Virginia Board of Education Agenda Item

Agenda Item: E **Date:** July 23, 2015

Title	First Review of High School Equivalency (HSE) Examination Guidelines		
Presenter	Dr. Susan M. Clair, Director, Office of Adult Education and Literacy, Department of Education Mr. E. Denton Sisk, Chair, Adult Education and Literacy Advisory Committee		
E-mail	Susan.Clair@doe.virginia.gov	**Phone**	(804) 786-3347

Purpose of Presentation:
Action required by state or federal law or regulation.

Previous Review or Action:
No previous review or action.

Action Requested:
Action will be requested at a future meeting. Specify anticipated date below:
September 10, 2015

Alignment with Board of Education Goals: Please indicate (X) all that apply:

	Goal 1: Accountability for Student Learning
X	Goal 2: Rigorous Standards to Promote College and Career Readiness
X	Goal 3: Expanded Opportunities to Learn
	Goal 4: Nurturing Young Learners
	Goal 5: Highly Qualified and Effective Educators
	Goal 6: Sound Policies for Student Success
	Goal 7: Safe and Secure Schools
	Other Priority or Initiative. Specify:

Background Information and Statutory Authority:
Approval of the high school equivalency guidelines will ensure that examination(s) approved in Virginia will meet rigorous standards to promote College and Career Readiness. Furthermore, these guidelines were developed to expand opportunities for adults to be prepared for employment, postsecondary education, and training.

In March 2013, the Superintendent of Public Instruction approved the state's adoption of the 2014 GED® test as the state approved high school equivalency examination. The GED® test was selected because it is widely accepted and recognized by postsecondary education and employers. State and local resources for the implementation of the GED® test were put in place as a result of that acceptance.

On January 2, 2014, the GED Testing Service™ (GEDTS) made significant changes to the GED® test in terms of both content and delivery. The 2014 GED® test changed from paper-based testing to a test

delivered only on computer at authorized Pearson VUE Testing Centers. The 2014 GED® test has four subject areas instead of the five subject areas on the previous test. These subject areas are: Reasoning through Language Arts, Mathematical Reasoning, Science, and Social Studies.
On June 26, 2014, the Office of Adult Education and Literacy (OAEL) informed the Board of the impending change to the *Code of Virginia* effective July 1, 2014. On that date, HB 1007 (Byron) changed all references in the *Code of Virginia* from "General Educational Development (GED®)" to "high school equivalency examination approved by the Board of Education." The language was changed in recognition of other high school equivalency (HSE) examination options that are now available.

Two other HSE examination options are currently available in addition to the GED® test - the *High School Equivalency Test* (HiSET®), from the Educational Testing Service, and CTB/McGraw Hill's *Test Assessing Secondary Completion*™ (TASC). According to a January 27, 2015 report, compiled by the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium, 40 states have selected the 2014 GED® computer-based test as their approved alternative high school examination, five states selected all three high school equivalency tests, seven states selected only the HiSET®, and four states selected only the TASC. In total, 40 states offer the GED® test; 14 states offer HiSET®; and 9 states offer TASC.

On September 18, 2014, the GED® testing program was temporarily approved by the Board as the HSE examination to be used in Virginia. The approval was granted to comply with the legislated code changes. At this same meeting, the Board directed the OAEL to conduct a comparative analysis of HSE examination options in order to make an informed decision about which HSE examination(s) would best meet the needs of Virginia's adult learners. To address the Board's request for additional information regarding optional HSE examinations and timelines in which to evaluate these examinations, the OAEL developed an Action Plan that outlined the steps that the office would take, from October 2014 to spring/summer of 2015, to obtain information about optional high school equivalency examinations. In addition to these actions, the Superintendent of Public Instruction requested that OAEL survey key stakeholders to determine the credibility and acceptability of all HSE options.

Summary of Important Issues:
Evaluation of High School Equivalency Examinations
The following actions have been taken by the OAEL following the September 18, 2014, Board meeting:

- October 2014: The Adult Education and Literacy Advisory Committee (AELAC) was informed of the temporary approval of the GED® test and that the OAEL would move forward with a Request for Information (RFI) to vendors of other available high school equivalency examinations.
- October/November 2014: The OAEL begins preliminary preparation to conduct an RFI.
- December 2014: James Madison University (JMU) was contracted to develop a RFI and solicited responses from the three available HSE vendors. Dr. Diane Foucar-Szocki, Professor, Learning, Technology and Education Leadership, and Dr. Amy Dimarco-Thelk, Director of Assessment and Evaluation, JMU, coordinated this RFI process.
- January/February 2015: The RFI was released on January 26th and was due back on February 20th. A HSE Review Committee was selected and contacted. The HSE Review Committee consisted of 15 members, representing the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), the Virginia Department of Corrections (DOC), the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), Goodwill Industries of the Valleys, Advisor for Workforce Development of the Secretary of Commerce and Trade, Virginia Association of School Superintendents, Adult Education and Literacy Regional Program Managers, and adult education professionals from local school divisions including Hampton City

Public Schools, Fairfax County Public Schools, Henrico County Public Schools, Newport News City Public Schools, Prince William County Public Schools, and Virginia Beach City Public Schools.

- March/April 2015: Members of the HSE Review Committee received electronically the information received from the three HSE vendors to review and study prior to a meeting held on April 13 and 14. At this meeting, the three vendors presented their HSE examinations. Discussions were held following each presentation, with time allowed for the committee members to ask questions of the HSE vendors; then the committee members completed surveys on the presentations they heard. As part of the HSE evaluation process, JMU conducted interviews with various states, OAEL staff, and the Division of Instruction, Chief Academic Officer/Assistant Superintendent for Instruction.
- April 2015: The Chief Academic Officer/Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and OAEL staff met with representatives from the Attorney General's office and the Office of Procurement to determine whether the OAEL was required to conduct a Request for Proposal (RFP) from HSE vendors. It was determined that the OAEL develop HSE examination guidelines to be approved by the Board. All HSE vendors have had an opportunity to participate in the RFI process and vendor presentations, and all will have the opportunity to submit an application to be an approved HSE examination in Virginia. It was further understood that a contract with HSE vendors would not be necessary because they are not being hired by the Department to offer the examinations. Instead, the vendors are being authorized by the Department to provide the examinations to eligible individuals.
- May 2015: JMU compiled information from the RFI materials, the HSE Review Committee survey results, and information garnered through interviews with OAEL staff, the Chief Academic Officer/Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC) staff, and selected states that have adopted one or more of the available HSE examinations.
- May 2015: Using the JMU report as a framework, guidelines were developed containing all of the relevant criteria to be considered when approving an HSE examination for use in Virginia. These guidelines were developed by an HSE Guidelines Committee, consisting of a representative from the Department of Corrections, the Virginia Community College System, a representative from a four-year state university, a local Adult Education Program Manager, a representative from Goodwill Industries International Inc., and OAEL staff.
- June 2015: The JMU report and the HSE Examination Guidelines were presented to the AELAC on June 12. (Report and guidelines attached). Both of these documents were thoroughly reviewed and discussed in depth. The committee emphasized that the state should continue to uphold high standards and rigor when considering HSE examination approval. The AELAC voted unanimously to approve the HSE Examination Guidelines to present to the Board for First Review.
- July 2015: An HSE Evaluation Committee was selected to evaluate HSE vendor applications.
- July 23, 2015: The HSE Examination Guidelines will be presented to the Board for first review.

Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources:
There will be no impact on approving the guidelines. The impact on fiscal and human resources will be determined by the number of HSE examinations that are approved.

Timetable for Further Review/Action:

- September 10, 2015: Final Review

Upon final review of the HSE guidelines, the following timeline will be followed:

- October 1, 2015: HSE vendors will apply, using Board-approved HSE Examination Guidelines, to be an approved HSE provider in Virginia.
- November 1-December 17, 2015: The HSE Evaluation Committee will evaluate HSE vendor applications.
- January 2016: If more than one exam is approved by the HSE Evaluation Committee, an action plan will be developed by OAEL to assist the field in the planning process for implementing additional exams.

Superintendent's Recommendation:
The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board receive for first review the High School Equivalency Examination Guidelines for Virginia.

Attachment A

Virginia High School Equivalency Exam Review Process

Evaluation Report 2015

Diane-Foucar-Szocki, Ed.D. & Amy Thelk, Ph.D.

James Madison University, College of Education for

The Virginia Office of Adult Education And Literacy

Virginia High School Equivalency Exam Review Process
Evaluation Report
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary **3**

Introduction **4**

Response to RFI Review **4**

Table 1: Accessibility

Table 2: Administration

Table 3: Test Quality

Table 4: Vendor Characteristics

Interview Results **14**

Virginia

Other States

Review Committee Survey Results **19**

I. Vendor Impression Survey

II. Overall Evaluation Survey

III. HSE Testing in Virginia

IV. Summary

Conclusion and Next Steps **29**

Appendices **30**

Appendix A: RFI

Appendix B: HSE Review Factors

Appendix C: HSERC Members

Appendix D: HSERC Survey

Executive Summary

In early 2015, evaluators from James Madison University's College of Education worked with the Virginia Department of Education Office of Adult Education and Literacy to gather data about three available high school equivalency (HSE) tests and their use in Virginia (including the one test already in use in Virginia). Following a Request for Information (RFI) process which resulted in all three vendors submitting information, the work was done in four parts: RFI review, interview with state staff, gathering committee feedback following vendor presentations, and discussions with other states about their particular techniques for evaluating HSE tests.

From the RFI documents, data were gathered about vendor characteristics and test quality; accessibility issues and administrative details were also extracted. This information is included in tabular form in great detail in this report.

Main themes that emerged from state staff discussions were accessibility (test cost and availability) as being of primary importance to the targeted population, as well as acknowledgement that adopting additional or different tests would bring about implementation and transition issues for the adult education community.

Following the vendor presentations in April, 2015, feedback from review committee members indicated that all of the tests would be useful in some way at the state level, with some tests addressing certain areas better than others. Detailed survey results and comments are contained herein.

State conversations revealed diversity in the reasons why states embarked upon the process of reviewing tests, and the varied needs of each state's HSE consumers resulted in distinct testing choices being adopted. Nonetheless, communications about lessons learned may assist Virginia with its test review work.

Introduction

The United States has offered the test of General Educational Development (GED®) as a high school equivalency exam since 1945 when it provided returning WWII veterans evidence of having high school equivalency, primarily for taking advantage of the GI Bill and entering college. Until 2014 the GED® was the only available HSE examination option nationally. Revised five times since 1945, the 2014 GED® revision consists of four computer-based subtests (Reasoning through Language Arts, Mathematical Reasoning, Social Studies and Science) that take 7.5 hours to complete. In 2014, two additional HSE exams were released: HiSET® (**Hi**gh **S**chool **E**quivalency **T**est), offered through Educational Testing Services (ETS), and TASC® (**T**est **A**ssessing **S**econdary **C**ompletion), offered through CTB/McGraw-Hill. The availability of three exams prompted Virginia to revise statute. On July 1, 2014, the Virginia Board of Education approved House Bill 1007, which changed all references in the Code of Virginia from a *General Educational Development (GED)* certificate to a *High School Equivalency (HSE)* certificate. The Virginia Board of Education provisionally adopted the GED® test as its approved HSE assessment. The Board also charged the Virginia Office of Adult Education and Literacy (OAEL) with reviewing the available HSE exam options and making a recommendation to the Virginia Board of Education.

Evaluators from James Madison University's College of Education were contracted to: 1) prepare and conduct a Request for Information (RFI), 2) conduct interviews with selected Virginia state staff, 3) conduct interviews with staff of selected states where HSE decisions had already been made, 4) convene a vendor fair where the OAEL-selected High School Equivalency Review Committee (HSERC) could meet with responding vendors, 5) design and administer an HSE evaluation survey to the HSERC, and 6) prepare a report and present to the Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Advisory Committee (VAELAC).

