

ALABAMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Request for Proposal

RFP ALSDE 2024-06

ALABAMA COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Note: FAXED OR E-MAILED PROPOSALS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Inquiries and response submissions related to this RFP are to be addressed to:

Cindy Gillespie
Office of Operations
Alabama State Department of Education
50 N. Ripley Street, Room P305
Gordon Persons Building
Montgomery, AL 36104
Email: cgillespie@alsde.edu

Deadline:

Proposals must be received no later than 4:00 pm on May 6, 2024.

It is required that each vendor clearly mark the envelope RFP ALSDE 2024-06 in the lower left corner of the envelope (Response packages that are not marked will be rejected).

The proposal package must contain the following:

1. **Original proposal plus twelve copies** with original signatures (The proposal must be signed by an official authorized to legally bind the vendor to the information provided). **Two (2) electronic copies** on a USB flash drive in MS Word format.
2. Must be currently registered with The Alabama Department of Finance, Division of Procurement as a State Vendor and provide vendor number. <http://www.purchasing.alabama.gov>
3. The vendor must complete the affidavit for business entity/employer/vendor. Verification of enrollment in E-verify should be presented on the form found in Appendix A.

Non-Public Proposal Opening

May 7 & 8, 2024

9:00 am

**Gordon Persons Building, P103
50 North Ripley Street
Montgomery, AL 36104**

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Section 1.00 Administrative Overview

1.1 Purpose and Background

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) is seeking proposals from qualified vendors experienced in large-scale statewide student assessment with the capacity to develop and deliver computer-based Summative Assessments for Grades 2-8, High School, and an Alternate Assessment, along with assessment support services. Vendors must have experience in developing, administering, scoring, and reporting large-scale assessments; and experience in educational measurement, including test development, scaling and equating, data analysis, standard setting, technical reporting, data forensics, and computer-based testing.

Currently, Alabama administers two state-developed and state-owned assessments and the *ACT with Writing* for its accountability system. The *Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP) Summative* and *ACAP Alternate* measure student achievement of the standards contained in the *Alabama Courses of Study Standards* and the *Alabama Alternate Achievement Standards*, respectively. The *ACAP Summative* is administered to students in Grades 2-8 in English Language Arts (ELA), math, and students in Grades 4, 6, and 8 in science. The *ACAP Alternate* is administered to students in those same grades and to students in Grades 10 and 11. The *ACT with Writing* is administered to students in Grade 11 and the *PreACT* is administered to students in Grade 10.

The goal of the Alabama's statewide assessment system is to measure student acquisition of important academic outcomes in selected academic content areas, and provide useful, timely feedback to students, teachers, principals, and other stakeholders. The assessment system must provide stakeholders with varied, informative, and easily interpretable reports that help end-users understand student, local, and statewide educational expectations. The ALSDE seeks to build on the work already done for its *ACAP Summative* and *ACAP Alternate* assessments and to develop a new, state-owned assessment for high school students. In addition, the ALSDE intends to develop computer-based practice tests to mirror each of these components and provide data to inform instruction and preparation for the operational assessments.

Summative Assessment for Grades 2-8 - This RFP requires vendors to submit technical and cost proposals that clearly delineate the vendor's plan for delivering products and services for multiple years. The Summative Assessment must be developmentally appropriate for students and substantially aligned to the *Alabama Course of Study Standards* in ELA and mathematics in Grades 2-8, and science in Grades 4, 6, and 8. In addition, vendors must provide a plan for developing a reading assessment to meet the requirements of the *Alabama Literacy Act*, a computer-based practice test that mirrors the operational assessment, and support services for each of these components. The assessments must be technically sound as defined by the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* by the American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)/Association of Test Publishers *Operational Best Practices for Statewide Large-Scale Assessment*, particularly in terms of privacy,

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reliability, validity, opportunity to learn, accommodations, scoring, reporting, and documentation. Additionally, development and implementation of the Summative Assessment must adhere to the established guidelines and requirements for the U.S. Department of Education's (USDE) Peer Review Guidelines and the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*. The *Alabama Courses of Study Standards* can be found at <https://www.alabamaachievers.org/content-areas-specialty>.

Alternate Assessment - Federal law requires the use of an alternate assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities receiving special education services who cannot participate in the state assessment program. Each state is required to establish the state's definition of "significant cognitive disabilities." According to the *ACAP Accessibility Supports and Accommodations Policy for State Assessments* manual, the definition of a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities is a student with an intelligence quotient (IQ) of three standard deviations below the mean, which is an IQ of 55 or below. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams shall use this definition as a guideline when determining if a student shall participate in an alternate assessment. A student with an IQ of 55 or below—and receiving instruction on the *Alabama Alternate Achievement Standards*, an extension of the grade-level state content standards—is eligible for the Alternate Assessment as determined by the student's IEP.

This RFP requires vendors to submit technical and cost proposals that clearly delineate the vendor's plan for delivering products and services for multiple years. The Alternate Assessment must be developmentally appropriate for students and substantially aligned to the *Alabama Alternate Achievement Standards* that are extensions of the *Alabama Course of Study Standards* in ELA, mathematics in Grades 2-8, and two (2) high school grades to be determined; and science in Grades 4, 6, 8, and one (1) high school grade to be determined. In addition, vendors must provide a plan for developing a practice test that mirrors the operational assessment and for providing support services for each of these components. The Alternate Assessments must be technically sound as defined by the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* by the American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education. Additionally, development and implementation of the Alternate Assessment must adhere to the established guidelines and requirements for the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) Peer Review Guidelines, and the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*. The *Alabama Alternate Achievement Standards* can be found at <https://www.alabamaachievers.org/special-education/subject-resources/>.

High School Summative Assessment - This RFP requires vendors to submit technical and cost proposals that clearly delineate the vendor's plan for delivering products and services for multiple years. The High School Summative Assessment must be developmentally appropriate for students and substantially aligned to the *Alabama Course of Study Standards* in ELA,

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mathematics, and science in one (1) high school grade to be determined. In addition, vendors must provide a plan for developing a computer-based practice test that mirrors the operational assessment and for providing support services for each of these components. The assessments must be technically sound as defined by the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* by the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education CCSSO/Association of Test Publishers *Operational Best Practices for Statewide Large-Scale Assessment*, particularly in terms of privacy, reliability, validity, opportunity to learn, accommodations, scoring, reporting, and documentation. Additionally, development and implementation of the High School Summative Assessment must adhere to the established guidelines and requirements for the USDOE Peer Review Guidelines and the ESSA. The *Alabama Courses of Study Standards* can be found at [Alabama Achieves - Content Area Specialty](#)

Estimated statewide number of systems	153
Estimated statewide number of schools	1,744
Estimated Number of Students Tested – Summative	55,000- 60,000
Estimated Number of Students that will Test with the Reading Assessment via the ALA	15,000
Estimated Number of Students Tested - Alternate	6,000
Estimated Number of Students Tested – High School Summative Assessment (In two grades)	110,000
A cost estimate is needed for: Summative Assessments - Grades 2-8 Alternate Assessments – Grades 2-8, and two (2) high school grades to be determined High School Summative Assessments – Two (2) grades to be determined	
The ALSDE will only be charged for the actual number tested for scoring. In preparing the "Cost Response", vendors must propose "unit" prices, not block prices.	

Commercial “Off-the-Shelf” assessments or products will not meet the needs of this proposal.

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Components of the Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP)

Component Name	In Scope	Description and Purpose	Timing	Anticipated Yearly Volume	Major Uses	Required or Optional?	Grades	Subjects
ACAP Alternate	Yes	Grades 2-8, 10, and 11 end-of-year alternate assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities	Spring (March-April)	6,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure student achievement of the standards contained in the <i>Alabama Alternate Achievement Standards</i> • State and federal accountability 	Required	2-8, 10, 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English Language Arts • Math • Science
ACAP Summative	Yes	Grades 2-8 end-of-year summative assessment	Spring (March-April)	375,000 to 400,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure student achievement of the standards contained in the <i>Alabama Courses of Study Standards</i> • State and federal accountability 	Required	2-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English Language Arts • Math • Science
ACAP Practice Test	Yes	Practice test for the ACAP Summative	Throughout school year	375,000 to 400,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare students for the administration of the ACAP Summative • Provide educators with data for instruction 	Optional for students	2-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English Language Arts • Math • Science
ACAP Supplemental Reading Test	Yes	Summer reading assessment for Grade 3	June-July	15,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used as a source for 3rd grade promotion 	Optional for students	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading
ACCESS for ELLs	No	English language proficiency assessment	January-March	45,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure progress in English language acquisition for English learners • State and federal accountability 	Required	K-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Writing • Listening • Speaking
Alternate ACCESS for ELLs	No	English language proficiency assessment for students with the most significant	January-March	325	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure progress in English language acquisition for English learners with the most significant 	Required	K-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Writing • Listening • Speaking

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Component Name	In Scope	Description and Purpose	Timing	Anticipated Yearly Volume	Major Uses	Required or Optional?	Grades	Subjects
		cognitive disabilities			cognitive disabilities and used for federal accountability			
ACT with Writing	Yes	Grade 11 end-of-year summative assessment	Spring (March-April)	55,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure high school academic achievement • State and federal accountability 	Required	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English Language Arts • Math • Science
Pre-ACT Secure	Yes	Grade 10 end-of-year assessment	October	55,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure high school academic achievement • Provide a baseline for high school academic growth 	Required	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English Language Arts • Math • Science
WorkKeys	No	Credentialing assessment measuring foundational skills required for success in the workplace	February-March	35,000 to 40,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an opportunity for individual student credentialing • CCR 	Optional	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graphic literacy • Applied math • Workplace documents
NAEP	No	National Assessment of Educational Progress (the Nation's Report Card)	January-March	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure trends in academic achievement for states and the nation 	Optional	4, 8, and 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Math

1.2 Anticipated Time Table

April 26, 2024	Question Submission Deadline
April 30, 2024	Question Responses Due
May 6, 2024	Proposal Submission Deadline

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1.3 Proposal Evaluation

An Evaluation Team will review the proposals and make a recommendation. The criteria listed below will be used to evaluate the proposals for the purpose of ranking them in relative position based on how fully each proposal meets the requirements of this RFP.

Evaluation Criteria:

Vendor qualifications and experience	25 points
Budget Proposal	25 points
Detailed description test development, instructional materials, training, psychometric services, and reporting	50 points

Best and Final Offers:

The ALSDE may either accept a vendor's initial proposal by award of a contract or enter into discussions with vendors whose proposals are deemed to be reasonably acceptable consideration for award. After discussions are concluded, a vendor may be allowed to submit a "Best and Final Offer" for consideration in a manner and method prescribed by the ALSDE. By submitting a proposal each vendor accepts and agrees to all conditions and requirements herein.

The ALSDE will make all decisions regarding evaluation of the proposal. The ALSDE reserves the right to judge and determine whether a request is compliant with and has satisfactorily met the requirements of the RFP. The ALSDE reserves the right to waive technical and other defects if, in its judgment, the interest of the ALSDE so requires. Any further information disclosed about the RFP during this process will be provided to all vendors in a manner and method prescribed by the ALSDE.

Rejection of Proposal:

ALSDE reserves the right to reject any or all proposals which are deemed to be non-responsive, late in submission, or unsatisfactory in any way. ALSDE shall have no obligation to award a contract for work, goods and/or services as a result of this RFP.

Qualified bidders aggrieved in connection with the with the solicitation of a contract may protest to the Chief Procurement Officer. See generally State of Alabama Department of Finance Administrative Code Regulations at <https://finance.alabama.gov/media/rnii4ga1/administrative-code-355-4-1-01-thru-06.pdf>.

Confidentiality:

All information contained in the RFP is considered to be the exclusive property of the ALSDE. Recipients of this RFP are not to disclose any information contained within the RFP unless such information is publicly available. This RFP is provided for the sole purpose of allowing Vendors to respond to these specifications.

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Selection Process:

The ALSDE will select the vendor that provides the most technically sound and cost-effective proposal that best fits the needs of the ALSDE. Final selection of the successful vendor will not be based solely on cost. The vendor product will be evaluated primarily on the scope of the activities linked to associated costs as detailed in the RFP. RFPs will be reviewed to ascertain that minimum requirements have been met. The ALSDE reserves the right to conduct discussions with potential vendors in order to clarify information contained in their proposals, but the ALSDE has no obligation to do so. The vendor will provide notice to the ALSDE any partnership with another firm to provide parts of the solution; however, the vendor must provide management of the partner and is responsible for all project performance. Any subcontractor or partner will be subject to the same vetting process as the vendor, and the vendor is responsible for ensuring that each subcontractor acknowledges and is contractually bound by the staffing plan and other commitments listed in this RFP.

Unless provided by law, nothing in this RFP shall be construed to create any legal obligation on the part of the ALSDE or any respondents. The ALSDE reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to amend, suspend, terminate, or reissue the RFP in whole or in part, at any stage. In no event shall the ALSDE be liable to respondents for any cost or damages incurred in connection with the RFP process, including, but not limited to, any and all costs of preparing a response to this RFP or any other costs incurred in reliance on this RFP. No respondent shall be entitled to repayment from the ALSDE for any costs, expenses, or fees related to the RFP. All supporting documentation submitted in response to the RFP will become the property of the ALSDE. Respondents may also withdraw their interest in the RFP, in writing, at any point in time, as more information becomes known. If, within the confines of this RFP, the vendor provides intellectual property be it understood that all RFP contents are subject to *Open Records Act* laws and thus are subsequently in the public domain.

Intent to Award

Division of Procurement will send out an intent to participating suppliers, defining the protest period. The Chief Procurement Officer (CPO), is the awarding authority and as such is a signatory on the agreement/contract.

Disclaimer Notice:

The ALSDE shall not be liable for any costs associated with the preparation of proposals or negotiations of a contract incurred by any party.

Availability of Funds:

It is expressly understood and agreed that the obligations of the ALSDE to proceed is conditioned upon the continued availability of funds that may be expended for these purposes.

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1.4 Conditions and Terms

Contract Terms:

The contract (initial contract term is 12 months) resulting from this RFP may be renewable for four (4) additional years pending written agreement of the vendor and the ALSDE, dependent upon required state approvals, availability of funds, performance evaluations of the project, at the full discretion of the ALSDE. The contract will commence pending CPO signature, Legislative Review Committee approval, and Governor's signature.

The vendor shall be fully prepared to commence work after full execution of the contract by parties and the receipt of required governmental approvals.

Proposals should reference each element in the RFP by number on the cover of each copy and be arranged in the same sequence. All fees and costs are to be stated in United States currency. Vendors must reply to each element of the RFP.

Section 2.00 Scope

2.1 Scope of Vendor's Work and Responsibilities

Vendor Qualifications

It is imperative that the vendor meet the mandatory minimum qualifications listed below. If partnering with a subcontractor, the vendor and its proposed subcontractor(s) may collectively meet the mandatory minimum qualifications.

- A minimum of five (5) years of experience with developing, producing, administering, scoring, and reporting large-scale, high-stakes **computer-based** statewide assessments.
- Experience with developing, administering, scoring, and reporting innovative, interactive technology-enhanced items.
- Experience with establishing security protocols for online assessments.
- Demonstrated experience in providing policy and practice guidelines for human and/or Artificial Intelligence (AI) scoring.
- Demonstrated experience in providing policy and practice guidelines for accessibility and accommodations in a secure computer-based assessment environment, utilizing a diverse array of hardware and software.
- Demonstrated project management experience, with a specific focus on work planning, status reporting, issue management, and deliverable review and approval procedures.
- Familiarity with the *Alabama Course of Study Standards*, the *Alabama Alternate Achievement Standards*, and the NAEP frameworks for ELA/reading, mathematics, and science.

Commercial “Off-the-Shelf” assessments or products will not meet the needs of this proposal.

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Even though the ALSDE has made every effort to include all requested requirements for this RFP, if the vendor notes work that needs to be completed, but not listed, the vendor must include these details within the proposal.

Proposals may include only Summative Assessments, only Alternate Assessments, only High School Summative Assessments, or a combination of the three or all of the three assessment systems. Please clearly identify which type of proposal is being submitted by marking the outside envelope and the inside contents with any of the following:

Option 1: SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS (this must include the practice test)

Option 2: ALTERNATE ASSESSMENTS (this must include the practice test)

Option 3: HIGH SCHOOL SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS (this must include the practice test)

BOTH Options 1 & Options 2

BOTH Options 1 & 3

BOTH Options 2 & Options 3

ALL THREE Options

NOTE: Vendors may be required to provide a presentation to clarify any needed information.

Option 1 - Summative Assessment

- The Summative Assessment in (ELA) and mathematics will be administered annually to students in Grades 2 – 8.
- The Summative Assessment in science will be administered annually in Grades 4, 6, and 8.
- The Practice Test will be administered in (ELA) and mathematics to students in Grades 2 – 8, and science in Grades 4, 6, and 8. The Practice Test will have a delivery format to include multiple forms to be administered multiple times throughout the year.
- The Reading Alternative Assessment, per the *ALA*, will be administered at an agreed upon time to about 15,000 Grade 3 students. This assessment will be administered after the Summative assessment.

A. General Requirements

Professional Standards/Best Practices

The vendor shall ensure that all materials, practices, and procedures developed under this contract meet relevant professional standards, such as those contained in the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* published by the American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Psychological Association (APA), and the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME), CCSSO/Association of Test Publishers *Operational Best Practices for Statewide Large-Scale Assessment*, particularly in terms of privacy, reliability, validity, opportunity to learn, accommodations, scoring, reporting, and documentation.

- The vendor shall inform the ALSDE in writing when implementation practices or policies are inconsistent with the best educational research and practice. The vendor shall be responsible for clearly communicating the risks of violating the conclusions of the best educational

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research and practice. If the ALSDE agrees, the vendor shall work to make the necessary corrections.

State and Federal Requirements

- The vendor shall ensure that all materials, processes, and procedures developed under this contract meet relevant state and federal requirements, including ESSA and peer review requirements, as well as the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*.
- Throughout the life of the contract, and any extensions, the vendor shall communicate in writing to the ALSDE when it concludes that the program no longer meets state and federal requirements and shall provide corrective options to the ALSDE for consideration.
- The vendor shall confirm its agreement to meet this requirement.

Communication

- Project communication will occur through a series of meetings, in addition to regular conference calls between the vendor and ALSDE.
- Upon contract award, the vendor shall organize and facilitate a meeting to review and finalize the project work plan. In addition, the vendor shall attend up to two additional planning meetings annually, excluding the training and development meetings required herein at the discretion of the ALSDE.

Security

- The vendor shall follow *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)*, state, and industry standard security policies, including the provision of confidentiality agreements for all vendor staff, subcontractors, and educators participating in any aspect of this project.
- The vendor should include sample confidentiality agreements as an attachment to the proposal.
- The vendor must indicate the base services (ex., accounting of all secure materials, sealing, forensic analysis, etc.) related to test security that it requires for its high-stakes state accountability assessments.
- Any breach of security that occurs through the negligence or inaction of the vendor, such as, but not limited to, failure to adhere to any security protocol or allowing raters to remove secure materials from item writing meetings, item review meetings, data review meetings, etc., will be considered a default on the terms of contract.
- The vendor shall confirm its agreement to meet this requirement.

Travel

The vendor may be required to travel to various statewide locations to meet project requirements/training.

- All anticipated travel expenses are to be included in the vendor's cost component response.

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- The total price quoted for this project should include any travel expenses. No additional costs will be reimbursed.

Backup and Recovery

The vendor shall provide a detailed description of the backup and recovery processes used to protect critical data. The vendor will:

- Describe the tools used for backup and recovery of applications and data.
- Describe the impact of the proposed backup process on the operation of the system.
- Address the following:
 - Use of and method for logging information.
 - Single points of failure and recommended approaches for the elimination of information.
 - Approach to redundancy.
 - Describe options to have the collected data stored at the vendor's site in addition to sending results along to the ALSDE. A proposed retention schedule must be included.

ALSDE Sign-Off

- All procedures followed in the development, production, administration, scanning, scoring, and reporting of the Alabama state summative assessment shall be made available for review by the ALSDE and as determined by the ALSDE, may be subject to ALSDE approval.
- The vendor shall confirm its contract to meet this requirement in the submitted proposal.

B. Organization and Personnel

Throughout this document, the term “vendor(s)” is also assumed to include subcontractors where appropriate and applicable. If the vendor proposes to subcontract any part of the work, the vendor's response to this RFP must refer to the subcontractors where appropriate. Within the relevant requirements and specifications, a description of each proposed subcontractor's role in the project, qualifications to perform that role, management structure, key staff assignments, and qualifications of assigned staff shall be included.

If the vendor has discovered fault with a subcontractor named in the proposal, the vendor has an obligation to inform the ALSDE immediately, and the appropriate steps must be taken by either the subcontractor or the vendor to correct the problem prior to that problem resulting in substandard performance or non-compliance. The vendor shall remain responsible for the performance of its subcontractors.

Organizational Structure

- Organizational charts must be provided, including identification of executive and key personnel for the vendor, and for the ALSDE project team, including any subcontractors where applicable, must be provided. Qualifications of key executive personnel must be presented.

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- A supporting resume outlining education/training, employment history, and experience in conducting the work that is expected under this contract.
- The charts shall clearly indicate lines of authority and communication within and among the vendor's departments and subcontractors, where appropriate.
- The vendor shall also describe its escalation process for resolving any vendor/client disagreements.
- An executive team member directly in charge of overseeing the Alabama project shall be identified.
 - This executive team member shall be available during and outside of normal business hours to assist with any urgent situations.
 - Contact information for this individual shall be provided at the time of contract award.
 - Changes to the assigned executive team member, except for those resulting from the separation of services, require prior consent by the ALSDE.
 - The replacement shall have qualifications that meet or exceed the original staff member proposed or the staff member holding the position previously and shall be approved by the ALSDE.

Staff Qualifications and Experience

- The vendor shall provide a list of key staff, including but not limited to, the program manager, lead psychometrician, content development lead, content-specific area lead, technology lead, special populations lead, scoring manager(s), production manager(s), and publication staff, as well as all staff assigned to this assessment component.
 - Each staff member's assigned responsibilities and time allocated to the project must be provided.
 - Time expected to be allocated to other projects must also be indicated.
- The vendor shall affirm in the response to this request for proposals that should the contract be awarded, all key personnel proposed shall be released from any concurrent responsibilities that would impede their availability to assume the work as proposed.
- The vendor shall assign one person, with ALSDE approval, to function as the Program Manager. The Program Manager must have at least five years of experience with projects of similar scope and size and will be committed to the project throughout its duration. At least three references from individuals in states or agencies where the proposed Program Manager has coordinated a comparable assessment program must be provided. That person must be responsible for all activities required by the project and will serve as the vendor's main contact person between the vendor and the ALSDE. The Program Manager shall have the authority to make decisions and commitments on behalf of the vendor, subject to ALSDE approval.
- The Lead Online System Manager(s) will oversee all aspects of the online assessment system. The Lead Online System Manager(s) will be responsible for the design and function of the online system, assisting with training school systems using the online system and troubleshooting any system technical problems with the system. The Lead Online System

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Manager(s) will also be responsible for scheduling stress and readiness tests to ensure that all school systems are prepared for online testing.

- Lead Content Specialists must have a bachelor's degree (master's degree preferred) as well as classroom experience in the specific content area.
 - The Project Manager(s) will manage the item and test development efforts, holding responsibility for development schedules and oversight of all item development, test construction, editorial tasks, and test-related publications.
- The Scoring Project Manager(s) will oversee the technical team members to complete processing, programming, scoring, reporting, and quality assurance tasks according to the timeline and requirements from the ALSDE. At least three references from state or agency clients previously served by the Scoring Project Manager(s) are required.
- The Lead Psychometrician(s) will oversee tasks and issues that relate to item selection, test form equating, sample selection, calibration, scaling, validity evidence, reliability evidence, reporting, test design, and other technical analyses. Psychometric staff must conduct studies and provide resources sufficient to meet the requirements of the USDOE Peer Review and technical needs of the ALSDE. Sufficient resources must be allotted for timely test construction, reporting, and all other technical tasks. The proposal must provide evidence that the psychometricians assigned to support the ALSDE are highly qualified and experienced in current industry-standard psychometric practice and USDOE assessment and accountability requirements. The Lead Psychometrician(s) must also have strong communication skills and the ability to make highly technical issues and information understandable to various audiences.
- The Quality Assurance Leader(s) will implement the steps and procedures used to ensure the products meet ALSDE requirements without errors.
- Dedicated Data Analyst(s) are required throughout the duration of the project to analyze student performance results or other technical aspects of the project and produce reports, including ad hoc or longitudinal reports, as required by ALSDE. The Data Analyst(s) must be highly proficient in statistical analysis software and have practical knowledge to be able to provide data in a format easily understandable by the public and media.
- Technical Editors and Reviewers will develop all test-related publications and ensure that they are accurate, concise, user-friendly, grammatically correct, and technically sound. In addition to the work, Technical Editors and Reviewers would contribute to test administration materials. Graphic Designers must be available to the ALSDE for providing design and copy layouts for brochures, websites, and other communications or presentations.
- Help Desk Administrator(s) will ensure communication services for Alabama schools and systems are correct and timely. The Help Desk Administrator(s) must train responders to accurately address specific Alabama policies, procedures, and issues on all aspects of the testing program.
- ALSDE requires that a Technology Expert be identified. This individual shall be responsible

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for many tasks, including but not limited to, assisting ALSDE and the systems with online assessments; working with ALSDE information systems (IS) staff to ensure the accurate and efficient transfer of data to and from ALSDE; creating, defining, and reviewing file layouts; assisting in verifying of demographic data; and assisting ALSDE and District Test Coordinators with the use of functionality.

- Ideally, this person will be located in the central part of the state.
- At a minimum, this person will be available to be on-site, anywhere within the state, at the request of the ALSDE. Outside of the installation and testing window, this person's availability may be more flexible; however, during the actual installation and testing window, this person must be immediately available with little to no notice.
- For all meetings involving educators, the vendor must identify and indicate the qualifications of the Facilitators.
 - General qualifications for training and meeting facilitators must be included in the response to this request for proposal.
 - Facilitators must be familiar with best practices, and state and federal laws, procedures, and regulations.
 - As applicable, facilitators must also be familiar with the academic instruction of students and the educational and assessment landscape.
 - Facilitators must be able to clearly articulate spoken English and create easily understood written materials and visual training aids.
 - Facilitators must have demonstrated successful experience in leading large-group trainings, including webinars and meetings.
- The ALSDE requires the vendor to hire Item Writers to write test items for the assessments. The writers must have a degree in a relevant field and knowledge of relevant subjects.
- The ALSDE reserves the right to interview and approve all key staff, including the subcontractor staff.
- Throughout the life of the contract, and any extensions, changes to the assigned Program Manager, Program Coordinator, Project Manager, Lead Psychometrician, Content Development Lead, Content Specific Area Lead, Special Populations Expert, Lead Online System Manager, and Technology Expert, except for those resulting from separation of services, will require prior written consent by the ALSDE.
- If the ALSDE requests the removal of specific vendor personnel, the vendor shall provide replacement(s) without impacting the project.
- Replacement(s) shall have qualifications that meet or exceed the original staff member proposed or the staff member holding the position previously and shall be approved by ALSDE.
- All personnel working on-site at ALSDE or school sites may be required to be pre-approved for site access via a criminal background check paid for by the vendor.

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Corporate Capabilities and Capacities

The vendor must present a description of corporate capabilities.

- The vendor shall provide the company's history, including the number of years that it has been in business, buyouts, takeovers, IPO's, bankruptcies, litigations, and claims, etc., within the last five (5) years.
- Situations arising in assessed liquidated damages must be described with their resolution, along with the amount of the liquidated damages or provided additional services.
- The description shall also identify the number of employees in the company and the company's location(s). The overall capacity of the vendor's organization(s) and the resources it will commit to the work for the project (by name and role in the project) shall be discussed.
- A general description of the vendor's capabilities and capacities related to development, production, shipping and receipt, administration (of paper-based and computer-based assessments), scanning, scoring, data processing, reporting, and psychometric activities shall be included. Responses must demonstrate that the vendor meets, at a minimum, the mandatory qualifications presented at the beginning of this component.
- Specific examples of the vendor's work products, such as test and item specifications, items, forms, technical manuals, research reports, technical services, etc., should be identified under the relevant requirements and specifications.
- The ALSDE expects to receive the same or better quality of work throughout the contract, including any extensions, as the examples that are provided in the proposal.

Relevant Experience

- The vendor shall provide a listing and descriptions of all work in similar projects that it and its proposed subcontractors have carried out or are carrying out for other clients. The list shall include client, program name, content area, grades, administration mode (paper-based or computer-based), use of scoring, length of contract, and number of students.
- For computer-based testing, the vendor shall include the total number of tests administered and the highest number of successful concurrent testers. For each such project, the vendor must provide the name of the state or other organization, the name of client contact person, and this individual's telephone number and email.
- Company Experience: The following vendor qualifications are required to ensure that effective services for the described project are achievable:
 - Documentation of expertise; and
 - Technical competency in all areas identified in the RFP.
- Submit a minimum of three (3) references for each of the areas listed above for experience in the last five (5) years.
- Further evidence of experience should be evident in responses to specific requirements and

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specifications as appropriate.

Risk Management and Quality Assurance

- The vendor shall address timeline issues, risks, mitigation, and contingency plans for all aspects of the project. These plans should refer to more than just “communication.”
- The vendor should highlight its proven ability to document and enact risk management strategies - especially as they relate to the development, production, shipping and receipt, administration (of paper-based and computer-based assessments), scanning, scoring (human and AI), data processing, reporting, and psychometric activities of all aspects of the assessments.
- The vendor should submit sample Risk Assessment documentation used in an existing program to demonstrate the comprehensiveness of its ability to conduct contingency planning for a variety of conditions.
 - This Risk Assessment documentation may be submitted as an attachment to the proposal. This documentation should also highlight internal procedures and protocols for quality assurance in all aspects of delivering large-scale, statewide assessments - including test development, production, shipping and receipt, administration (of paper-based and computer-based assessments), scanning, scoring (human and AI), data processing, reporting, and psychometric activities of all aspects of the assessments.

C. Program Management

Due to the high level of attention focused on these tests and their importance, the goal for the ALSDE and the vendor is 100% accuracy in every aspect of the program. The contracted vendor will utilize formal project management methodology and provide the ALSDE with a project management plan. The plan will include position assignments with areas of responsibility, project schedules and milestones, tasks, subtasks, critical path analysis, specifications for key systems, detailing the production schedules and critical deadlines.

- The vendor is required to obtain ALSDE written approval of the timelines and all materials prior to their use, distribution, or publication. The vendor must include the review time requirements into the appropriate project management plans. The proposal will detail the methodology to be employed and provide samples of the documents that will be used for project management, including progress reports.

Schedule of Activities

- The vendor shall provide a proposed schedule that clearly identifies and includes:
 - Key activities related to the field (ordering of materials; receipt of materials; test dates; return of materials; demographic clean-up window; release of individual student scores; final individual student, school, and system score file release; and receipt of paper reports); and

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- Key transfer dates between the vendor and ALSDE related to development, production, shipping and receipt, administration (of paper-based and computer-based assessments), scanning, scoring, data processing, reporting, and psychometric activities.
- The vendor must provide a Key Activities Table for each fiscal year.

Project Schedule

- Proposals shall include a detailed schedule, reflective of the work plans, which describes how each of the requirements and specifications described in the proposal will be accomplished. The schedule shall, at a minimum, identify the tasks, subtasks, beginning date, end date, and the group responsible for each step in the process. The schedule must be included as a separate attachment to the proposal.
- Schedules must reflect the periods of time mutually agreed upon.
- Activities related to the development of the next year's assessment and reporting for the prior year's assessment must be clearly distinguishable from activities related to the current year's assessment.
- The vendor and the ALSDE shall mutually agree upon final dates. Joint monitoring of the schedule shall occur on an on-going basis. The vendor shall ensure that all schedule adjustments allow final deliverable dates to be met. If necessary, timelines and schedules may be revised with prior approval of the ALSDE and an executed contract amendment for all deliverables subject to liquidated damages.
- A revision of a timeline on the part of the vendor exempts the vendor from meeting a contractual deadline only if:
 - The vendor and ALSDE mutually agree upon and document, through a contract amendment, an extension of the deadline as executed through a contract amendment; or
 - The vendor can prove that the deadline was not met due to failure of the ALSDE to meet a contractual deadline, resulting in the vendor's inability to adhere to the schedule for delivery of products and services.
- The vendor shall alert the ALSDE as soon as it believes a deliverable subject to liquidated damages is at risk of not meeting its delivery date.
- The ALSDE must be notified whenever its contract is included in the vendor's internal meetings focused on programs at risk.

