



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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January 9, 2025

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Dear Chair Lucas, Senator Hashmi, Chair Torian, and Delegate Rasoul,

I am pleased to submit the enclosed Report on [Item 119.2.a of Chapter 2, 2024 Acts of Assembly](#) which requires the Virginia Department of Education to report on a plan to implement a new state assessment system as the result of a Request for Information (RFI) based on the recommendations of HB 585 and recent legislative action.

Pursuant to Chapter 760, 2022 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.

If you have questions or require additional information relating to this transmittal, please do not hesitate to contact, Em Cooper, Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, at Em.cooper@doe.virginia.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Coons".

Dr. Lisa Coons
LC/ ec

REPORT ON PLAN TO IMPLEMENT A NEW STATE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

January 9, 2025



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I. Executive Summary

Pursuant to Chapter 760, 2022 Acts of the General Assembly, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) shall provide a plan on the implementation of a new assessment system. The Department may issue a request for information (RFI) as part of the process to better determine costs and requirements of any new system.

The RFI sought information from qualified vendors regarding the development, delivery, scoring, administration, data analysis, and reporting components of a new Virginia K-12 Assessment Program. This RFI also aimed to identify innovative and efficient solutions in the market that could enhance its assessment program. The objective of this RFI was to gain insight into the capabilities and offerings within the assessment vendor community to determine if the marketplace can provide the recommendations of the HB 585 Report and the additional needs of a new assessment system. VDOE sought detailed information about proposed solutions and estimated non-binding pricing structures. Virginia was also seeking pricing guidance to aid with the development of budgetary estimates.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview on the RFI submissions received for a new assessment system and to outline a plan forward for a new assessment system in Virginia as required by the General Assembly. To comply with budget language found in Item 119A.2.a of Chapter 2 of the Acts of Assembly (Special Session I, 2024) - the plan to implement a new state assessment system includes the following elements: a revised timeline; estimated short-and long-term costs, including the costs to transition to the new system; staffing and training needs; key milestones; and project deliverables.

Disclaimer: The information submitted by applicants through the RFI and the content of this legislative update are for informational purposes only. None of the information within RFI submissions nor the descriptions of submissions outlined herein can or will be used to select a future assessment vendor. Only proposals submitted in response to a formal Request for Proposals issued under the VPPA can or will be considered in selecting a future assessment vendor.

II. Background on Virginia K-12 Assessment System

State assessment systems are powerful tools to evaluate and communicate academic progress and mastery, provide clear feedback for educators to support student needs, and to ensure learning outcomes—both growth and mastery—are transparent and actionable. While Virginia has one of the longest-standing assessment systems in the nation, it has been clear for many years it is no longer delivering quality information for students, teachers, and parents to evaluate whether we are delivering on our commitment to high expectations of every child. This is why Virginia General Assembly members sought meaningful change in the 2022 legislative session.

A. House Bill 585 & Work Group Findings

[House Bill 585 \(HB 585\)](#), patroned by now-Senator Schuyler VanValkenburg (at the time a member of the Virginia House of Delegates) and Delegates David Bulova, Carrie Coyner, and Glenn Davis, charged the Secretary of Education and the Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction to:

“convene and consult a work group consisting of representatives of the Virginia Department of Education and other appropriate stakeholders to revise the Virginia Standards of Learning summative assessments of proficiency that require students to demonstrate that they possess the skills, knowledge, and content necessary for success and to develop a plan for implementation of such revised assessments.”

In March of 2023, the Secretary of Education and the Virginia Department of Education convened the HB 585 Work Group comprised of teachers, Virginia Board of Education (VBOE) members, leaders, parents, and state level experts to review the current assessment system, analyze leading innovative state assessments, participate in discussions with national and state assessment leaders in innovative assessment design, and compare Virginia’s rigor of standards and annual assessment framework to high performing states.

The overwhelming consensus of the HB 585 Work Group was clear throughout the process: Virginia is committed to raising learning expectations for all children in the Commonwealth. Three critical aligned components are needed to make this goal a reality: rigorous standards, best-in-class assessments, and a transparent and meaningful accountability and support system. Through the work of HB 585 Work Group, Virginia established a clear plan to ensure these three components are aligned and focused on ensuring every student is on track at every point in their academic journey to graduate ready for life.

The HB 585 Work Group grounded their recommendations around rigorous academic standards. Without quality assessment information, the impact of these standards is limited; as a result, the Work Group was clear on the need for Virginia’s assessments to evolve to ensure all education stakeholders have clear information about student progress toward, and mastery of standards content. For this to happen, the Commonwealth must continue its efforts to revamp subject area *Standards of Learning* to be best-in-class, high-quality, and rigorous; reset proficiency definitions to be benchmarked to the best in the nation; and develop a multifaceted assessment system that clearly and accurately assesses teaching and learning. The VBOE successfully adopted nation-leading Math, ELA, History Social Science and Computer Science academic *Standards of Learning*.

The HB 585 Work Group met over the course of five months to review background information on Virginia’s current assessment system; digest expert reports on state assessments, participate in discussions with national assessment leaders and states leading in innovative assessment design, and compare specific standards and test items from Virginia with other model states. The challenges and opportunities identified by the group across all facets of Virginia’s current assessment system generated critical recommendations to address them and to build a best-in-class assessment system.

The HB 585 Work Group focused on the following theory of action:

“State annual assessments are used to measure how well the public education system teaches students to master a state’s academic standards in each subject area. Virginia Standards of Learning assessments are intricately linked to and reflective of the academic standards, as the assessments measure the mastery of the Standards of Learning. Yes, Virginia’s students are trailing behind the rest of the country, and low standards and weak assessments are masking the truth about student performance. House Bill 585 (HB 585) charged the Secretary of Education and the Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction to “convene and consult a work group consisting of representatives of the Virginia Department of Education and other appropriate stakeholders to revise the Virginia Standards of Learning summative assessments of proficiency that require students to demonstrate that they possess the skills, knowledge, and content necessary for success and to develop a plan for implementation of such revised assessments.”

Additionally, the HB 585 Work Group recommended the following actions:

1. The HB 585 Work Group recommends that Virginia’s General Assembly review and revise legislation on educational assessments in Virginia to ensure alignment with these recommendations and to “sufficiently approve” funding for a new assessment system.
2. The HB 585 Work Group recommends that the VBOE use these recommendations as they advise the VDOE on assessment matters and finalize the proficiency levels for the new assessment system.
3. The HB 585 Work Group recommends that the VDOE use these recommendations as they move forward with procuring new assessments to ensure the new assessment system is rigorous and effectively measures student mastery.

After assessing the current state of assessments, comparing other statewide assessments systems, and prioritizing critical actions, the HB 585 Work Group made the [following recommendations](#) to the General Assembly on September 25, 2023. The progress listed below are efforts VDOE has been able to implement. The recommendations are organized around the five opportunity areas defined by the HB 585 Work Group:

- Opportunity 1: Clearer and More Rigorous Standards,
- Opportunity 2: More Rigorous Assessments,
- Opportunity 3: More Timely, Clear, and Actionable Reporting,
- Opportunity 4: Improved System Coherence, and
- Opportunity 5: Innovative Assessment Design.

Opportunity 1: Clearer and More Rigorous Standards

State assessments measure the concepts within the *Standards of Learning*. The proficiency and student growth measures on these assessments reflects true readiness for the next grade and success beyond high school graduation including the following:

- 1a. *Review, clarify, and revise Virginia’s Standards of Learning.* Virginia should include concrete examples of how students will demonstrate mastery, including incorporating the information currently reflected in curriculum frameworks, and seek input from business and higher education, in addition to K-12 educators and families.
- 1b. *Update state assessments to reflect revised Standards of Learning.* State assessments must reflect revised standards to support and reinforce classroom instruction and measure student growth.
- 1c. *Review and revise proficiency standards (cut scores) to align with NAEP expectations.* Ensure cut scores—meaning how many correct answers it takes to demonstrate proficiency—and growth measures signal true proficiency through a transparent, valid standard-setting process and reflect the rigor of nationally recognized assessments. VDOE and the State Board of Education have a planned process that will launch in February 2025.

Opportunity 2: More Rigorous Assessment Items

Rigorous items are essential to a high-quality assessment system. In Meetings Two and Three, HB 585 Work Group members learned from state assessment thought leaders and compared Virginia’s assessment items to those from other states. Currently, Virginia students have limited opportunities to demonstrate critical thinking through rigorous item types such as those that require writing or open-ended questions. As a result, Virginia assessments are not aligned to the knowledge and skills students will need to be successful in each subsequent grade and after graduation.

To make Virginia’s assessment items more rigorous, HB 585 Work Group members made the following recommendations:

- 2a. *Assessments should go beyond selected response questions.* Development of more rigorous and clear standards will necessitate more rigorous assessment items. Virginia’s assessments should provide various open-ended formats for students to respond to questions. The assessments have been updated to align with new standards and new innovative item types have been included. Open-ended responses have not been included as scoring this type of assessment item would create a large scoring cost.
- 2b. *Maintain rigor while ensuring accessibility for all students.* While students with significant cognitive disabilities will continue to participate in the alternate assessment, all other students will participate in the state’s summative and interim assessments. VDOE teams have worked collaboratively to ensure that testing accommodations support student access to rigorous testing items.

