

1 **TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION**
2 **Adult Education and Literacy Letter**

ID/No:	AEL 06-21
Date:	December 21, 2021
Keyword:	AEL
Effective:	Immediately

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4 **To:** Adult Education and Literacy Grant Recipients
5 Adult Education and Literacy Special Initiative Grantees
6 Local Workforce Development Board Executive Directors
7 Commission Executive Offices
8 Integrated Service Area Managers



10 **From:** Courtney Arbour, Director, Workforce Development Division

11 **Subject:** **High School Equivalency Subsidy Program for Program Year 2021–2022**

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13 **PURPOSE:**

14 The purpose of this AEL Letter is to provide Adult Education and Literacy (AEL)
15 grantees¹ with information and guidance on implementing the high school equivalency
16 (HSE) subsidy program.

17 **RESCISSIONS:**

18 AEL Letter 01-21, Change 1

19 **BACKGROUND:**

20 House Bill (HB) 1525, 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2021), amended Texas
21 Education Code §48.302, Subsidy for High School Equivalency Examination for Certain
22 Individuals, which requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to enter into a
23 memorandum of understanding (MOU) with TWC when transferring funds to provide a
24 subsidy for the cost of an HSE exam for individuals who are 21 years of age or older.
25 TWC has adopted rules addressing program implementation and eligibility requirements
26 for this program at TWC Chapter 805 Adult Education and Literacy rules, Subchapter E,
27 High School Equivalency Subsidy Program.

28 Currently, GED Testing Service, LLC (the publisher of the GED exam) is the only HSE
29 exam vendor approved by the State Board of Education to operate in Texas. Test takers
30 who pass this exam are issued a State of Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency
31 (TxCHSE). Each GED exam, or the complete battery of the exam, comprises four

¹ For the purposes of this AEL Letter, AEL grantees are entities that receive AEL funds through the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).

1 individual tests, which correspond to the subject areas of mathematics, science, social
2 studies, and language arts.

3 On November 1, 2021, TEA and TWC entered into an interagency contract, which states
4 that TEA may transfer up to \$750,000 for each fiscal year of the 2021–2023 biennium for
5 the HSE subsidy program.

6 **PROCEDURES:**

7 **No Local Flexibility (NLF)**: This rating indicates that AEL entities must comply with
8 the federal and state laws, rules, policies, and required procedures set forth in this AEL
9 Letter and have no local flexibility in determining whether and/or how to comply. All
10 information with an NLF rating is indicated by “must” or “shall.”

11 **Local Flexibility (LF)**: This rating indicates that AEL entities have local flexibility in
12 determining whether and/or how to implement guidance or recommended practices set
13 forth in this AEL Letter. All information with an LF rating is indicated by “may” or
14 “recommend.”

15 **Definitions**

16 **NLF**: AEL grantees must be aware of the following definitions, which relate to the HSE
17 subsidy voucher program.

18 **HSE voucher tracker** is the Microsoft Excel reporting tool that grantees use to track
19 HSE vouchers released by TWC AEL to the grantee for subsidy recipients. This tool
20 serves two purposes:

- 21 • It is TWC’s mechanism to send voucher codes to AEL grantees.
- 22 • It provides grantees with a way to track voucher usage by student name, Texas
23 Educating Adults Management System (TEAMS) participant ID, and HSE voucher
24 information in order to reconcile voucher usage data against TEAMS and GED
25 Manager™. The terms “online proctored,” “computer-based regular,” and “computer-
26 based retake” are used to describe the different types of vouchers available for each
27 GED test.

28 **Subsidy** is an amount not to exceed the cost of one GED exam, inclusive of all subject
29 areas or the complete battery, as negotiated by TEA with GED Testing Service, LLC.
30 The GED exam contains four tests, and individual tests correspond to the subject areas of
31 mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts. The test fees per battery and per
32 subject area for the GED exam are on the [TEA website](#).

33 **Subsidy recipient** is an individual who is determined to be eligible to receive an HSE
34 subsidy. An individual is eligible if he or she:

- 35 • is a Texas resident;
- 36 • is 21 years of age or older at the time that a voucher for the subsidy is issued;
- 37 • lacks a high school diploma or its equivalent; and
- 38 • is determined to be HSE test-ready.

39 A subsidy recipient may be:

- 40 • a current AEL participant;

- a former AEL participant within 365 days of exit; or
- a non-AEL participant who is otherwise eligible to receive the subsidy.