Ongoing Communication

Communication between the vendor and ALSDE will be essential.

- The vendor shall make all written communication or summaries of communications with any subcontractor(s) identified in the proposal available to ALSDE at its request. In addition, ALSDE expects to be able to participate during all appropriate and applicable meetings and trainings between the vendor and any subcontractor(s) identified in the proposal.
- Ongoing communication will occur between ALSDE and the vendor via the designated

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Program Manager as necessary whenever issues arise.

- To facilitate regular communication, the vendor's Program Manager shall organize weekly conference calls with the ALSDE.
- The vendor's Program Manager and ALSDE shall work collaboratively to develop a mutually agreed upon agenda for conference calls. The vendor shall be responsible for scheduling and setting up conference calls and any costs associated with the conference call.
- In addition to weekly progress calls, the vendor shall submit a monthly report to ALSDE demonstrating progress toward deliverables within the project's work plan.

Project Meetings

- Periodic meetings between the ALSDE staff and representatives of the vendor are essential. Those persons directly involved with the project shall be available for technical assistance and discussion at the project meetings at the expense of the vendor. Strategies, procedures, and timelines for the next testing cycle will be discussed, reviewed, and will cover all aspects of the program including blueprints and test specifications; item development and item banking; field- testing; computer-based testing; scoring; equating; test booklet production; standard setting; training; administration manuals and ancillaries; test administration; security and inventory procedures; shipping, delivery, and return procedures; reporting and analysis; and quality assurance.
- The vendor shall provide travel and time for the appropriate staff to be available as needed to consult with the ALSDE. At a minimum, the vendor will coordinate the following meetings:
 - Planning Meetings
 - Content and Test Specifications Meetings
 - Item Development Meetings
 - Content Review Committee Meetings
 - Bias Review Committee Meetings
 - Alignment Study Meetings
 - Any Additional Meetings Not Specifically Listed Here
- The vendor shall prepare written documentation of each in-person and committee project meeting. This shall be submitted to the ALSDE within an agreed upon timeline at the conclusion of each meeting.

Monthly Reports

- The vendor shall provide a monthly report that summarizes actions taken, issues that arose, issue resolution that occurred, outstanding issues and when they will be resolved, upcoming deadlines, and work that will occur.
- These reports shall be sent monthly to the ALSDE.

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Program Improvement Plans

- For each phase of the program including development, production, shipping and receipt, administration (of paper-based and computer-based assessments), scanning, scoring, data processing, reporting and psychometric activities, the vendor shall provide a report that addresses the relevant phase by detailing the activities completed and by providing recommendations for improvement for the next assessment cycle.
- The report shall also detail errors, problems and/or discrepancies by system and by school.
- The report will allow ALSDE to identify any patterns, problems, or discrepancies noted in the report and to use that information to make appropriate decisions.

Quality Control and Signoffs

Reviews and signoffs for all deliverables shall be documented and available to ALSDE upon request. The vendor shall document the steps, timeline, and staff involved in the quality control procedures for each phase and deliverable of the project.

D. Assessment Development

The vendor must describe in detail its plan for the development of the Summative Assessment, which must describe each step in the development process and must be reflective of the relevant activities and schedule for all test development activities from start to finish for each assessment year. The following is a list of activities required by this RFP for the development of the Summative Assessment. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of every activity required by this RFP, and it is expected that the vendor will carefully read all sections of the RFP and undertake and complete all work necessary to ensure that the ALSDE can successfully administer the Summative Assessment in Grades 2-8.

- The *Alabama Courses of Study* and the NAEP Frameworks must be utilized in the development of items.
- Assessments offered in other languages must be developed.

Content

The vendor must provide a sample of eligible item types to be reviewed by the field and approved by the ALSDE.

Development of Performance Level Descriptors

The vendor must provide a description of the process to be used to develop general and grade level specific performance level descriptors for each content.

Item Types

The vendor's response must describe the variety of item types that would be included on the assessment, including item types that require students to generate or produce a response as well as select a response.

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- The vendor's response must provide access to sample items to allow ALSDE to review proposed item formats.

Item Blueprints

- The vendor shall create a proposed test blueprint for developing assessments in each content area and grade levels.
- The vendor shall provide refined blueprints to be reviewed by the field, as appropriate, and approved by the ALSDE.
- This blueprint must specify the number of each type of assessment item to be used at each grade level in each content area, depth of knowledge, the number of items in each final test form (operational and field-test slots), the number of sessions required and the total amount of testing time.
- The vendor must allow for the accommodation of additional testing time into the schedule.
- The vendor must take into consideration that the assessments must generate valid information throughout the data distribution.

Test Item Development

The ALSDE is looking to develop a bank of items that it owns. ALSDE is not seeking to use vendor owned items unless there is a compelling psychometric rationale.

- The vendor's proposal should include a detailed plan for item development.
 - Potential supplemental resources and activities should be discussed.
 - The vendor's content specialists and item writers must have experience teaching ELA, mathematics, or science. Passages, items for ELA, prompts for writing, items for mathematics, and items for science must be custom written for the test, with the understanding that any item submitted will become the property of the ALSDE, which will retain all rights, including full distribution rights.
 - After item reviews and field testing, the item bank must have a sufficient number of unique items, with good statistics, to develop additional forms and items to change out all open-ended items for additional administrations.
 - The vendor must provide for appropriate over-production of items to allow for elimination due to content reviews, bias reviews, and field testing.
 - The vendor must edit the items before submitting them for any review.
 - The vendor must also provide the artwork for items before submitting them for review.
- The vendor shall provide samples of high-quality assessment items of each type for each content area so ALSDE can see the nature of the work the vendor is capable of providing.
- The vendor shall create, with the assistance of ALSDE, a variety of prototypical assessment items. These could include innovative approaches to performance assessments and computer-based assessments. These prototypes will illustrate the types of items to be created for the item developers and will be used to illustrate the assessments.

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- Timelines associated with the above activities must be provided.
- The vendor shall describe in detail how it will provide and monitor the assignments given to the developers.
- The vendor must describe in detail its plan for thoroughly editing the items. Editors shall be persons qualified in the content area(s) in which they are editing.
- The vendor must manage an electronic item bank that will be fully accessible to ALSDE. This bank will include items with field-test statistics.
- Accurate and detailed item bank records must be kept and reported as requested by the ALSDE. The proposal should detail the item bank structure and the processes the vendor will use to update and maintain the bank.
- The vendor shall provide electronic copies of the item bank by content area when necessary.
- The vendor should note if a software program or web-based application for the item pool will be provided to the ALSDE as part of the proposal.
- The vendor should account for new forms being developed each year.
- The vendor should state how listening items that align to the ELA Course of Study will be developed.
- The vendor must work with ALSDE to decide on the item pool and summary of the items for each year.

Cognitive Labs

- The vendor shall provide a detailed plan for conducting the cognitive labs for any new types of assessment items. These items should be exposed to students and teachers prior to introducing them on operational assessments.
- The vendor shall provide prototypes to be used through a cognitive lab process to evaluate the quality and appropriateness of the items for the Summative Assessment.
- The vendor must describe how the cognitive labs' test results will be used to refine the items.

Item Specifications

- The vendor's proposal should include a detailed plan of the procedure to be used to write item specifications for each grade and content of the assessment. The plan should include the number and statement of each standard, format/item type(s), content limits, and sample items for each format/type.
- The vendor shall develop specifications for each type of item and artwork to be created. The vendor shall work with ALSDE to prepare a Style Guide to be used for item presentation.
- Online items should include Accessible Portable Item Profile (APIP) coding. The vendor shall provide evidence of its ability to fulfill this requirement.

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- After the ALSDE approves the Item Specifications, the vendor will provide the ALSDE with an electronic copy of the final versions for publication.
- It will be the vendor's responsibility to do the final proofreading of all text and graphics for accuracy prior to sending them to the ALSDE for approval.

Universal Design

- The vendor must present its plan to ensure items will be created to permit students with disabilities and English learners to fully participate in the assessments and receive valid scores, while minimizing the need for accommodations.
- The vendor must explain how the needs of students with disabilities, especially sensory, physical and language disabilities, as well as English learners, will be taken into consideration during item writing.
- The vendor shall explain how universal design principles will be applied to online and paper administrations.

Number of Items to be Developed

- For each year, grade, content area and item type, the vendor shall identify the number of items that will be developed to be taken to item review, the number expected to be accepted, the number expected to be included across the test forms during field testing and the number expected to be accepted at data review.
- The vendor is responsible for the production of the needed number of items for each content area and grade level.
- The vendor's response should reflect an understanding of ALSDE's intended use of the results from the assessment, the type of scores that will be reported, the plan to release items, and an understanding of academic standards. The vendor's response should also consider the testing time and cost constraints discussed throughout this RFP.

Item Bank

- The vendor shall describe in detail its system for an item bank. This system must provide the ability to indicate the status of each item and permit the assessment forms to be readily accessible.

Passage Selection and Review

- The vendor shall describe its plan for selecting appropriate passages for all relevant content areas based on complexity, quality, and range.
- Although ALSDE values the use of authentic, classic, and historically significant passages, it recognizes that, especially in lower grades, the vendor may have the ability to provide appropriately complex, high quality literary and informational texts through a commissioned process.
- The ALSDE also appreciates the flexibility in use that commissioned passages provide. The

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ALSDE will, therefore, permit the vendor to use high quality commissioned passages as well as copyrighted passages for which permission is obtained.

- It will be the vendor's responsibility to provide all needed passages for the Summative Assessments, including both printed and online tests. For all permissioned passages, it will be the vendor's responsibility to secure the permissions ensuring that ALSDE can use the items on both paper-based and computer-based assessments, as well as used for released items.
- The ALSDE requests that a percentage of the passages (TBD) be written from topics addressed in the *Alabama Courses of Study Standards* for Social Studies and Science.
- The vendor shall present its plan for ALSDE review followed by field review of the passages.
- For the passages, the review must reflect an evaluation of the complexity, quality, and range of text, as well as bias.

Item Writer Training

- The vendor shall describe in detail its plan for providing item writing training and assignments.
- The multiple-choice, short constructed-response and extended constructed-response types of items are to be created by the vendor under the direction of ALSDE (using Alabama public school educators unless otherwise agreed upon by the vendor and ALSDE).
- The vendor shall indicate in detail what materials it proposes to use for assessment development training, and how these materials will be created, reviewed, and used.
- The training must assist item developers in understanding Universal Design principles, including accessibility related to interactive online item types, so that the need for extensive assessment accommodations for students with disabilities and English learners is minimized. Item writers will need to be helped to understand the implications of automated scoring for item development.
- The ALSDE must review and approve these materials and procedures before they are used.
- The vendor must present a process for recruiting, evaluating, and retaining educators to serve in the role of item writers.
- The vendor must also provide a plan for determining item writing assignments, and contingency plans should the educators be unable to produce enough items in the available time.

Educator Meetings

For all meetings held with Alabama public school educators, the vendor is responsible for all costs. This includes all expenses for *Americans with Disabilities Act* compliant meeting sites, including sign language interpreters and large print as needed; AV equipment; internet connections; and any other desired requirement for the meeting to be successful. If an overnight stay is required, hotel rooms will be billed directly to the vendor. Each educator receives a stipend, if a non-workday, or the district is reimbursed for the cost of hiring a substitute at an agreed upon rate during the educator's absence. In addition, Alabama public school educators

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are reimbursed for travel expenses (mileage, parking, tolls, etc.) and meals during overnight stays.

Expenditure	Description
Stipend or Substitute Reimbursement	Up to \$150 stipend if a non-workday for the educator or reimbursement of district for hiring a substitute at the agreed upon rate
Meal Expenses	The per diem rate will be set at the current state rate at the time of the event.
Lodging	Lodging shall only be provided for participants who travel more than thirty (30) miles in one direction to attend the event.
Parking/Tolls	Participants will be reimbursed for total cost.

Item Review Committees

- The ALSDE believes that the use of Item Review Committees consisting of Alabama public school educators is a critical part of the item development process. The use of Alabama public school educators enhances the transparency of the program and increases understanding and buy-in.
- The vendor will support grade-level item review committees for each assessment proposed. The committees will consist primarily of grade-appropriate teachers recruited and selected by the ALSDE. Additional committee members may include local curriculum coordinators, content specialists, ELL specialists, and/or special education specialists.
- The ALSDE and the vendor's Item Development Team will work together to facilitate the meetings which will be held annually in Alabama. If the vendor feels that additional meetings are necessary, and/or the timing of the meetings should be changed, the vendor's response should include a proposal for an alternative meeting schedule.
- The vendor's response should include the steps taken to ensure the most efficient use of the limited time available with the members of the Item Review Committees.
- The vendor will schedule an additional meeting with ALSDE to reconcile item feedback; and written documents will be produced by the vendor, summarizing the meeting and recommendations, within two weeks of each committee meeting.

Content and Bias Review Meetings

- The vendor must present its plan for both the content and bias review meetings.
- Each item must be reviewed by a Content and Bias Review Committee in each content area to ensure that the item is of high quality, that it is aligned to the standards, that it measures the skill in a sound manner, and that the item does not unfairly advantage/disadvantage any student and is not offensive to students, parents, or the public.
- This committee shall also review the overall content coverage of the set of items, noting any

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areas where the alignment of the set of assessment items is weak.

- A separate committee will be convened in each content area (ELA, mathematics, and science). Each committee will review each batch of items prior to field-testing.
- Initially, these meetings must occur face-to-face. As the assessment matures, vendors may propose to conduct these reviews either in person at meetings to be held in the state, or by using a virtual item review system. In either case, the vendor will need to describe how it will protect the confidentiality of the items before, during, and after the review meetings.
- If the vendor proposes to use an electronic means for conducting the item reviews, the vendor must provide detailed information on the electronic system they propose to use and provide illustrative graphics that show the review capabilities of their system(s) and/or provide online access to the system for the ALSDE to review.
- The vendor will be responsible for providing the ALSDE with summary information, including the number of items accepted as is, the number of items accepted with revisions, and the number of items rejected.
- The vendor is expected to take the lead role in training the educators and facilitating each one of the Item Review Committees' responsibilities.
- The vendor shall indicate in detail what materials it proposes to use for these meetings, and how these materials will be created, reviewed by the ALSDE, and used. All materials must be reviewed by the ALSDE prior to the meeting to allow time for revisions to be made prior to printing.
- The vendor will be responsible for all costs associated with this educator meeting.

Field-testing (initial and embedded)

- All newly created items are to be field-tested.
- The vendor must describe how it will partner with Alabama's current vendor to allow for field-test items to be embedded into the operational assessment or if the vendor could offer a standalone field test.
- The vendor shall provide its plan for conducting the field-test (e.g., how many items of each type are to be field-tested, how many items will be in each form, and the number of test forms needed to accommodate the number of items to be field-tested at each grade level and content).
- The vendor's plan for including accommodations in field-testing must also be included.
- The vendor must be willing to partner with Alabama's current vendor to allow for field-test items to be embedded into an operational assessment, if ALSDE deems it necessary.
- After initial field-testing, field-test items will be embedded. The vendor shall describe its detailed plan for embedding field-test items in operational forms (e.g., how many items of each type are to be field-tested, how many items will be in each form, and how many test forms will be needed to accommodate the number of items to be field-tested at each grade level and content).

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- The vendor's development plan for field-testing shall include how the materials will be prepared including test forms and administrator's directions.

Data Review

- The vendor must provide a plan for ALSDE and educator committee review of data resulting from field testing.
- The vendor will be responsible for all costs associated with this meeting.

Form Development - Regular Form

- The vendor shall describe in detail how it will select the items to be used in the operational forms each year.
- The plan must describe how multiple forms will be developed each year; ALSDE is requesting multiple forms (more than two) each year. Discussion should describe how items will be refreshed each year.
- The plan for the development of the forms shall include consideration of the number of anchor items needed to equate the measures from year to year, the number of new operational items to be included, and the number and position of new items to be field-tested. Maximum number of exposures for items must also be addressed.
- This plan must also describe how the vendor will support equating the assessment from year to year during the development process. This must include how the item bank will be utilized to select the operational items and field-test items, and what percentage of pre-used items the vendor proposes be used again.

Form Development Make-up Form

- The vendor shall describe how a make-up form will be developed and used when students are unable to complete testing.

Breach Form

- The vendor shall describe the way it will provide a breach form for each grade and content area.
- Where possible, it is the expectation that the same breach form will be used for the life of the contract, including any extensions.

Accommodated Materials and Administration Procedures

- The vendor must provide a list of appropriate assessment accommodations for students with disabilities and English learners. Accommodations listed must be supported by the most current research.
- The list shall describe the test accommodations and supports that allow access for students with

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disabilities and English learners to participate in each assessment most fully without interfering with the construct of the assessment.

- The vendor must describe accommodations that would threaten the validity of the assessment by interfering with the construct being measured.
- Accommodations must be considered for both online and paper assessments.
- The vendor shall be expected to facilitate extensive discussion with ALSDE on accommodations.

- **Large Print and Braille Paper Versions**

The vendor must describe the steps it will follow to create large print forms for each grade and content area, including other language forms. Any issues that are known to arise with images must be addressed.

- The vendor will be responsible for providing a Braille version of all tests as necessary.
- The quality of Braille must meet the standards established by the American Printing House for the Blind. The vendor is responsible for having Braille materials proofed by an independent party (approved by ALSDE) that includes a certified Braille reader.
- The vendor will describe its plan for dealing with items that cannot be brailled. Indicate how the inability of the item to be brailled is documented in the item development system and item bank and how this will affect scoring.

- **Accommodated Paper-Based Forms**

The vendor must describe its steps to create valid accommodated paper-based forms.

- **Document Development**

The following describes the documents required by this RFP but is not an exhaustive list. The ALSDE will have final approval on all documents.

- **District Test Coordinators (DTCs) Manual**

The vendor shall describe in detail the contents of the District Test Coordinators Manual and the planned processes for creating and proofing the manual. The manuals will be printed and made available in electronic format.

- **Test Administration Manuals**

The vendor must describe its steps to create the Test Administration Manuals.

- The vendor shall describe in detail the contents of the Test Administration Manual and as its planned processes for creating and proofing the manual.
- The manuals will be printed and distributed to the DTCs and made available in electronic format.

- **Technology Guide**

- The vendor must describe in detail the contents of a Technology Guide to be provided to Technology Coordinators.

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- The Technology Guide must include all technical requirements for the online administration of the assessment, as well as troubleshooting guidance and any other information pertinent to the role of the Technology Coordinator.

- **Ancillary Materials**
 - The vendor will describe what ancillary materials will be produced and how it will develop the materials.
 - Ancillary materials must include Parent Resources. The vendor will describe the Parent Resources to be made available.

- **Instructional Materials for the *Alabama Course of Study Standards***
 - Instructional materials are a valuable resource to aid teachers in their instruction and provide educators with a purposeful sequencing of teaching and learning expectations.
 - The vendor shall propose detailed work to develop/revise, as needed, the instructional materials (one per content area and grade levels) aligned to the standards.
 - The vendor shall describe in detail its proposal to coordinate and facilitate meetings with educators to develop, review, and/or revise instructional materials.
 - The committee shall also ensure the instructional materials are aligned to the standards and are appropriate.
 - The vendor shall develop the agenda, prepare all meeting materials, and provide the initial training on how to develop and/or refine any current instructional documents.
 - The vendor shall oversee the committee process.
 - The vendor shall ensure that a fair and orderly consensus process is followed, that committee-work product is adequately documented, and that the process stays on schedule.
 - The vendor shall also serve as resources, answering questions pertaining to the content of instructional materials.
 - The vendor shall indicate in detail what materials it proposes to use for these meetings, as well as how these materials shall be created, reviewed by the ALSDE, and used.
 - All materials shall be reviewed by the ALSDE at least one week prior to the meeting and printing.
 - The vendor is responsible for all costs associated with this meeting following the ALSDE guidelines for educator participation including travel, hotel, etc., at state rates.

- **Sample/Released Items**

The vendor will propose a plan for the annual release of a representative sample of test items. The purpose of releasing items is to provide stakeholders with information about the type and level of knowledge and skills assessed on the assessments, the variety of item types used on the assessments, and the rigor of the items on the assessments.

 - The released items will consist of an agreed-upon number of items.
 - The vendor's response should address how common items may be used to support the release of items.
 - Release of items will begin with the first operational administration of the Summative

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- Each year it is ALSDE's goal to release and post items of each type in each content area and grade. The items must be presented in a way that are easily downloadable for use in the classroom.
- For all items, standard(s) measured by the item and item statistics must be provided for educator use.
- For constructed-response items, scoring guides and annotated responses for each point on the rubric scale must also be provided.
- The vendor must describe the support materials it intends to develop to meet this specification, as well as the steps it will follow to develop and produce those materials.

Assessment Administration

The vendor shall describe in detail its plan for the administration of the operational assessment. This plan must describe each step in the assessment administration process and must reflect assessment administration activities, from start to finish, for each assessment year.

● **Test Window**

The Summative Assessment will be administered in the spring of each year. The vendor shall provide suggested test windows considering end of year and reporting expectations.

● **Distribution of Printed Test Materials**

The vendor should include in the response a detailed description of the procedures along with the name of the subcontractor or carrier to be used to distribute testing materials to each LEA. These procedures must be approved in advance by the ALSDE. The vendor must describe how it will provide/deliver additional materials requested by any LEA after the original delivery date.

- The vendor must describe in detail its plans for ensuring quality control of the packaging commensurate with a high stakes assessment program.
- The vendor must explain the process on how the materials will be packaged, collected/destroyed after testing, and the verification process of the return of all printed secure materials.

● **Online Test Delivery System**

The vendor shall provide the ALSDE with a detailed Infrastructure Plan, which will incorporate all components required to meet industry standard best practices.

- The vendor's web-based hosted infrastructure service must provide for delivery on wireless networks with comparable performance to wired networks.
- Applications must be delivered within a secure browser that restricts access to the devices and Internet, based on the requirements of the ALSDE.
- The vendor shall discuss the minimum hardware specifications and technical standards, as well as the recommended hardware specifications and technical standards needed, for operation of its proposed system. This discussion should also include an analysis of differences in system performance based on minimum or recommended hardware.

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- The vendor shall describe in detail how it will ensure that all items placed in its online test delivery system will appear on students' computer screens as intended, for the variety of types of computers, operating systems, and connectivity.
- The vendor shall also describe its strategy for ensuring that new systems and all interfaces function properly when releasing new versions of any software application.

- **Remote Testing Option**
 - The vendor must describe its plan for implementing a remote administration of the assessment should it be required at some point within the life of the contract.
 - The plan should include the vendor's capabilities with regard to the remote administration of high-stakes, secure assessments, as well as detailed steps for ensuring test security with remote testing.
 - The ALSDE is requesting a full refresh each year. This refresh must include a different form from the non-virtual schools.
 - The ALSDE is interested in results from year over year comparisons, test session comparison, testing times, answer change analysis, and other score comparability/quality measures from non-virtual schools.

- **Tools and Accommodations**

The vendor is expected to adhere to and meet the evolving expectations of industry standards in online accommodations.

 - The vendor must describe the extent to which its system currently meets the Accessible Portable Item Profile (APIP) standards and specifications.
 - The vendor shall discuss how the tools and accommodations accessed by the student during testing will be tracked, as well as how student profiles will be created and/or uploaded to allow for appropriate accommodation options during testing.
 - The vendor shall specify the extent to which its system can provide embedded tools and details about what those tools would do.
 - The vendor's test delivery interface shall include all the information and resources required to make a test item accessible for students with a variety of disabilities.
 - The vendor shall discuss the extent to which its test delivery interface includes the following accommodations:
 - Audio accommodations, either through text-to-speech or through recorded audio (the vendor should discuss the pros and cons of these audio alternatives);
 - Visual accommodation tools, including magnification, reverse contrast, selection of foreground and background colors, color overlay, masking, adjustable font face, and alerts to test takers that alternate tactile representations; and
 - Any additional accommodation tool, including virtual keyboards, translation tools, sign language and sign system presentation, voice recognition, and word prediction.
 - The vendor shall discuss the extent to which its web-based test delivery system will be

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compatible with third-party devices and software that allow accommodations to be offered to students with disabilities for accommodations that cannot be built into the vendor's system.

- The vendor must describe how its system integrates with external assistive technology devices.
- The vendor shall discuss how individual student profiles are created or imported into the system to select and make available appropriate accommodations based on student need.
- The vendor shall discuss options for accommodated materials for Test Administrators should such materials be requested.

Training/Professional Development

The vendor shall describe its plan to create the materials for training sessions and professional development with sufficient time so that ALSDE has at least two weeks to preview the materials to be used and suggest any changes to be incorporated into the training materials before use.

- Training and support for the Summative Assessments shall be provided by the vendor to Alabama educators as needed for this assessment.
- The vendor must include in its proposal a detailed plan of action and timeline that describes how and when each of the training and support tasks will be accomplished.
- The vendor will be required to provide the trainings and professional development listed below, as well as additional, ad-hoc trainings upon request.
- **Technology Coordinator Training**
 - These sessions shall provide system IT personnel with training on the operation and features of the online assessment system.
 - It must include training on the physical and electronic security of assessments, system requirements for implementing the online assessment, and troubleshooting of technology issues at the school or system site.
 - Training must include a visual and oral presentation and may include other types of interactive technology.
 - The vendor shall be mindful of and ensure the provision of all facility and training accommodations that are required by the *Americans with Disabilities Act*.
 - Training sessions shall be recorded and archived as a potential future training or reference resource.
- **District Test Coordinator Training**
 - The ALSDE holds two workshops a year with all DTCs, one at the beginning of the school year and one after the winter break.
 - The vendor's Program Manager and other pertinent vendor staff shall attend these workshops at the vendor's expense if deemed appropriate by ALSDE.
 - Vendor will be responsible for securing and paying for locations suitable for around 200 attendees.

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- These sessions shall provide DTCs with information concerning the administration of assessments and security of assessments.
- Training must include a visual and oral presentation and may include other types of interactive technology.
- **Additional Trainings**

The vendor should include a detailed list and descriptions of additional trainings that could be provided. The vendor will be required to participate in a majority of trainings that will be provided.

 - MEGA – State conference that is held in July annually. The vendor will need to plan to provide at least 6-8 trainings each year. The vendor will be responsible for all costs associated with participation at this meeting.
 - Instructional Information Trainings – The vendor should provide a list with details of instructional trainings that would be offered with this contract.
 - Accessibility Supports and Accommodations Training – The vendor should plan for a training that will provide educators with guidance around the selection and use of accessibility supports and accommodations on the Summative Assessments.
 - Reporting/Data – The vendor should plan for trainings that would provide educators and parents with guidance related to the interpretation and use of reports and/or data.
 - Professional Development – The vendor should include a professional development plan that would incorporate around three to four (3-4) weeks of trainings each year.
- The vendor shall provide its plan for training and support. A schedule should be provided identifying the topic, target audience and target dates.
- Vendor will establish and implement a training plan for system and school educators, administrators, and technology coordinators on all aspects of the Summative Assessment. The vendor should describe written materials, both face-to-face and online module training and other supports that may be developed to ensure that students are prepared to function within the computer-based and paper-based testing environments.
- Vendor will be required to develop other resource materials, including user instructional materials, one pagers, etc.
- The vendor will be required to develop instructional resource materials, including but not limited to, professional development on connecting the assessments to classroom instruction, using Performance Level Descriptors and Item Specifications in the classroom, and using assessment data to inform instruction. The plan for this requirement should detail how to use the instructional materials to enhance student learning.
- Vendor policies, procedures and systems should exemplify user-friendliness and be intuitive to the extent possible.
- The ALSDE shall retain ownership of all training materials and online modules.
- The vendor must include other trainings that are not specifically listed in this RFP to provide a successful delivery of all aspects of the assessment.

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- **Online Training Support**

The vendor shall describe its plan to provide training and customer support specific to online assessment. The description should include training with an easy-to-understand set of directions, including screenshots, for operating the online assessment software. The vendor may also include other beneficial training materials in its response such as e-learning modules and online tutorials for users.

- **Online Tutorials**

The vendor must include a plan on the development of online stand-alone student tutorials that will be used to familiarize the student with the platform and the item types.

Accommodations and Accessibility Supports

The ALSDE is committed to maximum accessibility for all students including those with disabilities and English learners (ELs) with or without disabilities.

- The vendor must provide assurances that the test items, test forms, and platforms were designed and developed with Universal Design principles to allow participation of the widest possible range of students and result in valid inferences about performance for all students participating in the assessment.
- The vendor will provide a detailed list of accessibility supports and accommodations available within their assessment platform. Provide information regarding fairness in administration and accommodations such as evidence of validated feasible accommodations available.
- The vendor must provide a sample accessibility and accommodations manual in the response to this RFP. The manual should address accessibility and accommodation features for all students, including students with student plans. To ensure that students with different levels of English language proficiency and ELs with disabilities can demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the assessments, the tests must be designed to eliminate or minimize any factors that are irrelevant to measuring the constructs represented in the test specifications.
- In those instances where the ALSDE uncovers a tool, support or accommodation not addressed by the vendor's accessibility and accommodations guidance, the vendor will facilitate engagements with the ALSDE to consider the new accommodations. If the decision is to allow the newly identified means of access, the vendor will collaborate with the ALSDE to incorporate into the next feasible administration.
- Universally designed assessments are developed to ensure all students in the school are tested, and that testing results are not affected by disability, gender, race, or English language ability.
- The vendor must provide assurances that the test design, development, and administration allow fair access for all students.
- **Print on-Demand**
For students with specific testing barriers (i.e., student's plan dictates administration of tests

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in paper-based format), vendor's Assessment Delivery Platform must support the ability for print on demand.

- **Braille and Large Print**

For each operational assessment, the vendor's system will support administration instances in both Braille and Large Print.

- The vendor must provide a plan for developing, reviewing, and providing both braille and large print paper forms of the assessment, including the provision of ancillary materials to assist in the administration of the assessment with these accommodated materials.
- The vendor must describe its plan for adapting online forms of the assessment to make them appropriate for a paper form of the assessment and accessible to students testing with a paper form of the assessment.
- The vendor's Assessment Delivery Platform will provide for students identified through a student plan to access the assessment through on-demand Braille using refreshable Braille devices or large Print formatting using vision enhancing tools or software.

- **Video Sign Language**

The vendor must describe its capacity to provide online video sign language and its delivery system for the provision of this accommodation.

- **Assistive Technology**

The vendor's assessment administration platform shall support refreshable Braille devices and vision enhancing software.

- The vendor shall work with the ALSDE to explore the feasibility of supporting additional assistive technology including, but not necessarily limited to, screen reader, speech-to-text, and text-to-speech software, screen enlargement, and alternative input devices and software.

Data Integration and Collection

The vendor will interface with a web service written and hosted by the ALSDE to retrieve the data for the organization and student demographic files. Once the vendor has processed all testing data, the ALSDE will retrieve test results via a web service written and hosted by the vendor.

- The vendor shall describe in detail the services to be provided to conduct the required online data collections.
- The vendor shall include a detailed description of how its data collection system will be designed to operate within existing local system communication infrastructures.
- The vendor shall also describe how its system works with system/school content filtering systems and firewalls.
- The online data collection system design must be flexible, so that software modifications, database changes, and reporting requirements can be made efficiently and cost effectively.

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The vendor must indicate how it will ensure that this can be done.

- The vendor must explain how its system will accommodate for students who have moved in and out of a school or system.
- The vendor's system must show real-time online testing status and statistics by assessment and system. This status will be available to ALSDE and systems. Daily status reports shall be available for viewing.

- **Data Collection Protection Features**

The vendor shall discuss how its system responds to interrupted Internet services without the loss of data, including student responses.

- The vendor's online data collection system must have a time-out or similar locking mechanism to prevent unauthorized access if a student, while entering data, has to immediately evacuate the area due to an emergency. This must also include an auto-save feature so that the student can easily resume when the emergency or the time-out has passed.
- **Access to Data Collection System**

The vendor shall provide ALSDE with a secure, password-protected, web-based system for the purposes of accessing and analyzing the assessment processes and data.

 - ALSDE shall have access to and oversight of all aspects of online performance during the data collection windows and access to captured data after the data collection windows close.
 - The vendor must provide access to the online data collection system via a unique log-in ID and password.