Opportunity 3: More Timely, Clear, and Actionable Reporting

The assessment system provides information that can directly communicate growth and achievement so that stakeholders can see how students are moving towards mastery and achieving mastery. Additional transparency on student and school performance is accomplished through a revised accountability system that clearly reports school performance and progress based on the new assessment.

- 3a. *Prioritize timely data for teachers and families.* The assessment system should provide information that can directly inform instructional planning and individualized supports for student growth, removing the guesswork so teachers know what to do next. This should include regular (i.e., annual) releases of sample test items reflecting the current assessment and connecting items to standards. While releasing additional assessment items for teachers would be a large budgetary ask, VDOE has worked with the current vendor to provide testlets with sample new items. Principals and Superintendents have been encouraged to support educators in this understanding of new items.
- 3b. *Set assessment windows that maximize learning time.* Assessments are most actionable when their delivery maximizes learning time as well as increase as ensure that students have flexible options to complete assessments.
- 3c. *Differentiate reports by audience.* Virginia should intentionally design score reports for specific user groups, including students, families, teachers, school leaders.
- 3d. *Support educators through training on using state assessment results to inform instruction.* Educators need comprehensive training to deepen their understanding of assessment results and how to translate them into action.

Opportunity 4: Improved System Coherence

The assessment system includes actionable achievement and growth data that provides school leaders and educators with useful information on how students are progressing and feeds into a clear accountability system.

- 4a. *Ensure the assessment system measures proficiency and student growth.* Virginia should develop an assessment system that provides educators and school leaders with the actionable data they need to understand how students are progressing from one year to the next.
- 4b. *Support divisions in administering high-quality, rigorous interim assessments.* Divisions should have access to interim assessments that are aligned to the *Standards of Learning* to ensure actionable, relevant information that supports instruction.
- 4c. *Measure student learning before third grade in both literacy and numeracy.* Virginia has implemented the new VALLSS literacy screener beginning in kindergarten. Virginia should ensure students are also assessed in numeracy beginning in kindergarten to provide educators

earlier, actionable information on student learning and to improve coherence across the assessment system, providing checkpoints from K-3 to 4-8 to high school.

4d. *Provide school division support in developing coherent, aligned assessment calendars to ensure assessment data is actionable.* Virginia should support the development of aligned assessment calendars, ensuring educators in making informed decisions about classroom instruction based on timely and meaningful data.

Opportunity 5: Innovative Assessment Design

State policies and practices promote innovative competency-based assessment design. Assessments of student mastery need to match this innovation and allow students to demonstrate mastery and accelerate at a personalized pace.

5a. *Plan for future innovation.* Virginia must first align its assessment system with best practices and rigorous expectations for students. Going forward, Virginia has an opportunity to lead the nation, investing in an innovative assessment system that puts student learning and mastery first.

HB 585 Work Group feedback included that a new assessment system:

- Evaluate student mastery and competency through an integrated approach allowing students to demonstrate mastery and jump ahead in content,
- Include performance tasks or project-based assessments as part of an assessment system that allows multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate what they know, and
- Are interactive, engaging, and reflective of real-world scenarios.

As discussed, many components of the HB 585 report have been implemented with no additional cost or contracting. Some of the Opportunities (Recommendations) from the HB 585 report have been completed or are being implemented during the 2024-2025 assessment cycle, and some opportunities remain to be implemented in the upcoming year:

- Opportunity One (*Rigorous Standards*) has been completed as the Virginia’s Math and Reading standards were approved by the Board in 2023 and 2024, respectively. These rigorous standards require students to demonstrate deep content knowledge and prepare students for college and career.
- Opportunity Two (*Rigorous Assessment Items*) is underway for the Fall of 2024, the current assessment vendor has incorporated item types that go beyond selected response and new innovative item types have been implemented. In addition, accessibility has continued to be a focus for the inclusion of new item types.
- Opportunity Three (*Actionable Reporting*) will be a key expectation of the future selected assessment vendor including ensuring timely data for teachers and families, assessment windows that maximize learning time, differentiated reports by audience, and training for educators on how to use assessment results to inform instruction.
- Opportunity Four (*System Coherence*) will continue to be implemented as divisions have started administering the new literacy screener beginning in kindergarten this school year. This data will need to be coordinated with SOL data. Lastly, Opportunity Five (*Innovative Design*) includes the performance tasks that will need to be fully developed over the course of the next 18 months. This Opportunity will also require the new assessment vendor to develop competency-based assessments as more school divisions take advantage of seat time flexibilities.

Additional Note:

- The selected assessment vendor will need to support the coordination of interim assessments, high-quality, rigorous SOL assessments, and K-3 screening assessments.
- As part of the new accountability framework, the U.S. Department of Education required performance tasks to be field tested during the 2025 assessment window to use performance task data in the 2026 accountability system. The VDOE has leveraged ESSER III monies to pilot the performance tasks with the current vendor and receive feedback from the field ahead of the preliminary assessment of fifth and eighth grade students in spring of 2025. The components that require additional funds and contracting were incorporated into the RFI proposal and process.

B. 2024 Legislation

There are two new laws from 2024, enacted after the Work Group’s final recommendations that impacted the plan for a new assessment system and RFI components:

1. Subsection C of § 22.1-253.13:3 of the *Code of Virginia* states the Virginia Board of Education permits school boards to administer, during the 2024–2026 school years, assessments as alternatives to the through-year growth assessment system established by the Virginia Board of Education pursuant to such provision of law, provided that any such alternative assessment is aligned to the *Standards of Learning*. This allows divisions to have a choice in the utilization of assessments to measure growth in the fall and spring in Math and Reading. Divisions must seek approval from VDOE to utilize alternative assessments.
2. The passage and signing of HB1477 in 2024, a new law focused on competency-based learning, led to VDOE evaluating existing assessment practices and protocols. The Board of Education plans to update guidance for school divisions in spring 2025 on assessment administration to account for competency-based learning models and the growing use of personalized learning. This is also a critical component in the new Mathematics and English Language Arts standards. This new law informed one section of the RFI focused solely on competency-based assessments.

C. Request for Information: Background and Overview

Pursuant to Item 119.A.2.a of Chapter 2, 2024 Acts of the General Assembly, VDOE issued a Request for Information (RFI) for K-12 assessment vendors as part of the process to better determine the costs and requirements of a new system. Through the HB 585 Work Group, a variety of listening sessions, Learning Heroes listening sessions, and VDOE stakeholder feedback sessions, parents, educators, school and division leaders, superintendents, and national experts have provided input and recommendations to VDOE. The goal of this new assessment system is to improve item development, reporting, and test design that results in a best-in-class assessment system for the Commonwealth.

Per the Annual Procurement and Surplus Property Manual (APSPM), "*An RFI is an informal document issued when an agency is not aware of the products available in the market which may satisfy its requirements. The use of an RFI does not require a purchase requisition, however an RFI may result in the development of a requisition, or the issuance of an IFB or RFP after an agency determines the types of products that are available which will satisfy its requirements. An RFI cannot be made into an agreement.*" An RFI is not a legal procurement method listed under the Virginia Public Procurement Act.

VDOE issued an RFI to gain understanding of the marketplace, to identify vendor capacity that meet the needs of the field, to better understand the unique context of Virginia, and to explore the capacity and cost of developing new and innovative concepts in the assessment system. The RFI was posted on August 26, 2024, and closed on September 30, 2024. The information learned has helped VDOE inform the development of a more tailored approach and to set requirements that will lead to a successful outcome. VDOE designed the RFI around the above-mentioned recommendations of the HB 585 Work Group final report and additional feedback from stakeholders. The categories that vendors were required to submit included the following:

- Category 1: *Rigorous Assessment Item Development* (Questions (also known as Items) are aligned to what students should know and be able to do in their *Standards of Learning*)
- Category 2: *Test Development* (Test items allow students to demonstrate their mastery in multiple ways defined by the HB 585 Work Group final report, and the test is accessible for all learners)
- Category 3: *Timely, Clear, and Actionable Reporting* (Easy to use reports for teachers, schools, and families)
- Category 4: *System Coherence* (Assessment system that both measures proficiency and growth and between all K-12 assessments)
- Category 5: *Competency-based Assessments* (Innovative assessments that offer the ability to test when a student is ready to show mastery not just during designated testing window)
- Category 6: *Performance Tasks* (Innovative assessments that offer the ability to provide interactive and dynamic 5th grade and 8th grade tasks measuring Virginia's 5 C's and career exploration as defined in the VBOE's School Performance and Support Framework)
- Category 7: *Budget* (The vendor provides a line-item pricing worksheet that is inclusive of all above components and reflects a best-in-class system. The responses from each company are woven throughout this report.)
- Category 8: *Teacher Training* (VDOE asked for follow up information on teacher training. This became an additional reporting category for the General Assembly Report.)

