



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

November 6, 2015

Dear Colleague:

On September 25, 2015, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) released revised [guidance](#) outlining the criteria by which States will demonstrate the quality of their statewide assessment system and re-launched our peer review of State assessment systems. I am writing today to announce that ED is seeking experts to serve as peer reviewers for that process and to ask if you would (a) be interested in serving as a peer reviewer and/or (b) consider identifying others who might be interested and qualified to serve as reviewers.

A key purpose of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA), is to promote educational excellence and equity so that by the time students graduate from high school, they have mastered the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in college and the workforce. Under the ESEA, a critical element of each State's work to meet this goal is the development and adoption of (1) challenging academic content standards that define what the State expects all students to know and be able to do and (2) assessments aligned with those standards to measure student achievement in meeting those expectations. A high-quality State assessment system that is aligned to State-determined standards provides data that the students, teachers, parents, principals, and State and district leaders can use to identify academic needs, target resources and supports toward students who need them most, evaluate school and program effectiveness, and close achievement gaps among subgroups of students. Section 1111(e) of the ESEA requires ED to establish a review by external peers of each State's assessment system to ensure technical soundness and to provide recommendations to ED.

ED will assemble qualified educators and experts in assessments or academic content to participate in the review process to evaluate the technical soundness of each State's assessment systems – this includes reading/language arts, mathematics, and science assessments and general assessments as well as alternate assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The documentation provided by each State will be complex and highly technical. The review requires experts in the field to examine the documents and offer (1) technical assistance to the State and (2) recommendations to ED.

Qualifications of Reviewers

ED is seeking educators and other assessment experts to serve as peer reviewers for State assessment systems who have strong technical expertise necessary for reviewing State assessment systems and practical experiences in applying that expertise to the operation of State assessment systems. Each assessment peer reviewer will be selected by ED based on the individual's experience and expertise, with an emphasis on knowledge of technical aspects of large-scale assessments, experience with the operation of State assessment systems, and relevant specialized expertise (such as developing accessible assessments for special populations such as students with disabilities and English learners, designing

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The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

technology-based assessments, developing alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards, scoring and reporting assessments, or English language arts, mathematics, or science content knowledge).

The State Assessment Peer Review Process

ED will train all individuals selected to serve as assessment peer reviewers prior to the first review. For 2016, ED has established three windows for States to submit documentation: late January, late March, and May 2016. ED anticipates that the peers will receive documents approximately two weeks prior to the window. A peer may be selected for one or more of the windows; a peer need not be available for all three windows. From the full list of all available reviewers, ED will create a panel of 3-5 experts to review a State's documentation. ED will work to ensure a fair and balanced panel for the review of each State's assessment system, according to areas of reviewers' expertise. Please be aware that the selection process for peer reviewers to serve on a panel for any particular State will include a review for possible, apparent, and/or actual conflicts of interest. Each reviewer on a panel will work individually approximately 2-3 days over two weeks to review and evaluate the State's documentation. Following that, ED will convene the panel, most likely in Washington, DC, for 2-3 days to discuss the documentation. Peer reviewers will receive an honorarium for their time preparing for and participating in the review.

Indicating Your Interest in Being a Peer Reviewer

If you are interested in serving on a panel to review State assessment systems, please submit the materials outlined below to ESEA.Assessment@ed.gov with the subject line: "Assessment Peer Review" by **Wednesday, November 25, 2015**.

- A curriculum vitae
- A completed checklist of qualifications and conflict of interest form (see attached)

We invite and encourage you to share this letter with individuals whom you feel are highly qualified. If you have any question, please feel free to contact Patrick Rooney at Patrick.Rooney@ed.gov. Thank you for your interest in helping ED with this important activity.

Sincerely,

/s/

Monique M. Chism, Ph.D.
Director
Office of State Support