System Reliability and Mitigation Experience

- **Information Technology**

The vendor shall provide a draft plan detailing the deployment and operation of information technology and contingencies for the failure of information technology systems.

- The vendor shall ensure the reliability of information technology used in the transmission and function of computer-based assessments.
- **Cyber security**

The vendor shall describe the overall approach to security in its proposed system.

 - The vendor shall agree at all times to maintain network system and application security that, at minimum, conform to the following:
 - State of Alabama Cyber Security Policies as found at <https://oit.alabama.gov/cybersecurity/>,
 - and current cyber security standards set forth and maintained by the Center for Internet Security, which can be found at <http://www.cisecurity.org>.
 - Special consideration must be made to ensure the security of Personally Identified Information (PII) stored or processed by the system.
 - The system will be subject to security reviews by OIT Office of Cyber Security.

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- Challenges that the vendor may encounter for meeting cyber security standards during this project and how those challenges can be mitigated shall be identified.
- The vendor shall discuss the features of its system which prevent infiltration.

- **Online Assessment Challenges and Solutions**

The vendor shall describe the issues/challenges/problems/mistakes that arose in its history with online assessment administrations.

- The vendor must describe and indicate the level of impact to school personnel, students, scores, and timeline for reporting. The description shall include the steps taken by the vendor or sponsoring agency to mitigate those issues.
- Finally, the vendor should indicate what steps it will take to prevent these issues from occurring in Alabama.

Scoring

The vendor shall describe in detail its plan for scoring of the tests. This plan must describe each step in the scoring process and must reflect all scoring activities from start to finish for each assessment year.

- **Range-finding Meetings**

The vendor shall facilitate range-finding meetings for content specialists and Alabama public school educators to define rubric score points for scoring of the field-test items for the writing student responses.

- The vendor will be responsible for all costs associated with this educator meeting.
- The vendor must explain how it will select exemplary student responses from field-testing that are representative of the various types of responses collected from students.
- The plan shall include an estimate of how many responses will be needed to appropriately define rubric score points for items and a rationale for why these numbers will adequately meet Alabama's needs.

- **Scoring Decision Guide**

The vendor shall develop and maintain a scoring decision guide, including decisions for how to address unusual situations or questions that arise each year around scores.

- **Scoring Staff**

The vendor must describe the process that is used to hire scorers and the method that will be used to provide training/support to staff required to meet its proposed timeline.

- The vendor shall provide in writing the credentials and qualifications of the individuals it proposes to use as raters, table leaders, and scoring supervisors for ALSDE's approval.

- **Artificial Intelligence Scoring**

The vendor shall describe in detail its current capacity to score the different item types and content areas represented in the summative assessments.

- The vendor must provide information about options for automated scoring using artificial intelligence (AI) where appropriate.

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- The vendor must include any limitations of the use of the vendor's AI scoring for each item type.

Additional Scoring Considerations

- **Reliability and Validity of Scoring Procedures**
The vendor shall describe its proposed procedures for assuring that the assessments will be scored in a reliable and valid manner. This includes proper incorporation and utilization of the human scoring procedures.
- **Scoring Student Writing Responses**
Writing response scoring must produce scores that can be mapped back to the scoring rubric(s) in order to provide educators with actionable data to improve student writing.
- **Procedure for Unusual Responses**
The vendor shall describe its procedures for dealing with unusual student responses, such as those that indicate abuse or potential for student self-harm that may need to be brought to the attention of local educators.
 - It is essential that unusual responses such as these be sent electronically, in a secure manner, to ALSDE as soon as they are discovered (within 24 hours of discovery), along with student and system identification information so that ALSDE can provide to the DTC for system investigation.

Submission of Data Files and Reporting Assessment Results

The vendor must describe in detail its plan for the reporting of data files and results of the assessment. This plan must describe each step in the reporting of data files and assessment results processes and must reflect all reporting of data files and assessment results activities, for each year.

- **Data**
All raw student testing data shall be provided to ALSDE by the vendor.
- **Data files**
The vendor will describe what data files will be provided and the timeline for deliveries.
 - The exact content, naming conventions, definitions of data elements, and file type shall be clearly documented and agreed upon by the vendor and ALSDE at least three (3) months prior to test administration.
 - The vendor shall provide full state data files to ALSDE.
 - The vendor shall maintain the proper identification of each student and the accurate matching of the student to the test results using the identification number for each student.
 - The state data file shall be transmitted securely to the ALSDE within two weeks after testing has completed.

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- At a minimum, the state file shall include all elements that have been used in reporting.
- All timelines for posting and releasing data are negotiable according to the agreed upon timeline.
- **Data Documentation**

The vendor will describe how it will develop data specification/file layouts, definitions, and formats in collaboration with ALSDE to document all data provided to ALSDE.
- **Data Ownership**
 - ALSDE shall own the raw and final data generated through the contract awarded from this solicitation.
 - The vendor is not allowed to utilize data generated through the Summative Assessment for its own purposes.
 - Any usage of the data generated through activities related to this RFP may not be used for purposes outside of this RFP without prior written approval from the ALSDE.
 - ALSDE may choose to report the data in additional reporting layouts.
 - Additionally, electronic images of the state-level summary report by grade and content levels shall be delivered to the ALSDE.
 - These images shall be in a format mutually agreed upon by the vendor and the ALSDE.
- **Data Analysis and Reporting**
 - The ALSDE intends to have an online reporting system within a secure Web-based system.
 - All reporting aspects shall be included in the Web-based reporting system as outlined in this RFP.
 - The vendor shall analyze the data; print, package, and deliver student/home reports and student labels; and provide other data electronically through a secure site.
 - The ALSDE intends to report student results involving a growth component.
 - The ALSDE shall notify the vendor of the subgroups to be disaggregated for the report.
 - A technical report on each year's administration shall be presented to the ALSDE.
 - At the state level, the vendor shall produce separate analysis by grade, gender, ethnic group, special education categories, and Limited English Proficient (LEP).
 - The vendor shall be prepared to offer student reports in other languages if necessary.
 - The vendor shall be prepared to produce ad hoc reports as needed upon request.
- **Quality Control**
 - The vendor shall ensure that all data operations are subject to multiple checks for accuracy before data, files, or reports are released.
 - The vendor shall include in its proposal a full and complete description of its quality control procedures used in the reporting process for ALSDE review.
 - The vendor shall develop and implement quality control procedures for checking the accuracy of all test information, all student scores and identification, and all summary

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data.

- The vendor must plan and prepare quality assurance (QA) schedules that will allow work to flow in a timely, effective manner, while maintaining high quality deliverables.
- **Formatting of Reports**
 - Assessment results are to be reported in a "user friendly" format, including "print ready" classroom reports.
 - ALSDE is especially interested in reporting approaches that provide actionable information for students, parents, and educators.
 - The reporting system must be designed to complement instruction and to facilitate the use of assessment results to improve student achievement.
 - Reports must reflect areas of strength as well as areas that need to be targeted for instruction.
 - Report shells and reports for accommodated forms of this assessment component, such as other languages, will also need to be generated.
 - The design and layout of reports will be initiated in a timely manner so that ALSDE has sufficient time to review the reports and to provide feedback to the vendor.
 - This timeline shall be incorporated into the detailed schedule that will be included in the proposal.
- **Individual Student Reports**
 - Score reports shall fulfill the Federal reporting requirements of *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). Specifically, the reporting system shall meet the expectations outlined in current Peer Review requirements.
 - At a minimum, individual score reports shall summarize the student's performance in all content areas on which the student was assessed down to the content standards.
 - This report shall include an overall scale score, performance level, performance level descriptors, and sub-scores for each content area tested. Growth scores and Alabama percentile ranks must also be included.
 - Two (2) paper copies and an electronic version of individual student score reports, as well as labels for student cumulative folders, shall be prepared to summarize student performance.
 - These reports must be provided in other languages for all content areas.
 - Should the vendor propose to utilize the scores of a subcontractor (e.g. Lexile or Quantile), those must be listed as an option.
 - The vendor should describe additional types of information that may be added to reports as the program matures.
 - The vendor shall describe how it proposes to fulfill this requirement and shall provide a graphic to illustrate what the proposed reports would look like.
 - The vendor must provide an annotated student report with explanations of all data points for parents.

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- **State/System/School Reports**
 - Summary reports shall be prepared at the state, system, and school levels.
 - The same data reported on the individual student report must be aggregated for state/system/school reports.
 - Additionally, state/system/school reports must provide disaggregated data by student population and trend data.
 - Electronic reports must be generated that summarize the performance of the state/system/school on all components of the assessment taken and on any sub-domain or instructional objective.
 - Exact content and format for each of the reports and files will be further refined during the project.
 - ALSDE will approve the formats and type of information that will be included on or within the reports.
 - All timelines for reporting dissemination is negotiable according to the agreed upon timeline.

- **Reporting Errors**
 - The vendor shall immediately notify ALSDE when an error in reporting has been discovered.
 - The vendor and ALSDE will develop a plan for correcting the error.
 - The plan will include a description of how timely and forthright information will be communicated to all affected stakeholders.

- **Assessment Interpretive Guides**
 - Annually, the vendor shall develop two (2) Interpretive Guides to assist parents and teachers in interpreting assessment results.
 - The vendor shall describe in detail the contents of the Guide, as well as its proposed process for creating and proofing it.
 - The Interpretive Guide must be available online prior to the release of reports.
 - The Interpretive Guide shall be formatted in such a way that pertinent information can easily be printed at the school building for distribution to teachers or parents.
 - The format shall have information that is specifically targeted to parents.
 - The vendor must provide trainings/recordings to support these guides.

- **Operational Analysis**
 - Item data from the operational assessment must include appropriate Item Response Theory (IRT) item and task parameters, distractor, and bias analysis, and fit and Differential Item Functioning (DIF) statistics based on the selected IRT model.
 - The vendor shall describe its plan for providing each of these item data components and

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the method to be used for calculations.

- The vendor shall also describe its approach to item calibration, including its approach to parameter estimation and any proprietary or third-party software to be employed by the vendor.
- Examination of performance task data from the operational assessment must include rater reliability information, percentages of students in categories, materials used during review and any other relevant information.
- The vendor must provide ALSDE with all appropriate test statistics and information including:
 - Test Information Functions
 - Differential Test Function Information
 - Validity And Reliability Measures
- The vendor shall describe its method for establishing inter-rater agreement among its scorers, including how it will calculate inter-rater agreement statistics by grade and content area each year.
- Inter-rater agreement shall be examined separately for each dimension in each scoring rubric, as this may inform subsequent test development, training, or professional development priorities.

- A description of the method to be used for standard errors of measurement calculations shall also be included.
- The vendor shall produce a report of recommendations for changes to the future Summative Assessments based on operational assessment results.
- The report shall include item development process revision recommendations, administration materials and process revision recommendations, and an analysis of anchor pools available for future operational testing.

- **Scaling**
 - The vendor shall work with ALSDE to implement a scaling procedure that will result in scale scores.
 - The vendor will establish model fit and individual score reliability for the selected scaling procedure.
 - The vendor shall identify advantages and potential disadvantages of its proposed scaling procedures within the detailed plan.

- **Standard Setting**
 - The vendor shall provide a description of its standard setting method(s), which shall include a detailed explanation of the proposed statistical methods and how they will be used to set standards.

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- Procedures must be approved by ALSDE's Technical Advisory Committee.
- The vendor shall be responsible for all costs associated with convening these panel meetings.
- The vendor shall suggest how to approach communication with the field regarding potentially changing cut scores.
- The vendor shall prepare a report describing and documenting the entire standard setting process.

- **Performance Level Descriptors**
 - It is the vendor's responsibility to describe in detail the process to be used to develop content and grade level specific performance level descriptors for the Summative Assessments.
 - The vendor is responsible for all costs associated with proposed meetings.

- **Linking and Equating**
 - The vendor shall describe its proposed equating process, including any equating proposed at the sub-score level.
 - In addition, the vendor shall describe its procedure for maintaining trend lines over time for the Summative Assessment.
 - Vendors shall describe the linking and equating procedures to be used in support of the scales in each content area and grade level.

Plans for Establishing Technical Adequacy

- **Alignment Studies**
 - The vendor shall set aside resources for independently conducted alignment studies of the assessments to the *Alabama Course of Study Standards*.
 - The vendor will be responsible for the costs for this study.

- **Establishing Comparability**
 - The vendor must provide its plan for establishing comparability between accommodated and not accommodated test forms and administrations, including mathematics, and science assessments in other languages.
 - The vendor must present its plan for establishing comparability between paper-based and computer-based assessments.
 - The vendor shall provide any relevant empirical evidence that supports its ability to accomplish this goal.
 - Comparability will need to be established within a year between the online and accommodated paper-based forms.

- **Technical Advisory Committee**
 - The vendor is expected to attend Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings as requested.

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- The vendor shall work with ALSDE to participate in the TAC meetings.
- The vendor is expected to provide clearly stated questions and supporting background materials in a timely fashion for review by ALSDE and the TAC, prior to TAC meetings.
- All psychometric processes, including test design, scaling, equating, standard setting, and validation procedures must go before the TAC for review and must receive ALSDE approval.

- **State Board Meetings**
The vendor may be required to attend and provide processes of work to the State Board Meetings/Work Sessions. The vendor should plan for up to six (6) presentations.

- **Technical Report**
The vendor shall propose how it will develop and deliver a Technical Report or a Technical Report Supplement (with the year's statistical information included) annually.
 - The Technical Report shall include all relevant psychometric information for each test.
 - The report is to be completed following the end of the operational program unless otherwise determined by ALSDE and vendor.

- **Irregularity and Data Forensic Analysis**
 - The vendor shall indicate the steps that it will take to ensure that the assessment data collected represent the independent work of the students assessed.
 - Solutions using data forensic statistical analyses to evaluate whether some of the test results were not earned fairly should be offered.
 - The ALSDE is specifically interested in:
 - Determining whether there is evidence of collusion among test takers.
 - If there are results indicative of prior exposure to test questions.
 - If students are responding consistently across the test materials.
 - If changes in performance from test event to test event are consistent with what might be expected given a conscientious effort to help students learn.
 - Any other agreed upon analyses.
 - These steps shall include:
 - Pattern analyses of wrong to right answer changes.
 - Erasure analyses (if applicable).
 - Examination of school performance to detect unusual score gains or losses, including follow-up procedures to investigate such score changes.
 - Other means for detecting results which are aberrant and may indicate that standardized test administration and security procedures were not followed.
 - The ALSDE anticipates that the vendor will use multiple methods to analyze results.
 - The vendor shall submit samples of data forensics reports illustrating how the results can be used by the ALSDE.

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- The data forensics analysis solution may include those used by other State Departments of Education for analyzing test results.
- The RFP response must include detailed specifications of the statistical analyses used to provide the data forensics analyses.

Peer Review Requirements

- The vendor shall provide its plan for conducting the studies necessary to meet **all** requirements of the U.S. Department of Education's (USDE) *Standards and Assessment Peer Review Guidance*.
- The vendor must describe its plan for providing the best and most cost-effective studies for meeting this requirement.
- The vendor shall describe in detail how it will conduct studies to verify and support the validity of interpretations drawn from test scores.
- The vendor shall also propose its strategy for developing studies that investigate the intended and unintended consequences.
- The vendor shall indicate how the studies will support ALSDE's response to each element of the Peer Review Guidance.

Customer Service

The ALSDE requires maintaining a steady flow of communication between ALSDE and the vendor. Vendors shall respond to the requirements below with the understanding that it is ALSDE's expectation that technical and logistical support shall be provided in a responsive manner that minimizes burden, disruption, and inconvenience.

● **Routine District Communications/Notifications**

The vendor shall be responsible for writing routine communications/notifications to the DTCs and/or Technology Coordinators.

● **Telephone and Email Support**

- A dedicated toll-free customer service number and trained customer service representatives shall be provided by the vendor for this project.
- Customer service personnel shall be able to clearly articulate spoken English.
- The lead customer service representative shall be named in the proposal, and ALSDE shall have the right to approve the named person.
- The lead supervisor and other vendor trained staff shall be available to answer Alabama calls from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. central time each business day.
- When customer service staff is not available to take a call, a voicemail service system shall be available to record the caller's message.
- Messages shall be returned in a timely manner, generally within one hour or less but always within one business day.
- The vendor shall describe its proposed procedures for providing telephone support to Alabama.

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- The vendor shall provide e-mail support from its customer service center.
- **Issue Resolution**
 - Customer service staff shall have a system to ensure that issues raised by districts/schools have been satisfactorily resolved.
 - The vendor shall notify ALSDE of any communication with the field regarding urgent or sensitive issues.
- **Records of Interaction with Customers**
 - The vendor shall include a description of how calls and emails will be logged.
 - An electronic record of all telephone calls and e-mails, as well as responses given to customers, must be maintained by the vendor.
 - All communications with the field initiated by the vendor must be pre-approved by the ALSDE.
 - Additionally, customer service staff may be asked to initiate email communications in unusual circumstances by the ALSDE.
- **Telemetry Data**

The vendor will include how it will provide telemetry data to investigate and resolve questions related to a student’s testing experience and/or potential loss of data.

 - The vendor must allocate time and resources to accomplish this requirement.
- **Business Rules** must be applied and approved by ALSDE on an annual basis.

E. Summative Reading Subtest and Reading Assessment to Meet the Requirements of the *Alabama Literacy Act*

The *Alabama Literacy Act* was passed in 2019 to help improve reading in Alabama’s public schools and to ensure students are reading on grade level by the end of third grade. One component of the ALA is a requirement for Grade 3 students to score “on or above grade level” on the state’s reading assessment. Therefore, ALSDE will require its assessment vendor to produce reading scale scores based on the reading items within its ELA assessment for Grades 2 and 3, and to conduct standard-setting to determine cut scores for “on or above grade level.” Grade 2 is included to provide data for intensive remediation during the third-grade year. The ALSDE refers to this reading score as the *ACAP Summative Reading Subtest*.

In addition to the *ACAP Summative Reading Subtest* score, the ALA requires an reading assessment, to meet the requirements of the ALA, to be administered to Grade 3 students who do not meet the cut score for “on or above grade level” reading in the summer following third grade. Therefore, the ALSDE will require its assessment vendor to develop a stand-alone reading assessment that mirrors the *ACAP Summative Reading Subtest* and is scored on the same scale. This assessment is one of the sources in determining 3rd grade promotion.

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As part of its response to this RFP, the vendor must provide a plan on how it will:

1. Extract a reading subtest score for Grades 2 and 3 based on ELA reading items that measure the six subcategories required by the ALA-Phonological Awareness/Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension—and conduct standard setting to determine cut scores for “on or above grade level” reading.
 2. Develop, administer, and score a reading assessment, assessment to meet the requirements of the ALA, to be administered to Grade 3 students who do not meet the cut score for “on or above grade level” reading in the summer following third grade. The vendor must describe how the item bank will be developed to refresh each year with the possibility of different forms.
 3. This assessment is one of the sources in determining 3rd grade promotion.
- **Business Rules** must be applied and approved by ALSDE on an annual basis.

F. Summative Practice Tests

ALSDE is proposing to provide practice tests that will be solely owned by ALSDE. Each item written/developed must be completely aligned with the *Alabama Course of Study Standards*.

The practice test forms will include a representative sample of the item types that will be included on the Summative assessment. The practice tests will be available throughout the school year and will be ready to administer more than one (1) time per year, with different forms. The practice tests must be available no later than August of each year.

The following requirements are requested for the Online Practice Tests:

Timeline with a detailed schedule of all aspects of the Practice Test.

Program Manager - The vendor will provide a dedicated **Program Manager** to assist and oversee this project.

Web-based Online Test Delivery System

The vendor shall indicate whether the hosted infrastructure service that it proposes to use for the practice test will be used in its current form or if it will be modified in any way for Alabama.

- The vendor must specify the version/release number of the service to be implemented for this project.
- The vendor shall provide ALSDE with a detailed Infrastructure Plan, which will incorporate all components required to meet industry standard best practices and, at a minimum, include the following:

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- Hardware
- Software
- Network
- Active Directory Services
- Database
- Caching Capabilities
- Configuration
- Vendor Resources for Implementation
- Timeline Segment in Accordance With The Project Plan
- Testing And Validation
- The vendor's web-based hosted infrastructure service must provide for delivery on wireless networks with comparable performance to wired networks. (Vendor must support common web security appliances such as IronPort, Web Titan, and Cisco's secure web appliance.)
- The vendor must provide an Infrastructure Guide that details the minimum and recommended technical specifications and configurations needed to successfully access the online testing platform/system and to deliver the online practice tests that meet minimum specifications to perform on all student testing devices allowable within the schools including iPads, Chromebooks, laptops, and desktops.
- Due to the expectation that some districts will have to rely on lower-grade access, the vendor will discuss how to provide access.
- Applications must be delivered within a secure browser that restricts access to the desktop and Internet, based on the requirements of ALSDE.
- Alabama does not have established minimum technology standards for schools within the state. However, support from the vendor must include the following technical standards at a minimum: Windows 7 or higher, VISTA platforms, plus Mac OS 9.2.2 and Mac OS 10.1.1 or higher as well as current version of the Linux kernel.
- The vendor shall indicate how it proposes to support releases of the above-mentioned platforms.
- Support for versions of operating systems will be continued until ALSDE approves discontinuing support for a particular version.
- The vendor shall discuss the minimum hardware specifications and technical standards, as well as the recommended hardware specifications and technical standards needed, for operation of its proposed system. This discussion should also include an analysis of differences in system performance based on minimum or recommended hardware.
- The vendor shall describe in detail how it will assure that all items placed in its web-based test delivery system will appear on students' computer screens as intended, for the variety of types of computers, operating systems, and connectivity described here.
- The vendor shall also describe its strategy for ensuring that new systems and all interfaces function properly when releasing new versions of any software application.

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Platform

- The vendor must provide the technical specifications for a multi-faceted electronic assessment technical solution that includes, at minimum, an online test delivery system, online test administration system, and online scoring platform.
- Set-up and Installation Guide that details an overview for deployment and implementation including troubleshooting tips.
- Ease of use – the system offers intuitive navigation with minimal training needed.
- Navigation is efficient with minimal clicking required to complete key tasks.
- User’s Guide that fully details the functionality of the online system (platform) for an end user in a school or district.
- The vendor must provide details on the ability to deliver thousands of assessments at any point in time.

Technical Requirements - The online assessments must work with a variety of devices, such as PCs, Mac, iPads, Chromebooks, and Windows tablets and use a variety of browser products, if necessary.

- A system that integrates with an API.
- Application will be hosted on Cloud-based servers.

Test Development: capacity to develop a variety of passages and Alabama specific items in order to ensure that multiple genres and forms are reflected.

- Item types – variety of item types and possible student responses available
- A rich Item Bank that reflects the Depth of Knowledge levels.
- Accommodations - At a minimum, the vendor is expected to provide the same online and paper-based student testing accommodations as provided by the *Summative*, including accommodated materials; braille test and large print test.
 - The vendor is expected to adhere to and meet the evolving expectations of industry standards in online accommodations.
 - The vendor must describe the extent to which its system currently meets the Accessible Portable Item Profile (APIP) standards and specifications.
 - The vendor shall discuss how the tools and accommodations accessed by the student during testing will be tracked, as well as how student profiles will be created and/or uploaded to allow for appropriate accommodation options during testing.
 - The vendor’s test delivery interface shall include all the information and resources required to make a test item accessible for students with a variety of disabilities and special needs.
 - The vendor shall discuss how it will develop other languages versions of the assessment in mathematics and science and provide other language Text-to-Speech.

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- The vendor shall discuss the extent to which its test delivery interface includes the following accommodations:
 - Audio accommodations, either through text-to-speech or through recorded audio (the vendor should discuss the pros and cons of these audio alternatives)
 - For audio accommodations, the discussion should include the vendor’s ability to highlight portions of the screen to be read aloud; and
 - Visual accommodation tools, including magnification, reverse contrast, selection of foreground and background colors, color overlay, masking, and adjustable font.
- The vendor shall discuss the extent to which its web-based test delivery system will be compatible with third-party devices and software that allow accommodations to be offered to students with disabilities for accommodations that cannot be built into the vendor’s system.
- Devices that can be used with the test delivery interface to include alternate keyboard, alternate mouse, refreshable Braille displays, Braille note-takers, keyboard emulators, and alternative and augmentative communication devices.
- The vendor shall discuss how individual student profiles are created or imported into the system to select and make available appropriate accommodations based on student need.
- The vendor must describe how the item bank will be developed to refresh each year.

Retired Items

- The vendor will provide a detailed plan on how to incorporate ALSDE’s retired Summative Assessment items into the platform and practice tests.

Ownership of items – ALSDE will be the sole owner of materials produced and data collected, including but not limited to:

- All test item banks and items developed for the practice test.
- All materials prepared for training or presentations.
- All research conducted by the vendor.
- All data related to the ALSDE practice tests and student personal information.

Online Tutorials

- Online stand-alone tutorials shall be developed by the vendor.
 - These will be used to familiarize the student with the system and the item types prior to taking the practice test.

Support/Training

- Face-to-face training on how to operate the platform and administer the assessments.
- Office hours or training modules
- Support helpline/email

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- Clear and complete training materials with complete technical support to obtain full understanding of how to administer the online practice tests.
- Training Guide that provides step-by-step details for how to complete the most needed tasks in the online testing platform/system.
- Scoring/Benchmark guide with training that includes guidelines, information, and procedures to facilitate scoring of the writing responses if an online scoring option is not available.

Data and Reports

- Raw data files must be provided to ALSDE at appropriate intervals throughout the school year.
- Reporting Portal – the reporting portal must be capable of being upgraded across time. Initially, the system must be able to organize and present assessment data in a way that is easy for all users to read and understand. The Reporting Portal should allow for differentiated access to individual student, classroom, school, district, and state assessment data, and they should integrate seamlessly with each other.
- Provide a secure platform for schools/districts to access data/reports.
- Data are presented in a way that effectively communicates student learning to all users, including helping teachers understand which students need support for which skills.
- Reports that provide actionable and comparative data that inform instructional decision making.
 - Provide a sample report.
 - Assessment results are to be reported in a “user friendly” format.
 - Reports must have the capability to be customizable reports and print ready.
 - The ALSDE is especially interested in reporting approaches that provide actionable information for students, parents, and classroom teachers.
 - The reporting system must be designed to complement instruction and to facilitate the use of assessment results to improve student achievement.
 - Reports must reflect areas of strength as well as areas that need to be targeted for instruction.
 - The vendor shall provide in detail how it proposes to fulfill this requirement.
 - The design and layout of reports will be initiated in a timely manner so that ALSDE has sufficient time to review the reports and to provide feedback to the vendor.

Individual Student Reports

- At a minimum, individual score reports shall summarize the student's performance in all content areas on which the student was assessed down to the standards.
- This report shall include an overall transformed scale score, performance level, performance level descriptor, and sub-scores for each content area tested and equated to the Summative Assessment.
- These reports must be provided in other languages for all content areas.

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- Classroom level reports that are print-ready must be provided.
- Additionally, reporting measures must contain actionable information, such that teachers and parents can use results to connect students with targeted instructional and leisure-time materials that meet and challenge the student’s abilities, interests, and learning objectives.
- The vendor should describe additional types of information that may be added to reports as the program matures.

State/System/School Reports

- Summary reports shall be prepared at the state, district, and school levels.
- The same data reported on the individual student report must be aggregated for state/system/school reports.
- Additionally, state/system/school reports must provide disaggregated data by student population and trend data.
- Electronic reports must be generated that summarize the performance of the state/system/school on all components of the assessment taken and on any sub-domain or instructional objective sub-score.
- Exact content and format for each of the reports and files will be further refined during the project.

Access to Data Collection System

- The vendor shall provide ALSDE with a secure, password-protected, web-based system.
- The vendor shall provide statewide, student level data with results of the Practice Test.

Data Collection Protection Features

- The vendor shall discuss how its system responds to interrupted Internet services without the loss of data, including student responses.
- The vendor’s online data collection system must have a time-out or similar locking mechanism to prevent unauthorized access in the event that a student, while entering data, has to immediately evacuate the area due to an emergency such as a fire or tornado drill. This must also include an auto-save feature so that the student can easily resume when the emergency or the time-out has passed.
- The vendor shall describe in detail the services to be provided to conduct the required online data collections.
- The vendor shall include a detailed description of how its data collection system will be designed to operate within existing local system communication infrastructures, including T-1, DSL, or cable modem lines.
- The vendor shall assume that the existing technological infrastructure and computing hardware of the state, districts, and schools will not be replaced, as well as taken into consideration that some systems will be upgraded.
- The vendor shall also describe how its system works with district/school content filtering systems

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and firewalls.

- The online data collection system design must be flexible, so that software modifications, database changes, and reporting requirements can be made efficiently and cost effectively. The vendor must indicate how it will assure that this can be done.
- The vendor must explain how its system will accommodate for students who have moved in and out of a school or system since the rosters were created.

Data Privacy – The vendor must comply with all data security, data privacy and appropriate use laws, regulations, policies, and procedures required by the ALSDE.

- The vendor will describe how security of individual student data will be protected.
- Provide how the vendor will safeguard all individual student data and personally identifiable information.
- The vendor agrees to abide by and maintain adequate data security measures to protect Student Data from unauthorized disclosure or acquisition by an unauthorized person.
- Vendor shall make best efforts practices to secure usernames, passwords, and any other means of gaining access to the practice tests or student data.

System Reliability and Mitigation Experience

- Information Technology
 - The vendor shall ensure the reliability of information technology used in the transmission and function of computer-based assessments.
 - The vendor shall provide a draft plan detailing the deployment and operation of information technology and contingencies for the failure of information technology systems.
- Cyber security
 - The vendor shall agree at all times to maintain network system and application security that, at minimum, conform to the following:
 - State of Alabama Cyber Security Policies as found at <https://oit.alabama.gov/cybersecurity/>; and
 - Current cyber security standards set forth and maintained by the Center for Internet Security, which can be found at <http://www.cisecurity.org>.
 - The vendor must agree to document all cyber security expectations to State of Alabama Policies and Standards in response to this RFP.
 - Special consideration must be made to ensure the security of Personally Identified Information (PII) stored or processed by the system.
 - The system will be subject to security reviews by OIT Office of Cyber Security.
 - The vendor shall describe the overall approach to security in its proposed system.
 - Challenges that the vendor may encounter for meeting cyber security standards during this project and how those challenges can be mitigated shall also be identified.
 - The vendor shall discuss the features of its system which prevent infiltration.

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Online Assessment Challenges and Remedies

- The vendor shall describe the issues/challenges/problems/mistakes that arose in its history with online assessment administrations.
- The vendor must describe and indicate the level of impact to school personnel, students, scores, and timeline for reporting. The description shall include the steps taken by the vendor to mitigate those issues.
- The vendor should indicate what steps it will take to prevent these issues from occurring in Alabama.

Business Rules must be applied and approved by ALSDE on an annual basis.

G. Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)

The vendor shall cover the costs for four (4) ALSDE staff memberships to the state membership of the CCSSO and State Collaboratives.

H. National Conference on Student Assessment (NCSA)

The vendor shall make all arrangements and cover the costs for ALSDE staff (up to five) to attend the annual National Conference on Student Assessment (NCSA) including hotel, travel, registration, and incidentals.

I. Facility for District Test Coordinator Meeting

The vendor will be responsible for securing a facility for the two District Test Coordinator Meetings held each year around the state. The vendor would be responsible for all equipment, Internet/Wi-Fi, etc. for around 200 people.

J. Performance Bond

- The selected vendor should, within ten days after notification of the award and at no additional cost to the ALSDE, furnish a performance bond for the full contract amount.
- The performance guarantee will be one of the following: cashier's check, other type bank certified check (personal or company checks not acceptable), money order, an irrevocable letter of credit, or surety bond issued by a company authorized to do business within the state of Alabama.

K. Transition

Proposals must include a transition plan ensuring the continuity of the state assessment program is of the essence.

- The vendor will assist the ALSDE with all activities required to transfer all assessment documents and materials during the transition.
- The vendor shall reference its proven ability to provide smooth contract transitions when working with other assessment organizations in contract transitional activities.

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Option 2: Alternate Assessment

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) intends to contract with a vendor for the major products and services required to assist the ALSDE in developing and administering the Alternate Assessment in Grades 2-8, and two (2) high school grades to be determined in ELA and mathematics, and Grades 4, 6, 8, and one (1) high school grade to be determined in science to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The ALSDE intends to contract with a vendor for the development and administration of the Alternate Assessment based on the *Alabama Alternate Achievement Standards* (AAAS) located at <https://www.alabamaachievers.org/special-education/subject-resources/>. These standards are an extension of the regular academic content standards in the subject areas of English language arts, mathematics, and science.