At the conclusion of the RFI submission window, there were seven vendors that submitted a proposal; one submitted after the deadline and therefore was not accepted. Two additional vendors did not include a completed proposal; therefore, four were deemed to have enough information to complete an analysis of their ability to meet the above categories. VDOE's Assessment team reviewed each proposal to identify vendors who have implemented statewide comprehensive assessment systems similar to the size needed for Virginia for all the above categories outlined in the RFI. Additionally, VDOE asked for follow up information from each of the four vendors to understand more about their ability to provide the needs of the RFI.

Cost Options

The RFI sought categorical pricing to aid with the development of budgetary estimates. Vendors were asked to submit a line-item pricing worksheet to identify the cost for each category to ensure that all stakeholders understand the cost elements of the recommendations in the HB 585 Work Group final report. This also ensures that Virginia's assessments aligns to state and federal regulations, VBOE policy, and the HB 585 Work Group recommendations.

Since this is an RFI, estimated price ranges could be submitted; but specific price proposals were not provided, and are not available in this report. Further, these are cost estimates and are based on the pricing worksheet submissions. Lastly, unlike traditional procurement protections for an RFP, Virginia law does

not provide vendors with the same protections from rival companies easily accessing their categorial pricing estimates.

Analysis

The VDOE Assessment team reviewed the proposals and follow-up responses to better understand the quality of options in the assessment marketplace for each category. Vendor response analyses only included the evidence that vendors submitted to the RFI. The vendor may have more evidence that they did not share as part of the RFI.

Additionally, a cost estimate for each category was requested to better understand the market cost of each category from the report.

Category One: Rigorous Assessment Item Development and Item Banking

The HB 585 Work Group final report identified that “Virginia’s academic *Standards of Learning* are the North Star of any effective assessment system. In Meeting Three, the HB 585 Work Group dug into examples of Virginia *Standards of Learning* and compared them with examples from other states. These comparisons revealed to the group that weak learning standards translate into weak assessment items: without robust learning standards, the depth and rigor of assessment items also fall short.” High expectations generate high standards of learning which translate to high quality, rigorous instruction assessed by aligned test items.

The HB 585 Work Group recommended that VDOE update the state assessments to reflect revised and more rigorous *Standards of Learning* and ensure proficiency cut scores—meaning how many correct answers it takes to demonstrate proficiency—and growth measures signal true proficiency through a transparent, valid process and align to nationally-recognized assessments. Rigorous assessment item development and item banking is aligned to the HB 585 Work Group recommendations as the RFI required assessment vendors to submit evidence that provides opportunities for students to demonstrate knowledge through various item types aligned to Virginia’s new *Standards of Learning*.

The assessment vendors were asked to detail a clear description of rigorous assessment item development and an item banking system that utilizes standards-aligned assessment items and enables students to engage with complex ideas to support their thinking, produce informed judgments, and demonstrate critical thinking and understanding. In addition to multiple choice questions, more types of items should be included that maintain rigorous critical thinking expectations. The assessment vendors were also asked to include a line-item pricing for this category.

The VDOE analyzed responses for experience in areas such as test alignment to content standards and providing the maximum information on a student’s gaps in understanding while maintaining the current length of assessments; the test development process including replenishment of item bank and ensuring all standards are being tested on a yearly basis.

Overall Finding: These findings focus on marketplace capacity to meet the first HB 585 recommendation. Based on the responses to the RFI, there appear to be multiple vendors that can meet the needs of Virginia as we develop our new assessments.

To illustrate:

- One vendor has worked with four large states to develop state-specific assessment items and additionally supported two states with a regional consortium (items that are not state-specific).
- One vendor has worked with six large states on state-specific content, including Virginia, on

developing science items and integrating reading and writing, a comprehensive development plan with increased constructed response items, items that assess the breadth and depth of the SOL, and an item banking system to support standards alignment.

- Another vendor worked with two states of similar size to Virginia.
- One vendor had worked with some states that had state specific item development but also had used a consortium-based approach for several other states.
- Examples of state test item development as a comparison to what Virginia is looking for:
 - *Arkansas*: A vendor revised and reorganized Arkansas’ reading and math standards and transitioned to a state-specific pool of items
 - *Florida*: One vendor implemented a three-year development plan to create new blueprints and conducted a gap analysis to maintain a rich test item that measured all of Florida’s standards. Another vendor created custom item development including ELA, math, science, and social studies for Florida’s summative and alternate summative assessments.
 - *Georgia*: One vendor worked with Georgia to develop a new test design with custom, state-focused content. assessment vendors.
 - *Illinois*: A vendor developed custom science items for Illinois’ summative and formative assessments.
 - *Maine*: One vendor created state-specific science assessment items in Maine.
 - *New Jersey*: One vendor created New Jersey’s summative, customized ELA and math assessments for grades 5-8 and high school.
 - *South Dakota*: A vendor created summative, computer-adaptive assessments in ELA and math in grades 3-8 and 11 for South Dakota.
 - *Texas*: One vendor was responsible for item development for summative and interim ELA and math assessments in Texas. Another vendor provided item development for summative and alternate summative assessments aligned to state standards in Texas.
 - *Utah*: A vendor developed statewide summative, benchmark, and interim assessments for grades 3-8 ELA, writing 5-8, math 3-8, and science 4-8 in Utah.
- One vendor had experience with implementing consortium-based assessment items for Colorado, Louisiana, and New Jersey, but they did not have state specific items.
- Vendors also produce item types in addition to traditional multiple choice questions. These include interactive items aligned to state standards that are realistic, use visuals, and allow students to demonstrate critical thinking such as using evidence to support their thinking and creating graphs.

Pricing:

The vendor submissions for this category of the RFI demonstrated a large pricing range. *As a reminder, RFPs have different accountability for accuracy based on RFP specification than vendor RFI for responses. Therefore, vendors often provide a wide estimate in RFI responses. The vendors submitted a one estimate and a five-year estimate.* The estimated one-year contract cost for this category ranged from \$588,000 to \$5,700,000. The five-year estimated cost ranged between \$3 million

to \$28 million. The estimated average cost for a one-year contract would be \$3.2 million. The estimated five-year contract cost for this category would be \$15 million. One vendor did not provide a pricing estimate; and therefore, the evidence on every vendor's capacity to fully meet this criterion was unclear.

As a reminder, proposals submitted in response to RFPs have different protections than RFI responses. See Va. Code § 2.2-4342. This may have influenced the ranges provided.

Category Two: Test Development

The HB 585 Work Group reviewed the test development process for Virginia, beginning with the test blueprints which identify standards assessed, item types, and reporting categories. The HB 585 Work Group identified that there are limited opportunities for students to demonstrate critical thinking skills based on current assessment item types. They recommended that strong assessment items should provide innovative item types that allow students to engage with complex ideas, support their thinking with evidence, produce informed judgements, and demonstrate critical thinking and understanding through various item types including written responses.

The HB 585 Work Group also stated Virginia's assessments should provide various open-ended formats for students to respond to questions, requiring writing on assessments and ensuring that questions align with the standards required for that grade. The need for maximizing the value of every assessment item by including questions that provide the maximum information on a student's gaps in understanding without adding length to the assessments was also noted.

Critical steps in the development of new assessment types are building the capacity to have enough items in their item bank to test all standards, aligning test items to the new standards, providing divisions with field test items, and releasing items for teachers' students to utilize and have experience with prior to the actual assessment being given.

Overall Findings: These findings focus on marketplace capacity to meet the second HB 585 recommendation. Based on the responses to the RFI, there appear to be multiple vendors that can meet the needs of Virginia as we develop our new assessments.

To illustrate:

- Vendors committed to including content and assessment specialists to partner with the VDOE to conduct a close examination of current reports, test structure, item and test specification documents, performance level descriptors, technical reports, and other relevant program resources. Vendors also would partner with VDOE to identify rigorous, critical-thinking requirements reflected in the *Standards of Learning* in addition to the recommendations of the HB 585 Work Group.
- Some vendors committed to a yearly process of standards and item review, hosting feedback committees, and replenishment of the item bank for Virginia's new assessment program.
- One vendor suggested a vertical alignment study to identify the knowledge and skills students have mastered and how much growth/progress they have made towards mastery since the last assessment opportunity.
- One vendor described content-area knowledge and skills that students are expected to demonstrate within and across proficiency levels and revising these to reflect any changes in rigor to the program or the *Standards of Learning*, while also defining expectations for each standard at each performance level. The process included an item analysis, setting specifications to ensure

there are written responses in each assessment, item refinement through a gap analysis, and an item replenishment plan to ensure all standards that are taught are tested.