The contracted evaluators completed eleven interviews (five with state directors/staff and six with VALRC/VDOE staff members. This process led to learning about conclusions states have arrived at in the process of evaluating HSE exams, as well as Virginia's past and current HSE practices. Generalizations should not be made further than these conversations.

The report presents an analysis of HSE vendor RFI responses, staff interviews, survey results and interviews with other states where HSE decisions have occurred. The information-gathering process that is detailed in this report allowed for representation of many different constituencies (e.g. K-12, Adult Education, corrections, community college) affiliated with and impacted by Virginia's High School Equivalency certificate review process. However, in no way is the representation in the HSERC representative of the relative proportions each stakeholder occupies when viewed at the state level. Therefore, some opinions voiced in the interview and survey data do not necessarily indicate the impact that a given change would have on the constituency. Each of the areas of interest require further evaluation in order to determine stakeholder majority opinions and impact on test-takers' lives and goals.

Response to RFI

The following section contains information about each vendor's response to the RFI issued through James Madison University (JMU) Procurement in February 2015 (Appendix A). To manage the high quantity of information, and to coordinate with the emergent themes drawn from interviews, the analysis of responses has been grouped into four tables: *Accessibility* (Table 1), *Administration* (Table 2), *Test Quality* (Table 3), and *Vendor Characteristics* (Table 4). The information contained in the table is only what was present in the vendors' replies; there may be more information about each component outside of vendor responses.

Table 1: Accessibility

Factor related to Accessibility	GED®	HiSET®	TASC®
Access to scores	Available through Smart Transcript Official scores provided within three hours of module completion. State identifies which program managers can have access to student scores. Students must give adult learning programs permission to view their scores.	Multiple-choice scores for paper-pencil, and essay scores for either format will be available within 3-5 days of ETS receiving score sheets. Instant CBT preliminary score on multiple-choice items. Data available to testing center, Commonwealth, and the student. Data not directly released to adult education programs.	Online reporting system (PRISM) for use by VDOE and testing centers allows for customizable reports. Data on student scores are available in PRISM within three days. Students are mailed an initial paper transcript.
Annual Attempts Allowed	3 times; after 3rd attempt, with each subsequent test, must wait 60 days before testing again	3 times per year per each content area	3 times per year; after 3rd attempt, wait 6 months before testing again
Cancellations	Free rescheduling or cancellation if made 24 hours prior to appointment	Depends on state – either contact testing center, or call ETS customer service	Not addressed in RFI
Cost	$120 ($80 for test, $40 for testing center fee) $30 per module (with $10 of this going toward testing center fee). Two Retakes are discounted within year; $10 for retake, the test center's fee.	$50, includes two free retakes within one year (same price for CBT & PBT) $15 per module, or pay $50 for entire test	$52, includes two free retakes within one year (same price for CBT & PBT) Price will increase to $54 by 2017 (still with two free retakes)
Formats: PBT or CBT	1 format: CBT PBT version is offered as an accommodation or may be used on very limited basis for exceptional cases	2 formats: CBT, PBT	2 formats: CBT, PBT. Can be administered with a combination of both modes.

Factor related to Accessibility	**GED®**	**HiSET®**	**TASC®**
Registration	Test taker must set up a **MyGED®** online account; registration help available via phone Online scheduling, 24/7. Test-takers can register in person at an authorized GED® test center, but still registers online. Spanish test takers can register via phone	Register online with HiSET® & set up a **My HiSET®** account.	Online registration Option to register in person at test center, with money collected onsite.
Schedule/Availability	Students can test when they want	Depends on state – scheduling may be through testing center; other states also allow scheduling online or by calling ETS customer service	Students work with testing center to set up testing times.
Test Centers	Pearson VUE testing centers, fixed additional sites, mobile additional sites, or GED®-only sites	VDOE will approve CBT sites if they meet ETS requirements; additional classroom space needed for PBT.	Use existing test sites for CBT; additional classroom space needed for PBT.

Table 2: Administration

Factor related to Administration	GED®	HiSET®	TASC®
Languages	English, Spanish	English, Spanish	English, Spanish
Accommodations available	PBT version Audio version Screen reader Braille, including tactile graphics Talking calculator Zoom/magnifier Background color changer Private room Extended testing time Extra breaks Scribe Reader All accommodations are free	Extended time Separate room Audio version Large print/ magnification Talking calculator Scribe/ keyboard entry aide Additional supervised break time Sign language-interpreted instructions No Braille	Large-print Braille Audio Video of signed instructions Breaks Talking calculator Extended time Scribe Separate room Assistive technology Small group Other accommodations may be approved
Length of time to process accommodation requests	Decisions are communicated via email, usually within 30 days of request.	The majority of requests are processed within 10 days, but could take anywhere from 10-45 days for approval.	Decisions are communicated ands mailed within 30 days of request.
Marketing plan	Outreach tools for educators: Launch kit (available online), Brand Central (brochures, posters, etc.) and free downloads of videos and documents.	ETS will provide a comprehensive marketing plan: social media, template tools for testing sites, and marketing packets for Commonwealth employees, testing centers, universities, and employers.	CTB has a comprehensive marketing plan underway, which targets all 50 states.
Official Practice Tests	GED® Ready: The Official Practice Test can predict test readiness and provides diagnostic feedback to aid instructors (half-length, cost), both in English & Spanish. Free practice test (one-quarter length). A Teacher's Guide is an 8-week self-paced, free course available for download.	Free PBT official practice test (half length) available in English and Spanish. CBT practice tests available for $5.00 per subtest; these offer diagnostic feedback. New Official Practice Test is $10 per subject, but center can make copies of these.	TASC® readiness Assessment (half-length of operational test) provides information about likelihood of passing the TASC®, and offers diagnostic feedback. CBTs are scored instantly; PBT must be hand-scored by center.

Factor related to Administration	GED®	HiSET®	TASC®
Availability of Offline CBT	Yes. Does not require an Internet connection. Guides and information available on GED® web site	No. PBT (certified to be same as CBT test) is administered in settings without internet connection (i.e. corrections).	No. PBT is administered in settings without internet connection (i.e. corrections). CTB will work with VDOE to develop a plan to administer TASC® under existing policies in correctional facilities.
Transcripts and certificates	GED® Credentialing (Parchment) issues historical and new Smart Transcripts and fills requests made by employers, schools, students and the military. All historical data is stored in electronic, paper and microfiche formats. Requestor is charged a small fee for historical requests, or request for duplicate copies.	Self-print HiSET® score report may be used as the official Virginia transcript (available any time, free of charge through HiSET® account). An option to use Diploma Sender ™, which would provide HSE data management, GED® archive records management, and distribution of initial and duplicate HSE documents.	Transcripts mailed to student (VDOE chooses delivery method, e.g. USPS). The transcripts & certificates can also be sent electronically. Delivery via email is an option.

Table 3: Test Quality

Factor related to Test Quality	GED®	HiSET®	TASC®
Alignment with VA SOLs	The 2014 GED® measures Virginia SOL content in the areas of English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Social Studies. An independent alignment was completed by WestEd in 2014.	No alignment portrayed in RFI.	Alignment with VA SOLs stated in RFI on page 1.
Alignment with Career and College Readiness Standards for Adult Education (CCRSAE)	Language Arts, Social Studies and Math modules are aligned with CCRS.	Certain items are aligned with CCRS. See Page 17 in RFI. Unsure whether all CCRS are represented in the alignment.	Aligned with CCRS (RFI pg. 1); plans to enhance coverage by 2016.
Development of passing score	Passing scores based on performance of the 2013 high school graduate norming sample; specific information about how cut scores were decided was not provided.	Passing scores linked to 40th percentile in national population of high-school students	Passing scores for each subtest were set so that they resulted in a 70% pass rate based on norming sample. Compared to 2002 GED® series cut scores.
Further test development	Plans for another norming study to consider revising the passing standards in light of increasing rigor of high school graduation requirements	Nothing mentioned in RFI about test items. Increased coverage of CCRS through 2017.	CTB will address each subtest's rigor and complexity from 2014 through 2016.
Inferences for college bound vs. those seeking employment	Separate cut scores for HSE and college-ready result in three "zones": Below Passing (less than 150), Meets Passing Standard for HSE (150-169), and GED® Score with Honors (170+).	Separate cut scores for passing (8 on each test, with a minimum of 2/6 score on essay) and college-ready (15 on each test, with a minimum of 2/6 score on essay). College readiness indicators are provided on each individual score report.	Two cut scores: HSE (500 on each test, with a minimum of 2/8 on Writing prompt) and college & career readiness (cut score will be determined sometime in 2015 when TASC® will provide information about college and career readiness by predicting success in entry-level college courses). Some of the test items were field tested on students enrolled in vocational and technical colleges.

Factor related to Test Quality	GED®	HiSET®	TASC®
Initial test development	Multistep process, outlined in RFI response materials (pg. 19 -23/ Appendix L) Items field tested in late 2014 became operational in 2015 Item bank updated regularly with new items	Multistep process, outlined in RFI response materials (pg. 1-3) ETS continues to monitor test forms to confirm they reflect the evolving intentions of the testing program.	Multistep process, outlined in RFI response materials (Appendix A). Technology-enhanced and constructed-response items that were field tested in 2014 will be embedded in 2015 and incorporated into operational item pool in 2016. These new items will promote better reflection of the complexity and cognitive rigor of CCRS.
Norming	Based on the performance of 2013 high school graduates	Difficult to tell if the norming study has already occurred or not. Details of norming study, whether proposed or completed, not provided.	Included adult learners and students in correctional-based education settings in norm groups. Norming study took place fall 2013.
Number of sections	4 sections: Reasoning through Language Arts, Mathematical Reasoning, Science and Social Studies	5 sections: Language Arts - Reading, Language Arts - Writing, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies	5 sections: Reading, Writing, Math, Science and Social Studies
Pass rates/Test difficulty	2014 pass rate – 60% nationally, 62% in Virginia Pass rates higher in second half of 2014 than in first As stated in RFI, lower pass rates in Virginia may be due to new compensatory scoring model (must pass each section)	Pass rate not divulged in RFI.	2014 passing rate: 59%

Factor related to Test Quality	GED®	HiSET®	TASC®
Recognition of test name	Currently used by Virginia; test name widely recognized by employers and postsecondary institutions.	In 2014 ETS worked with employers, universities, and the military to provide information about the HiSET®. *Dear Colleague Letter* (April 2014) highlights FAFSA revisions impacts HSE and changes in terminology so that HiSET® will be included as an acceptable HSE assessment.	11 national organizations (such as the US Military and the US Chamber of Commerce) recognize TASC® as a valid HSE, as a result of CTB'S marketing campaign
Reliability studies	Based on 2013 Standardization and Norming Study Parallel forms: correlations range from .73 to .88 Quadratic Kappa (index of decision consistency) .59 to .78 (0 = agreement based on chance, 1 = perfect agreement)	No info in the RFI	Reliability indices calculated on over 5,000 scores from 2014. Subtest reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha) range from .78 to .87 (1.0 = perfect reliability)
Scoring	Two cut scores established: HS credential and GED® with Honors HS credential: examinees must get a minimum of 150 on each module, for a total minimum scaled score of 600. GED® with Honors: 170+ Essays are scored by automated scoring engines that are trained to replicate human scoring. Outliers flagged and sent to human readers.	Passing score linked to the 40th percentile in national HS graduate sample (will work with Virginia to customize the passing score) To pass, examinees must get an 8 on each subtest (this corresponds to the passing score of 82% of HS seniors in a national representative sample), a score of 2 on the essay, and a total composite score of 45. To be considered "college-ready," candidates must score 15 or above on each section (linked to score of top 20-30 percent of high school seniors who showed they are prepared for college without remediation).	To pass TASC®, examinee must score at least 500 on each subject area test, and at least a 2/8 on the writing prompt. Cut scores for college/career readiness will be available in 2015.