ALSDE intends to administer an Alternate Assessment to approximately 6,000 students per year. This assessment will be administered using a Web-based online administration/collection system with a companion paper-based student booklet. The ALSDE will report student results including a growth component.

A. General Requirements

Professional Standards/Best Practices

The vendor shall ensure that all materials, practices, and procedures developed under this contract meet relevant professional standards, such as those contained in the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* published by the American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Psychological Association (APA), and the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME), CCSSO/Association of Test Publishers *Operational Best Practices for Statewide Large-Scale Assessment*, particularly in terms of privacy, reliability, validity, opportunity to learn, accommodations, scoring, reporting, and documentation.

- The vendor shall inform ALSDE in writing when implementation practices or policies are not consistent with the best educational research and practice. The vendor shall be responsible for clearly communicating the risks of violating conclusions of the best educational research and practice. If ALSDE agrees, the vendor shall work to make necessary corrections.

State and Federal Requirements

- The vendor shall ensure that all materials, processes, and procedures developed under this contract meet relevant state and federal requirements, including requirements under ESSA and peer review, as well as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Throughout the life of the contract, and any extensions, the vendor shall communicate in writing to the ALSDE when it concludes that the program is no longer meeting state and federal requirements and shall provide corrective options to the ALSDE for consideration.

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Communication

- Project communication will occur through a series of meetings, in addition to regular conference calls between the vendor and ALSDE.
- Upon contract award, the vendor shall organize and facilitate a meeting at the vendor's office to review and finalize the project work plan. In addition, the vendor shall attend up to two additional planning meetings annually, excluding the training and development meetings required herein at the discretion of the ALSDE.

Security

- The vendor shall follow Family Educational Rights and privacy Act (FERPA), state, and industry standard security policies, including the provision of confidentiality agreements for all vendor staff, subcontractors, and educators participating in any aspect of this project.
- The vendor should include sample confidentiality agreements as an attachment to the proposal.
- The vendor must indicate the base services (ex. accounting of all secure materials, forensic analysis, etc.) related to test security that it requires for its high stakes state accountability assessments.
- Any breach of security that occurs through the negligence or inaction of the vendor, such as, but not limited to, failure to adhere to any security protocol or allowing raters to remove secure materials from item writing meetings, item review meetings, data review meetings, etc., will be considered a default on the terms of contract.

Travel

The vendor may be required to travel to various statewide locations to meet project requirements/training.

- All anticipated travel expenses are to be included in the vendor's cost component response.
- The total price quoted for this project should include any travel expenses. NO additional costs will be reimbursed.

Backup and Recovery

The vendor shall provide a detailed description of the backup and recovery processes used to protect data. The vendor will:

- Describe the tools used for backup and recovery of applications and data;
- Describe the impact of the proposed backup process on the operation of the system;
- Address the following:
 - Use of and method for logging information;
 - Single points of failure and recommended approaches for the elimination of information;
 - Approach to redundancy; and
 - Describe options to have the collected data stored at the vendor's site in addition to sending results along to ALSDE. A proposed retention schedule must be included.

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ALSDE Sign-Off

- All procedures followed in the development, production, administration, scanning, scoring, and reporting of the Alternate Assessments shall be made available for review by ALSDE and will be subject to ALSDE approval.

B. Organization and Personnel

Throughout this document, the term "vendor(s)" is also assumed to include subcontractors where appropriate and applicable. If the vendor proposes to subcontract any part of the work, the vendor's response to this RFP must refer to the subcontractors where appropriate. Within the relevant requirements and specifications, a description of each proposed subcontractor's role in the project, qualifications to perform that role, management structure, key staff assignments, and qualifications of assigned staff shall be included.

- If the vendor has discovered fault with a subcontractor named in the proposal, the vendor has the obligation to inform the ALSDE immediately, and the appropriate steps must be taken by either the subcontractor or the vendor to correct the problem prior to that problem resulting in substandard performance or non-compliance. The vendor shall remain responsible for the performance of its subcontractor.
- The vendor shall alert the ALSDE as soon as it believes a deliverable is subject to liquidated damages is at risk of not meeting its delivery date.
- The ALSDE shall be notified whenever its contract is included in vendor's internal meetings focused on programs at risk.
- For each following contract year, the vendor shall provide an updated detailed work plan and project schedule that specifies all activities leading to products or services deliverable to either the ALSDE or local school districts for the following assessment year.

Organizational Structure

- Organizational charts, including identification of executive and key personnel, for the vendor, and for the ALSDE project team specifically, including any subcontractors where applicable, must be provided. Qualifications of key executive personnel must be presented.
 - A supporting resume outlining education/training, employment history, and experience in conducting the work that is expected under this contract.
- The charts shall clearly indicate lines of authority and communication within and among the vendor's departments and subcontractors, where appropriate.
- The vendor shall also describe its escalation process for resolving any vendor/client disagreements.
- An executive team member directly in charge of overseeing the Alabama project shall be identified.
 - This executive team member shall be available both during and outside of normal business hours to assist with any urgent situations.

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- Contact information for this individual shall be provided at the time of contract award.
- Changes to the assigned executive team member, except for those resulting from separation of services, require prior consent by the ALSDE.
- The replacement shall have qualifications that meet or exceed the original staff member proposed or the staff member holding the position previously and shall be approved by the ALSDE.

Staff Qualifications and Experience

- The vendor shall provide a list of key staff, including but not limited to, the program manager, lead psychometrician, content development lead, content specific area lead, technology lead, special populations lead, scoring manager(s), production manager(s), and publication staff, as well as all staff assigned to this assessment component.
 - Each staff member's assigned responsibilities and time allocated to the project must be provided.
 - Time expected to be allocated to other projects must also be indicated.
- The vendor shall affirm in the response to this request for proposals that should the contract be awarded, all key personnel proposed shall be released from any concurrent responsibilities that would impede their availability to assume the work as proposed.
- The vendor shall assign one person, with the ALSDE approval, to function as the Program Manager. The Program Manager must have at least five years of experience with projects of similar scope and size and will be committed to the project throughout its duration. At least three references from individuals in states or agencies where the proposed Program Manager has coordinated a comparable assessment program must be provided. That person must be responsible for all activities required by the project and will serve as the main contact person between the vendor and ALSDE. The Program Manager shall have the authority to make decisions and commitments on behalf of the vendor, subject to ALSDE approval.
- The Lead Online System Manager(s) will oversee all aspects of the online assessment system. The Lead Online System Manager(s) will be responsible for the design and function of the online system, assistance with training school systems in the use of the online system and troubleshooting any system technical problems with the system. The Lead Online System Manager(s) will also be responsible for scheduling stress tests and readiness tests to ensure that all school systems are prepared for online testing.
- Lead Content Specialists must have a bachelor's degree (master's degree preferred) as well as experience with alternate assessment student populations.
 - The Project Manager(s) will manage the item and test development efforts, holding responsibility for development schedules and oversight of all item development, test construction, editorial tasks, and test-related publications.
- The Scoring Project Manager(s) will oversee technical team members to complete processing, programming, scoring, reporting, and quality assurance tasks according to the timeline and

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requirements from the ALSDE. At least three references from state or agency clients previously served by the Scoring Project Manager(s) are required.

- The Lead Psychometrician(s) will oversee tasks and issues that relate to item selection, test form equating, sample selection, calibration, scaling, validity evidence, reliability evidence, reporting, test design, and other technical analyses. Psychometric staff must conduct studies and provide resources sufficient to meet the requirements of the USDOE Peer Review and technical needs of the ALSDE. Sufficient resources must be allotted for timely test construction, reporting, and all other technical tasks. The proposal must provide evidence the psychometricians assigned to support ALSDE are highly qualified and experienced in current industry-standard psychometric practice and USDOE assessment and accountability requirements. The Lead Psychometrician(s) must also have strong communication skills and the ability to make highly technical issues and information understandable to various audiences.
- The Quality Assurance Leader(s) will implement the steps and procedures used to ensure the products meet ALSDE requirements without errors.
- Dedicated Data Analyst(s) are required throughout the duration of the project to analyze student performance results or other technical aspects of the project and produce reports, including ad hoc or longitudinal reports, as required by ALSDE. The Data Analyst(s) must be highly proficient in statistical analysis software and have practical knowledge to be able to provide data in a format easily understandable by the public and media.
- Technical Editors and Reviewers will develop all test-related publications and ensure that they are accurate, concise, user-friendly, grammatically correct, and technically sound. In addition to the work, Technical Editors and Reviewers would contribute to test administration materials. Graphic Designers must be available to the ALSDE for providing design and copy layouts for brochures, websites, and other communications or presentations.
- Help Desk Administrator(s) will ensure communication services for Alabama schools and systems are correct and timely. The Help Desk Administrator(s) must train responders to accurately address specific Alabama policy, procedures, and issues on all aspects of the testing program.
- The ALSDE requires that a Technology Expert be identified.

This individual shall be responsible for many tasks, including but not limited to, assisting ALSDE and the systems with online assessments; working with ALSDE information systems (IS) staff to ensure the accurate and efficient transfer of data to and from ALSDE; creating, defining, and reviewing file layouts; providing assistance in the verification of demographic data; and assisting ALSDE and District Test Coordinators with the use of functionality.

 - Ideally, this person will be located in the central part of the state.
 - At a minimum, this person will be available to be on-site at the request of ALSDE. Outside of the installation and testing window, this person's availability may be more flexible;

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however, during the actual installation and testing window, this person must be immediately available with little to no notice.

- For all meetings involving educators, the vendor must identify and indicate the qualifications of the Facilitators.
- General qualifications for training and meeting facilitators must be included in the response to this request for proposal.
- Facilitators must be familiar with best practices, as well as state and federal laws, procedures, and regulations.
- As applicable, facilitators must also be familiar with the instruction of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.
- Facilitators must be able to clearly articulate spoken English and create easily understood written materials and visual training aids.
- Facilitators must have demonstrated successful experience in leading large-group trainings, including webinars and meetings.
- ALSDE requires the vendor to hire Item Writers to write test items for the assessments. The writers must have a degree in a relevant field and knowledge of relevant subjects.
- ALSDE reserves the right to interview and approve all key staff, including subcontractor staff.

Throughout the life of the contract, and any extensions, changes to the assigned Program Manager, Program Coordinator, Project Manager, Lead Psychometrician, Content Development Lead, Content Specific Area Lead, Special Populations Expert, Lead Online System Manager, and Technology Expert, except for those resulting from separation of services, will require prior written consent by ALSDE.

- If the ALSDE requests removal of specific vendor personnel, the vendor shall provide replacement(s), with no impact to the project.
 - Replacement(s) shall have qualifications which meet or exceed the original staff member proposed or the staff member holding the position previously and shall be approved by the ALSDE.
 - All personnel who will work on-site at ALSDE or school sites may be required to be pre-approved for site access via a criminal background check paid for by the vendor.

Corporate Capabilities and Capacities

The vendor must present a description of corporate capabilities.

- The vendor shall provide the company's history, including the number of years that it has been in business, buyouts, takeovers, IPO's, bankruptcies, litigations, and claims, etc., within the last five (5) years.
- Situations arising in assessed liquidated damages must be described with their resolution,

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along with the amount of the liquidated damages or provided additional services.

- The description shall also identify the number of employees in the company and the company's location(s). The overall capacity of the vendor's organization(s) and the resources it will commit to the work for the project (by name and role in project) shall be discussed.
- A general description of the vendor's capabilities and capacities related to development, production, shipping and receipt, administration (of paper-based and computer-based assessments), scanning, scoring, data processing, reporting, and psychometric activities shall be included. Responses must demonstrate that the vendor meets, at a minimum, the mandatory qualifications presented at the beginning of this component.
- Specific examples of the vendor's work products, such as test and item specifications, items, forms, technical manuals, research reports, technical services, etc., should be identified under the relevant requirements and specifications.
- The ALSDE expects to receive the same or better quality of work throughout the contract, including any extensions, as the examples that are provided in the proposal.

Relevant Experience

- The vendor shall provide a listing and descriptions of all work in similar projects that it and its proposed subcontractors have carried out or are carrying out for other clients. The list shall include client, program name, content area, grades, administration mode (paper-based or computer-based), use of scoring, length of contract, and number of students.
- For computer-based testing, the vendor shall include the total number of tests administered and the highest number of successful concurrent testers. For each such project, the vendor must provide the name of the state or other organization, name of client contact person, this individual's telephone number and email.
- Company Experience: The following vendor qualifications are required to ensure that effective services for the described project are achievable:
 - Documentation of expertise; and
 - Technical competency in all areas identified in the RFP.
- Submit a minimum of three (3) references for each of the areas listed above for experience in the last five (5) years.
- Further evidence of experience should be evident in responses to specific requirements and specifications as appropriate.

Risk Management and Quality Assurance

- The vendor shall address timeline issues, risks, mitigation, and contingency plans for all aspects of the project. These plans should refer to more than just “communication.”
- The vendor should highlight its proven ability to document and enact risk management strategies - especially as they relate to the development, production, shipping and receipt,

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administration (of paper-based and computer-based assessments), scanning, scoring (human and AI), data processing, reporting, and psychometric activities of all aspects of the assessments.

- The vendor should submit sample Risk Assessment documentation used in an existing program to demonstrate the comprehensiveness of its ability to conduct contingency planning for a variety of conditions.
 - This Risk Assessment documentation may be submitted as an attachment to the proposal. This documentation should also highlight internal procedures and protocols for quality assurance in all aspects of delivering large-scale, statewide assessments - including test development, production, shipping and receipt, administration (of paper-based and computer-based assessments), scanning, scoring (human and AI), data processing, reporting, and psychometric activities of all aspects of the assessments.

C. Program Management

Due to the high level of attention focused on these tests and their importance, the goal for the ALSDE and the vendor is 100 percent accuracy in every aspect of the program. Toward that end, the contracted vendor will utilize formal project management methodology and provide the ALSDE with a project management plan. The plan will include position assignments with areas of responsibility, project schedules and milestones, tasks, subtasks, critical path analysis, specifications for key systems, detailing the production schedules and critical deadlines.

- The vendor is required to obtain ALSDE written approval of the timelines and all materials prior to their use, distribution, or publication. The vendor must include the review time requirements into the appropriate project management plans. The proposal will detail the methodology to be employed and provide samples of the documents that will be used for project management, including progress reports.

Schedule of Activities

- The vendor shall provide a proposed schedule that clearly identifies and includes:
 - Key activities related to the field (ordering of materials; receipt of materials; test dates; return of materials; demographic clean-up window; release of individual student scores; final individual student, school, and system score file release; and receipt of paper reports); and
 - Key transfer dates between the vendor and the ALSDE related to development, production, shipping and receipt, administration (of paper-based and computer-based assessments), scanning, scoring, data processing, reporting, and psychometric activities.
- The vendor must provide a Key Activities Table for each fiscal year.

Project Schedule

- Proposals shall include a detailed schedule, reflective of the work plans, which describes how each of the requirements and specifications described in the proposal will be accomplished. The schedule shall, at a minimum, identify the tasks, subtasks, beginning date, end date, and

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the group responsible for each step in the process. The schedule must be included as a separate attachment to the proposal.

- Schedules must reflect the periods of time mutually agreed upon.
- Activities related to the development of the next year's assessment and reporting for the prior year's assessment must be clearly distinguishable from activities related to the current year's assessment.
- The vendor and ALSDE shall mutually agree upon final dates. Joint monitoring of the schedule shall occur on an on-going basis. The vendor shall ensure that all schedule adjustments allow final deliverable dates to be met. If necessary, timelines and schedules may be revised with prior approval of the ALSDE and an executed contract amendment for all deliverables subject to liquidated damages.
- A revision of a timeline on the part of the vendor exempts the vendor from meeting a contractual deadline only if:
 - the vendor and ALSDE mutually agree upon and document, through a contract amendment, an extension of the deadline as executed through a contract amendment; or
 - the vendor can prove that the deadline was not met due to ALSDE's failure to meet a contractual deadline, resulting in the vendor's inability to adhere to the schedule for delivery of products and services.
- The vendor shall alert ALSDE as soon as it believes a deliverable subject to liquidated damages is at risk of not meeting its delivery date.
- The ALSDE must be notified whenever its contract is included in the vendor's internal meetings focused on programs at risk.

Ongoing Communication

Communication between the vendor and ALSDE will be essential.

- The vendor shall make all written communication or summaries of communications with any subcontractor(s) identified in the proposal available to ALSDE at its request. In addition, the ALSDE expects to be able to participate during all appropriate and applicable meetings and trainings between the vendor and any subcontractor(s) identified in the proposal.
- Ongoing communication will occur between the ALSDE and the vendor via the designated Program Manager as necessary whenever issues arise.
- To facilitate regular communication, the vendor's Program Manager shall organize weekly conference calls with the ALSDE.
- The vendor's Program Manager and ALSDE shall work collaboratively to develop a mutually agreed upon agenda for conference calls. The vendor shall be responsible for scheduling and setting up conference calls and any costs associated with the conference call.
- In addition to weekly progress calls, the vendor shall submit a monthly report to the ALSDE demonstrating progress toward deliverables within the project's work plan.

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Project meetings

- Periodic meetings between ALSDE staff and representatives of the vendor are essential. Those persons directly involved with the project shall be available for technical assistance and discussion at the project meetings at the expense of the vendor. Strategies, procedures, and timelines for the next testing cycle will be discussed and reviewed and will cover all aspects of the program including blueprints and test specifications; item development and item banking; field-testing; computer-based testing; scoring; equating; test booklet production; standard setting; training; administration manuals and ancillaries; test administration; security and inventory procedures; shipping, delivery, and return procedures; reporting and analysis; and quality assurance.
- The vendor shall provide travel and time for appropriate staff to be available as needed to consult with the ALSDE. At a minimum, the vendor will coordinate the following meetings:
 - Planning Meetings
 - Content And Test Specifications Meetings
 - Item Development Meetings
 - Content Review Committee Meetings
 - Bias Review Committee Meetings
 - Alignment Study Meetings
 - Any Additional Meetings Not Specifically Listed Here
- The vendor shall prepare written documentation of each in-person and committee project meeting. This shall be submitted to the ALSDE within an agreed upon timeline at the conclusion of each meeting.

Monthly reports

- The vendor shall provide a monthly report that summarizes actions taken, issues that arose, issue resolution that occurred, outstanding issues and when they will be resolved, upcoming deadlines, and work that will occur.
- These reports shall be sent monthly to the ALSDE.

Program Improvement Plans

- For each phase of the program including development, production, shipping and receipt, administration (of paper-based and computer-based assessments), scanning, scoring, data processing, reporting and psychometric activities, the vendor shall provide a report that addresses the relevant phase by detailing the activities completed and by providing recommendations for improvement for the next assessment cycle.
- The report shall also detail errors, problems and/or discrepancies by system and by school.
- The report will allow ALSDE to detect any patterns in the errors, problems, or discrepancies noted in the report and to use that information to make appropriate decisions.

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Quality Control and Signoffs

Reviews and signoffs for all deliverables shall be documented and available to ALSDE upon request. The vendor shall document the steps, timeline, and staff involved in the quality control procedures for each phase and deliverable of the project.

D. Assessment Development

The vendor must provide in detail its plan for the development of the Alternate Assessment which must describe each step in the development process and must be reflective of the relevant activities and schedule for all test development activities from start to finish for each assessment year.

The following is a list of activities required by this RFP for the development of the Alternate Assessments. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of every activity required by this RFP, and it is expected that the vendor will carefully read all sections of the RFP and undertake and complete all work necessary to ensure ALSDE can successfully administer the Alternate Assessments in Grades 2 – 8, and two (2) high school grades to be determined in ELA and math and science in Grades 4, 6, 8, and one (1) high school grade.

- ALSDE is requesting that assessments be offered in other languages.

Revisions to the *Alabama Alternate Achievement Standards*

- The vendor shall propose detailed work to revise as needed 15-20 alternate standards (per grade and content area) aligned to the state standards.
- *Alabama Alternate Achievement Standards* in the following content areas in grades K-12 shall be considered:
 - English Language Arts
 - Mathematics
 - Science
 - Social Studies
- The vendor shall describe in detail its proposal to coordinate and facilitate meetings with Alabama educators to review and revise the alternate standards.
- The committee shall also ensure the alternate standards are aligned to the state standards and are appropriate for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.
- On the last day of the meeting, the committee shall review the alternate standards for vertical alignment by content area.
- The vendor shall describe in detail its plan to include Test Development team members at each meeting including two content experts, two special education experts, and one project lead.
- The vendor shall develop the agenda, prepare all meeting materials, and provide the initial training on how to develop and/or refine current alternate standards.
- The vendor shall oversee the committee process.
- The vendor shall ensure that fair and orderly consensus process is followed, that committee-work product is adequately documented, and that the process stays on schedule.

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- The vendor shall also serve as resources, answering questions pertaining to the content of the standards.
- The vendor shall prepare draft standards for the ALSDE review.
- The ALSDE shall provide any revisions or edits to vendor. The vendor shall incorporate those revisions and then prepare the final copy for the ALSDE.
- The vendor shall indicate in detail what materials it proposes to use for these meetings, as well as how these materials shall be created, reviewed by the ALSDE, and used. All materials shall be reviewed by the ALSDE at least one week prior to the meeting and printing.
- The vendor is responsible for all costs associated with this meeting following the ALSDE guidelines for educator participation including travel, hotel, etc., at state rates.

Content

The vendor must provide a sample of eligible item types to be reviewed by the field and approved by ALSDE.

Development of Performance Level Descriptors

The vendor must provide a description of the process to be used to develop grade level specific performance level descriptors for each content.

Item Types

The vendor's response must describe the variety of item types that would be included on the assessment, including item types that require students to generate or produce a response as well as select a response.

- The vendor's response must provide access to sample items to allow ALSDE to review proposed item formats.

Item Blueprints

- The vendor shall create a proposed test blueprint for the assessments to be developed in each content area.
- The vendor shall provide refined blueprints to be reviewed by the field, as appropriate, and approved by ALSDE.
- This blueprint must specify the number of each type of assessment items to be used at each grade level in each content area, depth of knowledge, the numbers of items in each final test form (operational and field-test slots), the number of sessions required and the total amount of testing time.
- The vendor must allow for the accommodation of additional testing time into the schedule.
- The vendor must take into consideration the assessments must generate valid information throughout the data distribution.

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Test Item Development

ALSDE is looking to develop a bank of items that it owns. ALSDE is not seeking to use vendor owned items unless there is compelling psychometric rationale.

- The vendor's proposal should include a detailed plan for item development.
- Potential supplemental resources and activities should be discussed.
- The vendor's content specialists and item writers must have experience teaching ELA, mathematics, or science to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Passages, items for ELA, prompts for writing, items for mathematics, and items for science must be custom written for the test, with the understanding that any item submitted will become the property of the ALSDE, which will retain all rights, including full distribution rights.

- After item reviews and item field testing, the item bank must have a sufficient number of unique items, with good statistics, to develop additional forms and with enough additional items to change out all open-ended items for additional administrations.
- The vendor must provide for appropriate over-production of items to allow for elimination due to content reviews, bias reviews, and field testing.
- The vendor must edit the items before submitting them for any review.
- The vendor must also provide the artwork for items before submitting them for review.
- The vendor shall provide samples of high-quality assessment items of each type for each content area so ALSDE can see the nature of the work the vendor is capable of providing.
- The vendor shall create, with the assistance of ALSDE, a variety of prototypical assessment items. These could include innovative approaches to performance assessments and computer-based assessments. These prototypes will illustrate the types of items to be created for the item developers and will be used to illustrate the assessments.
- Timelines associated with the above activities must be provided.
- The vendor shall describe in detail how it will provide and monitor the assignments given to the developers.
- The vendor must describe in detail its plan for thoroughly editing the items. Editors shall be persons qualified in the content area(s) in which they are editing.
- The vendor must manage an electronic item bank that will be fully accessible to ALSDE. This bank will include items with field-test statistics.
- Accurate and detailed item bank records must be kept and reported as requested by the ALSDE. The proposal should detail the item bank structure and the processes the vendor will use to update and maintain the bank.
- The vendor shall provide electronic copies of the item bank by content area when necessary.
- The vendor should note if a software program or web-based application for the item pool will be provided to the ALSDE as part of the proposal.
- The vendor should account for new forms being developed each year.

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- The vendor should state how listening items will be developed.
- The vendor must work with ALSDE to decide on the item pool and summary of the item pool for each year.

Cognitive Labs

- The vendor shall provide a detailed plan for conducting the cognitive labs for any new types of assessment items. These items should be exposed to students and teachers prior to introducing them on operational assessments.
- The vendor shall provide prototypes to be used through a cognitive lab process to evaluate the quality and appropriateness of the items for the Alternate Assessments.
- The vendor must describe how the cognitive labs' test results will be used to refine the items.

Item Specifications

- The vendor's proposal should include a detailed plan of the procedure to be used to write item specifications for each grade of the assessment. The plan should include the number and statement of each standard, format/item type(s), content limits, and sample items for each format/type.
- The vendor shall develop specifications for each type of item and artwork to be created. The vendor shall work with ALSDE to prepare a Style Guide to be used for item presentation.
- Online items should include Accessible Portable Item Profile (APIP) coding. The vendor shall provide evidence of its ability to fulfill this requirement.
- After the Item Specifications are approved by ALSDE, the vendor will provide ALSDE with an electronic copy of the final versions for publication.
- It will be the vendor's responsibility to do final proofreading of all text and graphics for accuracy prior to sending to ALSDE for approval.

Universal Design

- The vendor shall explain how universal design principles will be applied to online and paper administrations.

Number of Items to be Developed

- For each year, grade, content area and item type, the vendor shall identify the number of items that will be developed to be taken to item review, the number expected to be accepted, the number expected to be included across the test forms during field testing and the number expected to be accepted at data review.
- The vendor is responsible for the production of the number of items needed for each content area and grade level.
- The vendor's response should reflect an understanding of ALSDE's intended use of the results from the assessment, the type of scores that will be reported, the plan to release items, as well as an understanding of standards. The vendor's response should also consider the testing time and cost

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constraints discussed throughout this RFP.

Item Bank

- The vendor shall describe in detail its system for an item bank. This system must provide the ability to indicate the status of each item and permit the assessment forms to be readily assemble.

Passage Selection and Review

- The vendor shall describe its plan for selecting appropriate passages for all relevant content areas based on complexity, quality, and range.
- Although ALSDE values the use of authentic, classic, and historically significant passages, it recognizes that, especially in lower grades, the vendor may have the ability to provide appropriately complex, high quality literary and informational texts through a commissioned process.
- ALSDE also appreciates the flexibility in use that commissioned passages provide. The ALSDE will, therefore, permit the vendor to use high quality commissioned passages as well as copyrighted passages for which permission is obtained.
- It will be the responsibility of the vendor to provide all needed passages for the Alternate Assessments, including both printed and online tests. For all permissioned passages, it will be the vendor's responsibility to secure the permissions ensuring that ALSDE can use the items on both paper-based and computer-based assessments, as well as used for released items.
- ALSDE requests that a percentage of the passages (TBD) be written from topics addressed in the *Alabama Alternate Achievement Standards* for Social Studies and Science.
- The vendor shall present its plan for ALSDE review followed by field review of the passages.
- For the passages, the review must reflect an evaluation of the complexity, quality, and range of text, as well as bias.

Item Writer Training

- The vendor shall describe in detail its plan for providing item writing training and assignments.
- The multiple-choice, short constructed-response and extended constructed-response types of items are to be created by the vendor under the direction of the ALSDE (using Alabama public school educators unless otherwise agreed upon by the vendor and ALSDE).
- The vendor shall indicate in detail what materials it proposes to use for assessment development training, as well as how these materials will be created, reviewed by the ALSDE, and used.
- The training must assist item developers in understanding Universal Design principles. The ALSDE must review and approve these materials and procedures before these materials are used.
- The vendor must present a process for recruiting, evaluating, and retaining educators to serve in the role of item writers.

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- The vendor must also provide a plan for determining item writing assignments, as well as contingency plans should the educators be unable to produce enough items in the available time.

Educator Meetings

For all meetings held with Alabama public school educators, the vendor is responsible for all costs. This includes all expenses for Americans with Disabilities Act compliant meeting sites, including sign language interpreters and large print as needed; AV equipment; Internet connections; and any other desired requirement for the meeting to be successful. If overnight stay is required, hotel rooms will be billed directly to the vendor. Each educator receives a stipend if the meeting is held on a non-contract day, or the district is reimbursed for the cost of hiring a substitute at an agreed upon rate during the educator’s absence. In addition, educators are reimbursed for travel expenses (mileage, parking, tolls, etc.) and meals during overnight stays.

Expenditure	Description
Stipend or Substitute Reimbursement	Up to \$150 stipend if a non-workday for the educator OR reimbursement of district for hiring a substitute at the agreed upon rate
Meal Expenses	The per diem rate will be set at the current state rate at the time of the event.
Lodging	Lodging shall only be provided for participants who travel more than thirty (30) miles in one direction to attend the event.
Parking/Tolls	Participants will be reimbursed for total cost.

Item Review Committees

- The ALSDE believes that the use of Item Review Committees consisting of Alabama public school educators from the state is a critical part of the item development process. The use of Alabama public school educators enhances the transparency of the program and increases understanding and buy-in.
- The vendor will support grade-level item review committees for each assessment proposed. The committees will consist primarily of grade-appropriate special education teachers recruited and selected by ALSDE. Additional committee members may include content specialists and ELL educators.
- ALSDE and the vendor's Item Development Team will work together to facilitate the meetings, which will be held annually in Alabama. If the vendor feels that additional meetings are necessary and/or the timing of the meetings should be changed, the vendor's response should include a proposal for an alternative meeting schedule.
- The vendor's response should include the steps taken to ensure the most efficient use of the limited time available with the members of the Item Review Committees.
- The vendor will schedule an additional meeting with ALSDE to reconcile item feedback; and

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written documents will be produced by the vendor, summarizing the meeting and recommendations, within two weeks of each committee meeting.

Content and Bias Review Meetings

- The vendor must present its plan for both the content meeting and the bias review meeting.
- Each item must be reviewed by a Content and Bias Review Committee in each content area to assure that the item is of high quality, that it is aligned to the standards, that it measures the skill in a sound manner, and that the item does not unfairly advantage/disadvantage any student and is not offensive to students, parents, or the public.
- This committee shall also review the overall content coverage of the set of items, noting any areas where the alignment of the set of assessment items is weak.
- A separate committee will be convened in each content area (ELA, mathematics, and science). Each committee will review each batch of items prior to field-testing.
- Initially, these meetings must occur face-to-face. As the assessment matures, vendors may propose to conduct these reviews either in person at meetings to be held in the state or by using a virtual item review system. In either case, the vendor will need to describe how it will protect the confidentiality of the items before, during, and after the review meetings.
- If the vendor proposes to use electronic means for conducting the item reviews, the vendor must provide detailed information on the electronic system they propose to use and provide illustrative graphics that show the review capabilities of their system(s) and/or provide online access to the system for ALSDE to review.
- The vendor will be responsible for providing ALSDE with summary information, including the number of items accepted as is, the number of items accepted with revisions, and the number of items rejected.
- The vendor is expected to take the lead role in training the educators and facilitating each one of the Item Review Committees' responsibilities.
- The vendor shall indicate in detail what materials it proposes to use for these meetings, as well as how these materials will be created, reviewed by ALSDE, and used. All materials must be reviewed by ALSDE prior to the meeting to allow time for revisions to be made prior to printing.
- The vendor will be responsible for all costs associated with this educator meeting.

Field-Testing (Initial and Embedded)

- All newly created items are to be formally field-tested.
- The vendor must describe how it will partner with Alabama's current vendor to allow for field-test items to be embedded into the operational assessment or if the vendor could offer a standalone field test.

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- The vendor shall provide its plan for conducting the field-test (e.g., how many items of each type are to be field-tested, how many items will be in each form, and the number of test forms needed to accommodate the number of items to be field-tested at each grade level and content).
- The vendor's plan for including accommodations in field-testing must also be included.
- The vendor must be willing to partner with Alabama's current vendor in order to allow for field-test items to be embedded into an operational assessment, if ALSDE deems necessary.
- After initial field-testing, field-test items will be embedded in operational forms. The vendor shall describe its detailed plan for embedding field-test items in operational forms (e.g., how many items of each type are to be field-tested, how many items will be in each form, and how many test forms will be needed to accommodate the number of items to be field-tested at each grade level and content).
- The vendor's development plan for field-testing shall include how the materials will be prepared, including test forms and administrators' directions.

