

Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority under ESSA: Frequently Asked Questions

1. Where can I find statutory information on the innovative assessment demonstration authority?

Statutory information about the innovative assessment demonstration authority (also known as the innovative assessment pilot) can be found in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) text, section 1204, “Innovative Assessment and Accountability Demonstration Authority,” 129 STAT. 1885.

2. What does the innovative assessment pilot entail?

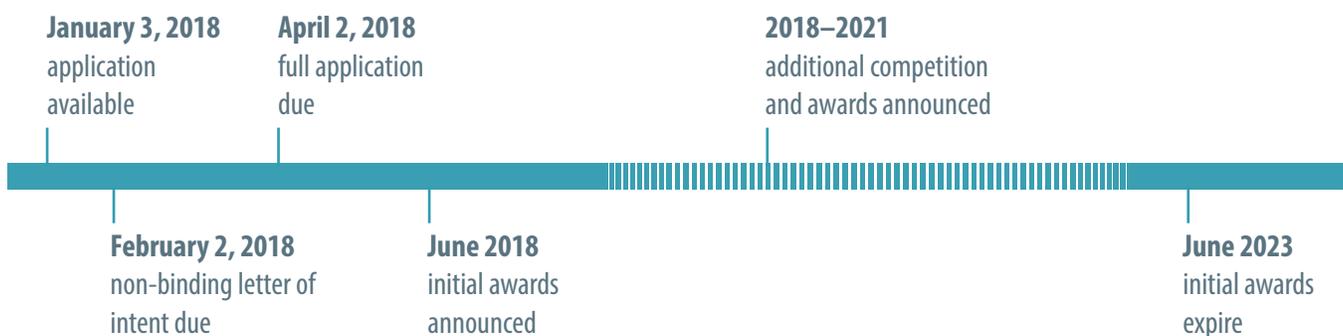
ESSA’s innovative assessment pilot allows a small number of states to administer innovative assessments in place of statewide assessments. States interested in trying out local assessments in place of state assessments may apply for participation. Participating states may pilot innovative assessments in a few districts to gauge how well these assessments meet state needs before implementing statewide. Participation in this pilot allows states to “test drive” next generation assessments in a handful of districts before administering the assessment to all students.

3. Who may apply?

States interested in piloting innovative assessments that can be used to meet federal testing and accountability regulations are encouraged to apply. Participation would allow states to pilot, to a limited number of students, an innovative assessment in place of its statewide assessment, while still meeting requirements for the administration of statewide assessments that would be used for accountability calculations.

States interested in applying should keep in mind that participation in the innovative assessment pilot requires states to pilot these assessments with the intention of eventually scaling up to statewide use.

4. What is the application timeline?



Awards of authority for the 2018–2019 school year will be announced in June 2018. It is expected that 3–6 states/consortia will be awarded during the current competition, for a period of up to 60 months. No more than seven states/consortia will be awarded during the three-year period from 2018–2021. At least one more competition will be held in the next three years.

5. What types of assessments can be used for the innovative assessment pilot?

According to federal regulations, an innovative assessment system may include:

- Competency-based assessments, instructionally embedded assessments, interim assessments, or performance-based assessments that combine into an annual summative determination for a student, which may be administered through computer adaptive assessments; and
- Assessments that validate when students are ready to demonstrate mastery or proficiency and allow for differentiated student support based on individual learning needs.

6. Are there examples of innovative assessment systems that states can examine?

States may want to look at the work New Hampshire has done. New Hampshire was granted approval by the U.S. Department of Education, through a prior waiver process, to administer competency-based assessments for two years. In four of the state's districts, New Hampshire administered competency-based assessments, developed through collaboration with districts, in place of statewide assessments. To meet federal technical assessment requirements, the state agreed to have these competency-based assessments undergo the state's peer review process.

7. How many states will be granted approval for this pilot?

For the first three years of this pilot, seven states will be granted approval. These states may work alone or as a consortium, with no more than four states allowed in a consortium. (Those four states would be considered part of the seven.) Affiliate consortium members—defined as states that participate in the planning and development of an innovative assessment but do not administer the assessment in at least one district in place of the statewide assessment—do not need to be included as part of the application and will not count as one of the seven states.

8. As part of the application, what materials must be submitted and to whom?

States must submit evidence to the Secretary of Education that demonstrates the proposed innovative assessments are valid, reliable, and comparable across districts. Evidence must also outline how states will scale their innovative assessment system to be used statewide by the end of the initial innovative assessment pilot period.

Applications must be submitted via Max.gov, the same site used for submission of ESSA plans and Title I assessment systems.

