incomplete	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Proposes developing through-year assessments which are shorter assessments based on the taught standards and then a year-end assessment which is much shorter than a traditional assessmentDid not include in proposal how assessments would be differentiated by grade level and what reporting data would look like by grade level
DRC Incomplete	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Proposal includes a plan for shorter, modular tests that can be tested during an instructional period a commitment to providing teachers with data to adjust instruction within the school yearDid not include how their shorter assessments called "testlets" would be differentiated by grade level and how Virginia would address item developmentNo cost estimate available due to company not submitting pricing worksheet on either initial proposal or follow-up responses
New Meridian Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is developing a flexible learning pathway by which students will learn and demonstrate mastery of specific learning objectives. The pathways are a series of assessments that are customized based on where the student is with the mastery of the content.Did not include an item development plan for alignment to Virginia's SOL and did not include how these assessments would be differentiated by grade level
Pearson Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Proposal includes a development of short, standard-by-standard assessments based on grade levels, an item bank that can be utilized by teachers to develop competency-based assessments, and a system that provides reporting data

RECOMMENDATION 6: PERFORMANCE TASKS

Vendor	Summary
Cambium Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with multiple states on the development of cluster-based assessments, similar to performance tasks, as these states adopted the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) which are aimed at improving science education for all students Offered a comprehensive plan to develop performance tasks for 3rd and 8th grade, provided examples of what performance task would look like by grade level, and outlined how performance tasks would be scoring using AI and human scoring
DRC Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided a plan to offer workshops for educators to develop performance tasks and performance task templates and methods by which performance tasks can be scored using AI and human scoring Did not include what the performance tasks would look like or be differentiated by grade level No cost estimate available due to company not submitting pricing worksheet on either initial proposal or follow-up responses
New Meridian Incomplete	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did not indicate experience on performance tasks Proposal includes a plan to collaborate with the state to develop interactive performance tasks using AI to score the assessments
Pearson Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently working with Virginia under the current contract on the development of performance tasks by developing custom content

BUDGET

Vendor	Summary
Cambium Adequate	Submitted a pricing worksheet, but it had a few items that did not include a cost due. Upon follow-up with VDOE, they indicated they were leaving the blanks due to the wide range of potential scope of work.
DRC Incomplete	Did not include pricing sheet and was asked to do so in the follow-up questions. Did not submit pricing worksheet upon second request.
New Meridian Adequate	Submitted pricing sheet with a few blank items. Upon follow-up, the vendor indicated blank items are not relevant to corresponding contract year.
Pearson Strong	Submitted a completed pricing sheet.

TEACHER TRAINING-FOLLOW-UP RESPONSES

Vendor	Summary
Cambium Adequate	Committed to offering training on item and test development, rubric validation, data review, and analysis. Will also commit to training divisions on test management, testing manuals, and rubrics.
DRC Adequate	Offers a comprehensive plan to train via videos and in-person workshops for all educators at state and division levels. Provided a list of offerings such as item writing, data review and interpretation, and instructional strategies aligned to Virginia's SOL.
New Meridian Adequate	Offered a plan to train teachers to interpret and apply student-level data and offered a train the trainer model for other professional development opportunities such as scoring for division level staff but not a plan for training teachers
Pearson Adequate	Offered a plan to train educators either in-person or virtual training sessions but did not include the types of training offerings for the various stakeholders, beginning with state, division, and teachers

CRITERIA RATINGS

Criteria	Cambium	DRC	New Meridian	Pearson
1. Rigorous Assessment Item Development	Strong	Adequate	Adequate	Strong
2. Test Development	Strong	Adequate	Strong	Strong
3. Timely, Clear, and Actionable Reporting	Strong	Adequate	Adequate	Strong
4. System Coherence	Strong	Adequate	Strong	Strong
5. Competency-Based Assessment	Incomplete	Incomplete	Adequate	Adequate
6. Performance Tasks	Strong	Adequate	Incomplete	Strong
7. Budget	Adequate	Incomplete*	Adequate	Strong
8. Teacher Training	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate

NEXT STEPS

1. This information shows that there are assessment providers that have the capacity to meet the expectations of an RFP process and meets the intended threshold of the required RFI.
2. This information will be used to create a full report to explain the capacity and interest of assessment providers to meet the full needs of Virginia's comprehensive state system. This report will be submitted to the General Assembly on November 1, 2024, and shared with the Governor's office and the State Board.
3. In addition, the information from the RFI will inform the HB 585 Report update that will be submitted to the General Assembly on November 1, 2024 and shared with the Governor's office and the State Board.