Data Review

- The vendor must provide a plan for ALSDE and educator committee review of data resulting from field testing.
- The vendor will be responsible for all costs associated with this meeting.

Form Development - Regular Form

- The vendor shall describe in detail how it will select the items to be used in the operational forms each year.
- The plan must describe how multiple forms will be developed each year; ALSDE is requesting multiple forms (more than two) each year. Discussion should describe how items will be refreshed each year.
- The plan for the development of the forms shall include consideration of the number of anchor items needed to equate the measures from year to year, the number of new operational items to be included, and the number and position of new items to be field-tested. Maximum number of exposures for items must also be addressed.
- This plan must also describe how the vendor will support the equating of the assessment from year to year during the development process. This must include the way the item bank will be utilized to select the operational items as well as the field-test items, and what percentage of pre-used items the vendor proposes be used again.

Breach Form

- The vendor shall describe the way it will provide a breach form for each grade and content

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area.

- Where possible, it is the expectation that the same breach form will be used for the life of the contract, including any extensions.

Accommodated Materials and Administration Procedures

- The vendor must provide a list of appropriate assessment accommodations for students with the most cognitive disabilities and English learners. Accommodations listed must be supported by the most current research.
- The list shall describe the test accommodations and supports that allow access for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and English learners to participate in each assessment most fully without interfering with the construct of the assessment.
 - The vendor must describe accommodations which would threaten the validity of the assessment by interfering with the construct being measured.
 - The vendor shall be expected to facilitate extensive discussion with ALSDE on accommodations.

- **Braille Paper Versions**

The vendor must describe the steps it will follow to create braille forms for each grade and content areas. Any issues that are known to arise with images must be addressed.

- The vendor will be responsible for providing a Braille version of all tests, as necessary.
- The quality of Braille must meet the standards established by the American Printing House for the Blind. The vendor is responsible for having Braille materials proofed by an independent party (approved by ALSDE) that includes a certified Braille reader.
- The vendor will describe its plan for dealing with items that cannot be brailled. Indicate how the inability of the item to be brailled is documented in the item development system and item bank and how this will affect scoring.

Document Development

The following describes the documents required by this RFP but is not an exhaustive list. ALSDE will have final approval on all documents.

- **Student Companion Test Booklet**

- All test booklets shall be labeled with unique numerical codes in sequential order to assist with test booklet security and inventory control.
- Test booklets shall be designed and constructed to ensure durability and printed in 18-point font.
- The vendor shall include samples of a proposed test booklet.
- The vendor shall be prepared to offer the assessment in other languages.

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- **District Test Coordinators Manual**

The vendor shall describe in detail the contents of the District Test Coordinators Manual, as well as the planned processes for creating and proofing the manual. The manuals will be printed, as well as made available in electronic format.

- **Test Administration Manuals**

The vendor must describe the steps it will follow to create the Test Administration Manuals.

- The vendor shall describe in detail the contents of the Test Administration Manual, as well as its planned processes for creating and proofing the manual.
- The manuals will be printed and distributed to the DTCs, as well as made available in electronic format.

- **Technology Guide**

- The vendor must describe in detail the contents of a Technology Guide to be provided to the Technology Coordinators.
- The Technology Guide must include all technical requirements for the online administration of the assessment, as well as troubleshooting guidance and any other information pertinent to the role of the Technology Coordinator.

- **Ancillary Materials**

- The vendor will describe what ancillary materials will be produced and how it will develop the materials.
- Ancillary materials must include Parent Resources. The vendor will describe the Parent Resources to be made available.

Instructional Materials for the *Alabama Alternate Achievement Standards*

Instructional materials are a valuable resource to aid teachers in their instruction and provide educators with a purposeful sequencing of teaching and learning expectations.

- The vendor shall propose detailed work to develop/revise, as needed, the instructional materials (one per content area and grade level) aligned to the standards.
- The vendor shall describe in detail its proposal to coordinate and facilitate meetings with Alabama educators to develop, review, and/or revise instructional materials.
- The committee shall also ensure the instructional materials are aligned to the alternate achievement standards and are appropriate.
- The vendor shall develop the agenda, prepare all meeting materials, and provide the initial training on how to develop and/or refine any current instructional documents.
- The vendor shall oversee the committee process.
- The vendor shall ensure that fair and orderly consensus process is followed, that committee-work product is adequately documented, and that the process stays on schedule.

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- The vendor shall also serve as resources, answering questions pertaining to the content of instructional materials.
- The vendor shall prepare instructional materials for the ALSDE review.
- The vendor shall indicate in detail what materials it proposes to use for these meetings, as well as how these materials shall be created, reviewed by the ALSDE, and used.
- All materials shall be reviewed by the ALSDE at least one week prior to the meeting and printing.
- The vendor is responsible for all costs associated with this meeting following the ALSDE guidelines for educator participation including travel, hotel, etc., at state rates.

Sample/Released Items

The vendor will propose a plan for the annual release of a representative sample of test items. The purpose of releasing items is to provide stakeholders with information about the type and level of knowledge and skills assessed on the assessments, the variety of item types used on the assessments, and the rigor of the items of the assessments.

- The released items will consist of an agreed-upon number of items.
- Release of items will begin with the first operational administration of the Alternate Assessments.
- Each year it is the goal of ALSDE to release and post items of each type in each content area and grade. The items must be presented in a way that they are easily downloadable for use in the classroom.
- For all items, standard(s) measured by the item and item statistics must be provided for educator use.
- For constructed-response items, scoring guides and annotated responses for each point on the rubric scale must also be provided.
- The vendor must describe the support materials it intends to develop to meet this specification, as well as the steps it will follow to develop and produce those materials.

Assessment Administration

The vendor shall describe in detail its plan for the administration of the operational assessment. This plan must describe each step in the assessment administration process and must reflect assessment administration activities, from start to finish, for each assessment year.

- **Test Window**

The Alternate Assessment will be administered in the spring of each year. The vendor shall provide suggested test windows considering end of year and reporting expectations.

- **Distribution of Printed Test Materials**

The vendor should include in the response a detailed description of the procedures along with the name of the subcontractor or carrier to be used to distribute testing materials to each LEA. These procedures must be approved in advance by the ALSDE. The vendor must describe how it

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will provide/deliver additional materials requested by any LEA after the original delivery date.

- The vendor must describe in detail its plans for ensuring quality control of the packaging commensurate with a high stakes assessment program.
- The vendor must explain the process on how the materials will be packaged, collected/destroyed after testing, and the verification process of the return of all printed secure materials.

- **Online Test Delivery System**

The vendor shall provide the ALSDE with a detailed Infrastructure Plan, which will incorporate all components required to meet industry standard best practices.

 - The vendor's web-based hosted infrastructure service must provide for delivery on wireless networks with comparable performance to wired networks.
 - Applications must be delivered within a secure browser that restricts access to the devices and Internet, based on the requirements of the ALSDE.
 - The vendor shall discuss the minimum hardware specifications and technical standards, as well as the recommended hardware specifications and technical standards needed, for operation of its proposed system. This discussion should also include an analysis of differences in system performance based on minimum or recommended hardware.
 - The vendor shall describe in detail how it will ensure that all items placed in its online test delivery system will appear on test administrator' computer screens as intended, for the variety of types of computers, operating systems, and connectivity.
 - The vendor shall also describe its strategy for ensuring that new systems and all interfaces function properly when releasing new versions of any software application.

- **Remote Testing Option**
 - The vendor must describe its plan for implementing the remote administration of the assessment should it be required at some point within the life of the contract.
 - The plan should include the vendor's capabilities with regard to the remote administration of high-stakes, secure assessments, as well as detailed steps for ensuring test security with remote testing.
 - The ALSDE is requesting a full refresh each year. This refresh must include a different form from the non-virtual schools.
 - The ALSDE is interested in results from year over year comparisons, test session comparison, testing times, answer change analysis, and other score comparability/quality measures from non-virtual schools.

- **Tools and Accommodations**

The vendor is expected to adhere to and meet the evolving expectations of industry standards in online accommodations.

 - The vendor must describe the extent to which its system currently meets the Accessible

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Portable Item Profile (APIP) standards and specifications.

- The vendor shall discuss how student profiles will be created and/or uploaded to allow for appropriate accommodation options during testing.
- The vendor shall discuss how individual student profiles are created or imported into the system to select and make available appropriate accommodations based on student need.
- The vendor shall discuss options for accommodated materials for Test Administrators should such materials be requested.

Training/Professional Development

The vendor shall describe its plan to create the materials for training sessions and professional development with sufficient time so that ALSDE has at least two weeks to preview the materials to be used and suggest any changes to be incorporated into the training materials before use.

Training and support for the Alternate Assessments shall be provided by the vendor to educators as needed for this assessment. The vendor must include in its proposal a detailed plan of action and timeline that describes how and when each of the training and support tasks will be accomplished. The vendor will be required to provide the trainings and professional development listed below, as well as additional, ad-hoc trainings upon request.

• **Technology Coordinator Training**

- These sessions shall provide system IT personnel with training on the operation and features of the online assessment system.
- It must include training on the physical and electronic security of assessments, system requirements for implementing the online assessment, and troubleshooting of technology issues at the school or system site.
- Training must include a visual as well as oral presentation and may include other types of interactive technology.
- The vendor shall be mindful of and ensure the provision of all facility and training accommodations that are required by the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Training sessions shall be recorded and archived as a potential future training or reference resource.

• **District Test Coordinator Training**

- The ALSDE holds two workshops a year with all DTCs, one at the beginning of the school year and one after the winter break.
- The vendor's Program Manager and other pertinent vendor staff shall attend these workshops at the vendor's expense if deemed appropriate by ALSDE.
- Vendor will be responsible for securing and paying for locations suitable for around 200 attendees.
- These sessions shall provide DTCs with information concerning the administration of assessments and security of assessments.
- Training must include a visual as well as oral presentation and may include other types of

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interactive technology.

- **Additional Trainings**

The vendor should include a detailed list and descriptions of additional trainings that could be provided. The vendor will be required to participate in a majority of trainings that will be provided.

- MEGA – State conference that is held in July annually. The vendor will need to plan to provide at least six to eight (6-8) trainings each year. The vendor will be responsible for all costs associated with participation at this meeting.
- Instructional Information Trainings – The vendor should provide a list with details of instructional trainings that would be offered with this contract.
- Accessibility Supports and Accommodations Training – The vendor should plan for a training that will provide educators with guidance around the selection and use of accessibility supports and accommodations on the Summative Assessments.
- Reporting/Data – The vendor should plan for trainings that would provide educators and parents with guidance related to the interpretation and use of reports and/or data.
- Professional Development – The vendor should include a professional development plan that would incorporate around three to four (3 to 4) weeks of trainings each year.
- The vendor shall provide its plan for training and support. A schedule should be provided identifying the topic, target audience and target dates.
- The vendor shall provide its plan for training and support. A schedule should be provided identifying the topic, target audience and target dates. The vendor will establish and implement a training plan for system and school educators, administrators, and technology coordinators on all aspects of the Summative Assessment. The vendor should describe written materials, both face-to-face and online module training and other supports that may be developed to ensure that students are prepared to function within the computer-based and paper-based testing environments.
- Vendor will be required to develop other resource materials, including user instructional materials, one pagers, etc.
- The vendor will be required to develop instructional resource materials, including but not limited to, professional development on connecting the assessments to classroom instruction, using Performance Level Descriptors and Item Specifications in the classroom, and using assessment data to inform instruction. The plan for this requirement should detail how to use the instructional materials to enhance student learning.
- Vendor policies, procedures and systems should exemplify user-friendliness and be intuitive to the extent possible.
- The ALSDE shall retain ownership of all training materials and online modules.
- The vendor must include other trainings that are not specifically listed in this RFP to provide a successful delivery of all aspects of the assessment.

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- **Online Training Support**

The vendor shall describe its plan to provide training and customer support specific to online assessment. The description should include training with an easy-to-understand set of directions, including screenshots, for operating the online assessment software. The vendor may also include other beneficial training materials in its response such as e-learning modules and online tutorials for users.

- **Online Tutorials**

The vendor must include a plan on the development of online Test Administrator tutorials that will be used to familiarize the Test Administrators with the platform and the item types.

Accommodations and Accessibility Supports

The ALSDE is committed to maximum accessibility for all students including those with disabilities and English learners (ELs) with or without disabilities. The vendor must provide assurances that the test design, development, and administration allow fair access for all students.

- **Print-on-Demand**

For students with specific testing barriers (i.e., students who must respond using eye-gazing), the vendor must describe its process for delivering additional paper copies of the student test booklet as print-on-demand.

- **Braille and Large Print**

For each operational assessment, the vendor's system will support administration instances in both Braille and Large Print.

- The vendor's Assessment Delivery Platform will provide for students identified through a student plan to access the assessment through on-demand Braille using refreshable Braille devices or large Print formatting using vision enhancing tools or software.

Data Integration and Collection

The vendor will interface with a web service written and hosted by the ALSDE to retrieve the data for the organization and student demographic files. Once the vendor has processed all testing data, the ALSDE will retrieve test results via a web service written and hosted by the vendor.

- The vendor shall describe in detail the services to be provided to conduct the required online data collections.
- The vendor shall include a detailed description of how its data collection system will be designed to operate within existing local system communication infrastructures.
- The vendor shall also describe how its system works with system/school content filtering systems and firewalls.
- The online data collection system design must be flexible, so that software modifications, database changes, and reporting requirements can be made efficiently and cost effectively.

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The vendor must indicate how it will ensure that this can be done.

- The vendor must explain how its system will accommodate for students who have moved in and out of a school or system.
- The vendor's system must show real-time online testing status and statistics by assessment and system. This status will be available to ALSDE and systems. Daily status reports shall be available for viewing.

- **Data Collection Protection Features**

The vendor shall discuss how its system responds to interrupted internet services without the loss of data, including student responses.

- The vendor's online data collection system must have a time-out or similar locking mechanism to prevent unauthorized access if a Test Administrator, while entering data, has to immediately evacuate the area due to an emergency. This must also include an auto- save feature so that the Test Administrator can easily resume when the emergency or the time-out has passed.

- **Access to Data Collection System**

The vendor shall provide ALSDE with a secure, password-protected, web-based system for the purposes of analyzing the assessment processes and data.

- ALSDE shall have access to and oversight of all aspects of online performance during the data collection windows and access to captured data after the data collection windows close.
- The vendor must provide access to the online data collection system via a unique log-in ID and password.

System Reliability and Mitigation Experience

- **Information Technology**

The vendor shall provide a draft plan detailing the deployment and operation of information technology and contingencies for the failure of information technology systems.

- The vendor shall ensure the reliability of information technology used in the transmission and function of computer-based assessments.

- **Cyber security**

The vendor shall describe the overall approach to security in its proposed system.

- The vendor shall agree at all times to maintain network system and application security that, at minimum, conform to the following:
 - State of Alabama Cyber Security Policies as found at <https://oit.alabama.gov/cybersecurity/>, and
 - Current cyber security standards set forth and maintained by the Center for Internet Security, which can be found at <http://www.cisecurity.org>.

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- Special consideration must be made to ensure the security of Personally Identified Information (PII) stored or processed by the system.
 - The system will be subject to security reviews by OIT Office of Cyber Security.
 - Challenges that the vendor may encounter for meeting cyber security standards during this project and how those challenges can be mitigated shall also be identified.
 - The vendor shall discuss the features of its system which prevent infiltration.
- **Online Assessment Challenges and Solutions**
The vendor shall describe the issues/challenges/problems/mistakes that arose in its history with online assessment administrations.
 - The vendor must describe and indicate the level of impact to school personnel, students, scores, and timeline for reporting. The description shall include the steps taken by the vendor or sponsoring agency to mitigate those issues.
 - Finally, the vendor should indicate what steps it will take to prevent these issues from occurring in Alabama.

Scoring

The vendor shall describe in detail its plan for scoring of the tests. This plan must describe each step in the scoring process and must reflect all scoring activities from start to finish for each assessment year.

- **Range-finding Meetings**
The vendor shall facilitate range-finding meetings for content specialists and Alabama public school special education educators to define rubric score points for scoring of the field-test items for the passage student responses.
 - The vendor will be responsible for all costs associated with this educator meeting.
 - The vendor must explain how it will select exemplary student responses from field-testing that are representative of the various types of responses collected from students.
 - The plan shall include an estimate of how many responses will be needed to appropriately define rubric score points for items and a rationale for why these numbers will adequately meet Alabama's needs.
- **Scoring Decision Guide**
The vendor shall develop and maintain a scoring decision guide, including decisions for how to address unusual situations or questions that arise each year around scores.
- **Scoring Staff**
The vendor must describe the process that is used to hire scorers and the method that will be used to provide training/support to staff required to meet its proposed timeline.
 - The vendor shall provide in writing the credentials and qualifications of the individuals it proposes to use as raters, table leaders, and scoring supervisors for ALSDE's approval.

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- **Artificial Intelligence Scoring**

The vendor shall describe in detail its current capacity to score the different item types and content areas represented in the Alternate Assessments.

- The vendor must provide information about options for automated scoring using artificial intelligence (AI) where appropriate.
- The vendor must include any limitations of the use of the vendor's AI scoring for each item type.

- **Additional Scoring Considerations**

- **Reliability and Validity of Scoring Procedures**

The vendor shall describe its proposed procedures for assuring that the assessments will be scored in a reliable and valid manner. This includes proper incorporation and utilization of the human scoring procedures.

- **Procedure for Unusual Responses**

The vendor shall describe its procedures for dealing with unusual student responses, such as those that indicate abuse or potential for student self-harm that may need to be brought to the attention of local educators.

- It is essential that unusual responses such as these be sent electronically, in a secure manner, to ALSDE as soon as they are discovered (within 24 hours of discovery), along with student and system identification information so that ALSDE can provide them to the DTC for system investigation.

Submission of Data Files and Reporting Assessment Results

The vendor must describe in detail its plan for the reporting of data files and results of the assessment. This plan must describe each step in the reporting of data files and assessment results processes and must reflect all reporting of data files and assessment results activities, for each year.

- **Data**

All raw student testing data shall be provided to ALSDE by the vendor.

- **Data files**

The vendor will describe what data files will be provided and the timeline for deliveries.

- The exact content, naming conventions, definitions of data elements, and file type shall be clearly documented and agreed upon by the vendor and ALSDE at least three (3) months prior to test administration.
- The vendor shall provide full state data files to ALSDE.
- The vendor shall maintain the proper identification of each student and the accurate matching of the student to the test results using the identification number for each student.
- The state data file shall be transmitted securely to the ALSDE within two weeks after testing has completed.
- At a minimum, the state file shall include all elements that have been used in reporting.

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- All timelines for posting and releasing data are negotiable according to the agreed upon timeline.
- **Data Documentation**

The vendor will describe how it will develop data specifications/file layouts, definitions, and formats in collaboration with ALSDE to document all data provided to ALSDE.
- **Data Ownership**
 - ALSDE shall own the raw and final data generated through the contract awarded from this solicitation.
 - The vendor is not allowed to utilize data generated through the Alternate Assessment for its own purposes.
 - Any usage of the data generated through activities related to this RFP may not be used for purposes outside of this RFP without prior written approval from the ALSDE.
 - ALSDE may choose to report the data in additional reporting layouts.
 - Additionally, electronic images of the state-level summary report by grade and content area shall be delivered to ALSDE.
 - These images shall be in a format mutually agreed upon by the vendor and ALSDE.
- **Data Analysis and Reporting**
 - The ALSDE intends to have an online reporting system within a secure Web-based system.
 - All reporting aspects shall be included in the Web-based reporting system as outlined in this RFP.
 - The vendor shall analyze the data; print, package, and deliver student/home reports and student labels; and provide other data electronically through a secure site.
 - The ALSDE intends to report student results involving a growth component.
 - The ALSDE shall notify the vendor of the subgroups to be disaggregated for the report.
 - A technical report on each year's administration shall be presented to the ALSDE.
 - At the state level, the vendor shall produce separate analysis by federally reported categories and any other identified categories determined by ALSDE.
 - The vendor shall be prepared to offer student reports in other languages if necessary.
- **Quality Control**
 - The vendor shall ensure that all data operations are subject to multiple checks for accuracy before data, files, or reports are released.
 - The vendor shall include in its proposal a full and complete description of its quality control procedures used in the reporting process for ALSDE review.
 - The vendor shall develop and implement quality control procedures for checking the accuracy of all test information, all student scores and identification, and all summary data.
 - The vendor must plan and prepare quality assurance (QA) schedules that will allow work to flow in a timely, effective manner, while maintaining high quality deliverables.

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- **Formatting of Reports**

- Assessment results are to be reported in a "user friendly" format.
- ALSDE is especially interested in reporting approaches that provide actionable information for students, parents, and educators.
- The reporting system must be designed to complement instruction and to facilitate the use of assessment results to improve student achievement.
- Reports must reflect areas of strength as well as areas that need to be targeted for instruction.
- Report shells and reports for accommodated forms of this assessment component, including other languages, will also need to be generated.
- The design and layout of reports will be initiated in a timely manner so that ALSDE has sufficient time to review the reports and to provide feedback to the vendor.
- This timeline shall be incorporated into the detailed schedule that will be included in the proposal.

- **Individual Student Reports**

- Score reports shall fulfill the Federal reporting requirements of *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). Specifically, the reporting system shall meet the expectations outlined in current Peer Review requirements.
- At a minimum, individual score reports shall summarize the student's performance in all content areas on which the student was assessed down to the content standards.
- This report shall include an overall scale score, performance level, performance-level descriptors, and sub-scores for each content area tested. Growth scores must be included.
- Two (2) paper copies and an electronic version of individual student score reports, as well as labels for student cumulative folders, shall be prepared to summarize student performance.
- These reports must be provided in other languages for all content areas.
- Should the vendor propose to utilize the scores of a subcontractor (Lexile or Quantile), those must be listed as an option.
- The vendor should describe additional types of information that may be added to reports as the program matures.
- The vendor shall describe how it proposes to fulfill this requirement and shall provide a graphic to illustrate what the proposed reports would look like.
- The vendor must provide an annotated student report with explanations of all data points for parents.

- **State/System/School Reports**

- Summary reports shall be prepared at the state, system, and school levels.
- The same data reported on the individual student report must be aggregated for state/system/school reports.

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- Additionally, state/system/school reports must provide disaggregated data by student population and trend data.
- Electronic reports must be generated that summarize the performance of the state/system/school on all components of the assessment taken and on any sub-domain or instructional objective.
- Exact content and format for each of the reports and files listed below will be further refined during the project.
- ALSDE will approve the formats and type of information that will be included on or within the reports.
- All timelines for reporting dissemination is negotiable according to the agreed upon timeline.
- **Reporting Errors**
 - The vendor shall immediately notify ALSDE when an error in reporting has been discovered.
 - The vendor and ALSDE will develop a plan for correcting the error.
 - The plan will include a description of how timely and forthright information will be communicated to all affected stakeholders.
- **Assessment Interpretive Guides**
 - Annually, the vendor shall develop two (2) Interpretive Guides to assist parents and teachers in interpreting assessment results.
 - The vendor shall describe in detail the contents of the Guide, as well as its proposed process for creating and proofing it.
 - The Interpretive Guide must be available online prior to the release of reports.
 - The Interpretive Guide shall be formatted in such a way that pertinent information can easily be copied at the school building for distribution to teachers or parents.
 - The format shall have information that is specifically targeted to parents.
 - The vendor must provide trainings/recordings to support these guides.
- **Operational Analysis**
 - Item data from the operational assessment must include appropriate Item Response Theory (IRT) item and task parameters, distractor, and bias analysis, and fit and Differential Item Functioning (DIF) statistics based on the selected IRT model.
 - The vendor shall describe its plan for providing each of these item data components and the method to be used for calculations.
 - The vendor shall also describe its approach to item calibration, including its approach to parameter estimation and any proprietary or third-party software to be employed by the vendor.
 - Examination of performance task data from the operational assessment must include rater reliability information, percentages of students in categories, materials used during review

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and any other relevant information.

- The vendor must provide ALSDE with all appropriate test statistics and information including:
 - Test Information Functions
 - Differential Test Function Information
 - Validity And Reliability Measures
- The vendor shall describe its method for establishing inter-rater agreement among its scorers, including how it will calculate inter-rater agreement statistics by grade and content area each year.

- Inter-rater agreement shall be examined separately for each dimension in each scoring rubric, as this may inform subsequent test development, training, or professional development priorities.
- A description of the method to be used for standard errors of measurement calculations shall also be included.
- The vendor shall produce a report of recommendations for changes to the future Alternate Assessments based on operational assessment results.
- The report shall include item development process revision recommendations, administration materials and process revision recommendations, and an analysis of anchor pools available for future operational testing.

- **Scaling**
 - The vendor shall work with ALSDE to implement a scaling procedure that will result in scale scores.
 - The vendor will establish model fit and individual score reliability for the selected scaling procedure.

 - The vendor shall identify advantages and potential disadvantages of its proposed scaling procedures within the detailed plan.

- **Standard Setting**
 - The vendor shall provide a description of its standard setting method(s), which shall include a detailed explanation of the proposed statistical methods and how they will be used to set standards.
 - Procedures must be approved by ALSDE's Technical Advisory Committee.
 - The vendor shall be responsible for all costs associated with convening these panels.
 - The vendor shall suggest how to approach communication with the field regarding potentially changing cut scores.
 - The vendor shall prepare a report describing and documenting the entire standard setting process.

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- **Performance Level Descriptors**
 - It is the vendor's responsibility to describe in detail the process to be used to develop content and grade-level specific performance level descriptors for the Alternate Assessments.
 - The vendor is responsible for all costs associated with proposed meetings.
- **Linking and Equating**
 - The vendor shall describe its proposed equating process, including any equating proposed at the sub-score level.
 - In addition, the vendor shall describe its procedure for maintaining trend lines over time for the Alternate Assessments.
 - Vendors shall describe the linking and equating procedures to be used in support of the scales in each content area and grade level.

Plans for Establishing Technical Adequacy

- **Alignment Studies**
 - The vendor shall set aside resources for independently conducted alignment studies of the assessments to the *Alabama Alternate Achievement Standards*.
 - The vendor will be responsible for the costs for this study.
- **Establishing Comparability**
 - The vendor must provide its plan for establishing comparability between accommodated and not accommodated test forms and administrations, including mathematics, and science assessments in other languages.
 - The vendor must present its plan for establishing comparability between paper-based and braille assessments.
 - The vendor shall provide any relevant empirical evidence that supports its ability to accomplish this goal.
- **Technical Advisory Committee**
 - The vendor shall work with ALSDE to participate in the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings.
 - The vendor is expected to provide clearly stated questions and supporting background materials in a timely fashion for review by ALSDE and the TAC, prior to TAC meetings.
 - All psychometric processes, including test design, scaling, equating, standard setting, and validation procedures must go before the TAC for review and must receive ALSDE approval.

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- **State Board Meetings**

The vendor may be required to attend and provide processes of work to the State Board Meetings/Work Sessions. The vendor should plan for up to six (6) presentations.

- **Technical Report**

The vendor shall propose how it will develop and deliver a Technical Report or a Technical Report Supplement (with the year's statistical information included) annually.

- The Technical Report shall include all relevant psychometric information for each test.
- The report is to be completed following the end of the operational program unless otherwise determined by ALSDE and vendor.

- **Irregularity and Data Forensic Analysis**

- The vendor shall indicate the steps that it will take to ensure that the assessment data collected represent the independent work of the students assessed.
- Solutions using data forensic statistical analyses to evaluate whether some of the test results were not earned fairly should be offered.
- The ALSDE anticipates that the vendor will use multiple methods to analyze results.
- The vendor shall submit samples of data forensics reports illustrating how the results can be used by the ALSDE.
- The data forensics analysis solution may include those used by other State Departments of Education for analyzing test results.
- The RFP response must include detailed specifications of the statistical analyses used to provide the data forensics analyses.

Peer Review Requirements

- The vendor shall provide its plan for conducting the studies necessary to meet **all** requirements of the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) *Standards and Assessment Peer Review Guidance*.
- The vendor must describe its plan for providing the best and most cost-effective studies for meeting this requirement.
- The vendor shall describe in detail how it will conduct studies to verify and support the validity of interpretations drawn from test scores.
- The vendor shall also propose its strategy for developing studies that investigate the intended and unintended consequences.
- The vendor shall indicate how the studies will support ALSDE's response to each element of the Peer Review Guidance.

Customer Service

The ALSDE requires the need for maintaining a steady flow of communication between the ALSDE and the vendor. Vendors shall respond to the requirements below with the understanding that it is ALSDE's expectation that technical and logistical support shall be provided in a responsive manner that minimizes burden, disruption, and inconvenience.

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- **Routine District Communications/Notifications**

The vendor shall be responsible for writing routine communications/notifications to the DTCs, Special Education Coordinators, and/or Technology Coordinators.

- **Telephone and Email Support**

- A dedicated toll-free customer service number and trained customer service representatives shall be provided by the vendor for this project.
- Customer service personnel shall be able to clearly articulate spoken English.
- The lead customer service representative shall be named in the proposal, and ALSDE shall have the right to approve the named person.
- The lead supervisor and other vendor trained staff shall be available to answer Alabama calls from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. central time each business day.
- When customer service staff is not available to take a call, a voicemail service system shall be available to record the caller's message.
- Messages shall be returned in a timely manner, generally within one hour or less but always within one business day.
- The vendor shall describe its proposed procedures for providing telephone support to Alabama.
- The vendor shall provide e-mail support from its customer service center.

- **Issue Resolution**

- Customer service staff shall have a system to ensure that issues raised by districts/schools have been satisfactorily resolved.
- The vendor shall notify ALSDE of any communication with the field regarding urgent or sensitive issues.

- **Records of Interaction with Customers**

- The vendor shall include a description of how calls and emails will be logged.
- An electronic record of all telephone calls and emails, as well as responses given to customers, must be maintained by the vendor.
- All communications with the field initiated by the vendor must be pre-approved by the ALSDE.
- Additionally, customer service staff may be asked to initiate email communications in unusual circumstances by the ALSDE.

- **Telemetry Data**

The vendor will include how it will provide telemetry data to investigate and resolve questions related to a student's testing experience and/or potential loss of data.

- The vendor must allocate time and resources to accomplish this requirement.

- **Business Rules** must be applied and approved by ALSDE on an annual basis.

E. Alternate Practice Tests

ALSDE is proposing to provide practice tests that will be solely owned by ALSDE. Each item written/developed must be completely aligned with the *Alabama Alternate Achievement Standards*.

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The practice test forms will include a representative sample of the item types that will be included on the Summative assessment. The practice tests will be available throughout the school year and will be ready to administer more than one (1) time per year, with different forms. The practice tests must be available no later than August of each year.

The vendor will describe in detail how it will propose practice tests for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Timeline with a detailed schedule of all aspects of the Practice Test.

Program Manager - The vendor will provide a dedicated **Program Manager** to assist and oversee this project.

Web-based Online Test Delivery System

The vendor shall indicate whether the hosted infrastructure service that it proposes to use for the practice test will be used in its current form or if it will be modified in any way for Alabama.

- The vendor must specify the version/release number of the service to be implemented for this project.
- The vendor shall provide ALSDE with a detailed Infrastructure Plan, which will incorporate all components required to meet industry standard best practices and, at a minimum, include the following:
 - Hardware
 - Software
 - Network
 - Active Directory Services
 - Database
 - Caching Capabilities
 - Configuration
 - Vendor Resources for Implementation
 - Timeline Segment in Accordance With The Project Plan
 - Testing And Validation
- The vendor's web-based hosted infrastructure service must provide for delivery on wireless networks with comparable performance to wired networks. (Vendor must support common web security appliances such as IronPort, Web Titan, and Cisco's secure web appliance.)
- The vendor must provide an Infrastructure Guide that details the minimum and recommended technical specifications and configurations needed to successfully access the online testing platform/system and to deliver the online practice tests that meet minimum specifications to perform on all student testing devices allowable within the schools including iPads, Chromebooks, laptops, and desktops.