- All vendors had evidence of experience working with various states on their assessments as well as a systematic process for reviewing items, field-testing, identifying gaps, hosting feedback committees, testing, and replenishing an item bank. For example:
 - *Florida*: A vendor created a multi-year test development plan for Florida that created a new test structure working with all stakeholders to analyze and develop test items for the assessments. They were able to focus largely on content, ensuring enough items to meet the test item needs for three administrations for each grade and subject area. In year two, the development was targeted toward building the item pool by looking at content gaps to ensure standards coverage for three operational assessments. In year three, the Florida focus was the continuation of a gap analysis to ensure all items being tested were rigorous and the item bank was being replenished.
 - *Georgia*: One vendor has worked with Georgia to develop a new test design as the state transitioned to new assessments measuring new content standards. They also laid out a plan to ensure the committees recommending cut scores follow a rigorous process of item analysis and development. Their proposal included administering 945,000 assessments annually.
 - *Illinois*: A vendor worked with Illinois on the development and technical support for the readiness assessment for ELA and math. In addition, they have expanded educator involvement in the design and development of Illinois' assessment with a custom bank of test questions owned by Illinois that includes more than 2,500 custom ELA and 1,300 custom math items for Illinois. Another vendor has worked with the Illinois Department of Education developing their ELA and math assessments for grades 3-8 and administer 800,000 tests annually.
 - *Louisiana*: One vendor worked with Louisiana for content management and technical services for their summative assessments in grades 3-high school in ELA and math.
 - *Maryland*: One vendor has worked with Maryland through a peer review process for test development.
 - *Montana*: A vendor worked with Montana on through-year assessments for students in grades 3-8.
 - *New Jersey*: A vendor worked with New Jersey for assessment design and development in grades 3-high school in ELA and math
 - *South Dakota*: A vendor developed summative, computer adaptive assessments in ELA and mathematics for South Dakota.
 - *Texas*: A vendor worked with Texas on item development and analytical services to support the state's assessments. Another vendor has worked with Texas in administering state-specific items, including assessments for students with disabilities, for 9.5 million tests annually.
 - *Utah*: One vendor developed statewide assessments for Utah in ELA, Writing, Math, and Science.
- All vendors listed many accessibility options and accommodations to ensure all students have an equal opportunity to be assessed and show performance on the *Standards of Learning*. All four assessment vendors included accessibility and accommodation features including text-to-speech, American Sign Language, word prediction, and assistive technology support, to name a few. A few additional illustrations:

- One vendor noted it has approximately 220 accessibility features, tools, and accommodations, and release new features each year to ensure that all students' needs are met.
- One vendor has flexible options for controlling the availability of tools and accommodations to maintain validity and minimize distractions for students.
- Three vendors also offered translating the assessments in Spanish and Arabic.
- One vendor offered Spanish translations of the assessment.

Pricing:

The vendor submissions for this category of the RFI demonstrated a large pricing range. *As a reminder, RFPs have different accountability for accuracy based on RFP specification than vendor RFI for responses. Therefore, vendors often provide a wide estimate in RFI responses. The vendors submitted a one-year estimate and a five-year estimate.* The vendors response to this pricing range for a one-year contract estimate in this category ranged from \$7.5-12.9 million. The vendor RFI response for a five-year contract estimate ranged between \$35-64 million. The average cost for one year estimate is approximately \$10 million, and for five years the estimated average cost would be approximately \$50 million.

As a reminder, proposals submitted in response to RFPs have different protections than RFI responses. See Va. Code § 2.2-4342. This may have influenced the ranges provided.

Category Three: Timely, Clear, and Actionable Reporting

Parents, teachers, and students should have access to comprehensive reports and a reporting suite that can communicate growth and achievement towards obtaining mastery. The HB 585 Work Group developed a series of recommendations based on what the future state of Virginia's assessment reporting system should look like. The recommendations focused on providing clear and timely data for teachers and families and differentiate the content of reports by audience. They also cited the need for teachers to become more proficient on various types of reports to assist them in having discussions with parents on their children's performance as well as assist them in planning instruction and intervention strategies.

The HB 585 Work Group also described the need to ensure families are provided with timely reports with resources to assist their children at home.

In addition to the feedback in the HB 585 Work Group final report, VDOE partnered with Learning Heroes this fall to hear from parents and guardians on the ease of use of Virginia's existing parent reports. The feedback provided by parents through the Learning Heroes report indicated that parents had a difficult time understanding the Student Detail by Question Report (SDBQ). These stakeholders provided feedback on the need for user-friendly, meaningful reports for [families](#).

In the RFI, the assessment vendors were asked to describe in detail a plan for differentiated score reports targeted to specific user groups (e.g. parents, teachers, and school leaders) on students' assessment results. The outlined plan needed to address how to prioritize timely data for teachers and families, assessment windows that maximize learning time, and how to support educator training on using state assessment results to inform instruction.

A strong need in Virginia is providing families with real-time reports that also provide a variety of strategies that parents can implement at home to help their children. Equally as valuable is a comprehensive reporting suite for divisions and the state to use.

Overall Findings: These findings focus on marketplace capacity to meet the third HB 585 recommendation. Based on the responses to the RFI, there appear to be multiple vendors that can meet the needs of Virginia as we develop our new assessments. The comprehensive responses from some of the assessment vendors show alignment to the recommendations from the HB 585 Work Group final report of timely, clear, and actionable reporting and that there is strong evidence of marketplace availability on reporting.

To illustrate:

- Two vendors cited types of reports available; reports for state, divisions, and parents; samples of reports; and trainings available, especially for teachers and divisions. Two vendors described using portals for reporting needs:
 - One vendor described an online portal for educators, an online portal for families, and a variety of reports for different audiences. The vendor's reporting system is for teachers, schools, and divisions which provide each user group with dynamic, real-time data and reports, including individual student reports.
 - One vendor described an educator portal that would provide multiple results to identify student performance trends and a parent portal that could provide a variety of reports. Their proposal offered a collaborative partnership with VDOE to provide customized reports. Their educator portal could include aggregate data, student performance trends, and intervention recommendations. The vendor also offered a parent portal that would provide comprehensive student data that provides families with reports on their children's individual strengths as well as any next steps in areas needing improvement.
- Two vendors described using dashboards for reporting needs:
 - One vendor proposed a dashboard that contains a variety of reports for educators and parents that are customized to state needs. These reports would be configured according to assessment windows and VDOE's specifications. The vendor included an assurance of assessment windows that maximized learning for students. The vendor also committed to providing a detailed plan outlining the design, implementation, and monitoring of an innovative reporting solution. Their response cited over 50 years of experience working in the realm of report development, delivering easy-to-interpret reports.
 - Another vendor described a variety of reports in their response and referred to their online dashboard for educators to analyze how students are performing and offers a parent portal that can be customized for Virginia. This platform has a hierarchal security structure for users at the state, division, or school level to access only the data pertaining to them. The vendor would provide interactive features for ease of use, filtering and sorting of information displayed on reports to support inquiry and analysis, and friendly dashboards that provide immediate and informative results. Reports could be downloaded and printed as needed. The vendor also provided samples of their interim and summative reports.
- A vendor indicated that their reporting system can be fully integrated with school divisions' enrollment system, so reports are accessible as students move among the division, school, and classes. Their reports include a variety of longitudinal and cross-sectional reports that provide information such as student growth and achievement over time and across grade levels.

- One vendor included a breakdown of the types of reports also available for state use such as statewide data across divisions and performance trends across demographics and educational program.
- Reporting elements that would be accessible for the VDOE would be overall scale scores, overall proficiency levels, performance in each reporting category, and actionable instructional next steps based on student performance on individual domains.

Pricing:

The vendor submissions for this category of the RFI demonstrated a large pricing range. *As a reminder, RFI responses need not be as specific on pricing as proposals submitted in response to a formal RFP. Therefore, vendors often provide a wide estimate in RFI responses. The vendors submitted a one-year estimate and a five-year estimate. The vendor pricing estimates for a one-year contract in this category ranged between \$2.1-\$10.3 million. For a five-year contract vendor estimates range between \$11-69 million. The average cost for one year would be approximately \$7 million, and for five years the average cost would be approximately \$40 million.*

As a reminder, proposals submitted in response to RFPs have different protections than RFI responses. See Va. Code § 2.2-4342. This may have influenced the ranges provided.

Category Four: Improve System Coherence

Virginia students and teachers navigate a web of assessments signaling different – and sometimes conflicting – expectations. Students take multiple assessments, including the *Standards of Learning* tests and Virginia Growth Assessment required by the state, as well as other benchmark and local assessments required by divisions or schools.

Throughout the meetings, HB 585 Work Group members reached consensus around a common goal for the assessment system: *students and educators deserve a coherent system of assessments that minimizes test time and maximizes instructional opportunities*. To do so, the HB 585 Work Group identified the current state of system coherence and a future state for a stronger, more aligned system of assessments focused on an assessment system that measures proficiency and student growth, measures student learning before third grade in both literacy and numeracy, and provides school division support in developing coherent, aligned, assessment calendars to ensure assessment data is actionable.

