

Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority Pilot under ESSA: Frequently Asked Questions

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

Statutory information about the innovative assessment demonstration authority pilot (hereafter “innovative assessment pilot”) can be found in section 1204 (“Innovative Assessment and Accountability Demonstration Authority”) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (129 STAT. 1885).

2. What does the innovative assessment pilot entail?

ESSA’s innovative assessment pilot allows a small number of states to permit all, or a subset, of their local education agencies (LEAs) to administer innovative assessments in place of statewide assessments. States that are interested in trying out local assessments that will eventually be used in place of state assessments may apply to participate in the pilot. Participating states can pilot innovative assessments in a few districts, to gauge how well these assessments meet state needs, before implementing them statewide. Eventually, these innovative assessments must be used to satisfy federal testing and accountability regulations.

The timeline for the application process has not yet been outlined. The timeline for applying and implementing an innovative assessment system will be at the discretion of the incoming Secretary of Education.

3. Who can apply to participate in the innovative assessment pilot?

States that are 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 that are 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 their use up to the statewide level.

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

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

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

Assessments used in the innovative assessment pilot must meet the requirements outlined in section 200.105 of the Title I, Part B, regulations. States do not have to develop an innovative assessment for use in this pilot; existing assessments can be used.

5. Are there available examples of states' innovative assessment systems?

States may want to look at the work that [New Hampshire](#) has done. Through a prior waiver process, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) granted New Hampshire approval to administer competency-based assessments for two years. New Hampshire administered competency-based assessments, developed through collaboration with districts, in place of statewide assessments in four of the states' school districts. To meet federal technical assessment requirements, the state agreed to have these competency-based assessments undergo the state's peer review process. New Hampshire's work may provide some ideas for states that are interested in applying for the innovative assessment system; states are not required to base their plans on New Hampshire's system.

6. How many states will be granted approval to participate in this pilot?

For the first three years of this five-year pilot, seven states will be granted approval to participate. These states may work individually or as a consortium, with no more than four states allowed in a consortium (those four states would be considered individually in relation to the seven-state total). Affiliate consortium members—defined as states that participate in the planning and development of an innovative assessment but that 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 be counted in the participant count of seven states.

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

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

Applications must include all of the following components:

- Description of the state's innovative assessment system;
- Description of the state's experiences in implementing any component of the innovative assessment system;
- Timeline for full implementation of the 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 (SEA) will provide support and training for the pilot innovative assessments to be implemented, including communication with parents of participating students;
- Description of how the SEA will gather feedback, from teachers, principals, other school leaders, and parents, that will be used to improve the innovative assessment system for its eventual use across the state;
- Description of the SEA's plan to ensure that all participating districts and schools are equipped to implement the innovative assessment system and that they are able to provide any needed instructional support for all students and subgroups to meet state-aligned academic achievement standards; and
- Description of the LEAs that will participate in the innovative assessment system, along with state criteria for approving additional LEAs for participation, and descriptions of how SEAs will ensure LEA compliance with system requirements.

For more details on application requirements, please refer to [ESSA text, section 1204](#), (129 STAT. 1885), and Title I, Part B, regulations.

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

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

9. 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.

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

Peer review requirements 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. The peer review process is also intended to provide an unbiased, rational, and consistent determination of progress toward state-defined academic goals.

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

Within 90 days of receiving an SEA application, the peer review process will result in a determination regarding approval, and the state will be informed of that determination. If an application is not approved, a state can revise and resubmit its application within 60 days, based on peer review feedback, with additional evidence of meeting requirements.

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

No. States can use this pilot to try out assessments for specific grades or subjects (e.g., trying a different science assessment, or a different grade 3 mathematics assessment), at the state's discretion. 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).

13. How does a participating 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.

14. Will additional federal funding be provided for the development and implementation of the 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.

15. What data will participating states be responsible for reporting to USED?

For each year of the pilot, states must provide the Secretary of Education with data on demographics of participating LEAs; innovative assessment performance data for 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 innovative assessments. As part of this information, states

must provide a summative determination of all participating students' mastery of grade-level content and achievement standards.

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

Yes. The Secretary of Education may withdraw authorization for a state to participate in the innovative assessment pilot if the state does not present sufficient evidence of compliance with all of the following: meeting requirements for assessments and accountability; including all students and all subgroups; providing unbiased, rational, and consistent determinations of progress toward stated academic goals; a high-quality plan to scale the innovative assessments to statewide use by the end of the pilot period or by the end of 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 of these requirements, the state must return to use of the statewide assessment system outlined in its state plan.

17. What will states be responsible for at the end of the five-year pilot period?

At the end of the five-year pilot period, participating states are expected to have implemented the piloted innovative assessment(s) across the state. Approval for the innovative assessment pilot may be extended for an additional two years if an SEA 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.

18. 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 assessments. Data for this purpose will be collected no later than 180 days after the initial pilot period, as well as prior to any pilot extension. The resulting summary of best practices will include descriptions 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.

18. Where can I find further information about the innovative assessment pilot?

Additional information about the innovative assessment pilot can be found in the [Title I, Part B, regulations](#) regarding assessments.



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