Voucher is an electronic voucher code provided to an eligible individual for taking a GED test. GED Testing Service, LLC, is the only approved vendor of the HSE exam in Texas for the purpose of TxCHSE attainment. The amounts for vouchers may vary due to the cost differences in test administration methods, such as online proctored or computer-based.

Initial Voucher Distribution to AEL Grantees

NLF: AEL grantees must be aware that the initial number of vouchers that are available to the grantee is shown in Attachment 1, Initial Voucher Distribution to AEL Grant Recipients, and were approved by TWC’s three-member Commission (Commission) on [November 23, 2021](#).

NLF: AEL grantees must request the type of HSE vouchers from AEL staff by emailing TWC.TXCHSE@twc.texas.gov and indicating the type of vouchers for the GED exam as follows:

- The number of regular or retake online-proctored test vouchers (\$42.25 each)
- The number of regular computer-based test vouchers (\$36.25 each)
- The number of retake and computer-based test vouchers (\$16.25 each)

The voucher request may not exceed the initial distribution voucher amounts approved by the Commission, as shown in Attachment 1.

TWC will send the requested types of GED voucher codes to the AEL director in the HSE voucher tracker.

HSE Subsidy Program Implementation

NLF: AEL grantees must be aware that they are responsible for the management and local implementation of the HSE subsidy program by following the rules in Subchapter E.

NLF: AEL grantees must be aware that HSE vouchers may only be used to pay for individual GED tests, including the regular and retake options for online-proctored and computer-based tests. Test administration options and fees are negotiated between TEA and GED Testing Service, LLC, and are available on the [TEA TxCHSE web page](#).

NLF: AEL grantees must be aware that neither an HSE subsidy nor the total value of vouchers given to a subsidy recipient may exceed the cost of a GED exam. The cost of a full battery of the GED exam is currently \$145 for the computer-based option and \$169 for the online-proctored option.

NLF: AEL grantees must be aware that the Commission may redistribute—either midyear or at a time deemed appropriate by staff—the number of HSE vouchers initially approved to that grantee, as shown in Attachment 1, based on the use and demand of HSE vouchers in the grantee’s service delivery area.

1 **NLF:** AEL grantees must be aware that HSE vouchers must not be used to pay for a test-
2 readiness assessment, such as the GED Ready Test.

3 **Requesting Additional Vouchers**

4 **LF:** AEL grantees may request additional vouchers from those shown in Attachment 1 once
5 they have used 70 percent of the initial voucher allotment.

6 **NLF:** AEL grantees must submit a written request for the additional vouchers to
7 TWC.TXCHSE@twc.texas.gov with the following information:

- 8 • The additional number of vouchers requested and a usage plan for the requested
9 vouchers
- 10 • Confirmation that the grantee has used at least 70 percent of the initial vouchers
11 allotted to the recipient
- 12 • Assurance that the grantee is accurately tracking voucher usage by providing a
13 completed HSE voucher tracking tool and confirming that it has been reconciled
14 against GED Manager™ and TEAMS

15 **NLF:** AEL grantees must be aware that TWC AEL will review the grantee’s request and may
16 require additional data before releasing additional vouchers. Grantees must be aware that
17 AEL staff may deny requests for additional vouchers.

18 **Subsidy Recipient Eligibility**

19 **NLF:** AEL grantees must be aware that, at the time a voucher is issued to the recipient, subsidy
20 recipients must:

- 21 • be 21 years of age or older;
- 22 • lack a high school diploma or its equivalent;
- 23 • be a Texas resident; and
- 24 • be determined HSE test-ready.

25 **NLF:** AEL grantees must be aware that the distribution of HSE vouchers to ineligible
26 individuals may result in disallowed costs.

27 **NLF:** AEL grantees must prioritize the distribution of HSE vouchers to current AEL
28 participants and to former AEL participants within 365 days of exit. AEL participants
29 include those enrolled in state leadership-funded initiatives, such as Accelerate Texas
30 and Ability-to-Benefit.

31 **NLF:** AEL grantees must have a process to distribute the HSE subsidy to eligible non-AEL
32 participants, which should include collection of the minimum information needed to
33 create a student record in TEAMS.

34 **LF:** AEL grantees may refer non-AEL participants seeking HSE vouchers to the AEL
35 program.

36 **Test-Readiness Eligibility**

1 **NLF:** Before distributing a voucher to a subsidy recipient, AEL grantees must ensure that the
2 recipient is HSE test-ready by using an assessment tool. The subsidy recipient's
3 instructor or assigned AEL program staff member will:

- 4 • determine whether the recipient is test-ready based on an assessment tool score; and
- 5 • for retake tests, confirm that the recipient is eligible to take the GED test according to
6 the vendor's retest policies.