In the current Virginia K-12 assessment program, tests for Grade 3-8 in Mathematics and Reading, grade 5 and grade 8 science tests, and two history/social science tests are included. Most, but not all, of the Grade 3-8 tests are used to meet federal requirements set by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), though all are required by state code.

RFI respondents were encouraged to propose opportunities for Virginia to develop coherence across the Virginia assessment system, both at the state and local level. Plans needed to include how Virginia can support divisions that are using locally-selected high-quality, rigorous interim assessments and connecting measures of student learning before grade three with the Virginia Assessment Program. The intention of a coherent assessment system is to ensure all assessments signal clear expectations for students, inform strong instructional practices, and provide school leaders and educators with actionable achievement and growth data.

Overall Findings: These findings focus on marketplace capacity to meet the fourth HB 585 recommendation. Based on the responses to the RFI, there appear to be multiple vendors that can meet the needs of Virginia as we develop our new assessments. There is a strong market for a coherent

assessment system for VDOE to meet the recommendations of the HB 585 Work Group to deliver an aligned, full-scope system of K-12 assessments.

To illustrate:

- Three vendors included a comprehensive plan to improving system coherence in Virginia.
 - One recommended developing a comprehensive assessment system (i.e., classroom, interim, summative) that is built from the ground up to be purposely aligned, so they work most effectively together.
 - A vendor’s comprehensive suite of assessment reporting and item development would also have the ability for educators to build assessments standard-by-standard. Teachers can also use short, pre-built assessments that provide actionable and accurate data.
 - One vendor proposed Virginia utilizing their trademarked interim assessment program at the school level which would be aligned to state level assessments. Through their assessment program, the interim assessments are aggregated to produce full-test scale scores. The vendor proposed implementing multi-state adaptive tests informed by “testlets” which are short assessments that aggregate scores to collect an end-of-year score.
 - To create coherence between locally-selected, high-quality, and rigorous interim assessments, K-2 assessments, and the Virginia assessment, the vendor proposed developing grade-three target benchmarks within the interim assessment tool. This proposed system would provide a bridge from K-2 assessments to the state’s end-of-year expectations, ensuring that locally-selected assessments connect measures of student learning before grade three with the Virginia assessments.
 - Through the proposed system, divisions’ local assessments could monitor student progress toward state expectations and adjust instruction as necessary.
 - They proposed adopting their assessment program as a multi-state program that aggregates scores for an end-of-year summative score. The vendor included a modular assessment system in their proposal which enables divisions to offer flexible short modular assessments to measure proficiency and growth throughout the year.
 - One vendor described an assessment system that was administered with several different items measuring each standard for the full range of content.
 - A vendor has developed customizable interim assessment products that include reporting of projected summative assessment performance with each interim assessment administration. In their response, the vendor cited their interim assessment product as a state-sponsored interim assessment that includes reporting of projected summative performance with each administration.
 - One vendor offered a plan to support more valid interpretations of interim assessments administered by divisions by implementing a program that clearly defines the degree to which those assessments are aligned to the state standards.
- Vendors demonstrated a commitment for all assessments to be derived from the developed test

structure plans and field-tested items with a common reporting system that provides grade-level test information that is maximized near each students' ability level.

- A vendor described the development of early grade assessments to measure students' literacy and numeracy support to build a coherent system beginning with grades K-2.
- One vendor recommended utilizing their reporting system to include locally developed assessments that ensure alignment and proficiency and are reported in one system.
- A vendor recommended VDOE conduct studies for evaluating how well performance on early literacy screeners aligns with achievement on the *Standards of Learning* grade 3 assessments.
- Vendors shared a few examples of work in other states to further demonstrate experience, such as:
 - *Florida:* A vendor contracted with Florida to develop assessments requiring students to participate in two progress monitoring assessments and fall and winter summative assessments, which all followed a common test structure and a common pool of items. The vendor has worked with Florida on their administration of the statewide, standardized Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring System for the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program and public schools serving grades K-10.
- A vendor incorporated K-2 assessments in two states where performance standards were being established across all grades, which reinforced the importance and continuity of academic content standards across the educational system.

Pricing:

The vendor submissions for this category of the RFI demonstrated a large pricing range. *As a reminder, RFPs have different accountability for accuracy based on RFP specification than vendor RFI for responses. Therefore, vendors often provide a wide estimate in RFI responses. The vendors submitted a one estimate and a five-year estimate.* The estimate for one year contract in this category was between \$176,000 and \$2.2 million. The estimate for a five-year contracting this category ranged from \$11-11.2 million. The average cost for one year contract in this category would be approximately \$1.2 million, and for five years in this category was \$11 million.

As a reminder, proposals submitted in response to RFPs have different protections than RFI responses. See Va. Code § 2.2-4342. This may have influenced the ranges provided.

Category Five: Competency-Based Assessments

Virginia must first align its assessment system with best practices and rigorous expectations for students. Going forward, Virginia has an opportunity to lead the nation, investing in an innovative assessment system that puts student learning and mastery first.

The HB 585 Work Group described their last and final recommendation as a “plan for future innovation.” The HB 585 Work Group discussed research on comprehensive state assessment systems of other states and emphasized that classroom, curriculum, and instruction should be aligned. Additionally, through the HB 585 Work Group’s exploration of innovative assessments in Massachusetts, Louisiana, and Texas, as well as their individual experiences, HB 585 Work Group members identified key opportunities to consider innovating Virginia’s K-12 assessments including open-ended responses, performance tasks, and more flexible test items.

[House Bill 1477](#) also provides Virginia divisions with the option to utilize seat time flexibility and intentionally design competency- or mastery-based learning models. Virginia is in the process of moving from "time-based" policies to a "competency-based" structure to earn credits and capture learning based on demonstrating mastery of content and skills. Educators shared that the top reason they have not moved forward on personalized learning or competency-based school models comes down to testing and assessment barriers – the state assessment is too rigid on when and how students are tested.

The VDOE is committed to providing divisions and schools with the necessary assessment flexibilities this spring that would allow for competency-based education models. These flexibilities would enable students to demonstrate mastery and potentially progress more rapidly through a course or curriculum or demonstrate mastery ahead of sitting in a course and swiftly accelerating to the next course in the sequence.

Respondents of the RFI were asked to propose methods for how Virginia could transition to assessing student mastery, competency, and growth through a comprehensive approach. Vendors were asked to address a competency-based assessment model for elementary, middle, and high school students. Proposals also needed to include flexible test administration options to provide actionable data for competency-based education models.

Overall Findings: The vendor responses did not yield enough information to determine whether the marketplace is strong for the development of competency-based assessments and can meet the needs of Virginia’s innovative school leaders and models. This would need to be a long-term component of any new assessment and would require time and stakeholder input to build effective and rigorous competency-based assessments for Virginia.

There were, however, some promising components and pieces of information provided in the RFI submissions, including:

- One vendor cited that they are developing a “flexible learning pathway” to assessments for students to demonstrate learning. The flexible learning pathway ensures students would learn and demonstrate mastery on specific learning objectives through a series of shorter, student-customized assessments.
- A vendor offered a proposal to build short, standard-by-standard assessments based on grade level, including an item bank that can be utilized by teachers to develop these assessments with a reporting system.
- A vendor proposed developing through-year assessments which are shorter assessments based on taught standards.
- One vendor provided a response of committing to developing shorter assessments called “testlets.”

Pricing:

The vendor submissions for this category of the RFI demonstrated a large pricing range. *As a reminder, RFPs have different accountability for accuracy based on RFP specification than vendor RFI for responses. Therefore, vendors often provide a wide estimate in RFI responses. The vendors submitted a one estimate and a five-year estimate.* The estimated range for a one-year contract in this category was between \$400,000 to \$6.7 million., The estimated range for a five-year contract was between \$1.2 million to \$33.8 million. The average cost estimate for a one-year contract is \$3.6 million. The estimated cost for a five-year contract is an average of \$17.5 million.

As a reminder, proposals submitted in response to RFPs have different protections than RFI

responses. See Va. Code § 2.2-4342. This may have influenced the ranges provided.

Category Six: Performance Tasks

As part of the Virginia Board of Education's [School Performance and Support Framework](#), performance tasks are now part of the Readiness Indicator for elementary and middle schools. The VBOE approved accountability and accreditation regulations in August 2024; the Biden Administration's U.S. Department of Education state plan approval for the Framework to serve as the federal accountability system of Virginia was approved Friday, January 3, 2025. These new regulations require the new Performance and Support Framework to include performance tasks. These tasks will measure the 5C's (Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, Citizenship, and Creative Thinking) in elementary school and the 5C's and career exploration and academic planning in middle school. Both performance tasks are aligned to the recommendation by the HB 585 Work Group to implement new and innovative assessments.

As part of the new accountability framework, the U.S. Department of Education required that performance tasks be field tested during the 2025 assessment window to use performance task data in the 2026 accountability system. The VDOE has leveraged ESSER III monies to preliminarily pilot the performance tasks and receive feedback from the field ahead of the preliminary assessment of fifth and eighth grade students in spring of 2025.