Factor related to Test Quality	GED®	HiSET®	TASC®
Test forms	3 English forms 3 Spanish forms	3 forms each PBT, CBT, Spanish, English, updated annually	3 forms updated annually (English and Spanish), 2 Braille forms updated annually
Test time	7.5 hours	Approximately 7 hours	7 hours, 25 minutes Spanish: 8 hours
Use in other states	2014 GED® is currently used in 40 states and DC	As stated in the RFI, ETS is working with 14 states to implement HiSET®; also used in 4 territories and with 2 sovereign nation tribes.	Approved for use in 9 states since 2014.
Validity studies	Based on 2013 Standardization and Norming Study: Pass rates ranged from 90% to 97% for those students shown to be in the Green (ready) zone on the GED® Ready Practice test.	Validity evidence will be collected using 2015, 2016 and 2017 HiSET® test scores	Comparability studies between PBT and CBT forms TASC® is positively correlated with TABE and Terra Nova tests (both of which measure content and cognitive skills associated with high school curricula in the United States)

Table 4: Vendor Characteristics/Quality

Factor related to Vendor Characteristics	GED®	HiSET®	TASC®
Experience with large-scale assessment	Currently on 5th GED® series	ETS develops and administers the following exams: Advanced Placement (AP), SAT, CLEP, GRE, Major Field Tests (MFTs), NAEP, The Praxis Series, and TOEFL, among others.	Administers TABE, a widely used test of adult basic education Has conducted several validity studies
Level of administrator support available	Pearson VUE, a partner with GED®TS, provides technical assistance via email, toll free helpline and an online system.	Telephone, email and fax lines Monday-Friday 8 am to 8 pm, Saturday 8 am to 5 pm	Telephone, email and fax lines Monday-Friday 7 am to 8 pm. Three tiers of support (Tier 1 = Help Desk, Tier 2 = Senior Support personnel, Tier 3 = interdisciplinary team members and is used for escalated complicated or urgent issues that have not been resolved at lower tiers).
Level of test-taker support available	Live chat services for test-takers using GED Ready®. Customer service available through email, call center, or at testing centers.	Telephone, email and fax lines Monday-Friday 8 am to 8 pm, Saturday 8 am to 5 pm.	Same as administrator support listed above.
Quality of response to RFI	Included Technical Manual and Assessment Guide for Virginia Educators as one of 14 Appendices.	Included practice tests in Appendix. Lacked reliability and validity information.	Included Technical Manual: TASC® Test 2014 in Appendix A.
Reputation of company	Has been the sole HSE credential since 1942. Owned by American Council on Education and NCS Pearson, Inc.	ETS is a non-profit testing company. Published hundreds of reports on adult education, starting in 1970s No prior test development experience with this population	CTB has been testing students for 88 years. Developed and administers the TABE, an assessment used with adult learners.

Interview Results

Virginia

In-person interviews were conducted on February 12, 2015, with six state staff members. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed for emergent themes. Results are reported here. Not all themes addressed by RFI responses were addressed in staff interviews. Additionally, some topics discussed by staff were not directly addressed in the RFI. A member of the state staff was hired after these interviews took place. Her comments are included in this section, and information added is clearly noted to distinguish it from what was gathered in the interviews, where appropriate. A list of the review factors for HSE exams that emerged from this evaluation can be found in Appendix B.

Accessibility

Accommodations. With GEDTS, all accommodations are between the test taker and the test publisher. Little concern was expressed about accommodations. Use of paper-based testing has been done as an accommodation.

Cost. Variance in cost to the test taker and cost recovery back to the test center and or local program mattered most to staff. Keeping cost reasonable and being able to offer vouchers where necessary was also a necessary consideration for staff.

Format. The means by which the test could be made available to test takers, specifically whether paper-based testing (PBT) was available was an important consideration, however it was mitigated by the year-long CBT-only experience, which alleviated some administrative challenges of PBT. Some wondered if having only CBT reduced accessibility. Since January 2014 the Virginia OAEL has supported only the CBT GED® test. The transitional waiver program was used where CBT could not be supported. Having non-computer based, (e.g., PBT) may increase accessibility. Issues that may increase with reinstituting paper-based testing in Virginia include test registration, test security and test accommodations. According to the newest member of the state OAELRC staff, Virginia was poised to handle a CBT-only testing system in January 2014.

Test Centers. Virginia has already provided state money to local programs to establish certified Pearson VUE testing centers. These centers offer the GED® and other Pearson VUE tests. At the time of the interviews, testing center requirements for HiSET® and TASC® were not known. Most staff wanted to know if the other tests could be administered in existing Pearson VUE testing centers. Some Pearson VUE centers operating in Virginia are not affiliated with the Virginia OAEL. Concern was expressed about test center access and the need for more centers or mobile centers in rural areas. It was conveyed by some that there are fewer test centers now that all must be Pearson VUE approved. Another member of the state staff indicated that in fact there are more testing centers today than VA has ever had. Prior to the CBT structure a local examiner could qualify a workplace as a secure test site and offer the GED®. That is no longer the case with the GED® and Pearson VUE.

Administration

Credentialing/Transcripts. Virginia transitioned from paper transcripts and credentials to an online system supported by GEDTS in 2014. All official transcripts and the issuing of Virginia HSE Certificates earned by passing the GED® are done online through GEDTS for a fee of $15.00 for either electronic or paper versions of the transcript and certificate. If another test were approved, management of and cost for transcripts and credential issuance would be a key consideration. Following the interviews another member of the team indicated that electronic transcripts and certificates are free to those who have just completed and passed tests; a paper certificate is free for the first request.

Data Management. GED® Analytics provides data on what tests have been taken and completed, and number of total battery passers for all Virginia's test takers. For security reasons, access to this data is limited to state staff. Currently data is not made available to local programs. Program access to tester information is further complicated if the test-taker does not opt in to allow his/her scores to be shared, then the locality will

not see his/her name. If additional tests are approved, issues related to access and management of test-taker data will need attention. Consideration will need to be given to how and what data would be managed and made accessible at the vendor, state, program, and individual levels.

Institutions of Higher Education/Community Colleges. Some wondered if community colleges would recognize the Virginia HSE credential in the same fashion as it is now if it were achievable via multiple assessments. Considerations included what scores would be meaningful and acceptable to higher education and the impact of multiple assessments on Pell grant eligibility. Some wondered about differentiation of credentialing, where the purposes of the student (i.e., work, postsecondary enrollment or personal achievement) might inform assessment selection. Some suggested a tiered or stackable certification system where career readiness certificates (bronze, silver and gold) might provide meaningful credentials short of the HSE. It was mentioned that test passers might seek to retake an HSE exam to achieve a higher score for college admission.

Instruction and Test-taking Preparation. Concern was expressed about local adult education programs having the capacity to prepare students for more than one test. Would offering more than one test require changes in preparation programs? What are the costs to local programs for preparation and offering of more than one test? What level of teacher preparation would be required? What kind of professional development would be needed to get teachers prepared? What materials and delivery methods are available for test takers to prepare for each of the tests? Transition to the 2014 GED® test required field-based professional development about the new assessments and what to expect. Something similar would be required if other assessments were introduced. Some expressed concern over test-taker confusion if multiple assessments were an option. Will completers know or recall what test they took to earn their credential and how much will that matter going forward?

Test Quality

Alignment. Tests should be aligned with what the Virginia Standards of Learning (SoLs) and the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education (CCRSAE). This alignment was the number one priority across all staff. Some suggested that GED® is the only one of the three tests aligned with Virginia because of GEDTS engagement with Virginia during its test-development process and the ensuing implementation of the test and its support systems. Current levels of HiSET® and TASC® test item accessibility are insufficient to conduct an independent, in-depth item analysis to determine each test's alignment with Virginia SoLs or CCRSAE.

Credibility/Recognition. GED® is the recognized brand name for high school equivalency examinations. Credibility suggests a Virginia high school equivalency certificate equates to high school proficiencies. If the Virginia High School Equivalency Certificate (VHSEC) is achievable by all three tests, employers and higher education would need to recognize the comparability and have confidence in the Virginia HSE certificate earned through the approved assessment(s).

Employer Needs/Workforce Development. Adult education staff members want to make positive contributions to Virginia's workforce development objectives and want HSE attainment to aid employability. It was suggested that using multiple assessments might be confusing and could result in a mismatch between employer needs/expectations and HSE completers. Some large employers may be aware of tests used in other states and would want to have that option in Virginia. It was also noted that it is more than likely that employers will not notice a change if more tests are approved.

HSE Purpose. VDOE OAEL staff members suggest that the purpose of HSE is to serve as a standard, a means of affirming recipients as college and career ready in accordance with the Virginia SoLs, comparable to an average standard diploma recipient. Some suggest that the purpose of the HSE is a measurement of knowledge attainment aligned with Virginia standards and not necessarily a credential to achieve employment or post-secondary education. The Virginia Adult Education system and its credential needs to reflect a minimum standard of what people who achieve it know and are able to do and that standard should be meaningful and reflective of a high school completer in Virginia in accordance with SoLs and CCRS.

Rigor. All staff commented on test rigor and comparability. The GED®, based on CCRS, offered primarily in CBT form, and having two passing thresholds, was seen as the most rigorous. In the face of criticism, GEDTS has affirmed that employers wanted a more rigorous test of academic, problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, and that is what has been delivered. Among Virginia staff, the 2014 GED® test is known to be harder, with writing tests that assess across the content areas using evidence-based writing. Some suggested that the 2014 GED® test could now rival the Virginia College Placement Test, which the 2002 GED® could not do. Less was known about the other two tests (HiSET® and TASC®); the prevailing perception was that HiSET® was more like the 2002 GED® test than like the 2014 GED® test, particularly with the option for paper-based testing. TASC® was perceived by some to be of greater rigor than the 2002 GED® and by others to be more like the 2002 GED®, however, all agreed that at the time they currently had no experience with the actual TASC® and HiSET® exams.

Vendor Quality

Customer Service. From those interviewed, experience with the current HSE vendor, GED®TS, is reported as excellent at the state and regional levels. Response by GEDTS has been rapid and professional.

Other States

Using the National Council of State Directors of Adult Education directory, phone calls were made and emails were sent to the offices of the state director in states that had been identified as having engaged in an HSE exam process and had arrived at and were implementing an approved approach to HSE for that state. States were selected representing a range of approaches, specifically states offering all three HSE exams, those offering HiSET® only, TASC® only and GED® only. Interview times were arranged with one or more state staff members. These conversations were recorded, transcribed and analyzed for themes.

Process

All five states used either an RFI or RFP process to secure information from vendors. All states used an expert or review panel to assist with the process. Where procurement is not a state function, only the RFI process was used. In states where the state pays some or all of the HSE costs an RFP was required**.** Legislation governing HSE practices varied considerably across the five states. Two states have legislative parameters requiring use of only one HSE exam for that state's HSE credential. One of those states chose the TASC® and the other chose the GED®. Where one test was required, RFPs were issued. Scoring rubrics were designed and used by review committee members who deliberated without state staff involvement and made a recommendation based on the resulting rubric scores. Other states did not have legislative parameters requiring one test. In these states, two approved one test, the HiSET®, for three years, beginning in 2014. The remaining state approved all three tests as meeting the requirements for its HSE credential. In 4 of the 5 states the credential is a certificate. In one state the credential is a diploma.

Implementation

Practices supporting HSE exam implementation varied. Levels of satisfaction with implementation also varied.

Accessibility

Cost

For all states interviewed, HSE testing prices are set by the state through negotiation with the vendor(s). Four of the five have one rate, because they have one test. Where multiple assessments are being used, there is a ceiling that cannot be exceeded for each test. In two states, much of the cost is paid by the state. In the other three, individuals pay the fee and can receive support through vouchers or waivers to reduce the cost to the individual if they cannot pay. Purchase of the entire battery or individual subtests is addressed in pricing guidelines, as are discounted retakes, with a test center fee set by the state. In states using the GED®, the financial interaction is between GED® and the test taker and GED® remunerates the test center. For TASC® and HiSET® all money exchange, registration and scheduling is done at the test center. Vendors bill test centers directly for the tests administered.