Applications must include all of the following components:

- Description of state's innovative assessment system;
- State's experiences in implementing any component of the innovative assessment system;
- Timeline for implementation of pilot innovative assessment system;
- Description of how the innovative assessment system will meet statutory ESSA requirements for assessment and accountability systems;

- Description of how the state education agency will provide support and training for the pilot innovative assessment system to be implemented, including communication with parents of participating students;
- Description of how the state education agency will gather feedback from teachers, principals, other school leaders, and parents that will be used to improve the innovative assessment system, for eventual use across the state;
- Description of the state education agency's plan to ensure that all participating districts and/or schools are equipped to implement the innovative assessment system and have needed instructional support for all students and subgroups to meet state-aligned academic achievement standards; and
- Description of the local education agencies that will participate in the innovative assessment system, along with criteria for approving additional local education agencies for participation, and descriptions of how states will ensure local education agency compliance with system requirements.

9. To which students must the innovative assessment be administered?

The innovative assessments must be administered to all students in a subset of participating districts, or all students in a subset of participating schools within a participating district.

For more details on application requirements, please refer to [ESSA text, section 1204](#), 129 STAT. 1885, as well as the [application instructions](#).

10. Who must be consulted during the development of the innovative assessment system?

In developing the innovative assessment system, states must consult with parents of children with disabilities, parents of English learners, and any other parents of subgroup students, and must also collaborate with representatives of American Indian/Alaska Native tribes located within the state.

11. Will peer review requirements be applied to the use of innovative assessments?

Peer review will be applied to inform the approval of states' innovative assessment systems. The peer review process will assess whether an innovative assessment system is comparable to administered state assessments, and provides an unbiased, rational, and consistent determination of progress toward defined academic goals.

12. When will states receive a response regarding the peer review process?

Within 90 days of receiving a state educational agency application, the peer review process will result in a determination regarding approval and inform the state. If an application is not approved, a state can revise and resubmit its application within 60 days, with additional evidence of meeting requirements.

13. Does the innovative assessment pilot have to include assessments for all grades and subjects?

No. States can use this pilot to try assessments for specific grades or subjects (e.g., trying a different science assessment, or a different grade 3 mathematics assessment). Whatever structure a state proposes for the pilot will be the system that the state works to scale statewide. Two different assessment systems may exist in the state for the duration of the pilot, but states are expected to implement a singular system at the conclusion of the pilot (and possible extension).

14. How does an interested state account for the administration of alternate assessments?

A district or school may participate in a state's innovative assessment system while continuing to administer the statewide alternate assessment.

15. Will additional funding be provided for the development and implementation of an innovative assessment pilot?

No. States may use grants for state assessments and related activities (ESSA text, section 1201, 129 STAT. 1879) for the purposes of the innovative assessment pilot. These grants can be used for the costs of developing or refining state assessments. The application for Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority is not a grant application; no grant funds are being awarded as part of this competition.

16. What data will participating states be responsible for reporting?

For each year of the pilot, states must provide the Secretary of Education with data on the following: demographics of participating local education agencies; performance of all participating students; feedback from teachers, principals, other school leaders, and parents on satisfaction with the innovative assessments; and description of the state's progress in scaling up the system. As part of this data, states must provide a summative determination of each participating student's mastery of grade-level content and achievement standards.

17. During the innovative assessment pilot, can a state's approval be rescinded?

Yes. The Secretary of Education may withdraw authorization for an innovative assessment pilot if the state does not present evidence of: meeting requirements for assessments and accountability; including all students and subgroups, providing an unbiased, rational, and consistent determination of progress toward stated goals; a high-quality plan to transition the innovative assessment system to statewide use by the end of the pilot period or the two-year extension; and comparability to statewide assessments in terms of content coverage, difficulty, and quality. If a state does not submit sufficient evidence in support of all these requirements, the state must return to using the statewide assessment system outlined in its state plan.

18. What happens at the end of the five-year pilot period?

Approval for the innovative assessment pilot may be extended for an additional two years if a state educational agency submits evidence that its innovative assessment pilot continues to meet requirements for assessments and accountability, including a plan for transitioning the innovative assessments to statewide use by the end of the two-year extension.

19. What will USED do with the data collected from states' innovative assessment pilots?

The Director of the Institute of Education Sciences, in consultation with the Secretary of Education, will collect and disseminate best practices on the development and implementation of states' innovative assessment systems. Data will be collected no later than 180 days after the initial pilot period and prior to any pilot extension. The resulting summary will include a description of best practices regarding summative assessments that are comparable with statewide assessments, effective supports for implementing an innovative assessment system, effective supports for all students and subgroups participating in an innovative assessment system, and strategies to ensure inter-rater reliability and comparability of mastery or proficiency determinations. This summary information will be made available on the USED website, and will be updated at least once every three years.



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