As the current assessment provider under contract with VDOE, the current vendor is developing this year's performance tasks through custom content, but the end products belong to and are owned by the Commonwealth. To build the bank of state performance tasks, the current vendor is following the same test development process as the Virginia *Standards of Learning* assessment. They offered the development of various item types such as short answer, multiple select, and extended responses. These performance tasks will be scored through machine, human, and automated scoring.

Respondents to the RFI were encouraged to propose methods for how Virginia could design and implement performance tasks aligned with Virginia's Academic and Career Plan. Proposals had to outline how the performance tasks would be scored either through human scoring or plans for AI scoring.

Overall Findings: There is capacity amongst assessment vendors to assist Virginia in developing performance tasks for 5th and 8th grade and can meet the needs of Virginia as we develop our new assessments and deliver for the Virginia Board of Education's School Performance and Support Framework.

To illustrate:

- One vendor is currently working with multiple states on the development of assessments like performance tasks, as these states adopted the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) which are aimed at improving science education for all students.
- A vendor offered a comprehensive plan for developing the performance tasks for 3rd and 8th grade, provided examples of what performance tasks would look like by grade level, and outlined how performance tasks would be scored using AI and human scoring.
- One vendor 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.

Pricing:

The vendor submissions for this category of the RFI demonstrated a large pricing range. *As a reminder, RFPs have different accountability for accuracy based on RFP specification than vendor RFI for responses. Therefore, vendors often provide a wide estimate in RFI responses. The vendors submitted a one-year estimate and a five-year estimate.* The estimated range for a one-year contract in this category fell between \$3.2 and \$10 million. The estimated range for a five-year contract in this category fell between \$3.2 and \$56 million. The estimated average cost for this category for a one-year contract is \$4 million, and the average estimated cost for a five-year contract is \$19.6 million.

As a reminder, proposals submitted in response to RFPs have different protections than RFI responses. See Va. Code § 2.2-4342. This may have influenced the ranges provided.

The remaining components of the RFI can be found in the following sections of the report: Category Seven, the Budget, is reflected below under II.B.2. Long-Term Budget Costs. Category Eight, Teacher Training, is summarized and reflected below under II.C. Teaching and Staffing Needs.

The vendor submissions for the categories requested through the RFI process demonstrated large pricing ranges. *As a reminder, RFPs have different accountability for accuracy based on RFP specification than vendor RFI for responses. Therefore, vendors often provide a wide estimate in RFI responses.*

III. Proposed Plan to Implement a New State Assessment System

A. Revised timeline

Virginia has one of the longest-standing assessment systems in the nation. The HB 585 Work Group confirmed what is widely expressed—that our tests are not working for students, teachers and parents. The VDOE has worked [over the past year to implement many of the recommendations](#) of the HB 585 Work Group, but the remaining recommendations must be done through a selected vendor contract to build a new assessment system. The RFI process captured proof of the capacity in the current marketplace to support the development and administration of a new innovative and rigorous statewide assessment system aligned to the recommendations of the HB 585 Report. Virginia is using the RFI findings to inform a thorough and rigorous RFP process.

The last RFP issued for a statewide assessment system was in 2005. This was prior to the passage of the 2019 high-risk contract review change in Virginia law, which requires contracts to undergo a more rigorous review process. As a result of the high-risk review law for IT-related procurements, VITA and OAG are each required to conduct additional reviews of RFPs prior to solicitation and contracts prior to contract award. Historically, across multiple administrations and prior Superintendents of Public Instruction, contract extensions and renewals were not required as outlined in the high-risk contracts law since they were not identified as new solicitations.

As VDOE looks to issue a solicitation for a new State Assessment System, compliance with the requirements of the high-risk contract law will be followed at the various procurement stages as defined in the law.

Action	Responsible Party	Target Completion Date
Align 2024-2025 assessment test questions to newly adopted Math and ELA <i>Standards of Learning</i> which began being implemented 2024-2025 school year	VDOE & the current vendor	October 31, 2024 Complete.
Complete 2024-2025 Fall Assessment Window	VDOE & the current vendor	December 15, 2024 Complete.
Make Final Decision on Issuance of Contract Extension with the current vendor including High-Risk Contract review process as required (Va. Code § 2.2-4303.1 (C)) – Regarding extension from December 31, 2025 to July 31, 2026 to complete the 2025-2026 school year assessment window.	VDOE in consultation with HAC/SFAC staff as well as Secretary of Finance, DPB, and Secretary of Education	Dec 31, 2024 Decision Complete – Not yet executed.
Develop RFP in collaboration with High-Risk Contract RFP Virginia Information Technology Agency (VITA)/Office of Attorney General (OAG) Review	Assessment Team	January 1 – March 30, 2025 (Proposed) Underway.
Release RFP	VDOE	April 1, 2025 (Proposed)
Host RFP Pre-Proposal Conference with Prospective Vendors	VDOE	April 10, 2025 (proposed)
Execute Final Contract Extension with the current vendor including High-Risk Contract review process as required (Code of VA 2.2-4303.1 (C) – Extension from December 31, 2025 to July 31, 2026 to complete the 2025-2026 school year assessment window.	VDOE	April 30, 2025 (if the final decision is made on 12/31/2024 to move forward)
Select and Train Evaluation Committee – Includes members of High-Risk Contract Review Process (Inclusive of OAG, VITA)	VDOE	March 31, 2025
RFP Submission Deadline	VDOE	June 2, 2025 (proposed)
Committee Pre-Evaluation	Evaluation Committee	June 25, 2025- June 27, 2025 (Proposed)
Committee Interviews with Qualified Applicants	Evaluation Committee	June 30, 2025- July 2, 2025 (proposed)
Committee Evaluation	Evaluation Committee	July 7, 2025-

Action	Responsible Party	Target Completion Date
		July 31, 2025 (proposed)
2024-2025 Spring Assessment Window Complete	VDOE & the current vendor	June 20, 2025 (proposed)
Price Negotiations and negotiation of terms and conditions (top 2 minimum)	VDOE Office of Procurement	August 14, 2025 (proposed)
3 rd Consensus Meeting – Price Negotiations	VDOE Office of Procurement	August 25, 2025 (proposed)
Final VITA CIO Approval & OAG Review	VITA	October 24, 2025 (proposed)
Notice of Intent to Award Issued	VDOE Office of Procurement	November 14, 2025 (proposed)
Targeted Contract Award Date	VDOE	December 1, 2025 (proposed)
Selected Vendor Transition Period/Implementation to begin with System for the 2026-2027 School Year	Selected Vendor	December 2, 2025 – August 1, 2026 (proposed)

B. Estimated short-and long-term costs, including costs to transition to the new system

Estimated Short-Term Costs

There are four critical actions that require funding:

1. Delivery of the 2024-2025 assessment, evaluation, and review.

Both state general funds and federal funds have been utilized to support the state-wide assessment system in 2024-2025. One-time ESSER and EANS funding has been used in the current fiscal year. These funds have helped support three updates: alignment to new more rigorous Math and ELA standards, innovative assessment questions, and to pilot performance tasks. The standards-aligned Math and ELA assessments increased the rigor of the assessment questions to match the revised standards. The innovative items have been added to ensure student mastery of the new standards can be measured as recommended by the HB 585 Report. The performance tasks are being piloted in school divisions in order to be added to assessments to comply with federal law.

2. Support Technical Advisory Committee.

The Technical Advisory Committee, or TAC, consists of national experts on assessment that advise VDOE on Virginia’s Assessment Program. They provide monthly guidance to VDOE’s assessment team and provide expert guidance and recommendations to ensure Virginia students have technically accurate assessments aligned to the *Standards of Learning* as well as assessments that meet the threshold of national research and best practices. The TAC currently provides VDOE support as it implements the HB 585 Work Group recommendations. For both FY25 and FY26, the TAC is budgeted \$187,500. Assuming 3% escalator on costs for fiscal years 2027-3031, the predicted cost is for TAC support services is \$750,000.

3. Six-month extension with existing assessment vendor.

The existing assessment vendor contract is set to expire December 31, 2025. This contract would end following the administration of the fall assessment window for the 2025-2026 school year. VDOE recommends following the one time, one year budget extension found in Item 119A.2.a of Chapter 2 of the Acts of Assembly (Special Session I, 2024).

The continuation of the existing assessment vendor contract through the 2025-2026 school year and completing the contract term June 30, 2026, ensures Virginia is compliant with federal and state assessment and accountability law. The contract extension to the end of the school year would capture students' growth and end-of-course assessments (including English learner proficiency and assessing students with significant cognitive disabilities), data and reports for educators, family reports, and state data used for school performance scores. These assessments would help capture the growth and proficiency of students in grade level standards of learning.

4. Transition to new assessment starting Fall 2026 with selected vendor.

The recent RFI issued by the Department did not break down one-time first year costs, so vendors have been hesitant to provide an estimate given the flux in ranges of costs received. Based on the current 18-month extension of \$82 million, dividing that by 18 months to get a monthly cost and multiplying by 12 months provides an annual cost of the existing contract which is roughly \$55 million. If we factor in a maximum 4% increase for an extension of 1 year (December 31, 2026) and the anticipated cost is \$57 million.