Testing Centers
In states using TASC® and HiSET®, testing centers are the same as pre-2014 practices and expectations. In states using the GED®, establishing Pearson-VUE testing centers was a necessity, although some centers are designated HSE only and do not have to meet the same level of standard as those sites offering the complete Pearson VUE testing suite. There are private Pearson VUE centers disconnected from the education system. Making sure these Pearson VUE testing centers are doing things properly is a concern for state staff. In the state offering GED® only, centers must receive state approval, thus all centers are connected to the state system. Where multiple assessments are an option, all three assessments can now coexist in the same approved Pearson VUE centers, although because the state requires a paper option be available, some private Pearson VUE centers opted out of HSE offerings for that reason. Achieving this level of coexistence took some time and required vendor flexibility. Some rural localities do not have approved Pearson VUE centers. In those localities, one or both of the other assessments are offered. The state encourages test centers to have available all three of the vendors but has been flexible about this transition, essentially supporting local option so long as both a CBT and PBT version of a HSE exam are made available. Where multiple assessments are offered, the financial and security agreement is between the vendor and the test center, with sign off by the state office. Each vendor and the state have an MOU that outlines responsibilities for being able to operate in that state.

Administration

Accommodations
In all states and with all tests, accommodation approvals are now the vendor's responsibility. The level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction was not mentioned in any interview.

Corrections
Corrections were mentioned directly by two states. The state using multiple assessments wanted to assure continuation for meritorious credit that reduces sentences by 60 days. Having multiple assessments supported this in the transition year of 2014, when CBT remained problematic with the GED® only. In the GED®-only state, offering CBT-only test administration created additional challenges within corrections. The challenges have been met and it was stated that the state's correction facilities are furthering computer access in its facilities, maybe as a result of the successful implementation of GED® computer-based testing.

Data Management
HiSET® states receive data each night. The GED®-only state uses GED® analytics. In both cases, the level of detail available is excellent and allows for meaningful analysis across many settings and variables. The TASC® -only state receives data from CTB/McGraw-Hill. CTB scores the test and sends the results to the state. The state processes and retains student transcripts and credentialing. This state is building a database to accommodate and use subtest data that is not yet available, but promised from CTB, to inform instruction. This planned level of diagnostics would be available to funded adult education programs and to the student directly through password protected CTB online.

Documentation and Archiving
Four of the five states continue to process transcripts and issue certificates from the state office. The state using multiple assessments has these services provided through Diploma Sender. Diploma Sender is the archive of records for the state, which still owns the data. Diploma Sender provides both transcript and certificate service for test takers for all three assessments.

Marketing
One state conducted a fairly large scale, yearlong information and marketing campaign to make policymakers, educators and the general citizenry aware of the test change anticipated in 2014. In the state where all three exams are an option they reported less confusion than anticipated. They launched a *Talk About your HSE Certificate* campaign that includes materials on the website and handouts to share with employers and colleges to inform them of the change and to assure that they honor all three equivalently. Confusion by test takers, employers and higher education has been much less than anticipated in those states that changed from the GED® to another test or added additional assessments to the GED®.

Test Quality

Testing Transition

In the initial year of implementation where the HSE test had been a change from the GED® or new tests were added in addition to the GED®, a grandfathering provision allowing for subtest combining across tests was instituted. For example, if a person passed 3 of the 5 test sub-tests in the old GED®, they would only have to pass the two they didn't pass in the new TASC® or HiSET® test. For 2014, some grandfathering was allowed of old GED® scores with new GED® scores if the GED® was still an option in that state. This practice was reported by state office personnel to have increased pass rates over the new test alone pass rate by an average of 7% during that first year in those states employing this practice.

Test Development

Those states using the HiSET® commented on changes being made to the test, particularly the 2015 Math test. These changes impact instruction and test preparation. Ongoing test changes are a result of the expressed intention of ETS to gradually increase HiSET® 's alignment with standards, including the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education. The state using TASC® did not comment on the impact of test items changes on instruction and test preparation. They did indicate that they have had the opportunity to inform the test development process with meaningful items aligned with the standards of their state. The year 2016 is anticipated to be more stable with fewer test and materials changes. Both PBT and CBT test administration is smooth.

Vendor Quality

Vendor Reliability and Customer Service

Those working with GED® have found GEDTS to be responsive and cooperative in the transition to GED® 2014. GEDTS offers many online and in-person supports. It was reported that Pearson-VUE's level of support to testing centers varies, and is not always satisfactory to those at the state. GED® using states reported that communication of testing center policy and required changes in practice could have been handled in a timelier manner. One state reported the need for consistent high-level communication with Pearson-VUE to assure issues were known, understood and resolved.

HiSET® test changes and support issues were also reported. Phasing CCRC-aligned items into the HiSET® is ongoing and results in test changes not being clearly communicated to states and localities in a timely manner. Clarity of testing policy remains insufficient. Some decisions are announced and then rescinded, causing local programs to have to pivot one way and then another within a matter of weeks or months. Getting clear and concise information remains problematic. Instructional materials, including practice tests, have been slow in arrival. These same states do report that the actual offering of HiSET® test in both PBT and CBT has been relatively smooth.

States using TASC® report reliable communication and customer service. Communication about changes has been timely. Item field-testing continues, resulting in ongoing test changes.

Review Committee Survey Results

As per the Scope of Work, evaluations were developed as part of the data collection process. Survey drafts were created and forwarded to the VDOE stakeholders for feedback prior to being utilized with HSE committee members.

HSE review committee members (Appendix C) were asked to fill out evaluations (Appendix D) following the vendor presentations and group discussion. All evaluations were administered via Qualtrics®, an online survey tool used by James Madison University. HSE committee member emails were loaded into the Qualtrics® system prior to the presentations, and all surveys were set to launch at a certain time so that when the appropriate time to give feedback arrived, each member would have the relevant survey in his/her email Inbox.

Committee members each had a short survey waiting in his/her Inbox after each presentation, and a survey of overall feedback about the tests and feasible options that was received and completed the day after vendor presentations, as the work session was coming to a close. Session facilitators scheduled dedicated time for each evaluation to be completed. Qualtrics® allows survey administrators to check whether those who receive a survey complete it; one of the facilitators monitored completion of the surveys and continued to encourage participation.

One HSE committee member was not able to complete two of the Vendor Impressions surveys (HiSET® and TASC®) because of an email filter that blocked the surveys from her email Inbox, so the number of respondents is lower for those evaluations.

I. Evaluation Results from Vendor Impressions surveys

HSE committee members completed surveys immediately following the vendor presentations. Organized group discussion had not taken place prior to any of these evaluations being completed. Responses were reviewed and organized into themes. The number in parenthesis is the number of respondents. Themes are presented from most respondents to least, with unique responses reported in a separate category. Unique responses are comments made by only one respondent.

GED® vendor impressions. This vendor presented first so this was the first evaluation completed by review team members.

1. *When asked what the benefits of using the GED® are, common answers were:*

- GED® is already in place/familiarity; resources have already been used for training and development (8)
- GED® is a recognized entity and has name recognition with employers (5)
- Alignment with CCR standards (3)
- Availability of publisher preparation materials (3)
- Experienced company/willingness to collaborate (3)
- Management and reporting tools/student portal/transcripts (3)
- Possibility for working with VCCS to eliminate prerequisites (3)

Unique responses include:

- Profile for remediation
- Psychometric rigor
- 2 levels of passing (standard and with honors)
- GED® Ready is predictive of success on test
- Opportunity for state to structure procedures and processes (possibly can lower cost)
- Seems to be a good assessment for younger adults

2. *When asked what the concerns or drawbacks of using the GED® are, common answers were:*

Responses clustered into three major themes.

- High cost (9)
- No paper options/ implications for jails (6)
- Difficult professional relationship with Pearson VUE -- customer service and technical support (3)

Unique responses include:

- Limits on accommodations
- GEDTS hasn't been willing to work collaboratively with Virginia before now
- Test centers can no longer test a large number of examinees at once
- Test materials are vague and feedback is general/hard to remediate
- Test constantly being revised, so materials will go out of date
- Assessment targets are too broad
- Running the remote-maintenance agent (RMA; a system utilized in the correctional system so that computer based testing can be accomplished offline).

3. *In your opinion, would this test meet the minimum HSE exam standards for Virginia?*

Yes (n=15, 94%)
Maybe/Don't Know (n=1, 6%)
No (n=0)

Immediately following the GEDTS presentation, HSE committee members identified GED® benefits and concerns. When analyzed using the emergent categories of Accessibility, Administration. Test Quality and Vendor Quality, GED® benefits were overwhelmingly identified as *Test Quality* (credibility, recognition, alignment) followed by *Vendor Quality* (experience, flexibility). The most commonly voiced concerns were *Accessibility* related, specifically cost and the lack of PBT. Ninety-four percent of respondents agreed that the GED® met the minimum HSE exam standards for Virginia.

TASC® Vendor Impressions. This was the second evaluation completed by the HSE committee members.

1. *When asked what the benefits of using the TASC® in Virginia are, common answers were:*

- Paper options are available (11)
- Low cost (10)
- Corporate connection to TABE (3)
- Availability of tester results to administrators (3)
- Established plan to improve test items (2)
- Practice tests only administered by HSE providers might increase numbers of students that utilize adult education programs (2)
- Company is experienced in test development and management (2)

Unique responses include:

- Writing test is separate from reading test
- Correlated with CCR
- Availability of Braille and large print formats
- User-friendly registration process
- Test format similar to prior GED® test
- Adaptive testing would shorten testing time
- Predictive practice test
- Not tied to Pearson VUE testing centers
- Ability to block certain individuals from registration (e.g. students who have not withdrawn from HS)
- Fairly easy to implement

2. *When asked what the concerns or drawbacks of using the TASC® are, common answers were:*

- Credential will not be recognized (6)
- Costs of transitioning to new test in Virginia (3)
- Adaptive testing (3)
- Paper based option takes us backwards (2)
- Length of time to receive scores in mail is too long (2)
- Field testing questions/ yearly changes (2)
- May end up all CBT anyway—no paper options in the future (2)
- No offline computer based testing for corrections (2)
- Issues with CTB-McGraw Hill, TABE (3)

Unique responses include:

- Test does not have an established track record
- Training via webinar might be difficult
- Need to purchase additional materials
- Test feedback looks generic
- Registration process seems confusing

3. *In your opinion, would [TASC®] meet the minimum HSE exam standards for Virginia?*

Yes (n=9, 64%)
Maybe/Don't Know (n =5, 36%)
No (n=0)

Immediately following the CTB/McGraw-Hill presentation, HSE committee members articulated TASC® benefits as *Accessibility* (low cost, PBT) and *Administration* (varied formats and registration process). Concerns were equally distributed between *Test Quality*, (credential recognition and test development) and *Administration* (test preparation, offering the test and reporting). Sixty-four percent of respondents agreed that the TASC® met the minimum HSE exam standards for Virginia.

HiSET® Vendor impressions. ETS was the final presenter. This was the final survey completed by HSE review committee members.

