A Process for Reviewing and Selecting Assessment Vendors

The assessment review and selection process is designed to help districts and schools identify an assessment system or tool that generates the information they need, in the time they need it, and is valid and reliable. It is designed to minimize subjectivity, allowing reviewers to assess the strengths and weaknesses of potential vendors in light of the specific needs of the agency and other constraints that influence vendor selection.

The following describes the features of the review and selection process, including three tools designed to assist users in identifying their assessment needs and rating the content and technical qualities of available assessments. In addition, this document includes definitions of the categories of information that districts and schools should collect and consider when identifying and reviewing the quality and suitability of assessments from a variety of vendors.

The Process and Tools:

The process entails a series of steps, described below, that are intended to help users first determine what their assessment needs are, how well a given vendor or assessment meets those needs, and then how to look across the various vendors and assessments to make a final selection:

Step 1: **What Do We Need? (*Assessment Needs Identification Tool*).** This form should be completed first and is intended to help districts and schools identify the type of assessment(s) the need and any constraints or requirements, such as length of the test, that test vendors must meet.

Step 2: **What Does This Vendor/Assessment Offer? (*Vendor/Assessment Review Tool*).** This form should be completed second and is intended to help districts and school focus on vendor requirements, the technical qualities of the assessment(s), and the match between features of the assessment and district or school needs. The form includes a scoring feature that allows users to generate a summary of the number of selection criteria a given assessment meets, which will facilitate comparisons of scores across vendors and assessments, as described in Step 3. One assessment review form should be completed for each assessment reviewed.

Step 3: **Which Assessment Best Meets Our Needs? (*Vendor/Assessment Review Summary Tool*).** This form should be used to summarize the results of each of the individual assessment reviews conducted under Step 2. If only one assessment was reviewed, then users can skip this final step of the review and selection process.

The tools are included at the end of this document in the order in which they should be used.

Definitions:

The following provides descriptions of the categories of information that districts and schools should collect and consider when identifying and reviewing the quality and suitability of assessments from a variety of vendors. These descriptions are intended to be a resource to districts and schools as they work through the Assessment Needs Identification tool and the Assessment Review Form.

1. **Type of vendor**: This catefield describes the scope of the assessment. It allows a user to specify if they are looking for a specific assessment (e.g. an end of the year Biology exam), or if they are looking for one vendor that can meet several assessment needs (e.g. assessments for different grade levels or content areas).

2. **The purpose and use of the assessment:** Two key decisions in the review process are (1) what type of assessment is needed, and (2) how the assessment will be used. If the primary goal is to provide teachers with information to make instructional decisions, then reviewers should consider a formative or diagnostic assessment (i.e., an assessment that provides information on specific skills for which students need more support). If the primary goal of the assessment is to provide information about what knowledge and skills students have learned or to assign grades, reviewers should consider a summative assessment (i.e., assessments that provide overall information on how students are doing against a set of standardized benchmarks). Identifying this information will help ensure that the results of the assessments are used appropriately and as designed.

3. **Scoring needs:** Related to the purpose and use is information on the type of scores needed. This includes who will have access to the scores, when the scores are needed in relation to when the assessment is administered, as well as who will be needed and available to do the actual scoring. It is important to think about how the scores will be produced to ensure that the assessment is able to provide the desired information within a given timeframe.

4. **Logistical, technological, and process requirements for test administration:** It is important to consider what constraints, if any, may impede how, when, and whether the assessment can be administered. For example, consider how much time is required to administer the assessment and whether the length of the assessment is acceptable to users, including teachers and students. In addition, consider the types of technology required for test administration, such as Chromebooks, iPads, or computers as well as internet bandwidth for online assessments.

   On the vendor side, there may be additional constraints that might limit who can administer the assessments. For example some assessments require training for anyone who will be administering the assessments.

5. **Supports for special student populations:** When determining whether the assessment is appropriate, consider all student populations that might be tested and whether the assessment can accommodate their needs. For example, consider whether the assessment is offered in languages other than English, or includes accommodations for students with disabilities. Consider the typical supports that are provided to different students when determining what supports are needed for this assessment.

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6. **Supports for test administration.** If school staff are administering the assessment, consider whether the vendor offers training or technical support to test administrators or to teachers and administrators who review/use the assessment results. In particular, determine whether the vendor requires that test administrators receive vendor training (a potential added cost of the assessment).