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- Due to the expectation that some districts will have to rely on lower-grade access, the vendor will discuss how to provide access.
- Applications must be delivered within a secure browser that restricts access to the desktop and Internet, based on the requirements of ALSDE.
- Alabama does not have established minimum technology standards for schools within the state. However, support from the vendor must include the following technical standards at a minimum: Windows 7 or higher, VISTA platforms, plus Mac OS 9.2.2 and Mac OS 10.1.1 or higher as well as current version of the Linux kernel.
- The vendor shall indicate how it proposes to support releases of the above-mentioned platforms.
- Support for versions of operating systems will be continued until ALSDE approves discontinuing support for a particular version.
- The vendor shall discuss the minimum hardware specifications and technical standards, as well as the recommended hardware specifications and technical standards needed, for operation of its proposed system. This discussion should also include an analysis of differences in system performance based on minimum or recommended hardware.
- The vendor shall describe in detail how it will assure that all items placed in its web-based test delivery system will appear on students' computer screens as intended, for the variety of types of computers, operating systems, and connectivity described here.
- The vendor shall also describe its strategy for ensuring that new systems and all interfaces function properly when releasing new versions of any software application.

Platform

- The vendor must provide the technical specifications for a multi-faceted electronic assessment technical solution that includes, at minimum, an online test delivery system, online test administration system, and online scoring platform.
- Set-up and Installation Guide that details an overview for deployment and implementation including troubleshooting tips.
- Ease of use – the system offers intuitive navigation with minimal training needed.
- Navigation is efficient with minimal clicking required to complete key tasks.
- User's Guide that fully details the functionality of the online system (platform) for an end user in a school or district.
- The vendor must provide details on the ability to deliver thousands of assessments at any point in time.

Technical Requirements - The online assessments must work with a variety of devices, such as PCs, Mac, iPads, Chromebooks, and Windows tablets and use a variety of browser products, if necessary.

- A system that integrates with an API.
- Application will be hosted on Cloud-based servers.

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Test Development: capacity to develop a variety of passages and Alabama specific items in order to ensure that multiple genres and forms are reflected.

- Item types – variety of item types and possible student responses available
- A rich Item Bank that reflects the Depth of Knowledge levels.
 - Accommodations - At a minimum, the vendor is expected to provide the same online and paper-based student testing accommodations as provided by the *Summative*, including accommodated materials; braille test and large print test.
 - The vendor is expected to adhere to and meet the evolving expectations of industry standards in online accommodations.
 - The vendor must describe the extent to which its system currently meets the Accessible Portable Item Profile (APIP) standards and specifications.
 - The vendor shall discuss how the tools and accommodations accessed by the student during testing will be tracked, as well as how student profiles will be created and/or uploaded to allow for appropriate accommodation options during testing.
 - The vendor’s test delivery interface shall include all the information and resources required to make a test item accessible for students with a variety of disabilities and special needs.
 - The vendor shall discuss how it will develop other languages versions of the assessment in mathematics and science and provide other language Text-to-Speech.
 - The vendor shall discuss the extent to which its test delivery interface includes the following accommodations:
 - Audio accommodations, either through text-to-speech or through recorded audio (the vendor should discuss the pros and cons of these audio alternatives)
 - For audio accommodations, the discussion should include the vendor’s ability to highlight portions of the screen to be read aloud; and
 - Visual accommodation tools, including magnification, reverse contrast, selection of foreground and background colors, color overlay, masking, and adjustable font.
 - The vendor shall discuss the extent to which its web-based test delivery system will be compatible with third-party devices and software that allow accommodations to be offered to students with disabilities for accommodations that cannot be built into the vendor’s system.
 - Devices that can be used with the test delivery interface to include alternate keyboard, alternate mouse, refreshable Braille displays, Braille note-takers, keyboard emulators, and alternative and augmentative communication devices.
 - The vendor shall discuss how individual student profiles are created or imported into the system to select and make available appropriate accommodations based on student need.
- The vendor must describe how the item bank will be developed to refresh each year.

Retired Items

- The vendor will provide a detailed plan on how to incorporate ALSDE’s retired Summative Assessment items into the platform and practice tests.

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Ownership of items – ALSDE will be the sole owner of materials produced and data collected, including but not limited to:

- All test item banks and items developed for the practice test.
- All materials prepared for training or presentations.
- All research conducted by the vendor.
- All data related to ALSDE practice tests and student personal information.

Online Tutorials

- Online stand-alone tutorials shall be developed by the vendor.
- These will be used to familiarize the student with the system and the item types prior to taking the practice test.

Support/Training

- Face-to-face training on how to operate the platform and administer the assessments.
- Office hours or training modules
- Support helpline/email
- Clear and complete training materials with complete technical support to obtain full understanding of how to administer the online practice tests.
- Training Guide that provides step-by-step details for how to complete the most needed tasks in the online testing platform/system.
- Scoring/Benchmark guide with training that includes guidelines, information, and procedures to facilitate scoring of the writing responses if an online scoring option is not available.

Data and Reports

- Raw data files must be provided to ALSDE at appropriate intervals throughout the school year.
- Reporting Portal – the reporting portal must be capable of being upgraded across time. Initially, the system must be able to organize and present assessment data in a way that is easy for all users to read and understand. The Reporting Portal should allow for differentiated access to individual student, classroom, school, district, and state assessment data, and they should integrate seamlessly with each other.
- Provide a secure platform for schools/districts to access data/reports.
- Data are presented in a way that effectively communicates student learning to all users, including helping teachers understand which students need support for which skills.
- Reports that provide actionable and comparative data that inform instructional decision making.
- Provide a sample report.
 - Assessment results are to be reported in a “user friendly” format.
 - Reports must have the capability to be customizable reports and print ready.
 - The ALSDE is especially interested in reporting approaches that provide actionable information for students, parents, and classroom teachers.

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- The reporting system must be designed to complement instruction and to facilitate the use of assessment results to improve student achievement.
- Reports must reflect areas of strength as well as areas that need to be targeted for instruction.
- The vendor shall provide in detail how it proposes to fulfill this requirement.
- The design and layout of reports will be initiated in a timely manner so that the ALSDE has sufficient time to review the reports and to provide feedback to the vendor.

Individual Student Reports

- At a minimum, individual score reports shall summarize the student's performance in all content areas on which the student was assessed down to the standards.
- This report shall include an overall transformed scale score, performance level, performance level descriptor, and sub-scores for each content area tested and equated to the Summative Assessment.
- These reports must be provided in other languages for all content areas.
- Classroom level reports that are print-ready must be provided.
- Additionally, reporting measures must contain actionable information, such that teachers and parents can use results to connect students with targeted instructional and leisure-time materials that meet and challenge the student's abilities, interests, and learning objectives.
- The vendor should describe additional types of information that may be added to reports as the program matures.

State/System/School Reports

- Summary reports shall be prepared at the state, district, and school levels.
- The same data reported on the individual student report must be aggregated for state/system/school reports.
- Additionally, state/system/school reports must provide disaggregated data by student population and trend data.
- Electronic reports must be generated that summarize the performance of the state/system/school on all components of the assessment taken and on any sub-domain or instructional objective sub-score.
- Exact content and format for each of the reports and files will be further refined during the project.

Access to Data Collection System

- The vendor shall provide ALSDE with a secure, password-protected, web-based system.
- The vendor shall provide statewide, student level data with results of the Practice Test.

Data Collection Protection Features

- The vendor shall discuss how its system responds to interrupted Internet services without the loss of data, including student responses.
- The vendor's online data collection system must have a time-out or similar locking mechanism to prevent unauthorized access in the event that a student, while entering data, has to immediately

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evacuate the area due to an emergency such as a fire or tornado drill. This must also include an auto-save feature so that the student can easily resume when the emergency or the time-out has passed.

- The vendor shall describe in detail the services to be provided to conduct the required online data collections.
- The vendor shall include a detailed description of how its data collection system will be designed to operate within existing local system communication infrastructures, including T-1, DSL, or cable modem lines.
- The vendor shall assume that the existing technological infrastructure and computing hardware of the state, districts, and schools will not be replaced, as well as taken into consideration that some systems will be upgraded.
- The vendor shall also describe how its system works with district/school content filtering systems and firewalls.
- The online data collection system design must be flexible, so that software modifications, database changes, and reporting requirements can be made efficiently and cost effectively. The vendor must indicate how it will assure that this can be done.
- The vendor must explain how its system will accommodate for students who have moved in and out of a school or system since the rosters were created.

Data Privacy – The vendor must comply with all data security, data privacy and appropriate use laws, regulations, policies, and procedures required by the ALSDE.

- The vendor will describe how security of individual student data will be protected.
- Provide how the vendor will safeguard all individual student data and personally identifiable information.
- The vendor agrees to abide by and maintain adequate data security measures to protect Student Data from unauthorized disclosure or acquisition by an unauthorized person.
- Vendor shall make best efforts practices to secure usernames, passwords, and any other means of gaining access to the practice tests or student data.

System Reliability and Mitigation Experience

- Information technology
 - The vendor shall ensure the reliability of information technology used in the transmission and function of computer-based assessments.
 - The vendor shall provide a draft plan detailing the deployment and operation of information technology and contingencies for the failure of information technology systems.
- Cyber security
 - The vendor shall agree at all times to maintain network system and application security that, at minimum, conform to the following:
 - State of Alabama Cyber Security Policies as found at <https://oit.alabama.gov/cybersecurity/>.

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- Current cyber security standards set forth and maintained by the Center for Internet Security, which can be found at <http://www.cisecurity.org>.
- The vendor must agree to document all cyber security expectations to State of Alabama Policies and Standards in response to this RFP.
- Special consideration must be made to ensure the security of Personally Identified Information (PII) stored or processed by the system.
- The system will be subject to security reviews by OIT Office of Cyber Security.
- The vendor shall describe the overall approach to security in its proposed system.
- Challenges that the vendor may encounter for meeting cyber security standards during this project and how those challenges can be mitigated shall also be identified.
- The vendor shall discuss the features of its system which prevent infiltration.

Online Assessment Challenges and Remedies

- The vendor shall describe the issues/challenges/problems/mistakes that arose in its history with online assessment administrations.
- The vendor must describe and indicate the level of impact to school personnel, students, scores, and timeline for reporting. The description shall include the steps taken by the vendor to mitigate those issues.
- The vendor should indicate what steps it will take to prevent these issues from occurring in Alabama.

Business Rules must be applied and approved by ALSDE on an annual basis.

F. Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)

The vendor shall cover the costs for two (2) ALSDE staff memberships to the state membership of the CCSSO and State Collaboratives.

G. National Conference on Student Assessment (NCSA)

The vendor shall make all arrangements and cover the costs for ALSDE staff (up to two) to attend the annual National Conference on Student Assessment (NCSA) including hotel, travel, registration, and incidentals.

H. Facility for District Test Coordinator Meeting

The vendor will be responsible for securing a facility for the two District Test Coordinator Meetings held each year around the state. The vendor would be responsible for all equipment, internet/Wi-Fi, etc., for around 200 people.

I. Performance Bond

- The selected vendor should, within ten days after notification of the award and at no additional cost to the ALSDE, furnish a performance bond for the full contract amount.

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- The performance guarantee will be one of the following: cashier's check, other type bank certified check (personal or company checks not acceptable), money order, an irrevocable letter of credit, or surety bond issued by a company authorized to do business within the state of Alabama.

J. Transition

Proposals must include a transition plan ensuring the continuity of the state assessment program is of the essence.

- The vendor will assist the ALSDE with all activities required to transfer all assessment documents and materials during the transition.
- The vendor shall reference its proven ability to provide smooth contract transitions when working with other assessment organizations in contract transitional activities.

Option 3 – High School Summative Assessment

The High School Summative Assessment will be administered annually to students in two (2) high school grades in ELA, mathematics, and one (1) high school grade in science.

A. General Requirements

Professional Standards/Best Practices

The vendor shall ensure that all materials, practices, and procedures developed under this contract meet relevant professional standards, such as those contained in the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* published by the American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Psychological Association (APA), and the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME), CCSSO/Association of Test Publishers *Operational Best Practices for Statewide Large-Scale Assessment*, particularly in terms of privacy, reliability, validity, opportunity to learn, accommodations, scoring, reporting, and documentation.

- The vendor shall inform ALSDE in writing when implementation practices or policies are not consistent with the best educational research and practice. The vendor shall be responsible for clearly communicating the risks of violating conclusions of the best educational research and practice. If ALSDE agrees, the vendor shall work to make necessary corrections.

State and Federal Requirements

- The vendor shall ensure that all materials, processes, and procedures developed under this contract meet relevant state and federal requirements, including requirements under ESSA and peer review, as well as the Individuals with *Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA).
- Throughout the life of the contract, and any extensions, the vendor shall communicate in writing to the ALSDE when it concludes that the program is no longer meeting state and

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federal requirements and shall provide corrective options to the ALSDE for consideration.

- The vendor shall confirm its agreement to meet this requirement.

Communication

- Project communication will occur through a series of meetings, in addition to regular conference calls between the vendor and ALSDE.
- Upon contract award, the vendor shall organize and facilitate a meeting to review and finalize the project work plan. In addition, the vendor shall attend up to two additional planning meetings annually, excluding the training and development meetings required herein at the discretion of ALSDE.

Security

- The vendor shall follow FERPA, state, and industry standard security policies, including the provision of confidentiality agreements for all vendor staff, subcontractors, and educators participating in any aspect of this project.
- The vendor should include sample confidentiality agreements as an attachment to the proposal.
- The vendor must indicate the base services (ex. accounting of all secure materials, sealing, forensic analysis, etc.) related to test security that it requires for its high stakes state accountability assessments.
- Any breach of security that occurs through the negligence or inaction of the vendor, such as, but not limited to, failure to adhere to any security protocol or allowing raters to remove secure materials from item writing meetings, item review meetings, data review meetings, etc., will be considered a default on the terms of contract.
- The vendor shall confirm its agreement to meet this requirement.

Travel

The vendor may be required to travel to various statewide locations to meet project requirements/training.

- All anticipated travel expenses are to be included in the vendor's cost component response.
- The total price quoted for this project should include any travel expenses. NO additional costs will be reimbursed.

Backup and Recovery

The vendor shall provide a detailed description of the backup and recovery processes used to protect critical data. The vendor will:

- Describe the tools used for backup and recovery of applications and data.
- Describe the impact of the proposed backup process on the operation of the system.
- Address the following:
 - Use of and method for logging information.
 - Single points of failure and recommended approaches for the elimination of

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information.

- Approach to redundancy.
- Describe options to have the collected data stored at the vendor's site in addition to sending results along to ALSDE. A proposed retention schedule must be included.

ALSDE Sign-Off

- All procedures followed in the development, production, administration, scanning, scoring, and reporting of the Alabama state summative assessment shall be made available for review by ALSDE and as determined by ALSDE, may be subject to ALSDE approval.
- The vendor shall confirm its contract to meet this requirement in the submitted proposal.

B. Organization and Personnel

Throughout this document, the term "vendor(s)" is also assumed to include subcontractors where appropriate and applicable. If the vendor proposes to subcontract any part of the work, the vendor's response to this RFP must refer to the subcontractors where appropriate. Within the relevant requirements and specifications, a description of each proposed subcontractor's role in the project, qualifications to perform that role, management structure, key staff assignments, and qualifications of assigned staff shall be included.

If the vendor has discovered fault with a subcontractor named in the proposal, the vendor has the obligation to inform ALSDE immediately, and the appropriate steps must be taken by either the subcontractor or the vendor to correct the problem prior to that problem resulting in substandard performance or non-compliance. The vendor shall remain responsible for the performance of its subcontractors.

Organizational Structure

- Organizational charts, including identification of executive and key personnel, for the vendor, and for ALSDE project team specifically, including any subcontractors where applicable, must be provided. Qualifications of key executive personnel must be presented.
 - A supporting resume outlining education/training, employment history, and experience in conducting the work that is expected under this contract.
- The charts shall clearly indicate lines of authority and communication within and among the vendor's departments and subcontractors, where appropriate.
- The vendor shall also describe its escalation process for resolving any vendor/client disagreements.
- An executive team member directly in charge of overseeing the Alabama project shall be identified.
 - This executive team member shall be available both during and outside of normal business hours to assist with any urgent situations.

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- Contact information for this individual shall be provided at the time of contract award.
- Changes to the assigned executive team member, except for those resulting from separation of services, require prior consent by ALSDE.
- The replacement shall have qualifications that meet or exceed the original staff member proposed or the staff member holding the position previously and shall be approved by ALSDE.

Staff Qualifications and Experience

- The vendor shall provide a list of key staff, including but not limited to, the program manager, lead psychometrician, content development lead, content specific area lead, technology lead, special populations lead, scoring manager(s), production manager(s), and publication staff, as well as all staff assigned to this assessment component.
 - Each staff member's assigned responsibilities and time allocated to the project must be provided.
 - Time expected to be allocated to other projects must also be indicated.
- The vendor shall affirm in the response to this request for proposals that should the contract be awarded, all key personnel proposed shall be released from any concurrent responsibilities that would impede their availability to assume the work as proposed.
- The vendor shall assign one person, with ALSDE approval, to function as the Program Manager. The Program Manager must have at least five years of experience with projects of similar scope and size and will be committed to the project throughout its duration. At least three references from individuals in states or agencies where the proposed Program Manager has coordinated a comparable assessment program must be provided. That person must be responsible for all activities required by the project and will serve as the main contact person between the vendor and ALSDE. The Program Manager shall have the authority to make decisions and commitments on behalf of the vendor, subject to ALSDE approval.
- The Lead Online System Manager(s) will oversee all aspects of the online assessment system. The Lead Online System Manager(s) will be responsible for the design and function of the online system, assistance with training school systems in the use of the online system and troubleshooting any system technical problems with the system. The Lead Online System Manager(s) will also be responsible for scheduling stress tests and readiness tests to ensure that all school systems are prepared for online testing.
- Lead Content Specialists must have a bachelor's degree (master's degree preferred) as well as classroom experience in the specific content area.
 - The Project Manager(s) will manage the item and test development efforts, holding responsibility for development schedules and oversight of all item development, test construction, editorial tasks, and test-related publications.
 -
- The Scoring Project Manager(s) will oversee technical team members to complete processing,

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programming, scoring, reporting, and quality assurance tasks according to the timeline and requirements from the ALSDE. At least three references from state or agency clients previously served by the Scoring Project Manager(s) are required.

- The Lead Psychometrician(s) will oversee tasks and issues that relate to item selection, test form equating, sample selection, calibration, scaling, validity evidence, reliability evidence, reporting, test design, and other technical analyses. Psychometric staff must conduct studies and provide resources sufficient to meet the requirements of the United States Department of Education (USDE) Peer Review and technical needs of the ALSDE. Sufficient resources must be allotted for timely test construction, reporting, and all other technical tasks. The proposal must provide evidence the psychometricians assigned to support ALSDE are highly qualified and experienced in current industry-standard psychometric practice and USDOE assessment and accountability requirements. The Lead Psychometrician(s) must also have strong communication skills and the ability to make highly technical issues and information understandable to various audiences.
- The Quality Assurance Leader(s) will implement the steps and procedures used to ensure the products meet ALSDE requirements without errors.
- Dedicated Data Analyst(s) are required throughout the duration of the project to analyze student performance results or other technical aspects of the project and produce reports, including ad hoc or longitudinal reports, as required by ALSDE. The Data Analyst(s) must be highly proficient in statistical analysis software and have practical knowledge to be able to provide data in a format easily understandable by the public and media.
- Technical Editors and Reviewers will develop all test-related publications and ensure that they are accurate, concise, user-friendly, grammatically correct, and technically sound. In addition to the work, Technical Editors and Reviewers would contribute to test administration materials. Graphic Designers must be available to the ALSDE for providing design and copy layouts for brochures, websites, and other communications or presentations.
- Help Desk Administrator(s) will ensure communication services for Alabama schools and systems are correct and timely. The Help Desk Administrator(s) must train responders to accurately address specific Alabama policy, procedures, and issues on all aspects of the testing program.
- ALSDE requires that a Technology Expert be identified. This individual shall be responsible for many tasks, including but not limited to, assisting ALSDE and the systems with online assessments; working with ALSDE information systems (IS) staff to ensure the accurate and efficient transfer of data to and from ALSDE; creating, defining, and reviewing file layouts; aiding in the verification of demographic data; and assisting ALSDE and District Test Coordinators with the use of functionality.
 - Ideally, this person will be located in the in the central part of the state.
 - At a minimum, this person will be available to be on-site, anywhere in the state, at the request of ALSDE. Outside of the installation and testing window, this person's availability may be more flexible; however, during the actual installation and testing window, this person must be immediately available with little to no notice.
- For all meetings involving educators, the vendor must identify and indicate the qualifications of the Facilitators.
 - General qualifications for training and meeting facilitators must be included in the

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response to this request for proposal.

- Facilitators must be familiar with best practices, as well as state and federal laws, procedures, and regulations.
- As applicable, facilitators must also be familiar with the academic instruction of students and the educational and assessment landscape.
- Facilitators must be able to clearly articulate spoken English and create easily understood written materials and visual training aids.
- Facilitators must have demonstrated successful experience in leading large-group trainings, including webinars and meetings.
- ALSDE requires the vendor to hire Item Writers to write test items for the assessments. The writers must have a degree in a relevant field and knowledge of relevant subjects.
- ALSDE reserves the right to interview and approve all key staff, including subcontractor staff.
- Throughout the life of the contract, and any extensions, changes to the assigned Program Manager, Program Coordinator, Project Manager, Lead Psychometrician, Content Development Lead, Content Specific Area Lead, Special Populations Expert, Lead Online System Manager, and Technology Expert, except for those resulting from separation of services, will require prior written consent by ALSDE.
- If ALSDE requests removal of specific vendor personnel, the vendor shall provide replacement(s), with no impact to the project.
 - Replacement(s) shall have qualifications which meet or exceed the original staff member proposed or the staff member holding the position previously and shall be approved by the ALSDE.
 - All personnel who will work on-site at ALSDE or school sites may be required to be pre-approved for site access via a criminal background check paid for by the vendor.

Corporate Capabilities and Capacities

The vendor must present a description of corporate capabilities.

- The vendor shall provide the company's history, including the number of years that it has been in business, buyouts, takeovers, IPO's, bankruptcies, litigations, and claims, etc., within the last five (5) years.
- Situations arising in assessed liquidated damages must be described with their resolution, along with the amount of the liquidated damages or provided additional services.
- The description shall also identify the number of employees in the company and the company's location(s). The overall capacity of the vendor's organization(s) and the resources it will commit to the work for the project (by name and role in project) shall be discussed.
- A general description of the vendor's capabilities and capacities related to development, production, shipping and receipt, administration (of paper-based and computer-based assessments), scanning, scoring, data processing, reporting, and psychometric activities shall be included. Responses must demonstrate that the vendor meets, at a minimum, the mandatory qualifications presented at the beginning of this component.
- Specific examples of the vendor's work products, such as test and item specifications, items,

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forms, technical manuals, research reports, technical services, etc., should be identified under the relevant requirements and specifications.

- ALSDE expects to receive the same or better quality of work throughout the contract, including any extensions, as the examples that are provided in the proposal.

Relevant Experience

- The vendor shall provide a listing and descriptions of all work in similar projects that it and its proposed subcontractors have carried out or are carrying out for other clients. The list shall include client, program name, content area, grades, administration mode (paper-based or computer-based), use of scoring, length of contract, and number of students.
- For computer-based testing, the vendor shall include the total number of tests administered and the highest number of successful concurrent testers. For each such project, the vendor must provide the name of the state or other organization, name of client contact person, this individual's telephone number and email.
- Company Experience: The following vendor qualifications are required to ensure that effective services for the described project are achievable:
 - Documentation of expertise.
 - Technical competency in all areas identified in the RFP.
- Submit a minimum of three (3) references for each of the areas listed above for experience in the last five (5) years.
- Further evidence of experience should be evident in responses to specific requirements and specifications as appropriate.

Risk Management and Quality Assurance

- The vendor shall address timeline issues, risks, mitigation, and contingency plans for all aspects of the project. These plans should refer to more than just "communication."
- The vendor should highlight its proven ability to document and enact risk management strategies - especially as they relate to the development, production, shipping and receipt, administration (of paper-based and computer-based assessments), scanning, scoring (human and AI), data processing, reporting, and psychometric activities of all aspects of the assessments.
- The vendor should submit sample Risk Assessment documentation used in an existing program to demonstrate the comprehensiveness of its ability to conduct contingency planning for a variety of conditions.
 - This Risk Assessment documentation may be submitted as an attachment to the proposal. This documentation should also highlight internal procedures and protocols for quality

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assurance in all aspects of delivering large-scale, statewide assessments - including test development, production, shipping and receipt, administration (of paper-based and computer-based assessments), scanning, scoring (human and AI), data processing, reporting, and psychometric activities of all aspects of the assessments.

C. Program Management

Due to the high level of attention focused on these tests and their importance, the goal for the ALSDE and the vendor is 100% accuracy in every aspect of the program. Toward the end, the contracted vendor will utilize formal project management methodology and provide ALSDE with a project management plan. The plan will include position assignments with areas of responsibility, project schedules and milestones, tasks, subtasks, critical path analysis, specifications for key systems, detailing the production schedules and critical deadlines.

- The vendor is required to obtain ALSDE written approval of the timelines and all materials prior to their use, distribution, or publication. The vendor must include the review time requirements into the appropriate project management plans. The proposal will detail the methodology to be employed and provide samples of the documents that will be used for project management, including progress reports.

Schedule of Activities

- The vendor shall provide a proposed schedule that clearly identifies and includes:
 - key activities related to the field (ordering of materials; receipt of materials; test dates; return of materials; demographic clean-up window; release of individual student scores; final individual student, school, and system score file release; and receipt of paper reports); and
 - key transfer dates between the vendor and ALSDE related to development, production, shipping and receipt, administration (of paper-based and computer-based assessments), scanning, scoring, data processing, reporting, and psychometric activities.
- The vendor must provide a Key Activities Table for each fiscal year.

Project Schedule

- Proposals shall include a detailed schedule, reflective of the work plans, which describes how each of the requirements and specifications described in the proposal will be accomplished. The schedule shall, at a minimum, identify the tasks, subtasks, beginning date, end date, and the group responsible for each step in the process. The schedule must be included as a separate attachment to the proposal.
- Schedules must reflect the periods of time mutually agreed upon.
- Activities related to the development of the next year's assessment, and reporting for the prior year's assessment must be clearly distinguishable from activities related to the current year's assessment.
- The vendor and ALSDE shall mutually agree upon final dates. Joint monitoring of the

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schedule shall occur on an on-going basis. The vendor shall ensure that all schedule adjustments allow final deliverable dates to be met. If necessary, timelines and schedules may be revised with prior approval of ALSDE and an executed contract amendment for all deliverables subject to liquidated damages.

- A revision of a timeline on the part of the vendor exempts the vendor from meeting a contractual deadline only if:
 - the vendor and ALSDE mutually agree upon and document, through a contract amendment, an extension of the deadline as executed through a contract amendment; or
 - the vendor can prove that the deadline was not met due to ALSDE's failure to meet a contractual deadline, resulting in the vendor's inability to adhere to the schedule for delivery of products and services.
- The vendor shall alert ALSDE as soon as it believes a deliverable subject to liquidated damages is at risk of not meeting its delivery date.
- ALSDE must be notified whenever its contract is included in the vendor's internal meetings focused on programs at risk.

Ongoing Communication

Communication between the vendor and ALSDE will be essential.

- The vendor shall make all written communication or summaries of communications with any subcontractor(s) identified in the proposal available to ALSDE at its request. In addition, the ALSDE expects to be able to participate during all appropriate and applicable meetings and trainings between the vendor and any subcontractor(s) identified in the proposal.
- Ongoing communication will occur between ALSDE and the vendor via the designated Program Manager as necessary whenever issues arise.
- To facilitate regular communication, the vendor's Program Manager shall organize weekly conference calls with ALSDE.
- The vendor's Program Manager and ALSDE shall work collaboratively to develop a mutually agreed upon agenda for conference calls. The vendor shall be responsible for scheduling and setting up conference calls and any costs associated with the conference call.
- In addition to weekly progress calls, the vendor shall submit a monthly report to ALSDE demonstrating progress toward deliverables within the project's work plan.

Project meetings

- Periodic meetings between ALSDE staff and representatives of the vendor are essential. Those persons directly involved with the project shall be available for technical assistance and discussion at the project meetings at the expense of the vendor. Strategies, procedures, and timelines for the next testing cycle will be discussed and reviewed and will cover all aspects of the program including blueprints and test specifications; item development and item banking; field-testing; computer-based testing; scoring; equating; test booklet production;

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standard setting; training; administration manuals and ancillaries; test administration; security and inventory procedures; shipping, delivery, and return procedures; reporting and analysis; and quality assurance.

- The vendor shall provide travel and time for appropriate staff to be available as needed to consult with ALSDE. At a minimum, the vendor will coordinate the following meetings:
 - Planning Meetings
 - Content And Test Specifications Meetings
 - Item Development Meetings
 - Content Review Committee Meetings
 - Bias Review Committee Meetings
 - Alignment Study Meetings
 - Any Additional Meetings Not Specifically Listed Here
- The vendor shall prepare written documentation of each in-person and committee project meeting. This shall be submitted to the ALSDE within an agreed upon timeline at the conclusion of each meeting.

Monthly reports

- The vendor shall provide a monthly report that summarizes actions taken, issues that arose, issue resolution that occurred, outstanding issues and when they will be resolved, upcoming deadlines, and work that will occur.
- These reports shall be sent monthly to the ALSDE.

Program Improvement Plans

- For each phase of the program including development, production, shipping and receipt, administration (of paper-based and computer-based assessments), scanning, scoring, data processing, reporting and psychometric activities, the vendor shall provide a report that addresses the relevant phase by detailing the activities completed and by providing recommendations for improvement for the next assessment cycle.
- The report shall also detail errors, problems and/or discrepancies by system and by school.
- The report will allow ALSDE to detect any patterns in the errors, problems, or discrepancies noted in the report and to use that information to make appropriate decisions.

Quality Control and Signoffs

Reviews and signoffs for all deliverables shall be documented and available to ALSDE upon request. The vendor shall document the steps, timeline, and staff involved in the quality control procedures for each phase and deliverable of the project.

D. Assessment Development

The vendor must provide a detailed plan for the development of the High School Summative Assessment, which must describe each step in the development process and must be reflective of the

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relevant activities and schedule for all test development activities from start to finish for each assessment year.

The following is a list of activities required by this RFP for the development of the High School summative assessment. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of every activity required by this RFP, and it is expected that the vendor will carefully read all sections of the RFP and undertake and complete all work necessary to ensure ALSDE can successfully administer the High School Summative Assessment in two (2) grades in ELA and math in High School and one (1) grade in science.

- The *Alabama Courses of Study* and the NAEP Frameworks must be utilized in the development of items.
- Assessments offered in other languages must be developed.

Content

The vendor must provide a sample of eligible item types to be reviewed by the field and approved by the ALSDE.

Development of Performance Level Descriptors

The vendor must provide a description of the process to be used to develop general and grade level specific performance level descriptors for each content.

Item Types

The vendor's response must describe the variety of item types that would be included on the assessment, including item types that require students to generate or produce a response as well as select a response.

- The vendor's response must provide access to sample items to allow ALSDE to review proposed item formats.

Item Blueprints

- The vendor shall create a proposed test blueprint for the assessments to be developed in each content area and grade level.
- The vendor shall provide refined blueprints to be reviewed by the field, as appropriate, and approved by ALSDE.
- This blueprint must specify the numbers of each type of assessment item to be used at each grade level in each content area, depth of knowledge, the numbers of items in each final test form (operational and field-test slots), the number of sessions required and the total amount of testing time.
- The vendor must allow for the accommodation of additional testing time into the schedule.
- The vendor must take into consideration the assessments must generate valid information

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throughout the data distribution.

Test Item Development

ALSDE is looking to develop a bank of items that it owns. ALSDE is not seeking to use vendor owned items unless there is compelling psychometric rationale.