1. *When asked what the benefits of using the HiSET® in Virginia are, common answers were:*

- Paper/pencil option (9)
- Collaborative approach to HSE; state advisory committee (7)
- Price (6)
- Credibility and resources of ETS (5)
- Patterned after 2002 GED® test (4)
- Nonprofit status of ETS (3)
- Flexibility in setting a cut score at the state level (2)
- Test centers can reproduce purchased practice tests (2)
- Would allow for gradual transition to more rigorous standards (2)

Unique responses include:

- Alignment to CCRS
- Essay scored by human raters
- Accommodation for large print on-site
- Can use existing testing centers
- Multiple (free) practice tests available
- Offline CBT option for corrections
- Comprehensive score reports
- Partial refunds for late cancellations could help testing centers recoup funds
- Spanish language options, including taking some tests in Spanish and others in English
- Test manager options (administrative data review)
- Ease of registration

2. *When asked what the concerns or drawbacks of using the HiSET® are, common answers were:*

- Scoring model allows test takers to pass all sections but fail exam because of required minimum composite score (4)
- Test item quality unknown/proposal lacked detail (3)
- Test is only two years old (3)
- Not as rigorous as 2014 GED® (2)
- Test changes in coming years (2)
- Too much like past GED®/ "going backwards" by offering less rigorous test (2)

Unique responses include:

- Recognition of the HiSET® as a legitimate credential
- Rigor increases every year
- 4-week turnaround for approval of accommodations
- Concerns for administration in correctional system
- Might not be able to use established Pearson VUE centers
- Separate contract with Aztec for computer based practice test
- Burden to offer both paper and computer-based testing options
- Governing board could be problematic
- No Braille options
- Non-specific feedback for practice tests and actual test
- Offering paper option means going backwards

3. *In your opinion, would [HiSet®] meet the minimum HSE exam standards for Virginia?*

Yes (n=11; 73%)
Maybe/Don't Know (n=4, 27%)
No (n=0)

Immediately following the ETS presentation, HSE committee members articulated HiSET® benefits as *Vendor Quality*, specifically ETS's credibility and experience as a not-for-profit testing enterprise; the stated willingness to work with the state to meet its needs and *Accessibility* (price and PBT). Concerns fell overwhelmingly to *Test Quality* (scoring, test development, rigor, credential recognition) and *Administration* (return to PBT, lack of materials). Seventy-three percent of respondents agreed that the HiSET® met the minimum HSE exam standards for Virginia.

II. Overall Vendor Evaluation Survey

The overall vendor evaluation survey was completed by HSE committee members at the close of the second day of the work session. Participants were given time to complete this evaluation after a comprehensive discussion of the pros and cons of each test had occurred, as well as conversation about what the best test options were for the state of Virginia (sole use of the current test, use of one of the other tests, use of two tests or all adopting three tests).

GED®. Responses are reported here from highest to lowest percentage of responses of *Completely*.

1. Please indicate the extent to which the GED® offers:

	Not at all	Somewhat	Completely	Total
Alignment with CCRS	0	1 (6%)	15 (94%)	16
A meaningful credential to College Administrators	0	2 (13%)	14 (88%)	16
A meaningful credential to employers	0	3 (19%)	13 (81%)	16
Acceptable content coverage	0	4 (25%)	12 (75%)	16
Appropriate test items	0	8 (50%)	8 (50%)	16
Convenience of credentialing services (e.g. transcripts, diplomas)	0	8 (50%)	8 (50%)	16
Consideration of requests for accommodations	5 (31%)	4 (25%)	7 (44%)	16
Technical assistance to state offices	0	10 (63%)	6 (38%)	16
Customer service for test takers	3 (19%)	9 (56%)	4 (25%)	16
Delivery options (paper/pencil, computer based)	9 (56%)	5 (31%)	2 (13%)	16
Technical support for adult educators	1 (6%)	13 (81%)	2 (13%)	16
Attractiveness of pricing	6 (38%)	9 (56%)	1 (6%)	16

The GED® was most highly regarded as having Alignment with CCRS (94%), A Meaningful credential to College Administrators (88%) and A Meaningful credential to employers (81%).

Looking at responses of **Not at all**, the GED® was deemed to be most lacking in Delivery options (56%), Attractiveness of Pricing (38%) and Consideration of requests for accommodations (31%).

Does GEDTS have the capacity to manage state-level HSE testing?
Strongly Agree 38% (n=6), **Agree** 56% (n=9); **Disagree**. 0%(n=0); **Strongly Disagree** 6% (n=1)

Consistent with their assessment of the GED® immediately following the vendor presentations, the HSE committee members overall evaluation surveys rated variables addressing *Test Quality* as highest for the GED®, with the *Accessibility* issues of pricing, delivery options and technical assistance to adult educators rated lowest. Ninety-four percent of the HSE committee members strongly agree or agree that GEDTS has the capacity to manage state-level HSE testing.

TASC®. Responses are reported here in from highest to lowest percentage of responses of *Completely*.

1. Please indicate the extent to which the TASC® offers:

	Not at all	Somewhat	Completely	Total
Delivery options (paper/pencil, computer based)	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	14 (88%)	16
Acceptable content coverage	0	6 (38%)	10 (63%)	16
Appropriate test items	0	7 (44%)	9 (56%)	16
Consideration of requests for accommodations	0	7 (44%)	9 (56%)	16
A meaningful credential to employers	1 (6%)	7 (44%)	8 (50%)	16
A meaningful credential to College Administrators	1 (6%)	7 (44%)	8 (50%)	16
Attractiveness of pricing	0	9 (56%)	7 (44%)	16
Alignment with CCRS	0	10 (63%)	6 (38%)	16
Convenience of credentialing services (e.g. transcripts, diplomas)	0	10 (63%)	6 (38%)	16
Customer service for test takers	0	10 (63%)	6 (38%)	16
Technical assistance to state offices	0	10 (63%)	6 (38%)	16
Technical support for adult educators	0	12 (75%)	4 (25%)	16

The areas for which TASC® was most highly regarded were Delivery options (88%), Acceptable content coverage (63%) and Appropriate test items and Consideration of requests for accommodations (both 56%).

There were very few responses of **Not at all**; 1 respondent (6%) thought the TASC® lacked Delivery options (6%), A Meaningful credential to College Administrators (also 6%, *n*=1) and A Meaningful credential to employers (also 6%, *n*=1).

Does CTB/McGraw-Hill have the capacity to manage state-level HSE testing?
Strongly Agree (*n*=5, 31%), **Agree** (*n*=9, 56%), **Disagree** (*n*=2, 13%), **Strongly Disagree** (*n*=0)

Consistent with their assessment of the TASC® immediately following the vendor presentations, HSE committee members rated the *Accessibility* variable of delivery options highest for TASC® . However, unlike their immediate impression survey, this overall survey also had the *Test Quality* variables of content coverage and appropriate test items rated highly. The *Vendor Quality* variable of technical assistance to adult educators had the most somewhat ratings. Eighty-seven percent of the HSE committee members strongly agree or agree that CBT/McGraw-Hill has the capacity to manage state-level HSE testing.

HiSET® **.** Responses are reported here from highest to lowest percentage of responses of *Completely*.

1. Please indicate the extent to which the HiSET® offers:

	Not at all	Somewhat	Completely	Total
Delivery options (paper/pencil, computer based)	0	2 (13%)	14 (88%)	16
Attractiveness of pricing	1 (6%)	3 (19%)	12 (75%)	16
Customer service for test takers	0	5 (31%)	11 (69%)	16
Technical assistance to state offices	0	8 (50%)	8 (50%)	16
A meaningful credential to employers	1 (6%)	9 (56%)	6 (38%)	16
A meaningful credential to College Administrators	2 (13%)	8 (50%)	6 (38%)	16
Technical support for adult educators	0	11 (69%)	5 (31%)	16
Consideration of requests for accommodations	0	11 (69%)	5 (31%)	16
Acceptable content coverage	0	11 (69%)	5 (31%)	16
Convenience of credentialing services (e.g. transcripts, diplomas)	0	12 (75%)	4 (25%)	16
Appropriate test items	0	11 (73%)	4 (27%)	15
Alignment with CCRS	2 (13%)	11 (73%)	2 (13%)	15

The areas for which HiSET® was most highly regarded were Delivery options (88%), Attractiveness of pricing (75%) and Customer service for test takers (69%).

Looking at responses of **Not at all**, the HiSET® was deemed to be most lacking in A Meaningful credential to College Administrators and Alignment with CCRS (both 13%, *n*=2), A Meaningful credential to employers and Attractiveness of Pricing (both 6%, *n*=1).

Does ETS have the capacity to manage state-level HSE testing?
Strongly Agree 31% (*n*=5), **Agree** (*n*=10, 63%); **Disagree** (*n*=1, 6%) **Strongly Disagree** (*n*=0)

In the overall evaluation survey the HSE committee members rated the *Accessibility* variables of delivery options and attractiveness of pricing most highly for HISET. The *Test Quality* variables of alignment with the CCRS and appropriate test items rated lowest. Ninety-four percent of the HSE committee members strongly agree or agree that ETS has the capacity to manage state-level HSE testing.

III. HSE testing in Virginia. Committee members were provided the opportunity to answer the following open-ended statements.

Overall, what three factors are most important to YOU when considering options for HSE testing?
Accessibility
Cost (*n*=11, 73%),
Access to the test (*n*=8, 50%),
Delivery options (*n*=4, 27%)
Vendor Quality
Customer and technical assistance, (*n*=3, 19%),
A meaningful credential (*n*=3, 19%),
Test Quality
Content alignment (*n*=3, 19%),
Item quality (*n*=2, 13%),
Test rigor (*n*=2, 13%)
Administration
Effective training for teachers and administrators (*n*=2, 13%), and

Other comments mentioned once were:

- Number of times a student can test in a calendar year
- No third party vendor involved in administration
- Meeting the needs of the state
- Commitment by the vendor
- Increasing enrollment in ABE
- Reliability of instructional tools
- Credibility
- Effective administration by state and local entities

I believe Virginians would benefit from having these following HSE exam option(s) – check all that apply. (One person did not respond, thus percentages are calculated on an *n* of 15.)
GED® (*n*=13, 87%)
HiSET® (*n*=8, 50%)
TASC® (*n*=8, 50%)
GED® only (*n*=5, 33%)
GED®, HiSET® and TASC® (*n*=5, 33%)
TASC® and GED® (*n*=3, 20%)
HiSET® only (*n*=2, 13%)

The following questions addressed the HSE committee members' opinions on whether they thought different stakeholders would be able to adapt should more testing options be utilized in the future.

I believe _____ would successfully adapt to more HSE testing options should they become available.	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
… test takers …	4 (25%)	10 (63%)	1 (6%)	1 (6%)
… adult educators …	8 (50%)	6 (38%)	2 (13%)	0
… employers …	4 (25%)	11 (69%)	1 (6%)	0
… higher education admissions …	7 (44%)	8 (50%)	1 (6%)	0

For HSE testing in Virginia, 73% of HSE review committee members submitted *cost* as a most important factor when considering HSE test options, followed by *access to the test*, a most important factor for 50% of the participants. Most HSE review committee members (87%) believe that Virginians would benefit from having access to the GED®. Half (50%) of the HSE review committee members believe that Virginian's would also benefit from having access to the TASC® and HiSET® exams. Overall, the committee members believe that test takers, adult educators, employers and higher education can adapt to more HSE options should they become available.

HSE Review Committee Surveys Summary

HSE review committee members identified benefits for each of the HSE exams reviewed. The dominant benefits for the GED® were *Test Quality* (credibility, recognition, alignment) followed by *Vendor Quality* (experience, flexibility). For TASC®, the most consistent benefit was *Accessibility* (delivery options) followed by *Test Quality* (content coverage and appropriate test items). HiSET® first impression benefits were *Vendor Quality*, specifically ETS's credibility and experience as a not-for-profit testing enterprise; ETS's stated willingness to work with Virginia to meet its needs and *Accessibility* (price and PBT). Overall, *Accessibility* (delivery options and attractiveness of pricing) remained highly rated while *Test Quality* (alignment with the CCRS, appropriate test items) was rated lowest.

The most commonly voiced GED® concern was *Accessibility* (cost and the lack of PBT). For TASC® the *Vendor Quality* variable of technical assistance to adult educators had the highest somewhat ratings with only 4 completely ratings. Overall, there was more variability in committee member responses regarding TASC®. For HiSET®, *Test Quality* (scoring, test development, rigor, credential recognition) and *Administration* (return to PBT, lack of materials) were the lowest rated items. HSE Review Committee member survey responses were most consistent from the vendor impression survey and the overall evaluation for GED®, then TASC® ; with the least consistency occurring between surveys for HiSET® .