7. **Technical qualities/features**: The vendor should include information on the technical quality of an assessment, which helps to ensure that the assessment results are valid and reliable. Types of technical information to look for include reports on:

   - Cronbach's alpha for reliability[1] (the result should be over 0.8, i.e., $\alpha \geq 0.8$)
   - Results from expert reviews of assessment quality
   - Results from a factor analysis indicating that the structure of the assessment matches the desired structure
   - Any bias or DIF[2] analysis indicating that the assessment performs similarly for different populations, meaning that the results are valid for any population tested, including ELs and students with disabilities.

   In addition, consider whether the results of the assessment can be linked to other assessments from previous years in order to be able to compare scores across different assessments.

8. **Costs**: The cost of an assessment may include more than just the cost of the student assessment forms. That is, vendor options such as scoring and generating score reports may have additional costs.

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[1] Cronbach's alpha measures the internal consistency or how closely related a set of items are as a group.
[2] Differential item functioning (DIF) is a statistical characteristic of an item that shows the extent to which the item might be measuring different abilities for members of separate subgroups.

STEP 1: Assessment Needs Identification Tool

Complete this form to identify the type of assessment(s) that are needed and any constraints or requirements, such as subjects tested, accommodations offered, or test length, that vendors must meet.
For each section, check all items that apply.

Number and type of vendors you are considering: □ One vendor that offers an assessment system that includes multiple assessments □ Multiple vendors, each offering specific assessments □ One vendor that offers a specific assessment □ Don't know
Purpose of the assessment(s): □ To provide diagnostic/formative assessment data that will inform instruction or student placement decisions □ To provide summative assessment data that will provide overall information on how students are doing against a set of standardized benchmarks □ Both □ Other (SPECIFY):_____
Content area requirements: □ English/language arts   □ Reading   □ Writing   □ Math   □ Science   □ Social Studies □ Other (specify): _____
Specific concept(s) or sub-scores required for the assessment:
Grade(s) or grade ranges assessed, if applicable: □ K   □ 1st   □ 2nd   □ 3rd   □ 4th   □ 5th   □ Elementary School □ 6th   □ 7th   □ 8th   □ Middle School □ 9th   □ 10th   □ 11th   □ 12th   □ High School □ No associated grade-level (NOTE: Important to indicate the specific concept(s) tested, i.e., see above)
Type of score reports needed: □ For Teachers   □ For district leaders □ For Students   □ Other (SPECIFY) _____ □ For Parents
How soon will schools/teachers need the assessment results? □ Immediately   □ Within a week   □ Within a month   □ Other
Staff (if any) who would be available for scoring:
Available technology: [What technology is available, e.g. Chromebooks, iPads, computers?]
Constraints on test administration: [e.g., What is the maximum amount of time the assessment can take?]
Who will administer the assessment? □ Teachers   □ Staff   □ Other: _____   □ Don't know
Types of accommodations or supports needed: □ Offered in additional languages   □ Supports for students with disabilities □ Support for EL students   □ Other (SPECIFY): _____
Do the results of the assessment need to be linked to other assessments? □ Yes   □ No   □ Don't know
Available budget: $ _____
Any additional concerns or needs:

STEP 2: Vendor/Assessment Review Tool

For each question below, compare the properties of a given assessment to the needs defined in the *Assessment Needs Identification Tool (STEP 1)*. Under the column labeled "Specifics," check all items that apply. Once all questions are answered, add up each "Yes," "Partially," or "No" response to generate a summary of the number of selection criteria a given assessment meets. Complete a separate *Vendor/Assessment Review* form for EACH assessment reviewed.