- The vendor's proposal should include a detailed plan for item development.
- Potential supplemental resources and activities should be discussed.
- The vendor's content specialists and item writers must have experience teaching ELA, mathematics, or science. Passages, items for ELA, prompts for writing, items for mathematics, and items for science must be custom written for the test, with the understanding that any item submitted will become the property of the ALSDE, which will retain all rights, including full distribution rights.
- After item reviews and item field testing, the item bank must have a sufficient number of unique items, with good statistics, to develop additional forms and with enough additional items to change out all open-ended items for additional administrations.
- The vendor must provide for appropriate over-production of items to allow for elimination due to content reviews, bias reviews, and field testing.
- The vendor must edit the items before submitting them for any review.
- The vendor must also provide the artwork for items before submitting them for review.
- The vendor shall provide samples of high-quality assessment items of each type for each content area so the ALSDE can see the nature of the work the vendor is capable of providing.
- The vendor shall create, with the assistance of the ALSDE, a variety of prototypical assessment items. These could include innovative approaches to performance assessments and computer-based assessments. These prototypes will illustrate the types of items to be created for the item developers and will be used to illustrate the assessments.
- Timelines associated with the above activities must be provided.
- The vendor shall describe in detail how it will provide and monitor the assignments given to the developers.
- The vendor must describe in detail its plan for thoroughly editing the items. Editors shall be persons qualified in the content area(s) in which they are editing.
- The vendor must manage an electronic item bank that will be fully accessible to the ALSDE. This bank will include items with field-test statistics.
- Accurate and detailed item bank records must be kept and reported as requested by the ALSDE. The proposal should detail the item bank structure and the processes the vendor will use to update and maintain the bank.
- The vendor shall provide electronic copies of the item bank by content area when necessary.
- The vendor should note if a software program or web-based application for the item pool will be provided to the ALSDE as part of the proposal.
- The vendor should account for multiple new forms being developed each year.

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- The vendor should state how listening items will be developed.
- The vendor must work with ALSDE to decide on the item pool and summary of the items for each year.

Cognitive Labs

- The vendor shall provide a detailed plan for conducting cognitive labs for any new types of assessment items. These items should be exposed to students and teachers prior to introducing them on operational assessments.
- The vendor shall provide prototypes to be used through a cognitive lab process to evaluate the quality and appropriateness of the items for the High School Summative Assessments.
- The vendor must describe how the cognitive labs' test results will be used to refine the items.

Item Specifications and Guidelines

- The vendor's proposal should include a detailed plan of the procedure to be used to write item specifications for each grade of the assessment. The plan should include the number and statement of each standard, format/item type(s), content limits, and sample items for each format/type.
- The vendor shall develop specifications for each type of item and artwork to be created. The vendor shall work with ALSDE to prepare a Style Guide to be used for item presentation.
- Online items should include Accessible Portable Item Profile (APIP) coding. The vendor shall provide evidence of its ability to fulfill this requirement.
- After the Item Specifications are approved by ALSDE, the vendor will provide ALSDE with an electronic copy of the final versions for publication.
- It will be the vendor's responsibility to do final proofreading of all text and graphics for accuracy prior to sending to ALSDE for approval.

Universal Design

- The vendor must present its plan to ensure items will be created to permit students with disabilities and English learners to fully participate in the assessments and receive valid scores, while minimizing the need for accommodations.
- The vendor must explain how the needs of students with disabilities, especially sensory, physical and language disabilities, as well as English learners, will be taken into consideration during item writing.
- The vendor shall explain how universal design principles will be applied to online and paper administrations.

Number of Items to be Developed

- For each year, grade, content area and item type, the vendor shall identify the number of items that will be developed to be taken to item review, the number expected to be accepted, the number

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expected to be included across the test forms during field testing and the number expected to be accepted at data review.

- The vendor is responsible for the production of the number of items needed for each content area and grade level.
- The vendor's response should reflect an understanding of ALSDE's intended use of the results from the assessment, the type of scores that will be reported, the plan to release items, as well as an understanding of academic standards. The vendor's response should also consider the testing time and cost constraints discussed throughout this RFP.

Item Bank

- The vendor shall describe in detail its system for an item bank. This system must provide the ability to indicate the status of each item and permit the assessment forms to be readily assembled.

Passage Selection and Review

- The vendor shall describe its plan for selecting appropriate passages for all relevant content areas based on complexity, quality, and range.
- Although ALSDE values the use of authentic, classic, and historically significant passages, it recognizes that, especially in lower grades, the vendor may have the ability to provide appropriately complex, high quality literary and informational texts through a commissioned process.
- ALSDE also appreciates the flexibility in use that commissioned passages provide. ALSDE will, therefore, permit the vendor to use high quality commissioned passages as well as copyrighted passages for which permission is obtained.
- It will be the responsibility of the vendor to provide all needed passages for Alabama assessments, including both printed and online tests. For all permissioned passages, it will be the vendor's responsibility to secure the permissions ensuring that ALSDE can use the items on both paper-based and computer-based assessments, as well as used for released items.
- ALSDE requests that a percentage of the passages (TBD) be written from topics addressed in the *Alabama Courses of Study Standards* for Social Studies and Science.
- The vendor shall provide evidence of its ability to fulfill this requirement.
- The vendor shall present its plan for ALSDE review followed by field review of the passages.
- For the passages, the review must reflect an evaluation of the complexity, quality and range of text, as well as bias.

Item Writer Training

- The vendor shall describe in detail its plan for providing item writing training and assignments.
- The multiple-choice, short constructed-response and extended constructed-response types of items are to be created by the vendor under the direction of ALSDE (using Alabama public school educators unless otherwise agreed upon by the vendor and ALSDE).

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- The vendor shall indicate in detail what materials it proposes to use for assessment development training, as well as how these materials will be created, reviewed, and used.
- The training must assist item developers in understanding Universal Design principles, including accessibility related to interactive online item types, so that the need for extensive assessment accommodations for students with disabilities and English learners is minimized. Item writers will need to be helped to understand the implications of automated scoring for item development.
- ALSDE must review and approve these materials and procedures before these materials are used.
- The vendor must present a process for recruiting, evaluating, and retaining educators to serve in the role of item writers.
- The vendor must also provide a plan for determining item writing assignments, as well as contingency plans should the educators be unable to produce enough items in the available time.

Educator Meetings

For all meetings held with Alabama public school educators, the vendor is responsible for all costs. This includes all expenses for Americans with Disabilities Act compliant meeting sites, including sign language interpreters and large print as needed; AV equipment; internet connections; and any other desired requirement for the meeting to be successful. If overnight stay is required, hotel rooms will be billed directly to the vendor. Each educator receives a stipend, if it is a non-workday for the educator, or the district is reimbursed for the cost of hiring a substitute at an agreed upon rate during the educator’s absence. In addition, educators are reimbursed for travel expenses (mileage, parking, tolls, etc.) and meals during overnight stays.

Expenditure	Description
Stipend or Substitute Reimbursement	Up to \$150 stipend if a non-workday for the educator OR reimbursement of district for hiring a substitute at the agreed upon rate
Meal Expenses	The per diem rate will be set at the current state rate at the time of the event.
Lodging	Lodging shall only be provided for participants who travel more than thirty (30) miles in one direction to attend the event.
Parking/Tolls	Participants will be reimbursed for total cost.

Item Review Committees

- The ALSDE believes that the use of Item Review Committees consisting of Alabama public school educators from the state is a critical part of the item development process. The use of Alabama public school educators enhances the transparency of the program and increases understanding and buy-in.
- The vendor will support grade-level item review committees for each assessment proposed.

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The committees will consist primarily of grade-appropriate teachers recruited and selected by ALSDE. Additional committee members may include local curriculum coordinators, content specialists, ELL specialists, and/or special education specialists.

- ALSDE and the vendor's Item Development Team will work together to facilitate the meetings which will be held annually in Alabama. If the vendor feels that additional meetings are necessary, and/or the timing of the meetings should be changed, the vendor's response should include a proposal for an alternative meeting schedule.
- The vendor's response should include the steps taken to ensure the most efficient use of the limited time available with the members of the Item Review Committees.
- The vendor will schedule an additional meeting with ALSDE to reconcile item feedback; and written documents will be produced by the vendor, summarizing the meeting and recommendations, within two weeks of each committee meeting.

Content and Bias Review Meetings

- The vendor must present its plan for both the content meeting and the bias review meeting.
- Each item must be reviewed by a Content and Bias Review Committee in each content area to assure that the item is of high quality, that it is aligned to the standards, that it measures the skill in a sound manner, and that the item does not unfairly advantage/disadvantage any student and is not offensive to students, parents, or the public.
- This committee shall also review the overall content coverage of the set of items, noting any areas where the alignment of the set of assessment items is weak.
- A separate committee will be convened in each content area (ELA, mathematics, and science). Each committee will review each batch of items prior to field-testing.
- Initially, these meetings must occur face-to-face. As the assessment matures, vendors may propose to conduct these reviews either in person at meetings to be held in the state, or by using a virtual item review system. In either case, the vendor will need to describe how it will protect the confidentiality of the items before, during, and after the review meetings.
- If the vendor proposes to use electronic means for conducting the item reviews, the vendor must provide detailed information on the electronic system they propose to use and provide illustrative graphics that show the review capabilities of their system(s) and/or provide online access to the system for the ALSDE to review.
- The vendor will be responsible for providing the ALSDE with summary information, including the number of items accepted as is, the number of items accepted with revisions, and the number of items rejected.
- The vendor is expected to take the lead role in training the educators and facilitating each one of the Item Review Committees' responsibilities.
- The vendor shall indicate in detail what materials it proposes to use for these meetings, as well as how these materials will be created, reviewed by the ALSDE, and used. All materials must be reviewed by ALSDE prior to the meeting to allow time for revisions to be made prior to

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printing.

- The vendor will be responsible for all costs associated with this educator meeting.

Field-testing (initial and embedded)

- All newly created items are to be field-tested.
- The vendor must describe how it will partner with Alabama's current vendor to allow for field-test items to be embedded into the operational assessment or if the vendor could offer a standalone field test.
- The vendor shall provide its plan for conducting a field-test (e.g., how many items of each type are to be field-tested, how many items will be in each form, and the number of test forms needed to accommodate the number of items to be field-tested at each grade level and content).
- The vendor's plan for including accommodations in field-testing must also be included.
- After initial field-testing, field-test items will be embedded. The vendor shall describe its detailed plan for embedding field-test items in operational forms (e.g., how many items of each type are to be field-tested, how many items will be in each form, and how many test forms will be needed to accommodate the number of items to be field-tested at each grade level and content).
- The vendor's development plan for field-testing shall include how the materials will be prepared for field-testing, including test forms, and administrator's directions.

Data Review

- The vendor must provide a plan for ALSDE and educator committee review of data resulting from field testing.
- The vendor will be responsible for all costs associated with this meeting.

Form Development - Regular Form

- The vendor shall describe in detail how it will select the items to be used in the operational forms each year.
- The plan must describe how multiple forms will be developed each year; ALSDE is requesting multiple forms (more than two) each year. Discussion should describe how items will be refreshed each year.
- The plan for the development of the forms shall include consideration of the number of anchor items needed to equate the measures from year to year, the number of new operational items to be included, and the number and position of new items to be field-tested. Maximum number of exposures for items must also be addressed.
- This plan must also describe how the vendor will support the equating of the assessment from year to year during the development process. This must include the way the item bank will be utilized to select the operational items as well as the field-test items, and what percentage

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of pre-used items the vendor proposes be used again.

Form Development Make-up Form

- The vendor shall describe how a make-up form will be developed and used when students are unable to complete testing.

Breach Form

- The vendor shall describe the way it will provide a breach form for each grade and content area.
- Where possible, it is the expectation that the same breach form will be used for the life of the contract, including any extensions.

Accommodated Materials and Administration Procedures

- The vendor must provide a list of appropriate assessment accommodations for students with disabilities and English learners. Accommodations listed must be supported by the most current research.
- The list shall describe the test accommodations and supports that allow access for students with disabilities and English learners to participate in each assessment most fully without interfering with the construct of the assessment.
- The vendor must describe accommodations which would threaten the validity of the assessment by interfering with the construct being measured.
 - Accommodations must be considered for both online and paper assessments.
 - The vendor shall be expected to facilitate extensive discussion with ALSDE on accommodations.

Large Print and Braille Paper Versions

The vendor must describe the steps it will follow to create large print forms for each grade and content area, including other language forms. Any issues that are known to arise with images must be addressed.

- The vendor will be responsible for providing a Braille version of all tests as necessary.
- The quality of Braille must meet the standards established by the American Printing House for the Blind. The vendor is responsible for having Braille materials proofed by an independent party (approved by ALSDE) that includes a certified Braille reader.
- The vendor will describe its plan for dealing with items that cannot be brailled. Indicate how the inability of the item to be brailled is documented in the item development system and item bank and how this will affect scoring.

Accommodated Paper-Based Forms

The vendor must describe the steps it will follow to create valid accommodated paper-based forms.

Document Development

The following describes the documents required by this RFP but is not an exhaustive list. ALSDE

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will have final approval on all documents.

- **District Test Coordinators Manual**

The vendor shall describe in detail the contents of the District Test Coordinators Manual, as well as the planned processes for creating and proofing the manual. The manuals will be printed, as well as made available in electronic format.

- **Test Administration Manuals**

The vendor must describe the steps it will follow to create the Test Administration Manuals.

- The vendor shall describe in detail the contents of the Test Administration Manual, as well as its planned processes for creating and proofing the manual.
- The manuals will be printed and distributed to the DTCs, as well as made available in electronic format.

- **Technology Guide**

- The vendor must describe in detail the contents of a Technology Guide to be provided to Technology Coordinators.
- The Technology Guide must include all technical requirements for the online administration of the assessment, as well as troubleshooting guidance and any other information pertinent to the role of the Technology Coordinator.

- **Ancillary Materials**

- The vendor will describe what ancillary materials will be produced and how it will develop the materials.
- Ancillary materials must include Parent Resources. The vendor will describe the Parent Resources to be made available.

- **Instructional Materials for the *Alabama Course of Study Standards***

- Instructional materials are a valuable resource to aid teachers in their instruction and provide educators with a purposeful sequencing of teaching and learning expectations.
- The vendor shall propose detailed work to develop/revise, as needed, the instructional materials (one per content area and grade level) aligned to the state standards.
- The vendor shall describe in detail its proposal to coordinate and facilitate meetings with Alabama educators to develop, review, and/or revise instructional materials.
- The committee shall also ensure the instructional materials are aligned to the *Alabama Course of Study Standards* and are appropriate.
- The vendor shall develop the agenda, prepare all meeting materials, and provide the initial training on how to instructional documents.
- The vendor shall oversee the committee process.
- The vendor shall ensure that fair and orderly consensus process is followed, that committee-work product is adequately documented, and that the process stays on schedule.

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- The vendor shall also serve as resources, answering questions pertaining to the content of instructional materials.
- The vendor shall indicate in detail what materials it proposes to use for these meetings, as well as how these materials shall be created, reviewed by the ALSDE, and used.
- All materials shall be reviewed by the ALSDE at least one week prior to the meeting and printing.
- The vendor is responsible for all costs associated with this meeting following the ALSDE guidelines for educator participation including travel, hotel, etc., at state rates.

Sample/Released Items

The vendor will propose a plan for the annual release of a representative sample of test items. The purpose of releasing items is to provide stakeholders with information about the type and level of knowledge and skills assessed on the assessments, the variety of item types used on the assessments, and the rigor of the items on the assessments.

- The released items will consist of an agreed-upon number of items.
- The vendor's response should address how common items may be used to support the release of items.
- Release of items will begin with the first operational administration of the High School Summative Assessment.
- Each year it is ALSDE's goal to release and post items of each type in each content area and grade. The items must be presented in a way that are easily downloadable for use in the classroom.
- For all items, standard(s) measured by the item and item statistics must be provided for educator use.
- For constructed-response items, scoring guides and annotated responses for each point on the rubric scale must also be provided.
- The vendor must describe the support materials it intends to develop to meet this specification, as well as the steps it will follow to develop and produce those materials.

Assessment Administration

The vendor shall describe in detail its plan for the administration of the operational assessment. This plan must describe each step in the assessment administration process and must reflect assessment administration activities, from start to finish, for each assessment year.

• **Test Window**

The High School Summative Assessment will be administered annually. The vendor shall provide suggested test windows considering end of year and reporting expectations.

• **Distribution of Printed Test Materials**

The vendor should include in the response a detailed description of the procedures along with the name of the subcontractor or carrier to be used to distribute testing materials to each LEA. These procedures must be approved in advance by the ALSDE. The vendor must describe how it

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will provide/deliver additional materials requested by any LEA after the original delivery date.

- The vendor must describe in detail its plans for ensuring quality control of the packaging commensurate with a high stakes assessment program.
- The vendor must explain the process on how the materials will be packaged, collected/destroyed after testing, and the verification process of the return of all printed secure materials.

- **Online Test Delivery System**

The vendor shall provide ALSDE with a detailed Infrastructure Plan, which will incorporate all components required to meet industry standard best practices.

- The vendor's web-based hosted infrastructure service must provide for delivery on wireless networks with comparable performance to wired networks.
- Applications must be delivered within a secure browser that restricts access to the devices and Internet, based on the requirements of ALSDE.
- The vendor shall discuss the minimum hardware specifications and technical standards, as well as the recommended hardware specifications and technical standards needed, for operation of its proposed system. This discussion should also include an analysis of differences in system performance based on minimum or recommended hardware.
- The vendor shall describe in detail how it will ensure that all items placed in its online test delivery system will appear on students' computer screens as intended, for the variety of types of computers, operating systems, and connectivity.
- The vendor shall also describe its strategy for ensuring that new systems and all interfaces function properly when releasing new versions of any software application.

- **Remote Testing Option**

- The vendor must describe its plan for implementing a remote administration of the assessment should it be required at some point within the life of the contract.
- The plan should include the vendor's capabilities with regard to the remote administration of high-stakes, secure assessments, as well as detailed steps for ensuring test security with remote testing.
- The ALSDE is requesting a full refresh each year. This refresh must include a different form from the non-virtual schools.
- The ALSDE is interested in results from year over year comparisons, test session comparison, testing times, answer change analysis, and other score comparability/quality measures from non-virtual schools.

- **Tools and Accommodations**

The vendor is expected to adhere to and meet the evolving expectations of industry standards in online accommodations.

- The vendor must describe the extent to which its system currently meets the Accessible

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Portable Item Profile (APIP) standards and specifications.

- The vendor shall discuss how the tools and accommodations accessed by the student during testing will be tracked, as well as how student profiles will be created and/or uploaded to allow for appropriate accommodation options during testing.
- The vendor shall specify the extent to which its system can provide embedded tools and details about what those tools would do.
- The vendor's test delivery interface shall include all the information and resources required to make a test item accessible for students with a variety of disabilities.
- The vendor shall discuss the extent to which its test delivery interface includes the following accommodations:
 - audio accommodations, either through text-to-speech or through recorded audio (the vendor should discuss the pros and cons of these audio alternatives);
 - visual accommodation tools, including magnification, reverse contrast, selection of foreground and background colors, color overlay, masking, adjustable font face, and alerts to test takers that alternate tactile representations; and
 - any additional accommodation tool, including virtual keyboards, translation tools, sign language and sign system presentation, voice recognition, and word prediction.
- The vendor shall discuss the extent to which its web-based test delivery system will be compatible with third-party devices and software that allow accommodations to be offered to students with disabilities for accommodations that cannot be built into the vendor's system.
- The vendor shall discuss how individual student profiles are created or imported into the system to select and make available appropriate accommodations based on student need.
- The vendor shall discuss options for accommodated materials for Test Administrators should such materials be requested.

Training/Professional Development

The vendor shall describe its plan to create the materials for training sessions and professional development with sufficient time so that ALSDE has at least two weeks to preview the materials to be used and suggest any changes to be incorporated into the training materials before use.

- Training and support for the High School Summative Assessments shall be provided by the vendor to educators as needed for this assessment.
- The vendor must include in its proposal a detailed plan of action and timeline that describes how and when each of the training and support tasks will be accomplished.
- The vendor will be required to provide the trainings and professional development listed below, as well as additional, ad-hoc trainings upon request.
- **Technology Coordinator Training**
 - These sessions shall provide system IT personnel with training on the operation and features of the online assessment system.
 - It must include training on the physical and electronic security of assessments, system

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requirements for implementing the online assessment, and troubleshooting of technology issues at the school or system site.

- Training must include a visual as well as oral presentation and may include other types of interactive technology.
- The vendor shall be mindful of and ensure the provision of all facility and training accommodations that are required by the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Training sessions shall be recorded and archived as a potential future training or reference resource.

- **District Test Coordinator Training**
 - The ALSDE holds two workshops a year with all DTCs, one at the beginning of the school year and one after the winter break.
 - The vendor's Program Manager and other pertinent vendor staff shall attend these workshops at the vendor's expense if deemed appropriate by the ALSDE.
 - Vendor will be responsible for securing and paying for locations suitable for around 200 attendees.
 - These sessions shall provide DTCs with information concerning the administration of assessments and security of assessments.
 - Training must include a visual as well as oral presentation and may include other types of interactive technology.

- **Additional Trainings**

The vendor should include a detailed list and descriptions of additional trainings that could be provided. The vendor will be required to participate in a majority of trainings that will be provided.

 - MEGA – State conference that is held in July annually. The vendor will need to plan to provide at least six to eight (6-8) trainings each year. The vendor will be responsible for all costs associated with participation at this meeting.
 - Instructional Information Trainings – The vendor should provide a list with details of instructional trainings that would be offered with this contract.
 - Accessibility Supports and Accommodations Training – The vendor should plan for a training that will provide educators with guidance around the selection and use of accessibility supports and accommodations on High School Summative Assessments.
 - Reporting/Data – The vendor should plan for trainings that would provide educators and parents with guidance related to the interpretation and use of reports and/or data.

 - Professional Development – The vendor should include a professional development plan that would incorporate around three to four (3-4) weeks of trainings each year.

- The vendor shall provide its plan for training and support. A schedule should be provided identifying the topic, target audience and target dates.

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- Vendor will establish and implement a training plan for system and school educators, administrators, and technology coordinators on all aspects of the High School Summative Assessments. The vendor should describe written materials, both face-to-face and online module training and other supports that may be developed to ensure that students are prepared to function within the computer-based and paper-based testing environments.
- Vendor will be required to develop other resource materials, including user instructional materials, one pagers, etc.
- The vendor will be required to develop instructional resource materials, including but not limited to, professional development on connecting the assessments to classroom instruction, using Performance Level Descriptors and Item Specifications in the classroom, and using assessment data to inform instruction. The plan for this requirement should detail how to use the instructional materials to enhance student learning.
- Vendor policies, procedures and systems should exemplify user-friendliness and be intuitive to the extent possible.
- The ALSDE shall retain ownership of all training materials and online modules.
- The vendor must include other trainings that are not specifically listed in this RFP to provide a successful delivery of all aspects of the assessment.
- **Online Training Support**
The vendor shall describe its plan to provide training and customer support specific to online assessment. The description should include training with an easy-to-understand set of directions, including screenshots, for operating the online assessment software. The vendor may also include other beneficial training materials in its response such as e-learning modules and online tutorials for users.
- **Online Tutorials**
 - The vendor must include a plan on the development of online stand-alone student tutorials that will be used to familiarize the student with the platform and the item types.

Accommodations and Accessibility Supports

The ALSDE is committed to maximum accessibility for all students including those with disabilities and English learners (ELs) with or without disabilities.

- The vendor must provide assurances that the test items, test forms, and platforms were designed and developed with Universal Design principles to allow participation of the widest possible range of students and result in valid inferences about performance for all students participating in the assessment.
- The vendor will provide a detailed list of accessibility supports and accommodations available within their assessment platform. Provide information regarding fairness in administration and accommodations such as evidence of validated feasible accommodations available.
- The vendor must provide a sample accessibility and accommodations manual in the response

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to this RFP. The manual should address accessibility and accommodation features for all students, including students with a plan. To ensure that students with different levels of English language proficiency and ELs with disabilities can demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the assessments, the tests must be designed to eliminate or minimize any factors that are irrelevant to measuring the constructs represented in the test specifications.

- In those instances where the ALSDE uncovers a tool, support or accommodation not addressed by the vendor's accessibility and accommodations guidance, the vendor will facilitate engagements with the ALSDE to consider the accommodations. If the decision is to allow the newly identified means of access, the vendor will collaborate with the ALSDE to incorporate into the next feasible administration.
- Universally designed assessments are developed to ensure all students in the school are tested, and that testing results are not affected by disability, gender, race, or English language ability.
- The vendor must provide assurances that the test design, development, and administration allow fair access for all students.

- **Print on-Demand**

For students with specific testing barriers (i.e., student's plan dictates administration of tests in paper-based format), vendor's Assessment Delivery Platform must support the ability for print on demand.

- **Braille and Large Print**

For each operational assessment, the vendor's system will support administration instances in both Braille and Large Print.

- The vendor's Assessment Delivery Platform will provide for students identified through a student plan to access the assessment through on-demand Braille using refreshable Braille devices or large Print formatting using vision enhancing tools or software.

- **Video Sign Language**

- The vendor must describe its capacity to provide online video sign language and its delivery system for the provision of this accommodation.

- **Assistive Technology**

The vendor's assessment administration platform shall support refreshable Braille devices and vision enhancing software.

- The vendor shall work with the ALSDE to explore the feasibility of supporting additional assistive technology including, but not necessarily limited to, screen reader and text-to-speech and speech-to-text software, screen enlargement, and alternative input devices and software.

Data Integration and Collection

The vendor will interface with a web service written and hosted by the ALSDE to retrieve the data for the organization and student demographic files. Once the vendor has processed all testing

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data, the ALSDE will retrieve test results via a web service written and hosted by the vendor.

- The vendor shall describe in detail the services to be provided to conduct the required online data collections.
- The vendor shall include a detailed description of how its data collection system will be designed to operate within existing local system communication infrastructures.
- The vendor shall also describe how its system works with system/school content filtering systems and firewalls.
- The online data collection system design must be flexible, so that software modifications, database changes, and reporting requirements can be made efficiently and cost effectively. The vendor must indicate how it will ensure that this can be done.
- The vendor must explain how its system will accommodate for students who have moved in and out of a school or system.
- The vendor's system must show real-time online testing status and statistics by assessment and system. This status will be available to ALSDE and systems. Daily status reports shall be available for viewing.

- **Data Collection Protection Features**

The vendor shall discuss how its system responds to interrupted internet services without the loss of data, including student responses.

- The vendor's online data collection system must have a time-out or similar locking mechanism to prevent unauthorized access if a student, while entering data, has to immediately evacuate the area due to an emergency. This must also include an auto-save feature so that the student can easily resume when the emergency or the time-out has passed.

- **Access to Data Collection System**

The vendor shall provide ALSDE with a secure, password-protected, web-based system for the purposes of accessing and analyzing the assessment processes and the data.

- The ALSDE shall have access to and oversight of all aspects of online performance during the data collection windows and access to captured data after the data collection windows close.
- The vendor must provide access to the online data collection system via a unique log-in ID and password.

System Reliability and Mitigation Experience

- **Information Technology**

The vendor shall provide a draft plan detailing the deployment and operation of information technology and contingencies for the failure of information technology systems.

- The vendor shall ensure the reliability of information technology used in the transmission and function of computer-based assessments.

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- **Cyber security**

The vendor shall describe the overall approach to security in its proposed system.

- The vendor shall agree at all times to maintain network system and application security that, at minimum, conform to the following:
 - State of Alabama Cyber Security Policies as found at <https://oit.alabama.gov/cybersecurity/>, and
 - Current cyber security standards set forth and maintained by the Center for Internet Security, which can be found at <http://www.cisecurity.org>.
- Special consideration must be made to ensure the security of Personally Identified Information (PII) stored or processed by the system.
- The system will be subject to security reviews by OIT Office of Cyber Security.
- Challenges that the vendor may encounter for meeting cyber security standards during this project and how those challenges can be mitigated shall be identified.
- The vendor shall discuss the features of its system which prevent infiltration.

- **Online Assessment Challenges and Solutions**

The vendor shall describe the issues/challenges/problems/mistakes that arose in its history with online assessment administrations.

- The vendor must describe and indicate the level of impact to school personnel, students, scores, and timeline for reporting. The description shall include the steps taken by the vendor or sponsoring agency to mitigate those issues.
- Finally, the vendor should indicate what steps it will take to prevent these issues from occurring in Alabama.

Scoring

The vendor shall describe in detail its plan for scoring of the tests. This plan must describe each step in the scoring process and must reflect all scoring activities from start to finish for each assessment year.

- **Range-finding Meetings**

The vendor shall facilitate range-finding meetings for content specialists and Alabama public school educators to define rubric score points for scoring of the field-test items for the writing student responses.

- The vendor will be responsible for all costs associated with this educator meeting.
- The vendor must explain how it will select exemplary student responses from field-testing that are representative of the various types of responses collected from students.
- The plan shall include an estimate of how many responses will be needed to appropriately define rubric score points for items and a rationale for why these numbers will adequately meet Alabama's needs.

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- **Scoring Decision Guide**

The vendor shall develop and maintain a scoring decision guide, including decisions for how to address unusual situations or questions that arise each year around scores.

- **Scoring Staff**

The vendor must describe the process that is used to hire scorers and the method that will be used to provide training/support to staff required to meet its proposed timeline.

- The vendor shall provide in writing the credentials and qualifications of the individuals it proposes to use as raters, table leaders, and scoring supervisors for ALSDE approval.

- **Artificial Intelligence Scoring**

The vendor shall describe in detail its current capacity to score the different item types and content areas represented in the High School Summative Assessments.

- The vendor must provide information about options for automated scoring using artificial intelligence (AI) where appropriate.
- The vendor must include any limitations of the use of the vendor's AI scoring for each item type.

- **Additional Scoring Considerations**

- **Reliability and Validity of Scoring Procedures**

The vendor shall describe its proposed procedures for assuring that the assessments will be scored in a reliable and valid manner. This includes proper incorporation and utilization of the human scoring procedures.

- **Scoring Student Writing Responses**

Writing response scoring must produce scores that can be mapped back to the scoring rubric(s) in order to provide educators with actionable data to improve student writing.

- **Procedure for Unusual Responses**

The vendor shall describe its procedures for dealing with unusual student responses, such as those that indicate abuse or potential for student self-harm that may need to be brought to the attention of local educators.

- It is essential that unusual responses such as these be sent electronically, in a secure manner, to the ALSDE as soon as they are discovered (within 24 hours of discovery), along with student and system identification information so that ALSDE can provide to the DTC for system investigation.

Submission of Data Files and Reporting Assessment Results

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The vendor must describe in detail its plan for the reporting of data files and results of the assessment. This plan must describe each step in the reporting of data files and assessment results processes and must reflect all reporting of data files and assessment results activities, for each year.

- **Data**
All raw student testing data shall be provided to the ALSDE by the vendor.
- **Data files**
The vendor will describe what data files will be provided and the timeline for deliveries.
 - The exact content, naming conventions, definitions of data elements, and file type shall be clearly documented and agreed upon by the vendor and ALSDE at least three (3) months prior to test administration.
 - The vendor shall provide full state data files to ALSDE.
 - The vendor shall maintain the proper identification of each student and the accurate matching of the student to the test results using the identification number for each student.
 - The state data file shall be transmitted securely to the ALSDE within two weeks after testing has completed.
 - At a minimum, the state file shall include all elements that have been used in reporting.
 - All timelines for posting and releasing data are negotiable according to the agreed upon timeline.
- **Data Documentation**
The vendor will describe how it will develop data specifications/file layouts, definitions, and formats in collaboration with the ALSDE to document all data provided to ALSDE.
- **Data Ownership**
 - ALSDE shall own the raw and final data generated through the contract awarded from this solicitation.
 - The vendor is not allowed to utilize data generated through the High School Summative Assessments for its own purposes.
 - Any usage of the data generated through activities related to this RFP may not be used for purposes outside of this RFP without prior written approval from the ALSDE.
 - ALSDE may choose to report the data in additional reporting layouts.
 - Additionally, electronic images of the state-level summary report by grade level and content area shall be delivered to ALSDE.
 - These images shall be in a format mutually agreed upon by the vendor and ALSDE.
- **Data Analysis and Reporting**
 - The ALSDE intends to have an online reporting system within a secure Web-based system.
 - All reporting aspects shall be included in the Web-based reporting system as outlined in this RFP.
 - The vendor shall analyze the data; print, package, and deliver student/home reports and student labels; and provide other data electronically through a secure site.
 - The ALSDE intends to report student results involving a growth component.
 - The ALSDE shall notify the vendor of the subgroups to be disaggregated for the report.
 - A technical report on each year's administration shall be presented to the ALSDE.
 - At the state level, the vendor shall produce separate analysis by federally reported categories and any other identified categories determined by ALSDE.
 - The vendor shall be prepared to offer student reports in other languages if necessary.

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- **Quality Control**

- The vendor shall ensure that all data operations are subject to multiple checks for accuracy before data, files, or reports are released.
- The vendor shall include in its proposal a full and complete description of its quality control procedures used in the reporting process for ALSDE review.
- The vendor shall develop and implement quality control procedures for checking the accuracy of all test information, all student scores and identification, and all summary data.
- The vendor must plan and prepare quality assurance (QA) schedules that will allow work to flow in a timely, effective manner, while maintaining high quality deliverables.