Nearly all (94%) of the HSE committee members agreed that the GED® met the minimum HSE exam standards for Virginia, followed by HISET (73%). Sixty-four percent (64%) of HSE committee members agreed that TASC® met the minimum HSE standards for Virginia.

Ninety-four percent (94%) of the HSE committee members strongly agree or agree that GEDTS and ETS have the capacity to manage state-level HSE testing, while eighty-seven percent of the HSE committee members strongly agree or agree that CBT/McGraw-Hill has the capacity to manage state-level HSE testing.

Most HSE review committee members (87%) believe that Virginians would benefit from having access to the GED®. Half (50%) of the HSE review committee members believe that Virginian's would also benefit from having access to the TASC® and HiSET® exams. Overall, the committee members believe that test takers, adult educators, employers and higher education can adapt to more HSE options should they become available.

Conclusion and Next Steps

This High School Equivalency Exam evaluation involved representatives from many constituencies coming together to review the available HSE exams, GED®, HiSET® and TASC® , for strengths and weaknesses. The research design for the information-gathering process allowed for representation of many constituencies (see Appendix C). However, in no way is the representation in the HSERC respectful of the relative proportions each stakeholder occupies when viewed at the state level. Therefore, some opinions voiced in the survey and interview data do not necessarily indicate the impact that a given change would have on the constituency. This would require further evaluation in order to determine stakeholder majority opinions and impact on test-takers' lives and goals.

The results of this evaluation are to serve as a resource to those who will determine which exams to approve for Virginia's state issued High School Equivalency Certificate. The evaluation data analysis yielded a list of *HSE Review Factors* organized into four categories of Accessibility, Administration, Test Quality and Vendor Quality. The entire HSE Review Factors list can be found in Appendix B. The four main review factor categories have been useful in organizing this report of the interview, survey and document review data for presentation to the OAEL and its Adult Education and Literacy Advisory Committee.

Accessibility

While in the process of gathering data about HSE testing options and Virginia's particular wants and needs some areas of conflicting opinion emerged and evolved. For example, many stakeholders indicated that the examinees should have options, such as whether to take the test on paper (PBT) or computer (CBT). At the same time, others voiced concern that bringing back an option for paper-based testing felt like Virginia is taking a step backwards. The most consensus was around the issue of test cost: those who brought up cost as a factor meant that options for less expensive tests should be considered, as GED® comes with the highest price tag of the three test options.

Administration and Vendor Quality

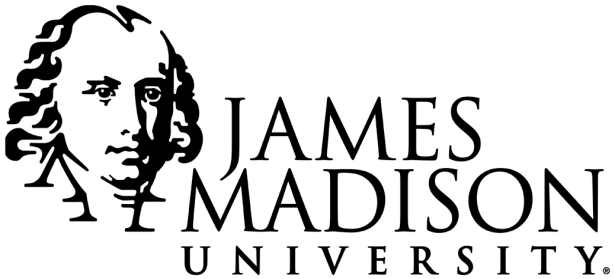
In speaking with representatives from other states, a theme that emerged was that the efficiency presented by vendors in presentations does not necessarily translate to ease in implementation. The appeal of phasing in a more rigorous test is complicated by the real experience of test changes occurring within timeframes that complicate preparation of teachers, materials and test takers. The adoption of new instrumentation brings about many new decisions, and additional time and resources should be allotted to facilitate these changes across an entire state.

Given that GED® has had a long-standing relationship with Virginia, GEDTS is well poised to stay involved. For example, whereas GED® provided a thorough study of alignment of their HSE exam with Virginia standards, the other HSE exams did not. However, one should keep in mind that the depth and expense for vendors of conducting this work would not be reasonable to prepare prior to establishing an arrangement to using the state exam in that state. Overall, all three companies have established themselves professionally and can assume large scale state level testing. Each test has areas of merit as well as imperfections. Differences among the tests may be relevant in light of the different reasons Virginia's HSE examinees have for pursuing their HSE credential.

Test Quality

Test quality emerged as the key criterion for state staff and was key to discussions across constituencies represented on the HSE Review Committee. All three vendors and their tests were believed to meet the minimum standard for High School Equivalency in Virginia, with the strongest support on the vendor impressions survey for GED®, followed by HiSET® and then TASC®.

Appendix A: Request for Information



Request for Information

RFI# DMS-845

High School Equivalency (HSE) Examinations

January 23, 2015

This RFI is strictly for gathering information. No contract or agreement will result. Information gathered

from responses to this RFI may be used to develop a Request for Proposal aligned with Virginia Department of Education criteria.

This RFI is strictly for gathering information. No contract or agreement will result.

Information gathered from responses to this RFI may be used to develop a Request for Proposal aligned with Virginia Department of Education criteria.

Issue Date: January 23, 2015

Title: HSE Examinations

Issuing Agency: Commonwealth of Virginia
James Madison University
Procurement Services MSC
5720
752 Ott Street, Wine Price
Bldg. First Floor, Suite 1023
Harrisonburg, VA 22807

RESPONSES DUE: 2:30 p.m. EST on Friday, February 20, 2015

Provide one (1) original and five (5) copies of the RFI with responses, INCLUDING ALL ATTACHMENTS. Any proprietary information should be clearly marked. In addition, provide one (1) electronic copy in Microsoft WORD format or searchable Adobe PDF (CD or flash drive) of the entire response, INCLUDING ALL ATTACHMENTS.

RESPONSES MAY BE MAILED, EXPRESS MAILED, OR HAND DELIVERED DIRECTLY TO THE ISSUING AGENCY SHOWN ABOVE.

All inquiries for information or clarification about the RFI or the RFI process should be directed to **Dana Simmers**, VCA, Buyer Senior, Procurement Services, at simmerdm@jmu.edu or by phone at 540/568-5113 or fax at 540/568-7935 not later than five business days before the response closing date.

Questions regarding the RFI may be submitted to Dana Simmers, James Madison University Procurement Services, by **Monday, February 16, 2015**. The email address to submit questions to is simmerdm@jmu.edu.

Name and Address of Firm:

-

-

_____

By:_____
(Signature in Ink)

Name:_____
(Please Print)

Title:_____

Date: _____

Phone:_____

Web Address: _____

Fax #:_____

Email:_____

ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF ADDENDUM *(if applicable)*: #1___ #2___ #3___ #4___ #5___ *(please initial)*

SMALL, WOMAN OR MINORITY OWNED BUSINESS:
YES; NO; *IF YES* ⇒⇒ SMALL; WOMAN; MINORITY ***IF MINORITY***: AA; HA; ASA; NW

Note: This public body does not discriminate against faith-based organizations in accordance with the *Code of Virginia*, § 2.2-4343.1 or against a bidder or offeror because of race, religion, color, sex, national origin, age, disability, or any other basis prohibited by state law relating to discrimination in employment.

Rev. 3/5/14 *(Previous Rev 1/27/14)*
ABS

I. PURPOSE

James Madison University, an agency of the Commonwealth of Virginia; in conjunction with the Virginia Department of Education, Office of Adult Education and Literacy (OAEL), is soliciting information from providers of high school equivalency (HSE) examinations. No contract or agreement will result from the collection of this information. Insight gathered from responses to this RFI is for informational purposes only. Responding to this RFI will neither increase nor decrease the chances of a firm being awarded a contract should a Request for Proposal (RFP) be issued in the future.

II. BACKGROUND STATEMENT

James Madison University (JMU) is a comprehensive public institution of higher learning in Harrisonburg, Virginia, enrolling approximately 20,000 students and employing 3,000 faculty and staff. The mission of JMU's College of Education is to prepare educated and enlightened individuals who can skillfully contribute to the common good of society and who can enter competently into positions of teaching and educational leadership, civic responsibility, and national service. The College prepares students to become professionals who integrate diverse perspectives and positively impact the lives of all they serve.

JMU's College of Education is working in conjunction with the Virginia Department of Education, Office of Adult Education and Literacy (OAEL), to obtain information about HSE examinations.

Currently, the General Educational Development (GED®) test is the only HSE examination approved by the Virginia Board of Education.

III. INFORMATION REQUESTED

Responses to the RFI **shall address each of the following** through narrative and supportive material:

A. Benefits of HSE Examination

1. Describe how your HSE examination benefits adult learners.

B. Assessment Description and Development

1. Describe your paper-based test, if offered.
2. Describe your computer-based test, if offered.
3. Describe the manner in which test items are developed and selected for the assessment.
4. Describe the content areas that will be covered in the test.
5. Describe how your test is normed.
6. Provide a rationale for recommending a minimum passing score.
7. Provide an explanation of how dual cut scores would be developed to indicate high school equivalency and college/career readiness.
8. Specify any available foreign language options.
9. Describe the extent to which your test was developed based on consultation with employers and postsecondary education institutions.

10. Describe your agency's experience developing and administering high-stakes tests.

11. Describe the technical assistance offered to state offices and to test centers

C. Overview of Scoring

1. Describe how the assessment is scored, including procedures for scoring required essays or constructed responses.

2. Describe how results are reported to the tester and the timeframe for receiving results.

3. Describe the score range for each subject and the cut scores to be used to determine attainment of an HSE credential or certificate.

4. Describe the process for establishing subject area score ranges and cut scores.

D. Other State Adoption of HSE Exam

1. Identify states in which the HSE examination is currently available. Provide the number of test takers and the pass rates these states are experiencing by individual subject area test, complete battery, age range, and calendar year.

2. Describe the plan, if applicable, to grow the test in terms of national coverage, including the growth timeline?

E. HSE Examination Recognition

1. Describe the extent to which the test is recognized by trade schools, employers, colleges, and universities across the nation. Provide a list of postsecondary education institutions that recognize the HSE examination as meeting the condition for admission into accredited associates and baccalaureate degree programs.

2. Describe the extent to which the examination prepares individuals to obtain industry certifications and professional licenses.

F. Corrections

1. Describe the extent to which the test is suited to the test-taking conditions of correctional residents.

G. Alignment with the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education

1. **Describe in detail how the HSE examination** is aligned with the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education. If an alignment study has been conducted with the College and Career Readiness Standards, provide a copy of the study with a summary describing who conducted the study, how the study was conducted, when the study was conducted, and the results of the study.

H. Accommodations

1. Describe the extent to which the assessment complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-336, Sec.36.309 Examinations and courses) requirement that any private or public entity that offers examinations relating to certification or credentialing for secondary or postsecondary education shall offer such examinations in a place and manner accessible to

persons with disabilities or offer alternative arrangements for such individuals as special accommodations.

2. Describe how test accommodations for individuals with disabilities are provided for both the paper-based (if offered) and computer-based (if offered) versions of the test.

3. Describe the process and standards for approving accommodation requests, including the communication to the applicant of approved or unapproved accommodations requests.

4. Describe the process for appealing decisions about accommodation requests.

5. Describe how approved accommodations are provided.

6. Describe which entities bear the cost of the accommodations.

7. Describe the turnaround time for the processing of requested accommodations.

8. Describe the delivery process by which accommodation documentation is provided.

9. Describe the accommodations communication process (email, phone, mail).

I. Policies and Procedures for Administering the HSE Examination

1. Describe the requirements for test-site application.

2. Describe how the paper-based test, if offered, is administered.

3. Describe how the computer-based test, if offered, is administered.

4. Provide a description of the qualifications of test administrators.

5. Describe responsibilities and training required of testing staff.

6. Describe equipment requirements for opening and operating a testing center.

7. Describe test security requirements and test center operational requirements.

8. Describe the test-taker registration process.

J. Supplemental Supports

1. Describe any supplemental supports available. These could include marketing materials and marketing campaigns aimed at the general public, business community, other educational institutions, employment agencies, other governmental entities including military services, and potential test-takers within the adult education system.