7 If a subsidy recipient is test-ready, the instructor or staff member will recommend to the
8 AEL director that the individual receive an HSE voucher.

9 **LF:** AEL grantees may use an assessment tool suitable for determining a subsidy recipient's
10 readiness to take an HSE test, such as the GED Ready practice test, or other assessments.
11 Such assessments are not required to be approved by the National Reporting System, as
12 outlined in the Texas Testing Guide. Grantees should consider any test-readiness scores
13 that may be required by the GED Testing Service, LLC, for online-proctored tests for the
14 GED exam.

15 **Photo ID and Texas Residency**

16 **NLF:** Before distributing a voucher to a subsidy recipient, AEL grantees must verify that the
17 recipient has a government-issued photo ID and proof of residency, following [TEA's](#)
18 [HSE test-taker requirements](#). Expired photo IDs are not accepted. If an individual does
19 not have the required documentation for taking an HSE exam as determined by TEA,
20 then that individual is not eligible to receive an HSE voucher.

21 **Local Distribution of Vouchers**

22 **NLF:** AEL grantees must enter all subsidy recipients, including non-AEL participants, into
23 TEAMS to create a unique TEAMS ID. Current and former AEL participants will already
24 have an assigned TEAMS ID, which must be used for HSE voucher tracking purposes
25 and for registering the student for the GED test.

26 **Subsidy Recipient Acknowledgment**

27 **NLF:** AEL grantees must develop a form for each subsidy recipient to sign to acknowledge
28 what the recipient must do in order to participate in the HSE subsidy program. At a
29 minimum, the form must state that the subsidy recipient agrees to:

- 30 • use the voucher only for his or herself;
- 31 • notify the AEL grantee if he or she is receiving vouchers from other programs;
- 32 • enter the TEAMS ID into his or her GED account; and
- 33 • give the AEL grantee permission to view testing information.

34 **Release of Voucher**

35 **NLF:** The AEL director or director-designated staff member is the only AEL program staff
36 member authorized to approve the distribution of a voucher to a subsidy recipient. At a
37 minimum, the director or designated staff member must confirm the following elements
38 before approving the release of a voucher to a subsidy recipient:

- 39 • The recipient is eligible.
- 40 • The recipient's ability to take the test is in accordance with the GED Testing Service,
41 LLC's retest policies.

- 1 • The recipient has not been given vouchers exceeding the value of a subsidy either
2 from the same AEL program or another AEL program, including in previous program
3 years.
- 4 • The recipient has a GED account **and has included his or her TEAMS ID number**
5 **on the account.**

6 Upon approving the release of a voucher to a subsidy recipient, the AEL director or
7 designated staff member must enter the recipient's:

- 8 • assigned GED voucher code in the Support Services page in TEAMS; and
- 9 • assigned TEAMS ID and the GED voucher code given to the subsidy recipient in the
10 HSE voucher tracker.

11 **LF:** AEL grantees may reference the Support Services page in TEAMS to assess how many
12 vouchers have been redeemed by the subsidy recipient and to determine whether the
13 recipient has redeemed a number of vouchers whose value exceeds the allowed subsidy
14 amount.

15 **LF:** AEL grantees may distribute more than one voucher to a subsidy recipient at a time if the
16 recipient is deemed test-ready.

17 **Test Registration**

18 **NLF:** Once a subsidy recipient is approved to receive a voucher, the recipient's AEL instructor
19 or other assigned staff member must help the recipient register for the HSE test online to
20 ensure that:

- 21 • the test is scheduled **within 30 days** based on the availability of test dates; and
- 22 • the unique TEAMS ID is entered into the appropriate field when registering for the
23 test.

24 **Redeemed GED Vouchers**

25 **NLF:** AEL grantees must be aware that once the subsidy recipient takes the scheduled test, the
26 voucher that was used to register for the test is considered redeemed and is counted
27 toward the recipient's use of the HSE subsidy. If a recipient is a no-show for a scheduled
28 test, then the voucher code is also considered redeemed and will count toward the subsidy
29 amount. However, if the scheduled test is canceled according to GED's cancellation
30 policy and is not charged, then the voucher is not redeemed.

31 **NLF:** AEL grantees must be aware that GED vouchers must be redeemed by August 31, 2022.
32 This means that all GED tests that were purchased with a voucher must be taken by
33 August 31, 2022.

34 **NLF:** AEL grantees must be aware of previous vouchers redeemed by a subsidy recipient to
35 ensure that the amount of subsidy given to that recipient does not exceed the cost of an
36 exam.