- **Formatting of Reports**

- Assessment results are to be reported in a "user friendly" format, including "print ready" classroom reports.
- ALSDE is especially interested in reporting approaches that provide actionable information for students, parents, and educators.
- The reporting system must be designed to complement instruction and to facilitate the use of assessment results to improve student achievement.
- Reports must reflect areas of strength as well as areas that need to be targeted for instruction.
- Report shells and reports for accommodated forms of this assessment component, in other languages, will also need to be generated.
- The design and layout of reports will be initiated in a timely manner so that the ALSDE has sufficient time to review the reports and to provide feedback to the vendor.
- This timeline shall be incorporated into the detailed schedule that will be included in the proposal.

- **Individual Student Reports**

- Score reports shall fulfill the Federal reporting requirements of *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). Specifically, the reporting system shall meet the expectations outlined in current Peer Review requirements.
- At a minimum, individual score reports shall summarize the student's performance in all content areas on which the student was assessed down to the standards.
- This report shall include an overall scale score, performance level, performance level descriptor, and sub-scores for each content area tested and growth scores.
- Two (2) paper copies and an electronic version of individual student score reports, as well as labels for student cumulative folders, shall be prepared to summarize student performance.
- These reports must be provided in other languages for all content areas.
- Should the vendor propose to utilize the scores of a subcontractor (Lexile or Quantile) that can help identify appropriate reading materials, those must be listed as an option.

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- The vendor should describe additional types of information that may be added to reports as the program matures.
- The vendor shall describe how it proposes to fulfill this requirement and shall provide a graphic to illustrate what the proposed reports would look like.
- The vendor must provide an annotated student report with explanations of all data points for parents.
- **State/System/School Reports**
 - Summary reports shall be prepared at the state, system, and school levels.
 - The same data reported on the individual student report must be aggregated for state/system/school reports.
 - Additionally, state/system/school reports must provide disaggregated data by student population and trend data.
 - Electronic reports must be generated that summarize the performance of the state/system/school on all components of the assessment taken and on any sub-domain or instructional objective.
 - Exact content and format for each of the reports and files will be further refined during the project.
 - ALSDE will approve the formats and type of information that will be included on or within the reports.
 - All timelines for reporting dissemination are negotiable according to the agreed upon timeline.
- **Reporting Errors**
 - The vendor shall immediately notify ALSDE when an error in reporting has been discovered.
 - The vendor and ALSDE will develop a plan for correcting the error.
 - The plan will include a description of how timely and forthright information will be communicated to all affected stakeholders.
- **Assessment Interpretive Guides**
 - Annually, the vendor shall develop two (2) Interpretive Guides to assist parents and teachers in interpreting assessment results.
 - The vendor shall describe in detail the contents of the Guide, as well as its proposed process for creating and proofing it.
 - The Interpretive Guide must be available online prior to the release of reports.
 - The Interpretive Guide shall be formatted in such a way that pertinent information can easily be printed at the school building for distribution to teachers or parents.
 - The format shall have information that is specifically targeted to parents.
 - The vendor must provide trainings/recordings to support these guides.

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- **Operational Analysis**

- Item data from the operational assessment must include appropriate IRT item and task parameters, distractor, and bias analysis, and fit and DIF statistics based on the selected IRT model.
- The vendor shall describe its plan for providing each of these item data components and the method to be used for calculations.
- The vendor shall also describe its approach to item calibration, including its approach to parameter estimation and any proprietary or third-party software to be employed by the vendor.
- Examination of performance task data from the operational assessment must include rater reliability information, percentages of students in categories, materials used during review and any other relevant information.
- The vendor must provide ALSDE with all appropriate test statistics and information including:
 - Test Information Functions.
 - Differential Test Function Information.
 - Validity And Reliability Measures.
- The vendor shall describe its method for establishing inter-rater agreement among its scorers, including how it will calculate inter-rater agreement statistics by grade and content area each year.
- Inter-rater agreement shall be examined separately for each dimension in each scoring rubric, as this may inform subsequent test development, training, or professional development priorities.
- A description of the method to be used for standard errors of measurement calculations shall also be included.
- The vendor shall produce a report of recommendations for changes to the future High School Summative Assessments based on operational assessment results.
- The report shall include item development process revision recommendations, administration materials and process revision recommendations, and an analysis of anchor pools available for future operational testing.

- **Scaling**

- The vendor shall work with the ALSDE to implement a scaling procedure that will result in scale scores.
- The vendor will establish model fit and individual score reliability for the selected scaling procedure.
- The vendor shall identify advantages and potential disadvantages of its proposed scaling procedures within the detailed plan.

- **Standard Setting**

- The vendor shall provide a description of its standard setting method(s), which shall

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include a detailed explanation of the proposed statistical methods and how they will be used to set standards.

- Procedures must be approved by the ALSDE's Technical Advisory Committee.
- The vendor shall be responsible for all costs associated with convening these panels for two- to three-day meetings.
- The vendor shall suggest how to approach communication with the field regarding potentially changing cut scores.
- The vendor shall prepare a report describing and documenting the entire standard setting process.
- **Performance Level Descriptors**
 - It is the vendor's responsibility to describe in detail the process to be used to develop content and grade level specific performance level descriptors for the High School Summative Assessments.
 - The vendor is responsible for all costs associated with proposed meetings.
- **Linking and Equating**
 - The vendor shall describe its proposed equating process, including any equating proposed at the sub-score level.
 - In addition, the vendor shall describe its procedure for maintaining trend lines over time for the High School Summative Assessments.
 - Vendors shall describe the linking and equating procedures to be used in support of the scales in each content area and grade level.

Plans for Establishing Technical Adequacy

● **Alignment Studies**

- The vendor shall set aside resources for independently conducted alignment studies of the assessments to the *Alabama Course of Study Standards*.
- The vendor will be responsible for the costs for this study.

● **Establishing Comparability**

- The vendor must provide its plan for establishing comparability between accommodated and not accommodated test forms and administrations, including the mathematics, and science assessments in other languages.
- The vendor must present its plan for establishing comparability between paper-based and computer-based assessments.
- The vendor shall provide any relevant empirical evidence that supports its ability to accomplish this goal.
- Comparability will need to be established within a year between the online and accommodated paper-based forms.

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• **Technical Advisory Committee**

- The vendor is expected to attend the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings as requested.
- The vendor shall work with the ALSDE to participate in the TAC meetings.
- The vendor is expected to provide clearly stated questions and supporting background materials in a timely fashion for review by the ALSDE and the TAC, prior to TAC meetings.
- All psychometric processes, including test design, scaling, equating, standard setting, and validation procedures must go before the TAC for review and must receive ALSDE approval.

• **State Board Meetings**

- The vendor may be required to attend and provide processes of work to the State Board Meetings/Work Sessions. The vendor should plan for up to six (6) presentations.

• **Technical Report**

- The vendor shall propose how it will develop and deliver a Technical Report or a Technical Report Supplement (with the year's statistical information included) annually.
 - The Technical Report shall include all relevant psychometric information for each test.
 - The report is to be completed following the end of the operational program unless otherwise determined by the ALSDE and vendor.

• **Irregularity and Data Forensic Analysis**

- The vendor shall indicate the steps that it will take to ensure that the assessment data collected represent the independent work of the students assessed.
- Solutions using data forensic statistical analyses to evaluate whether some of the test results were not earned fairly should be offered.
- ALSDE is specifically interested in:
 - Determining whether there is evidence of collusion among test takers.
 - If there are results indicative of prior exposure to test questions.
 - If students are responding consistently across the test materials.
 - If changes in performance from test event to test event are consistent with what might be expected given a conscientious effort to help students learn.
 - Any other agreed upon analyses.
- These steps shall include:
 - Pattern analyses of wrong to right answer changes.
 - Erasure analyses (if applicable).
 - Examination of school performance to detect unusual score gains or losses, including follow-up procedures to investigate such score changes.
 - Other means for detecting results which are aberrant and may indicate that standardized test administration and security procedures were not followed.
- ALSDE anticipates that the vendor will use multiple methods to analyze results.
- The vendor shall submit samples of data forensics reports illustrating how the results can

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be used by ALSDE.

- The data forensics analysis solution may include those used by other State Departments of Education for analyzing test results;
 - The RFP response must include detailed specifications of the statistical analyses used to provide the data forensics analyses.
- **Peer Review Requirements**
 - The vendor shall provide its plan for conducting the studies necessary to meet **all** requirements of the U.S. Department of Education's (USDOE) *Standards and Assessment Peer Review Guidance*.
 - The vendor must describe its plan for providing the best and most cost-effective studies for meeting this requirement.
 - The vendor shall describe in detail how it will conduct studies to verify and support the validity of interpretations drawn from test scores.
 - The vendor shall also propose its strategy for developing studies that investigate the intended and unintended consequences.
 - The vendor shall indicate how the studies will support ALSDE's response to each element of the Peer Review Guidance.

Customer Service

The ALSDE requires the need for maintaining a steady flow of communication between ALSDE and the vendor. Vendors shall respond to the requirements below with the understanding that it is ALSDE's expectation that technical and logistical support shall be provided in a responsive manner that minimizes burden, disruption, and inconvenience.

- **Routine District Communications/Notifications**

The vendor shall be responsible for writing routine communications/notifications to the DTCs and/or Technology Coordinators.
- **Telephone and Email Support**
 - A dedicated toll-free customer service number and trained customer service representatives shall be provided by the vendor for this project.
 - Customer service personnel shall be able to clearly articulate spoken English.
 - The lead customer service representative shall be named in the proposal, and ALSDE shall have the right to approve the named person.
 - The lead supervisor and other vendor trained staff shall be available to answer Alabama calls from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. central time each business day.
 - When customer service staff is not available to take a call, a voicemail service system shall be available to record the caller's message.
 - Messages shall be returned in a timely manner, generally within one hour or less but always within one business day.
 - The vendor shall describe its proposed procedures for providing telephone support to Alabama.

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- The vendor shall provide e-mail support from its customer service center.
- **Issue Resolution**
 - Customer service staff shall have a system to ensure that issues raised by districts/schools have been satisfactorily resolved.
 - The vendor shall notify ALSDE of any communication with the field regarding urgent or sensitive issues.
- **Records of Interaction with Customers**
 - The vendor shall include a description of how calls and emails will be logged.
 - An electronic record of all telephone calls and emails, as well as responses given to customers, must be maintained by the vendor.
 - All communications with the field initiated by the vendor must be pre-approved by the ALSDE.
 - Additionally, customer service staff may be asked to initiate email communications in unusual circumstances by ALSDE.
- **Telemetry Data**

The vendor will include how it will provide telemetry data to investigate and resolve questions related to a student's testing experience and/or potential loss of data.

 - The vendor must allocate time and resources to accomplish this requirement.
- **Business Rules** must be applied and approved by the ALSDE on an annual basis.

E. High School Summative Practice Tests

ALSDE is proposing to provide practice tests that will be solely owned by ALSDE. Each item written/developed must be completely aligned with the *Alabama Course of Study Standards*.

The practice test forms will include a representative sample of the item types that will be included on the High School summative assessment. The practice tests will be available throughout the school year and will be administered more than one (1) time per year, with different forms. The following requirements are requested for the Online Practice Tests:

Timeline with a detailed schedule of all aspects of the Practice Test.

Program Manager - The vendor will provide a dedicated **Program Manager** to assist and oversee this project.

Web-based Online Test Delivery System

The vendor shall indicate whether the hosted infrastructure service that it proposes to use for the practice test will be used in its current form or if it will be modified in any way for Alabama.

- The vendor must specify the version/release number of the service to be implemented for this project.
- The vendor shall provide ALSDE with a detailed Infrastructure Plan, which will incorporate all components required to meet industry standard best practices and, at a minimum, include the following:

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- Hardware
- Software
- Network
- Active Directory Services
- Database
- Caching Capabilities
- Configuration
- Vendor Resources for Implementation
- Timeline Segment in Accordance With The Project Plan
- Testing and Validation
- The vendor's web-based hosted infrastructure service must provide for delivery on wireless networks with comparable performance to wired networks. (Vendor must support common web security appliances such as IronPort, Web Titan, and Cisco's secure web appliance.)
- The vendor must provide an Infrastructure Guide that details the minimum and recommended technical specifications and configurations needed to successfully access the online testing platform/system and to deliver the online practice tests that meet minimum specifications to perform on all student testing devices allowable within the schools including iPads, Chromebooks, laptops, and desktops.
 - Due to the expectation that some districts will have to rely on lower-grade access, the vendor will discuss how to provide access.
 - Applications must be delivered within a secure browser that restricts access to the desktop and Internet, based on the requirements of the ALSDE.
 - Alabama does not have established minimum technology standards for schools within the state. However, support from the vendor must include the following technical standards at a minimum: Windows 7 or higher, VISTA platforms, plus Mac OS 9.2.2 and Mac OS 10.1.1 or higher as well as current version of the Linux kernel.
 - The vendor shall indicate how it proposes to support releases of the above-mentioned platforms.
 - Support for versions of operating systems will be continued until ALSDE approves discontinuing support for a particular version.
 - The vendor shall discuss the minimum hardware specifications and technical standards, as well as the recommended hardware specifications and technical standards needed, for operation of its proposed system. This discussion should also include an analysis of differences in system performance based on minimum or recommended hardware.
 - The vendor shall describe in detail how it will assure that all items placed in its web-based test delivery system will appear on students' computer screens as intended, for the variety of types of computers, operating systems, and connectivity described here.
 - The vendor shall also describe its strategy for ensuring that new systems and all interfaces function properly when releasing new versions of any software application.
 - The practice tests must be available no later than August of each year.

Platform

- The vendor must provide the technical specifications for a multi-faceted electronic assessment technical solution that includes, at minimum, an online test delivery system, online test administration system, and online scoring platform.
- Set-up and Installation Guide that details an overview for deployment and implementation including troubleshooting tips.
- Ease of use – the system offers intuitive navigation with minimal training needed.
- Navigation is efficient with minimal clicking required to complete key tasks.

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- User’s Guide that fully details the functionality of the online system (platform) for an end user in a school or district.
- The vendor must provide details on the ability to deliver thousands of assessments at any point in time.

Technical Requirements - The online assessments must work with a variety of devices, such as PCs, Mac, iPads, Chromebooks, and Windows tablets and use a variety of browser products, if necessary.

- A system that integrates with an API.
- Application will be hosted on Cloud-based servers.

Test Development: capacity to develop a variety of passages and Alabama specific items in order to ensure that multiple genres and forms are reflected.

- Item types – variety of item types and possible student responses available
- A rich Item Bank that reflects the Depth of Knowledge levels.
- Accommodations - At a minimum, the vendor is expected to provide the same online and paper-based student testing accommodations as provided by the High School summative assessments, including paper braille test and paper large print test.
 - The vendor is expected to adhere to and meet the evolving expectations of industry standards in online accommodations.
 - The vendor must describe the extent to which its system currently meets the Accessible Portable Item Profile (APIP) standards and specifications.
 - The vendor shall discuss how the tools and accommodations accessed by the student during testing will be tracked, as well as how student profiles will be created and/or uploaded to allow for appropriate accommodation options during testing.
 - The vendor’s test delivery interface shall include all the information and resources required to make a test item accessible for students with a variety of disabilities and special needs.
 - The vendor shall discuss how it will develop other language versions of the assessment in mathematics and science and provide other language Text-to-Speech.
 - The vendor shall discuss the extent to which its test delivery interface includes the following accommodations:
 - Audio accommodations, either through text-to-speech or through recorded audio (the vendor should discuss the pros and cons of these audio alternatives).
 - For audio accommodations, the discussion should include the vendor’s ability to highlight portions of the screen to be read aloud.
 - Visual accommodation tools, including magnification, reverse contrast, selection of foreground and background colors, color overlay, masking, and adjustable font.
 - The vendor shall discuss the extent to which its web-based test delivery system will be compatible with third-party devices and software that allow accommodations to be offered to students with disabilities for accommodations that cannot be built into the vendor’s system.
 - Devices that can be used with the test delivery interface to include alternate keyboard, alternate mouse, refreshable Braille displays, Braille note-takers, keyboard emulators, and alternative and augmentative communication devices.
 - The vendor shall discuss how individual student profiles are created or imported into the system to select and make available appropriate accommodations based on student need.
- The vendor must describe how the item bank will be developed to refresh each year.

Retired Items

- The vendor will provide a detailed plan on how to incorporate ALSDE’s retired High School summative assessment items into the platform and practice tests.

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Ownership of items – ALSDE will be the sole owner of materials produced and data collected, including but not limited to:

- All test item banks and items developed for the practice test.
- All materials prepared for training or presentations.
- All research conducted by the vendor.
- All data related to ALSDE practice tests and student personal information.

Online Tutorials

- Online stand-alone tutorials shall be developed by the vendor.
 - These will be used to familiarize the student with the system and the item types prior to taking the practice test.

Support/Training

- Face-to-face training on how to operate the platform and administer the assessments.
- Office hours or training modules
- Support helpline/email
- Clear and complete training materials with complete technical support to obtain full understanding of how to administer the online practice tests.
- Training Guide that provides step-by-step details for how to complete the most needed tasks in the online testing platform/system.
- Scoring/Benchmark guide with training that includes guidelines, information, and procedures to facilitate scoring of the writing responses if an online scoring option is not available.

Data and Reports

- Raw data files must be provided to the ALSDE at appropriate intervals throughout the school year.
- Reporting Portal – the reporting portal must be capable of being upgraded across time. Initially, the system must be able to organize and present assessment data in a way that is easy for all users to read and understand. The Reporting Portal should allow for differentiated access to individual student, classroom, school, district, and state assessment data, and they should integrate seamlessly with each other.
- Provide a secure platform for schools/districts to access data/reports.
- Data are presented in a way that effectively communicates student learning to all users, including helping teachers understand which students need support for which skills.
- Reports that provide actionable and comparative data that inform instructional decision making.
 - Provide a sample report.
 - Assessment results are to be reported in a “user friendly” format.
 - Reports must have the capability to be customizable reports and print ready.
 - The ALSDE is especially interested in reporting approaches that provide actionable information for students, parents, and classroom teachers.
 - The reporting system must be designed to complement instruction and to facilitate the use of assessment results to improve student achievement.
 - Reports must reflect areas of strength as well as areas that need to be targeted for instruction.
 - The vendor shall provide in detail how it proposes to fulfill this requirement.
 - The design and layout of reports will be initiated in a timely manner so that ALSDE has sufficient time to review the reports and to provide feedback to the vendor.

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- **Individual Student Reports**

- At a minimum, individual score reports shall summarize the student's performance in all content areas on which the student was assessed.
- This report shall include an overall transformed scale score, performance level, performance level descriptor, and sub-scores for each content area tested and equated to the High School summative assessment.
- These reports must be provided in other languages for all content areas.
- Classroom level reports that are print-ready must be provided.
- Additionally, reporting measures must contain actionable information, such that teachers and parents can use results to connect students with targeted instructional and leisure-time materials that meet and challenge the student's abilities, interests, and learning objectives.
- The vendor should describe additional types of information that may be added to reports as the program matures.

- **State/System/School Reports**

- Summary reports shall be prepared at the state, district, and school levels.
- The same data reported on the individual student report must be aggregated for state/system/school reports.
- Additionally, state/system/school reports must provide disaggregated data by student population and trend data.
- Electronic reports must be generated that summarize the performance of the state/system/school on all components of the assessment taken and on any sub-domain or instructional objective sub-score.
- Exact content and format for each of the reports and files will be further refined during the project.

Access to Data Collection System

- The vendor shall provide ALSDE with a secure, password-protected, web-based system.
- The vendor shall provide statewide, student level data with results of the Practice Test.

Data Collection Protection Features

- The vendor shall discuss how its system responds to interrupted Internet services without the loss of data, including student responses.
- The vendor's online data collection system must have a time-out or similar locking mechanism to prevent unauthorized access in the event that a student, while entering data, has to immediately evacuate the area due to an emergency such as a fire or tornado drill. This must also include an auto-save feature so that the student can easily resume when the emergency or the time-out has passed.
- The vendor shall describe in detail the services to be provided to conduct the required online data collections.
- The vendor shall include a detailed description of how its data collection system will be designed to operate within existing local system communication infrastructures, including T-1, DSL, or cable modem lines.
- The vendor shall assume that the existing technological infrastructure and computing hardware of the state, districts, and schools will not be replaced, as well as taken into consideration that some systems will be upgraded.
- The vendor shall also describe how its system works with district/school content filtering systems

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and firewalls.

- The online data collection system design must be flexible, so that software modifications, database changes, and reporting requirements can be made efficiently and cost effectively. The vendor must indicate how it will assure that this can be done.
- The vendor must explain how its system will accommodate for students who have moved in and out of a school or system since the rosters were created.

Data Privacy – The vendor must comply with all data security, data privacy and appropriate use laws, regulations, policies, and procedures required by the ALSDE.

- The vendor will describe how security of individual student data will be protected.
- Provide how the vendor will safeguard all individual student data and personally identifiable information.
- The vendor agrees to abide by and maintain adequate data security measures to protect Student Data from unauthorized disclosure or acquisition by an unauthorized person.
- Vendor shall make best efforts practices to secure usernames, passwords, and any other means of gaining access to the practice tests or student data.

System Reliability and Mitigation Experience

- Information technology
 - The vendor shall ensure the reliability of information technology used in the transmission and function of computer-based assessments.
 - The vendor shall provide a draft plan detailing the deployment and operation of information technology and contingencies for the failure of information technology systems.
- Cyber security
 - The vendor shall agree at all times to maintain network system and application security that, at minimum, conform to the following:
 - State of Alabama Cyber Security Policies as found at <https://oit.alabama.gov/cybersecurity/>; and
 - current cyber security standards set forth and maintained by the Center for Internet Security, which can be found at <http://www.cisecurity.org>.
 - The vendor must agree to document all cyber security expectations to State of Alabama Policies and Standards in response to this RFP.
 - Special consideration must be made to ensure the security of Personally Identified Information (PII) stored or processed by the system.
 - The system will be subject to security reviews by Office of Information Technology (OIT) Cyber Security
 - The vendor shall describe the overall approach to security in its proposed system.
 - Challenges that the vendor may encounter for meeting cyber security standards during this project and how those challenges can be mitigated shall also be identified.
 - The vendor shall discuss the features of its system which prevent infiltration.

Online Assessment Challenges and Remedies

- The vendor shall describe the issues/challenges/problems/mistakes that arose in its history with online assessment administrations.
- The vendor must describe and indicate the level of impact to school personnel, students, scores, and timeline for reporting. The description shall include the steps taken by the vendor to mitigate those issues.
- The vendor should indicate what steps it will take to prevent these issues from occurring in

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Alabama.

Business Rules must be applied and approved by ALSDE on an annual basis.

F. Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)

The vendor shall cover the costs for two (2) ALSDE staff memberships to the state membership of the CCSSO and State Collaboratives.

G. National Conference on Student Assessment (NCSA)

The vendor shall make all arrangements and cover the costs for ALSDE staff (up to two) to attend the annual National Conference on Student Assessment (NCSA) including hotel, travel, registration, and incidentals.

H. Facility for District Test Coordinator Meeting

The vendor will be responsible for securing a facility for the two District Test Coordinator Meetings held each year around the state. The vendor would be responsible for all equipment, Internet/Wi-Fi, etc., for around 200 people.

I. Performance Bond

- The selected vendor should, within ten days after notification of the award and at no additional cost to the SDE, furnish a performance bond for the full contract amount.
- The performance guarantee will be one of the following: cashier's check, other type bank certified check (personal or company checks not acceptable), money order, an irrevocable letter of credit, or surety bond issued by a company authorized to do business within the state of Alabama.

J. Transition

Proposals must include a transition plan ensuring the continuity of the state assessment program is of the essence.

- The vendor will assist ALSDE with all activities required to transfer all assessment documents and materials during the transition.
- The vendor shall reference its proven ability to provide smooth contract transitions when working with other assessment organizations in contract transitional activities.
-

2.2 Scope of Alabama State Department of Education's Work and Responsibilities

Specific responsibilities of the ALSDE are to:

- Approve the scope of work proposed as outlined above.
- Work with the vendor(s) and districts to ensure quality control and comprehensive implementation of the Summative assessments, Alternate assessments, and High School Summative assessments.

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Section 3.00 General Requirements

3.1 Requirements of Proposal

The vendor must provide the following mandatory information. **Failure to provide this information may be cause for the proposal to be rejected.** Qualifications, experience, and cost will be evaluated for contract award. The proposal may be submitted under the same cover with Vendor Requirements and Cost Proposal in two distinct sections. E-verify information is required to be submitted for all employees to include contractors of the vendors if necessary and applicable.

Part I

Signed Cover Letter:

The cover letter shall serve as the first page of the vendor's proposal. The vendor shall complete the cover letter and attach it to the proposal in response to the RFP. The cover letter must be signed by an official authorized to legally bind the vendor. It will state that the vendor is a legal entity that will meet the specifications. The cover letter must accompany the submitted proposal. The letter accompanying the proposal must have original signatures and must include contact numbers and email addresses for the authorized official signing the letters.

Part II

Vendor Qualification and Experience:

Vendor shall provide satisfactory evidence of the vendor's capability to coordinate the types of activities and to provide the services described in the RFP in a timely manner. Special attention should be given to the discussion of qualifications. The discussion shall include a description of the vendor's background and relevant experience as related to the required activities in the RFP.

Part III

Vendor shall provide a detailed plan describing how the services will be performed to meet the requirements of the RFP. The description shall encompass the requirements of this RFP. The response must be prepared and organized in a clear and concise manner that is easily understandable.

Vendor Organization:

Describe your organizational structure and explain how your organization qualifies to be responsive to the requirements of this RFP.

References:

The vendor shall provide a minimum of three (3) references that can support and validate training and/or projects and outcomes, including names or persons who may be contacted, position of person, addresses, and phone numbers where similar training and/or projects to that described in this RFP have been conducted.

Executive Summary:

An executive summary is required. This summary will condense and highlight the contents of the vendor's proposal.

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Part IV

Cost Proposal:

Vendor shall include the fee structure and pricing for the training sessions/program. The vendor shall submit a cost proposal in addition to other required information.

Flat rates for half and/or whole day training sessions should be inclusive of travel and/or supplies and materials costs and identify if the training is in person or virtual, and the proposed number of participants. Flat rates for consulting, coaching, and/or professional services should stipulate the cost per hour and the proposed number of hours. Project costs must include all proposed necessary charges to be made by the grantee in accomplishing the objectives of the grant during the specified grant period (initial grants are generally for a one-year period unless otherwise noted).

Subcontractor Disclosure:

If the execution of work to be performed requires the hiring of subcontractors, **you must clearly state this in the bid proposal and provide qualification for such individuals.** Sub-Contractors must be identified and the services they will provide or work they will perform must be clearly defined. The ALSDE will not refuse a proposal based upon use of a subcontractor; however, the ALSDE reserves the right to refuse the subcontractor you have selected. Contractor and associated personnel shall remain solely responsible for the performance of all work, including work that may be subcontracted.

Describe your rationale for utilizing Subcontractors including relevant past experience partnering with stated subcontractor(s). Documents for E-verification of subcontractors are the sole responsibility of the contractor and must be available upon request to ensure compliance.

Section 4.00 General Terms and Conditions

4.1 Governance

This RFP and its terms shall be governed and construed according to the laws of the State of Alabama. Any dispute arising out of this RFP shall be brought in the state of Alabama, with venue in Montgomery County, Alabama. Vendors agree to comply with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

4.2 Immigration

The proposal must contain a statement that the firm is aware of and in compliance with the requirements of the *Beason-Hammon Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act*; a statement that the vendor is enrolled in the E-Verify as required by Section 31-13-9 (b), *Code of Alabama 1975*, as amended:

BEASON-HAMMON ALABAMA TAXPAYER AND CITIZEN PROTECTION ACT

COMPLIANCE

The *Beason-Hammon Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act* (31-13-1 et seq, *Code of Alabama, 1975* as amended by Act 2012-491) regulates illegal immigration in the State of Alabama. All contracts with the State or political subdivision thereof must fully comply

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with each provision as provided by law.

A proposal must include a statement that the vendor has knowledge of this law and is in compliance. Before a contract is signed, the vendor awarded the contract must submit a Certificate of Compliance using the form at Appendix A. E-Verify enrollment can be accomplished at the website of the United States Department of Homeland Security at <http://www.uscis.gov>.

See Section 10 for additional language required by Section 10(k) of the Act to be included in the contract.

Rev.5-24-13Rev.5-24-13

4.3 Conflict of Interest

The vendor attests that no employee, officer, or agent of the vendor shall participate in the selection, award, or administration of a contract if a real or apparent conflict of interest may be involved. A conflict would arise when the employee, officer, agent, any member of his or her immediate family, his or her partner, or an organization which employs or is about to employ any of the parties indicated herein has a financial or other interest in the organization selected for an award. The officers, employees, and agents of the vendor, if selected as the career planning system vendor, shall neither award nor offer gratuities, favors, nor anything of monetary value from vendors or subcontractors.

4.4 Discrimination

Alabama Non-Discrimination Statement:

No person shall be denied employment, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in any program or activity on the basis of disability, gender, race, religion, national origin, color, age, genetic information, or any other category protected under the law. Ref: Sec. 1983, Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S.C.; Title VI and VII, Civil Rights Act of 1964; Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Sec. 504; Age Discrimination in Employment Act; the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008; Equal Pay Act of 1963; Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972; Title II of the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008. Title IX Coordinator, P.O. Box 302101, Montgomery, Alabama 36130-2101 or call (334) 694-4717.

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APPENDIX "A"

State of _____)
County of _____)

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE BEASON-HAMMON ALABAMA TAXPAYER AND CITIZEN PROTECTION ACT (ACT 2011-535, as amended by ACT 2012-491)

DATE: _____

RE Contract/Grant/Incentive (describe by number or subject):

_____ by and between
_____ (Contractor/Grantee) and
_____ (State Agency, Department or Public Entity)

The undersigned hereby certifies to the State of Alabama as follows:

1. The undersigned holds the position of _____ with the Contractor/Grantee named above, and is authorized to provide representations set out in this Certificate as the official and binding act of that entity, and has knowledge of the provisions of THE BEASON-HAMMON ALABAMA TAXPAYER AND CITIZEN PROTECTION ACT (ACT 2011-535 of the Alabama Legislature, as amended by ACT 2012-491) which is described herein as "the Act."

2. Using the following definitions from Section 3 of the Act, select and initial either (a) or (b), below, to describe the Contractor/Grantee's business structure.

BUSINESS ENTITY. Any person or group of persons employing one or more persons performing or engaging in any activity, enterprise, profession, or occupation for gain, benefit, advantage, or livelihood, whether for profit or not for profit.

a. Self-employed individuals, business entities filing articles of incorporation, partnerships, limited partnerships, limited liability companies, foreign corporations, foreign limited partnerships, and foreign limited liability companies authorized to transact business in this state, business trusts, and any business entity that registers with the Secretary of State.

b. Any business entity that possesses a business license, permit, certificate, approval, registration, charter, or similar form of authorization issued by the state, any business entity that is exempt by law from obtaining such a business license, and any business entity that is operating unlawfully without a business license.

EMPLOYER. Any person, firm, corporation, partnership, joint stock association, agent, manager, representative, foreman, or other person having control or custody of any employment, place of employment, or of any employee, including any person or entity employing any person for hire within the State of Alabama, including a public employer. This term shall not include the occupant of a household contracting with another person to perform casual domestic labor within the household.

_____(a) The Contractor/Grantee is a business entity or employer as those terms are defined in Section 3 of the Act.

_____(b) The Contractor/Grantee is not a business entity or employer as those terms are defined in Section 3 of the Act.

3. As of the date of this Certificate, the Contractor/Grantee does not knowingly employ an unauthorized alien within the State of Alabama and hereafter it will not knowingly employ, hire for employment, or continue to employ an unauthorized alien within the State of Alabama;

4. The Contractor/Grantee is enrolled in E-Verify unless it is not eligible to enroll because of the rules of that program or other factors beyond its control.

Certified this _____ day of _____ 20_____.

Name of Contractor/Grantee/Recipient
By: _____
Its _____

The above Certification was signed in my presence by the person whose name appears above, on this _____ day of _____ 20_____.

WITNESS: _____

Printed Name of Witness