2. Describe the customer service provisions offered to the test taker.

K. Credentialing Services

1. Describe all credentialing services available to test takers and the state HSE staff, including Web-based credentialing services that offer test takers the ability to order official transcripts and/or official HSE certificates online, turn-around time for credential attainment, access by state personnel, editing options, and customer support.

L. Practice Tests

1. Describe your practice tests, including method of delivery, scoring procedures, and the extent to which the practice test is aligned with the operational test.

M. Federal Requirements

1. Describe the extent to which the data identified below are available to adult education programs that enroll students who have taken any portion of the test or who will take any portion of the test after the student has exited the adult education program (*up to one year after program exit*).

   Student Name (*first, middle, last*)
   Social Security Number
   Unique test-taker ID
   Birth date
   Gender
   Subjects tested and result
   Overall result

2. Describe procedures and policies regarding disclosure of student personal information (*including test results*) with local adult education programs and with the state.

N. Testing Data

1. Describe what data reports are available, what data reports are downloadable, and who has access to these reports.

O. Cost Summary

1. Describe the estimated costs, if any, to the test taker of the practice test and the operational test.

2. Describe the estimated costs, if any, to the test center of the practice test and the operational test.

3. Describe any other estimated costs incurred by the state.

IV. RFI PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION

1. <u>GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS:</u>

   a. Responses shall be signed by an authorized representative of the firm. All information requested should be submitted.

   b. Responses should be prepared simply and economically, providing a straightforward, concise description of capabilities to satisfy the requirements of the RFI. Emphasis should be placed on completeness and clarity of content.

   c. Responses should be organized in the order in which the requirements are presented in the RFI. All pages of the response should be numbered. Information which the respondent desires to present that does not fall within any of the requirements of the RFI should be inserted at the appropriate place or be attached at the end of the response and designated as additional material.

   d. Each copy of the response should be bound or contained in a single volume where practical. All documentation submitted with the response should be contained in that single volume.

e. Ownership of all data, materials, and documentation originated and prepared for the State pursuant to the RFI shall belong exclusively to the State and be subject to public inspection in accordance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. Respondents shall clearly identify proprietary or trade secret material of their RFI response that shall not be subject to public disclosure in accordance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act Section 2.2-4342F of the Code of Virginia.

f. Oral Presentation: Respondents who submit a response to this RFI may be asked to give an oral presentation of their submission to James Madison University and OAEL. This provides an opportunity for the respondent to clarify or elaborate on its response to the RFI. James Madison University will schedule the time and location of these presentations. Oral presentations are an option of the University and may or may not be conducted.

2. SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS:

Responses should be as thorough and detailed as possible so that James Madison University may understand your full capabilities and offerings in providing the service detailed within this RFI. Responding firms shall submit the following items as a complete submission:

a. Return RFI cover sheet and all addenda acknowledgments, if any, signed and filled out

as required. b. A response to each item as described in Section III *Statement of Needs* of

this Request for
Information.

c. IDENTIFICATION OF SUBMISSION ENVELOPE: The signed submission should be returned in a separate envelope or package, sealed, and identified as follows:

From:

Name of Respondent Due Date Time

Street or Box Number RFI No.

City, State, Zip Code RFI Title

Name of Contract/Purchase Officer or Buyer_____

The envelope should be addressed to the issuing agency as directed on Page 1 of this RFI.

Appendix B: Review Factors for HSE Exams

- **Accessibility**
  - Access to Scores
  - Annual Attempts Allowed
  - Cancellations
  - Cost
  - Format
  - Registration
  - Schedule/Availability
  - Student Portal
  - Test Centers
- **Administration**
  - Accommodations
  - Availability of Preparation Materials
    - Practice Tests
  - Data Management
    - Reporting tools
    - Student portal
  - Languages
  - Marketing
  - Suitability for Corrections
  - Training: Teachers and Administrators
  - Transcripts/Credentials
- **Test Quality**
  - Alignment
  - Credibility/Recognition of Test Name
  - Development of Passing Scores
  - Inferences for college bound vs. employment
  - Norming
  - Pass rates/Test difficulty
  - Reliability Studies
  - Rigor
  - Scoring
  - Test Development
    - Initial
    - Further
  - Test
    - Forms
    - Sections and Questions
    - Time
  - Use in other states
  - Validity studies
- **Vendor Quality**
  - Experience
    - large-scale assessment
    - HSE population
  - Customer Service/Technical Assistance
    - Administrator support
    - Test Taker support
  - Flexibility
  - Quality of RFI response
  - Reliability
  - Reputation

Appendix C: HSE Review Committee

Ms. Kathy Anderson, Regional Program Manager, Region 19
Southside Programs for Adult Continuing Education (SPACE)

Ms. Jenny Bolte, Senior Director of Program Development Workforce Development
Goodwill Industries of the Valleys

Ms. Myra A. Chambers, Director of Alternative Learning
The Campus at Lee

Ms. Nancy Coggeshall, ABE/GED® Instructor

Ms. Elizabeth Creamer, Advisor for Workforce Development, Secretary of Commerce and Trade
Office of Governor Terence R. McAuliffe

Ms. Sue Garlock, Lead Instructor, ABE, GED®, NEDP

Ms. Amy Judd, Regional Adult Education Program Manager
Lord Fairfax Community College

Ms. Wendy Kang, Director of Higher Education Innovation
State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

Dr. Ben Kiser, Executive Director
Virginia Association of School Superintendents

Mr. Mark Koch, GED®® Instructor
Henrico County Public Schools

Ms. Louise Menges, ISAEP Coordinator
Newport News City Public Schools

Mr. Paul Palombo, Director, Adult Learning Center
Virginia Beach City Public Schools

Mr. Jim André Coordinator of Adult Coaching and Transitions
Workforce Development Services, Virginia Community College System

Dr. Anita Prince, Director of Academic Programs
Virginia Department of Corrections

Ms. Shannon Webster, Director of Testing
Department of Education, Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

Ms. Ann Wyllie, GED®® Chief Examiner
Fairfax County Public Schools

Appendix D: HSE Review Committee Surveys

GED® vendor impressions

Based on the information you've received from GED® Testing Services about the GED® High School Equivalency exam (RFI response, vendor presentation), please answer the following from the perspective of the agency you represent on this High School Equivalency (HSE) review committee.

Q1 What would be some of the benefits of using this test in Virginia?

Q2 What concerns or drawbacks would using this test in Virginia present?

Q3 In your opinion, would this test meet the minimum HSE exam standards for Virginia?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No
- ❍ Maybe / Don't Know

TASC® vendor impressions

Based on the information you've received from CTB/McGraw-Hill about the TASC® High School Equivalency exam (RFI response, vendor presentation), please answer the following from the perspective of the agency you represent on this High School Equivalency (HSE) review committee.

Q1 What would be some of the benefits of using this test in Virginia?

Q2 What concerns or drawbacks would using this test in Virginia present?

Q3 In your opinion, would this test meet the minimum HSE exam standards for Virginia?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No
- ❍ Maybe / Don't Know

HiSET® vendor impressions

Based on the information you've received from the Educational Testing Service (ETS) about the HiSET® High School Equivalency exam (RFI response, vendor presentation), please answer the following from the perspective of the agency you represent on this High School Equivalency (HSE) review committee.

Q1 What would be some of the benefits of using this test in Virginia?

Q2 What concerns or drawbacks would using this test in Virginia present?

Q3 In your opinion, would this test meet the minimum HSE exam standards for Virginia?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No
- ❍ Maybe / Don't Know

HSE Overall Vendor Evaluation

The first two questions ask about the **HiSET® test**, developed by ETS.

Q1 Please indicate the extent to which the **HiSET®** offers:

	Not at all	Somewhat	Completely
Alignment with Career and College Readiness Standards	❍	❍	❍
Acceptable content coverage	❍	❍	❍
Appropriate test items	❍	❍	❍
A Meaningful credential to employers	❍	❍	❍
A Meaningful credential to College Administrators	❍	❍	❍
Convenience of credentialing services (e.g. transcripts, diplomas)	❍	❍	❍
Delivery options (paper/pencil, computer based)	❍	❍	❍
Customer service for test takers	❍	❍	❍
Technical assistance to state offices	❍	❍	❍
Technical support for adult educators	❍	❍	❍
Consideration of requests for accommodations	❍	❍	❍
Attractiveness of Pricing	❍	❍	❍

Q2 I believe **ETS (HiSET®)** has the capacity to manage state-level HSE testing.

- ❍ Strongly Agree
- ❍ Agree
- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Strongly Disagree

The next two questions ask about the **TASC® test**, developed by CTB/McGraw-Hill.

Q3 Please indicate the extent to which the **TASC®** offers:

	Not at all	Somewhat	Completely
Alignment with Career and College Readiness Standards	❍	❍	❍
Acceptable content coverage	❍	❍	❍
Appropriate test items	❍	❍	❍
A Meaningful credential to employers	❍	❍	❍
A Meaningful credential to College Administrators	❍	❍	❍
Convenience of credentialing services (e.g. transcripts, diplomas)	❍	❍	❍
Delivery options (paper/pencil, computer based)	❍	❍	❍
Customer service for test takers	❍	❍	❍
Technical assistance to state offices	❍	❍	❍
Technical support for adult educators	❍	❍	❍
Consideration of requests for accommodations	❍	❍	❍
Attractiveness of Pricing	❍	❍	❍

Q4 I believe **CTB/McGraw-Hill (TASC®)** has the capacity to manage state-level HSE testing.

❍ Strongly Agree
❍ Agree
❍ Disagree
❍ Strongly Disagree

The next two questions ask about the **GED® test**, developed by GED® Testing Service.

Q5 Please indicate the extent to which the **GED®** offers:

	Not at all	Somewhat	Completely
Alignment with Career and College Readiness Standards	❍	❍	❍
Acceptable content coverage	❍	❍	❍
Appropriate test items	❍	❍	❍
A Meaningful credential to employers	❍	❍	❍
A Meaningful credential to College Administrators	❍	❍	❍
Convenience of credentialing services (e.g. transcripts, diplomas)	❍	❍	❍
Delivery options (paper/pencil, computer based)	❍	❍	❍
Customer service for test takers	❍	❍	❍
Technical assistance to state offices	❍	❍	❍
Technical support for adult educators	❍	❍	❍
Consideration of requests for accommodations	❍	❍	❍
Attractiveness of Pricing	❍	❍	❍

Q6 I believe **GED®** has the capacity to manage state-level HSE testing.

- ❍ Strongly Agree
- ❍ Agree
- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Strongly Disagree

For the remainder of the questions, please consider **all three test options**.

Q7 Overall, what three factors are most important to YOU when considering options for HSE testing?

Q8 I believe Virginians would benefit from having the following HSE exam option(s) (check all that apply).

- ❑ HiSET®
- ❑ TASC®
- ❑ GED®

Q9 I believe test takers would successfully adapt to more HSE testing options should they become available in Virginia.

- ❍ Strongly Agree
- ❍ Agree
- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Strongly Disagree

Q10 I believe adult educators would successfully adapt to more HSE testing options should they become available in Virginia.

- ❍ Strongly Agree
- ❍ Agree
- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Strongly Disagree

Q11 I believe employers would successfully adapt to more HSE testing options should they become available in Virginia.

- ❍ Strongly Agree
- ❍ Agree
- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Strongly Disagree

Q12 I believe higher education admissions would successfully adapt to more HSE testing options should they become available in Virginia.

- ❍ Strongly Agree
- ❍ Agree
- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Strongly Disagree

Q13 Please use the space below if you have further comments about any of the tests, the test vendors, and/or your constituency.

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Adult Education and Literacy

HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY EXAMINATION GUIDELINES FOR VIRGINIA

The Virginia Department of Education will utilize these guidelines to review all applications received from any High School Equivalency (HSE) examination provider. All vendors seeking approval for the use of a high school equivalency (HSE) examination in Virginia shall meet all of the following guidelines. The Virginia Department of Education shall be the agency to determine whether an HSE examination provider is approved. If an HSE examination is approved for use in Virginia, the approval will remain in effect for five years. Those vendors whose examination is not approved may reapply during an open application period set by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE).