NAME OF VENDOR _____   NAME OF ASSESSMENT _____

Question	Answer	Specifics
Purpose: Does the purpose of the assessment match our needs (i.e., diagnostic vs. summative)?	□ Yes □ Partially □ No	□ Formative/diagnostic assessment □ Summative assessment
Subjects tested: Does the assessment cover the desired subject areas?	□ Yes □ Partially □ No	Subjects tested: □ ELA □ Reading □ Writing □ Math □ Science □ Social Studies □ Other
Grades or grade ranges tested: Does the assessment cover the desired grade(s) or grade ranges?	□ Yes □ Partially □ No	□ K □ 1st □ 2nd □ 3rd □ 4th □ 5th □ 6th □ 7th □ 8th □ 9th □ 10th □ 11th □ 12th OR: □ Elementary grades (e.g., K-5) □ Middle school grades (e.g., 6-8) □ High School grades (e.g., 9-12) □ No associated grade-level
Score reports provided: Are there score reports provided to all stakeholders?	□ Yes □ No	□ For Teachers □ For Students □ For Parents □ For District leaders □ Other: _____
Scoring/reporting timeframe: Does the timeframe for scoring and reporting meet our needs?	□ Yes □ No	□ Immediately □ Within one week after test administration □ Within two weeks □ In one month □ In two months □ Other (SPECIFY) _____
Test formats: Do the test formats match our needs?	□ Yes □ No	□ Online only □ Paper/pencil only □ Both
Technology requirements: Can we satisfy the technology requirements of the assessment?	□ Yes □ Yes, but may need technology updates □ No	Type of online platform used/required: _____
Test administration time: Is the length of the assessment acceptable to our users (i.e., teachers and students)?	□ Yes □ No; too long	
Administrator training: Does the vendor offer training or other supports for our assessment	□ Yes □ Yes, but at extra cost □ No □ No, none needed	

Question	Answer	Specifics
users (i.e., teachers, administrators)?		
Administrator and/or use restrictions: Does the vendor impose any restrictions on test administration in terms of who can administer the assessment (i.e., they must be formally trained) and/or how the assessment can be used?	□ Yes, but can be met □ Yes, but cannot be met □ No	Type(s) of restrictions: _____
Additional supports: Does the assessment offer appropriate accommodations for students?	□ Yes □ Partially □ No □ Don't know	□ Accommodations for English learners □ Accommodations for students w/ disabilities □ Other (SPECIFY) _____
Additional languages: Is the assessment offered in all the languages our students require?	□ Yes □ Partially □ No □ Don't know	□ Spanish □ Portuguese □ Chinese □ Hindi □ Arabic □ Telugu □ Gujarati □ Haitian Creole □ Korean □ Polish
Technical quality: Is there evidence of the technical quality of the assessment?	□ Yes □ Partially □ No □ Don't know	□ Validation studies □ Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha \geq 0.8$) □ Factor analysis □ Bias or DIF analysis □ Other (SPECIFY) _____
Linked assessments: Can the results of this assessment be linked to other existing assessments?	□ Yes □ No □ Don't know	Which assessments?
Costs: Is the cost of the assessment within our allotted budget?	□ Yes □ Partially (i.e., a little over budget) □ No □ Don't know	**Initial purchase cost:** $_____ **Additional costs:** □ None □ Replacement forms: $_____ □ Scoring: $_____ □ Reporting: $_____ □ Training for use: $_____ □ Other (SPECIFY): _____ $_____
TOTAL Criteria Met	[ ] # Yes [ ] # Partially [ ] # No	

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STEP 3: Vendor/Assessment Summary Tool

This form should be used to summarize the results of each of the individual assessment/vendor reviews conducted in Step 2. Use the columns labeled Option 1, Option 2, etc. to enter information about each assessment using the information compiled through the Vendor/Assessment Review Form (Step 2). NOTE: If only one assessment was reviewed, skip this final step of the review and selection process.