The Department does not have the ability to extend the current vendor beyond December 31, 2026. With the structure of the contract extension through December 31, 2026, there would be no cost savings by only extending 6-months as the development of the assessment for the school year largely occurs in the first quarter of the fiscal year (which is most of the cost).

The Governor's introduced budget includes one-time \$66 million to cover transition costs under the assumption Virginia must pay for two assessment contracts concurrently for a year. A \$66 million increase is set aside in the budget proposal to sustain the transition to a new, innovative and rigorous assessment system, which will include new definitions of proficiency that will be benchmarked to the highest standard in the nation for all SOL tests and deliver on our shared commitment to restoring excellence in education. The assumed ongoing cost is based on the calculations outlined below under III.B.2 Estimated Long-Term Costs matrix and assumes a continued \$5 million in federal assessment grant monies to support that.

Estimated Long-Term Costs

First, it is important to contextualize existing K-12 assessment revenue sources. Federal assessment grant monies are inconsistent and should not be relied on to fund assessments because they can swiftly change without the state's control. Based on trends from pre-pandemic figures, \$5-5.5 million in federal funds is a valid estimate to use. VDOE received slightly less federal assessment grant monies in the range of \$4-4.9 million for FY21, FY22, FY23 and a significant bump to \$14.9 million in FY24.

Regarding general fund sources, all the state general fund monies outlined in Item 119, \$28,858,849, supports the K-12 assessment system. The \$300,000/year for growth scale in Item 123.F is also part of the K-12 assessment system. There are no other budget items related to the assessment system from the state General Fund.

VDOE requested each vendor submit a line-item pricing worksheet that included a low and high range for the costs for all components of the RFI for each year up to five years. Year 1 of the budget includes both the transition to the new assessment system and the administration of assessments. This includes program management, item development and test construction, test administration, scoring and reporting, accessibility and accommodations, research and technical services, communications, and training.

To better inform the House Appropriations Committee and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee members and staff, a decision matrix reflecting an **annualized cost for a potential 5-year contract with the selected assessment vendor is provided below:**

Basic Assessment Package-Minimum Compliance of Regulations	1 Year Contract Range	Annualized 5 Year Contract Yearly Cost
1. Test Development: This includes the management and development of test blueprints, items and assessment design aligned to Virginia standards of learning for grades 3-high school in reading, math, and science as regulatorily required. This includes ensuring items meet rigor and measure of learning outlined in the standard as well as matching the overall items to the percentages of content in the standards.	\$15-21 million	\$9.4-\$17 million
2. Test Administration: This includes the computer-based administration of assessments including providing accessibility and accommodation features and language translations.	\$4.8-5.3 million	\$3.7-4.1 million
3. Scoring and Reporting: This includes scoring all assessments and providing reports for educators and families.	\$8.5-\$9.3 million	\$7.98-9.58 million
4. Growth Assessments: As required by Virginia law, this includes the reading and math assessments students take during the year that show progress on the standards of learning.	\$500,000 – 800,000	\$1.22-1.62 million
<u>TOTAL</u>	\$28.8-36.4 million	\$22.3-32.3 million

Add-On Features [Partial Implementation of HB 585 Work Group Recommendations for Modernization and 2023/2024 Board of Education Discussions on Measuring Civics]	1 Year Contract Range	Annualized 5 Year Contract Yearly Cost
1. Competency-Based Assessments: The development of these innovative assessments, aligned to HB1477, allow students to have a personalized learning experience by assessing their proficiency of standards when they are ready, allowing them to advance courses at their own pace.	\$2.1-\$2.6 million	\$1.98 - \$2.22 million

Add-On Features [Partial Implementation of HB 585 Work Group Recommendations for Modernization and 2023/2024 Board of Education Discussions on Measuring Civics]	1 Year Contract Range	Annualized 5 Year Contract Yearly Cost
<i>NOTE: The new Board-approved Mathematics and ELA standards prioritize personalized or competency-based learning. More schools want to shift their models to this approach, but testing has been the barrier.</i>		
<p data-bbox="250 464 797 527">2. Creation of VA US Government End of Course (EOC) Test</p> <p data-bbox="201 569 854 766"><i>NOTE: The Board of Education has discussed how to measure “Civics Readiness” and this EOC example would provide actionable data to inform school models and staffing. This would also provide the Board with valid and reliable data to include within the School Performance and Support Framework.</i></p>	\$500,000-\$550,000	\$600,000 - \$700,000
TOTAL	\$2.6-\$3.15 million	\$2.58-2.92 million

Premier Assessment Package Add-On Features [Full Implementation of HB 585 Work Group Assessment Modernization Recommendations]	1 Year Contract Range	Annualized 5 Year Contract Yearly Cost
<p data-bbox="250 947 854 1115">1. Released Test Items: This provides educators, students, and families access to test items to show transparency and provide examples of how students are being assessed in each grade and content area.</p> <p data-bbox="201 1136 821 1331"><i>NOTE: This cost will vary depending on the number or percentage of test items released to the field. Expect the lower range cost for 5-10% of test items released and the higher range cost for 15-20% of test items released. This is a critical item for teachers.</i></p>	\$1.25-\$1.5 million	\$1.28 -\$1.44 million
<p data-bbox="250 1331 854 1541">2. Communications and Teacher Training: This includes resources, videos, trainings, and materials for educators and families to understand the assessment, the data and reports, and how to use the data to develop next steps to support student learning.</p>	\$750,000-\$825,000	\$700,000-\$780,000
TOTAL	\$2-\$2.325 million	\$1.98-2.22 million
Annualized Grand Total with Full Assessment Package	\$33.4- \$41.875 million	\$26.86-37.44 million

When comparing RFI costs to RFP costs, an RFI generally involves lower costs because it is more of an informal exploratory process, gathering basic information from vendors, while an RFP process requires detailed proposals with specific pricing, leading to higher costs for vendors to respond to due to the extensive evaluation process involved. The lower cost for the 5-year contract is accurate, as

vendors tend to lower costs over a longer-term contract period because it is easier for them to manage and guaranteed business. The matrix table estimates are based on mid-ranges of the RFI results. The ranges in the RFI responses had a large swing in numbers so VDOE has opted for the mid-range of the respondents to prepare the decision matrix chart that is enclosed above.

A few additional costs for Committee members and staff to account for:

- **VVAAS Growth and Security Costs for VITA:** Virginia's Visualization and Analytics Solution is how growth is measured among Virginia's 1.25 million students. VVAAS is a web-based tool available to all Virginia's K-12 divisions and parents. This system allows educators and parents to know exactly how their students have performed in math and reading over multiple years, as well as where they are projected to score, and whether they are meeting their growth potential. The tool also allows policy makers, school leaders, and the community know exactly how well a school is growing, and where additional resources should be allocated. For FY25 the cost is \$2,999,900 and FY26 is \$3,089,987. Assuming 3% escalator on costs for fiscal years 2027-3031, the predicted cost is \$3,182,594. This budget total includes the cost of this valuable tool, as well as the cost for the single sign on security services through VITA to ensure it is easily accessible and secure.
- **Accountability Dashboard/Report Cards:** This cost is for a vendor to help manage School Performance and Support Framework data collection, analysis and reporting to include development and maintenance of public-facing data dashboards for transparent data visualization for parents, families, and school personnel. For FY25 the cost is \$1,760,000 and for FY26 is \$1,568,000. Assuming 3% escalator on costs for fiscal years 2027-3031, the predicted cost is \$1,569,000.

C. Staffing and training needs

VDOE requested follow-up responses on the types of teacher training vendors have provided and could provide to support the shift to new assessments and using data and reports. While teacher training was included in the RFI as part of timely and clear reporting, this was added as an additional RFI reporting category.

For a new assessment system to be successful, teachers must be provided with comprehensive training on the new assessment system, understanding and using data to drive instruction, and utilizing reports to transparently inform students and families about their child's progress. This includes providing educators with the maximum allowable released test items and accompanying answer keys and rubrics for those released items (subject to budget availability), opportunities to engage with and understand the assessments through assessment guidance documents, and providing practice "testlets" for students; webinars on key topics; trainings (virtual and/or in person); videos; and a library of resources and tools that allow access to the testing platform, sample questions and tests, and examples of data and reports. To ensure effective implementation of assessments and use of their data to drive instruction and student supports, these professional learning opportunities aid educators throughout the school year to understand assessment design, student expectations, administration protocols, and various data and reporting structures for both growth and proficiency assessments. All vendors submitted adequate evidence in this category. VDOE will need to ensure the future assessment vendor will provide robust trainings and resources for educators and leaders for successful implementation of the new assessment system.