37 **LF:** AEL grantees may partner with state leadership-funded AEL program partners, such as
38 Accelerate Texas and Ability-to-Benefit, to distribute vouchers to AEL participants in
39 those programs.

1 **Tracking Voucher Use Locally**

2 **NLF**: AEL grantees that are distributing vouchers for GED tests must obtain access to the GED
3 Manager™ by emailing the GED Manager™ point of contact. This will enable grantees
4 to view all scheduled tests for subsidy recipients taking GED tests paid for with an HSE
5 voucher, as well as the status of tests taken using the voucher.

6 **NLF**: AEL grantees must enter the voucher code and a comment on the type of GED test for
7 which a voucher was redeemed for any subsidy recipient. These entries are made on the
8 Support Services page in the participant’s record in TEAMS.

9
10 **NLF**: AEL grantees must be aware of the following process for receiving and tracking voucher
11 codes:

- 12 1. The AEL director or designated staff member must email TWC AEL staff at
13 TWC.TXCHSE@twc.texas.gov to request the types of GED vouchers—online-
14 proctored, regular computer-based, or retake computer-based.
 - 15 2. TWC AEL staff sends the AEL director a set of voucher codes for the requested
16 voucher types via the HSE voucher tracker.
 - 17 3. Before releasing a voucher to a recipient, the AEL director or designated staff
18 member must confirm that the subsidy recipient has:
 - 19 • signed an HSE subsidy program acknowledgment form;
 - 20 • created a GED account;
 - 21 • entered the TEAMS ID into the GED account in the State Requested Information
22 field; and
 - 23 • given the AEL grantee permission to view test information in the GED account.
 - 24 4. Upon approving the release of a voucher for a recipient, the AEL director or
25 designated staff member enters all subsidy recipient information required in the HSE
26 voucher tracker, including the unique TEAMS ID, the voucher number, and whether
27 the voucher is for an online-proctored test, a regular test, or a retake test.
 - 28 5. When a subsidy recipient is registering for a GED test online, the recipient must enter
29 the unique TEAMS ID and voucher code before completing the purchase transaction
30 for the test.
 - 31 6. AEL grantees must enter all voucher numbers redeemed by subsidy recipients,
32 including non-AEL participants, in TEAMS on the Support Services page by the 15th
33 of each month, as outlined in the AEL Testing Guide.
 - 34 7. At least biweekly, AEL grantees should reconcile redeemed vouchers and compare
35 the vouchers assigned for a GED test (as noted on the HSE tracker, TEAMS, and
36 GED Manager™) with the redeemed vouchers, indicating that the scheduled test was
37 taken.
 - 38 8. By the monthly data validation date, grantees must ensure that data entered into the
39 TEAMS Support Services page is accurate and verify whether subsidy recipients have
40 redeemed a voucher by taking the GED test or whether the released voucher was
41 never redeemed (in other words, the test was canceled, or the voucher was never used
42 to schedule a test). Additionally, AEL grantees must verify that the total value of
43 vouchers granted to a recipient has not exceeded the cost of the HSE exam.
- 44

1 **Standard Operating Procedures**

2 **NLF**: AEL grantees must develop a standard operating procedure for implementing the HSE
3 subsidy program that addresses, at a minimum, the following elements:

- 4 • Eligibility determination of subsidy recipients that includes test-readiness
- 5 • The process for distributing vouchers to current, former, and non-AEL participants,
6 including referral of non-AEL participants to AEL
- 7 • The process for tracking vouchers offered to state leadership–funded AEL program
8 partners such as Accelerate Texas and Ability-to-Benefit and for distributing
9 vouchers to AEL participants in those programs
- 10 • Tracking voucher usage using the HSE voucher tracker and TEAMS
- 11 • Verification and reconciliation of voucher usage
- 12 • Tracking performance through GED Manager™ and/or Adult Educator Access and
13 notifying TWC if an earned credential is not showing in data match
- 14 • When requested by TWC AEL staff, an accurate list of redeemed vouchers via the
15 HSE voucher tracker

16 **INQUIRIES:**

17 Send inquiries regarding this AEL Letter to AELpolicy.clarifications@twc.texas.gov.

18 **ATTACHMENTS:**

19 Attachment 1: Initial Voucher Distribution to AEL Grant Recipients

20 **REFERENCES:**

21 House Bill 1525, 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2021)
22 Texas Education Code §48.302
23 TWC Chapter 805 Adult Education and Literacy Rules, Subchapter E, High School
24 Equivalency Subsidy Program
25 AEL Testing Guide