Quality of the HSE Test:	
Alignment	The vendor must provide evidence from a third party evaluator to show that the HSE examination is fully aligned to the *College & Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) for Adult Education* and substantially aligned to the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL).
Rigor	1) The vendor must provide evidence that its HSE examination meets or exceeds the most recent content and technical standards established by the 2014 edition of the *Standards for Education and Psychological Testing* (SEPT), a product of the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association (APA), and the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME). 2) The vendor must ensure that 80 percent of the HSE examination includes items using Depth of Knowledge Levels 2 and 3.
Test Development: Initial & Future	1) The vendor's design process for development of the HSE examination must be based on the SEPT in developing test items as is necessary for demonstrating high school equivalent knowledge and skills. 2) The vendor will review and update its question pool annually.
Reliability	1) The vendor will provide results of reliability studies to show the consistency and stability of the HSE examination. 2) The vendor will describe the psychometrics used to determine reliability. 3) The vendor will present a plan for maintaining and measuring reliability over time.
Validity	1) The vendor will provide results of validity studies to show that the HSE examination measures what it intends to measure. 2) The vendor will describe the psychometrics used to determine validity. 3) The vendor will present a plan for maintaining and measuring validity over time.

Norming of Tests	1) The vendor must have completed a norming of its HSE examination with graduating high school seniors within the last two years of test development. 2) The vendor will demonstrate that the norming study conducted met the SEPT. 3) The vendor will describe its plan for future norming studies, for both new test items and for overall HSE examination norming, to ensure that the set passing scores on the HSE examination remain consistent with high school completion requirements.
Passing Scores	The vendor will identify a minimum of two cut scores: one for high school equivalency and another for college and career readiness.
Test forms; Sections	1) The vendor will provide a minimum of three HSE examination forms in English per year. 2) The HSE examination will measure test- takers' skills in interpreting, analyzing, reasoning, and problem solving, as appropriate for the subject and standard. 3) The HSE examination will measure skills in the areas of writing, reading, math, science, and social studies.
Test Security	1) The vendor shall employ well-defined, clear, and transparent security measures to ensure the security, integrity, and accessibility of its HSE examination, taking into consideration local testing centers' capabilities. 2) The vendor must provide guidelines for testing centers to follow when security incidences occur during testing. 3) The vendor must provide the VDOE with the protocol regarding a national, state, or local breach in security with the HSE examination and the actions the vendor will take. 4) The vendor will specify the manner in which the VDOE and local testing centers will be informed of any problem concerning test security, including the resolution to the problem.
Official Practice Tests (OPT)	1) A minimum of three Official Practice Test (OPT) forms in English must be available. 2) OPTs must be aligned to the operational HSE examination and be predictive of how a test taker will perform on the actual HSE examination. 3) OPTs must provide a diagnostic report to assist the test taker in preparing for the HSE examination.
Credibility/Recognition of Test Name	1) The vendor will provide evidence that the HSE examination is nationally portable and broadly accepted by employers and postsecondary institutions. 2) The vendor will provide a plan to increase the HSE examination's name recognition to all stakeholders.

Test Delivery: Computer-Based Testing (CBT) and Paper-Based Testing (PBT)	1) The HSE examination can be delivered either by computer-based testing (CBT) or paper-based testing (PBT). 2) The vendor must provide a downloadable CBT option to Internet access for use by Corrections. 3) The CBT HSE examination must be secure on the Internet and be accessed by testing administrators only. 4) The vendor must be equipped with the connectivity and computing capacity to handle a high volume of HSE examination data. 5) The PBT must meet the same standards as the CBT in alignment, rigor, reliability, and validity. 6) The vendor must ship the PBT examination and related materials to the test sites designated by the VDOE. 7) The vendor will provide guidelines to ensure a secure method for scoring PBT. 8) The vendor will provide to the testing centers and the VDOE a list of all costs for administering and scoring the CBT and PBT.
Accessibility of the HSE Test:	
Registration process	1) The registration process should be seamless and easy to follow. 2) Registration should be completed online, with the test taker's chosen testing date and time confirmed during the registration process. 3) There must be a registration process in place for test takers receiving testing accommodations. 4) The vendor must provide customer service support to answer any questions during the registration process, both through phone and online options.
Test Centers	1) The vendor must approve any test center currently approved by VDOE for HSE examinations. 2) Only those testing centers approved by VDOE shall administer the HSE examination.
Cost	The vendor will identify a cost structure, with pricing of services and justifications for costs for the test taker, testing center, and the VDOE.
Testing	1) The vendor must allow test takers to take individual subtests without taking the complete HSE examination battery. 2) The vendor will provide a process to address any and all testing irregularities. 3) The vendor must have a process in place to authenticate the test taker's identity and eligibility to test. 4) The vendor must have a process in place to ensure that anyone enrolled in public education will not be eligible to take the HSE examination until the student meets eligibility requirements and is permitted to test by VDOE.

Cancellations/No Shows	1) The vendor must have a clear policy on cancellations, with a minimum of 24 hours to cancel, without penalty. 2) The vendor will provide guidelines as to what would constitute an "exception" if someone is a “no show” to the testing center and the process to follow to reschedule at no additional cost.
Retakes	A clear policy must be in place for when a test taker can retake the HSE examination (e.g., the number of times a person may retake the examination in one year; wait time between retakes; costs of retakes).
Accommodations	1) The vendor must offer alternate forms of delivery for the HSE examination that accommodate individual test takers who have diagnosed physical, mental, sensory, or cognitive disabilities in order to allow the test taker to participate on an equal basis with non-disabled peers. 2) The available accommodations must be in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended. 3) The vendor shall provide an easily accessible, step-by-step process to request accommodations for test takers who would benefit from receiving accommodations to test. 4) The vendor will bear the sole responsibility of approving test takers’ requests for accommodations. 5) The vendor shall ensure that the validity of all allowable accommodations is supported and documented. 6) The vendor must work with VDOE to develop provisions for the use of assistive technology. 7) Determination of accommodations’ approval must be a timely process, completed in 30 days or less. 8) An appeals process must also be identified and available to those who have been denied accommodations.
Scoring of Tests/Access to Scores	1) The vendor must provide a description of how scoring will occur; examinations must be scored electronically for both CBT and PBT, utilizing human scorers as needed. 2) Test takers should have direct, online access to their examination scores within 24 hours of completion for CBT and no more than four days after the vendor’s receipt of answer sheets for PBT. 3) The vendor must have processes and procedures in place for quality control and quality assurance to verify scoring results. 4) The vendor will provide a score report that reflects the academic strengths of the graduate and a diagnostic report for the test taker who needs to retake the test. 5) The VDOE will have electronic access to all test takers' scores in the state.
Suitability for Correctional Institutions, and City and Regional Jails	1) The delivery of the HSE examination must be compatible with the administrative needs of city and regional jails, the Virginia Department of Corrections, and the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice. 2) There must be an alternate registration process in place for test takers in correctional institutions because test takers cannot self-

	register. 3) The PBT must be available to city and regional jails that do not have the capacity for computer-based testing.
Administration of the HSE Test:	
Technology	1) The vendor will provide a complete description of technology required to provide CBT at local testing centers, in accordance with the criteria contained herein. 2) CBT requirements must be compatible for use in a correctional setting.
Data Management	1) All data, current and historical, is the intellectual property of VDOE. The vendor must maintain all Personally Identifiable Information (PII) in accordance with FERPA, state privacy laws and current Virginia Information Security Standards (SEC 501). 2) The vendor will provide access to a data management system that produces analysis of scores and statistical and demographic reports and any other customized, generated reports required by the VDOE. 3) The vendor shall provide technical assistance in the use of the data management system and work in consultation with the VDOE to provide additional required reports. 4) The vendor shall set the levels of access to the data management system in accordance with VDOE regulations. 5) The vendor shall update and backup files in the database on a daily basis. 6) The vendor must maintain all necessary configurations and data for file restorations. In the event files are lost, or if for any reason data files must be restored, the vendor must notify VDOE and restore the system to full operating capacity in a timely manner. 7) The data management system must be available to the VDOE at all times, except for necessary maintenance. All regular system maintenance must be confined to non-business hours (7 p.m. to 6 a.m.).
Training: Teachers, Staff, Administrators	1) The vendor must provide professional development, as it relates to testing, to the state at all levels - including teachers, examiners, local program administrators, and state staff. 2) The vendor must provide relevant training materials to the VDOE for review and approval before issuance. The VDOE reserves the right to edit and revise the materials as deemed necessary. 3) Training materials provided to the local program's test site staff must be provided at no additional charge to the state or localities. 4) The vendor must provide the specific minimum qualifications for testing personnel. 5) The vendor will make testing guidelines available, either in print or electronically, to each certified testing site, updating the guidelines as needed. 6) The vendor must certify testing administrators.

Transcripts/Certificates	1) The credentialing service used by the vendor must be able to maintain all current and historical records for VDOE. 2) The credentialing service used by the vendor will return, in a format that is agreeable to VDOE, all current and historical data to VDOE, if there is a cancellation or termination of services. 3) The credentialing service used by the vendor must maintain all Personally Identifiable Information (PII) in accordance with FERPA, state privacy laws and current Virginia Information Security Standards (SEC 501) and sign a Restricted Use Data Agreement (RUDA). 4) The vendor must provide all data to the credentialing service in a mutually approved format and in a timely manner. 5) Transcripts and certificates, both electronic and paper copies, will be given to all first- time passers free of charge. 6) The credentialing service may charge a nominal fee for those graduates who need a copy of either their transcript or certificate. 7) Electronic copies of transcripts or certificates shall be received within 48 hours of request. Paper copies of transcripts or certificates shall be received within five business days of request. 8) If a graduate has requested a transcript or certificate and no records are found, a resolution process must be in place to address this concern. 9) No changes or modifications can be made to the official state certificate without VDOE's permission.
Classroom preparation materials	1) The vendor shall provide information on the examination's content, format, and scoring process to VDOE. 2) The vendor shall recommend study materials to prepare students to take the HSE examination.
Collection of Testing Fees	1) The vendor will collect all testing fees during the registration process. 2) The vendor will reconcile with testing centers monthly for testing center fees to be dispersed. 3) The vendor shall provide the opportunity to purchase testing vouchers for the local adult education programs.
Vendor Quality	
Vendor Experience with Large-scale Assessment	The vendor must have a minimum of three years' proven experience of successfully providing services for large-scale (e.g. statewide or national), high-stakes testing programs. A "high-stakes" testing program is one which uses assessment results for high-stake decisions, such as federal and state educational accountability purposes, student graduation requirements, or qualification for entry into college or to take college entrance exams.

Technical Assistance	1) The vendor must provide 24-hour technical assistance to testing centers, or identify designated personnel to be available during testing center operating hours. 2) The vendor will provide a dedicated, toll-free telephone number that testing centers can use to report technical problems during testing and expect to receive an immediate response (within 30 minutes). 3) The vendor will also provide a toll-free telephone number and online access for the test takers to use for support, with an expected response by the next business day after initial contact.
Customer Service	1) The vendor will have a comprehensive customer service plan. 2) The vendor will identify at the state level the process that needs to be followed for any areas of concern, for both testing centers and test takers. 3) The vendor will provide the name and telephone number of the person(s) assigned to the resolution of specific issues (e.g., technology, registration, scoring, general issues, etc.). 4) The vendor will immediately resolve all testing centers' complaints and issues through a variety of options (telephone calls, e-mail, fax); test takers' complaints and issues will be resolved by the next business day after initial contact.
Compliance	1) The approved HSE vendor(s) will comply with all of the criteria listed within these guidelines. 2) If a vendor, once approved, does not comply, the VDOE has the right to remove approval of the HSE vendor from the approved list to administer an HSE examination in the Commonwealth of Virginia.