The RFI also requested evidence in releasing test items to use in trainings and communications to families. Part of effective test development and educator support includes releasing 10% of a

representative sample of items for each grade/content area and replenishing with new items. These released items are used to support educators, students, and families in understanding the assessment, rigor of items, and item types. Division and school leaders can also use these in professional development sessions and communications with families to make the assessments more transparent.

Overall Findings: In this category, all four assessment vendors submitted responses; VDOE would need to work closely with the selected vendor from an RFP on a detailed plan to provide teachers with professional development opportunities on reporting and utilizing data from reporting to inform instructional practices.

All four assessment vendors included several strategies and resources for training but did not offer a comprehensive and detailed plan on offering training for teachers on data analysis, data reporting, how to utilize various forms of data to inform instructional practices, planning lessons and intervention strategies, and communicating performance to parents, guardians, and students. The assessment vendors all shared a commitment to developing an item release plan so that educators and families would have access to test items and resources. To illustrate:

- One vendor committed to offering training on item and test development, rubric validation, data review, and analysis while also committing to training divisions on test management, testing manuals, rubrics, and various reports. However, they did not provide a clear response on training for teachers on utilizing reports for various audiences. For an item release plan, they committed to annually review the item pool to determine which items should be released including completing a full bank analysis against the new standards at the beginning of the contract.
- One vendor offered a comprehensive plan to train via videos and in-person workshops for all educators at the state- and division-level and provided a list of offerings such as item writing, data review and interpretation, and instructional strategies aligned to Virginia's *Standards of Learning*. To share released items, they recommended developing a larger item pool to support an annual 10% depletion of the item bank and a plan that is representative of each specific grade and content area.
- One vendor offered a plan to train teachers to interpret and use 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.
- A vendor recommended utilizing AI technology to develop test items aligned to standards and specifications to support the purpose of use such as practice tests, item pools, and instructional use with a tailored process that includes a human review to ensure that items meet the required quality standards rather than conventional item banks. The vendor cited the combination of human- and AI-generated content as being cost effective and provides high-quality content that is aligned to state standards.
- One vendor offered a plan to train educators either in-person or virtually but did not include the types of training offerings for the various stakeholders. They proposed a tiered approach to releasing test items beginning with an annual update of all item types, including new item types for math, reading, and science and sample reading, writing, and performance tasks. For additional support, the vendor would prepare content for release by developing manuals, rubrics, and answer keys.

Some vendors also addressed other staff training under the timely, clear, actionable reporting section of the RFI.

To illustrate:

- One vendor also offered support for educator training on interpreting and using assessment data. The vendor would partner with VDOE in developing learning objectives for trainings and establishing a training plan and providing training materials through a common platform that would serve as the secure online access point for VDOE, school divisions, and schools to view student scores and includes a Parent Portal for families to view their children's test scores.
- A vendor described potential offers of training for administrators on the various types of reports and how to interpret them but did not go into detail on how the training plan would be executed.

Pricing:

Three vendors submitted a five-year cost estimate. The range for a one-year contract fell between \$507,000 and \$1.6 million, and for a five-year contract the range fell between \$1.9-8.3 million. The average price for this category for a one-year contract is \$900,000, and the average for a five-year contract is \$4.5 million.

As a reminder, proposals submitted in response to RFPs have different protections than RFI responses. See Va. Code § 2.2-4342. This may have influenced the ranges provided.

D. Key milestones

The chart below provides a high-level timeline of when the existing assessment vendor is contracted, the overlap period of both the existing and selected assessment vendor, and when the selected vendor is the sole contractor. Milestones for each piece of the timeline follow. Operational assessments will continue throughout entire timeline and potential vendor transition.

2024-2025 SY	2025-2026 SY	November 2025-July 2026	2026-2027 SY
Current Vendor	Current Vendor	Transition Period	Selected Vendor (could be current or new dependent on award)

1. 2024-2025 School Year

The 2024-2025 assessment cycle includes the following milestones:

- Development of fifth and eighth grade performance tasks and rigorous test items aligned to Virginia Standards of Learning.
- Administration, scoring, and reporting of all Virginia SOL assessments in grades 3 through high school.

In addition, the standard setting proficiency process is planned to occur in late spring and summer 2025 (pending State Board approval) to update proficiency definitions on the tests that match best-in-the-nation expectations and are on par with top-performing states and NAEP proficiency that will be applied in Spring 2026. This includes:

- The recruitment and selection of educators and community members to serve on the proficiency review committees.
- Completing data collection and analysis of student data from the 2024-2025 assessment cycle.
- Working in partnership to benchmark Virginia definition of proficiency with NAEP definitions of proficiency and the highest state definitions of proficiency.

- Facilitating proficiency setting committee meetings.
- Preparing recommended cut scores for the TAC to review and provide feedback and Board approval.

2. RFP Bid and Contract with Selected Vendor

The VDOE is committed to a fair and transparent Request for Proposals (RFP) process to secure a vendor to implement a best-in-class assessment system. All vendors, including those who did not submit a response to the RFI, will be able to submit a proposal during the RFP process. The current vendor had no advantage as part of the RFI summaries in this report and will have no advantage as part of the future RFP process. VDOE owns the assessment content for all assessments, and the selected vendor from an RFP will have access to those items for the future development of assessments. Per federal and state requirements, Virginia must include performance tasks to the 2024-2025 summative assessments in 5th and 8th grades, and the current vendor is developing those tasks for the Commonwealth.

3. 2025-2026 Assessment Thru Existing Vendor Extension

Issuance of Contract Extension with the current vendor including High-Risk Contract review process as required (Va. Code § 2.2-4303.1 (C) – December 31, 2025 (Extend current contract to July 31, 2026))

The contract extension during the 2025-2026 assessment cycle will provide continuity of test development, administration, scoring, and reporting services from the assessment vendor. It will also include scoring and reporting that will reflect the Board-approved cut scores because of the proficiency setting process. This extension will ensure compliance with federal and state law and provide educators and families with student data on growth and proficiency. The major milestone will be executing the contract extension with the existing assessment vendor.

4. Successful Transition with Selected Vendor

After a contract is awarded to an assessment vendor selected through an RFP, a transition period will occur where both the current vendor and the selected vendor will overlap in contract timelines. This timeframe will provide a seamless transition of assessment services for the vendors, VDOE staff, school divisions, and students. This ensures there will be no interruption in current assessment administrations and services, and it will allow school divisions to be onboarded to a new platform, services, and processes. This onboarding will support the transition to a successful administration of assessments under the selected assessment vendor. The selected vendor will conduct extensive transition meetings with the existing vendor and VDOE that will allow historical knowledge and files, assessment designs and items, processes and protocols, and data and reports to be transferred. Major milestones include executing a new contract for the selected vendor and a series of transition meetings and processes between current and selected vendors and VDOE. All dates for the transition will be agreed upon amongst all parties. In addition, to ensure continuity of a successful transition that meets the needs of multiple stakeholder groups, an assessment transition advisory group will support VDOE in the implementation of the vendor transition timeline.

5. Seamless Delivery of Assessment Year 1

The newly contracted assessment vendor will assume the same high expectations for quality of deliverables and customer service, so that there is smooth and successful assessment cycle beginning

with the first administration under the new assessment contract. Training and support for divisions will be of utmost priority as leaders, teachers, and students could be learning a new testing platform, administration procedures, and data and reporting structures. The success of the training and support is critical to the success of the new assessment system. The selected assessment vendor will be accountable for the execution of all assessments in the testing platform being free of errors and administered without technological issues. The major milestone of this work is to facilitate training for all school divisions that put them in a posture for a successful first administration with the selected assessment vendor. The vendor will propose a timeline for all trainings and supports to be approved by VDOE.

E. Project deliverables

By January 31, 2025, VDOE will create a non-monetary contract modification (not a contract extension) in place with the current assessment vendor. This addendum to the existing contract will include the expectations for the contractor team and VDOE Teaching and Learning team to meet monthly to review the invoice being submitted by the vendor in advance of the official invoice being issued to VDOE for payment. Following the review meeting with the vendor and the VDOE team, the invoice will be signed off on by the Director of Assessment, Assistant Superintendent of Assessment, and the Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning. The vendor will provide detailed counts and supporting documentation outlining the number of tests that were developed, written, delivered, etc. as appropriate during the billing cycle. The resource and supporting documents will be listed in the addendum and available to support the invoice and request for payment. The work plan will be reviewed and included as supporting documentation for the invoices.

An internal tracking spreadsheet will be developed to support and assist the leadership team with tracking the work plans with completion of work and invoicing. This will also assist the VDOE team with monitoring the budget and actual reporting and allow for questions to be asked when/if they arise.

These details will be included as requirements in a contract moving forward with any assessment vendor. At a minimum, monthly meetings will be held to review the invoicing and billing cycle activity between the VDOE staff and the vendor.

With any new assessment contract, there will be clearly defined and measurable performance metrics, clear review processes including required staff members attendance requirements, and required signoffs before invoices are processed for payments. Clear enforcement provisions, including penalties and/or incentives, will be used in the contract moving forward should performance metrics or other defined provisions are not met.