	Assessment OPTION 1:	Assessment OPTION 2:	Assessment OPTION 3:
Assessment and vendor name:	_____	_____	_____
Purpose of the assessment:	□ Formative/diagnostic □ Summative	□ Formative/diagnostic □ Summative	□ Formative/diagnostic □ Summative
Subject(s) tested:	□ ELA □ Reading □ Writing □ Math □ Science □ Soc. Studies □ Other (SPECIFY): _____	□ ELA □ Reading □ Writing □ Math □ Science □ Soc. Studies □ Other (SPECIFY): _____	□ ELA □ Reading □ Writing □ Math □ Science □ Soc. Studies □ Other (SPECIFY): _____
Specific concept(s), if applicable:			
Grade(s) or grade ranges tested:	□ K □ 1st □ 2nd □ 3rd □ 4th □ 5th □ 6th □ 7th □ 8th □ 9th □ 10th □ 11th □ 12th OR: □ Elementary (e.g., grades K-5) □ Middle school (e.g., grades 6-8) □ High School (e.g., grades 9-12) □ No associated grade-level	□ K □ 1st □ 2nd □ 3rd □ 4th □ 5th □ 6th □ 7th □ 8th □ 9th □ 10th □ 11th □ 12th OR: □ Elementary (e.g., grades K-5) □ Middle school (e.g., grades 6-8) □ High School (e.g., grades 9-12) □ No associated grade-level	□ K □ 1st □ 2nd □ 3rd □ 4th □ 5th □ 6th □ 7th □ 8th □ 9th □ 10th □ 11th □ 12th OR: □ Elementary (e.g., grades K-5) □ Middle school (e.g., grades 6-8) □ High School (e.g., grades 9-12) □ No associated grade-level
Score reports provided:	□ For Teachers □ For Students □ For Parents □ For District leaders □ Other: _____	□ For Teachers □ For Students □ For Parents □ For District leaders □ Other: _____	□ For Teachers □ For Students □ For Parents □ For District leaders □ Other: _____
Scoring/reporting timeframe:	□ Immediately □ Within one week after test administration □ Within two weeks □ In one month □ In two months □ Other (SPECIFY) _____	□ Immediately □ Within one week after test administration □ Within two weeks □ In one month □ In two months □ Other (SPECIFY) _____	□ Immediately □ Within one week after test administration □ Within two weeks □ In one month □ In two months □ Other (SPECIFY) _____
Test formats:	□ Online (SPECIFY Platform): _____ □ Paper/pencil □ Both	□ Online (SPECIFY Platform): _____ □ Paper/pencil □ Both	□ Online (SPECIFY Platform): _____ □ Paper/pencil □ Both
Technology requirements of online format:	Online platform used/required (SPECIFY): _____	Online platform used/required (SPECIFY): _____	Online platform used/required (SPECIFY): _____
Test administration time:	# minutes: _____ # hours: _____	# minutes: _____ # hours: _____	# minutes: _____ # hours: _____
Administrator training offered?	□ Yes □ Yes, but extra costs □ No □ No, none needed	□ Yes □ Yes, but extra costs □ No □ No, none needed	□ Yes □ Yes, but extra costs □ No □ No, none needed

	Assessment OPTION 1:	Assessment OPTION 2:	Assessment OPTION 3:
Assessment and vendor name:	_____	_____	_____
Administrator and/or use restrictions	□ No restrictions □ Yes, but can be met _____ □ Yes, but cannot be met _____	□ No restrictions □ Yes, but can be met _____ □ Yes, but cannot be met _____	□ No restrictions □ Yes, but can be met _____ □ Yes, but cannot be met _____
Additional Supports or accommodations:	□ Accommodations for English learners □ Accommodations for students with disabilities □ Other (SPECIFY)	□ Accommodations for English learners □ Accommodations for students with disabilities □ Other (SPECIFY)	□ Accommodations for English learners □ Accommodations for students with disabilities □ Other (SPECIFY)
Additional languages:	□ Spanish □ Portuguese □ Chinese □ Hindi □ Arabic □ Telugu □ Gujarati □ Haitian Creole □ Korean □ Polish	□ Spanish □ Portuguese □ Chinese □ Hindi □ Arabic □ Telugu □ Gujarati □ Haitian Creole □ Korean □ Polish	□ Spanish □ Portuguese □ Chinese □ Hindi □ Arabic □ Telugu □ Gujarati □ Haitian Creole □ Korean □ Polish
Technical Quality:	□ Validation studies □ Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha \geq 0.8$) □ Factor analysis □ Bias or DIF analysis □ Other (SPECIFY) _____	□ Validation studies □ Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha \geq 0.8$) □ Factor analysis □ Bias or DIF analysis □ Other (SPECIFY) _____	□ Validation studies □ Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha \geq 0.8$) □ Factor analysis □ Bias or DIF analysis □ Other (SPECIFY) _____
Linked assessments:	□ Yes (SPECIFY) _____ □ No	□ Yes (SPECIFY) _____ □ No	□ Yes (SPECIFY) _____ □ No
Cost(s):	**Initial purchase cost:** $_____ **Additional costs (specify):** □ None □ Replacement forms: $____ □ Scoring: $_____ □ Reporting: $ _____ □ Training for use: $ _____ □ Other (SPECIFY): $	**Initial purchase cost:** $_____ **Additional costs (specify):** □ None □ Replacement forms: $____ □ Scoring: $_____ □ Reporting: $ _____ □ Training for use: $ _____ □ Other (SPECIFY): $	**Initial purchase cost:** $_____ **Additional costs (specify):** □ None □ Replacement forms: $____ □ Scoring: $_____ □ Reporting: $ _____ □ Training for use: $ _____ □ Other (SPECIFY): $
Total Criteria Met (from STEP 2)	**# Yes: _____**	**# Yes: _____**	**# Yes: _____**