

November 8, 2013

DIRECTIVE:	JOB CORPS PROGRAM INSTRUCTION NOTICE NO. 13-12
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TO: ALL JOB CORPS NATIONAL OFFICE STAFF
ALL JOB CORPS REGIONAL OFFICE STAFF
ALL JOB CORPS CENTER DIRECTORS
ALL JOB CORPS CENTER HSE POCs AND ACADEMIC MANAGERS
ALL JOB CORPS CENTER OPERATORS
ALL NATIONAL TRAINING AND SUPPORT CONTRACTORS
ALL OUTREACH, ADMISSIONS, AND CTS CONTRACTORS

FROM: GRACE A. KILBANE
National Director
Office of Job Corps

SUBJECT: Guidance on Centers' Preparations and Expenditures for High School
Equivalency (HSE) Testing

1. **Purpose.** One major goal of Job Corps' academic programming is to provide as many options as possible for students to obtain an education credential, either a high school diploma or HSE certificate, while enrolled in the program. With the change to new HSE tests beginning January 2014, centers must adapt their instructional programs to support students in obtaining HSE certificates. This Program Instruction notice provides specific guidance to centers on making the necessary changes and expending allocated funds.
2. **Background.** To facilitate Job Corps' transition to new HSE testing, the Office of Job Corps (OJC) issued training policy changes June 17, 2013, and center performance policy changes July 1, 2013. OJC has also transferred start-up funding to the Regional Offices for distribution to centers. This notice provides guidance to centers for planning and implementing new tests, and guidance on spending funds received from the Regions on center contracts.
3. **Changes in Academic Programming.** Job Corps is making a large-scale transition from the current GED 2002 to new HSE tests beginning January 2014. While a high school diploma remains the preferable credential for students, an HSE certificate is also an appropriate option. Job Corps will be aligning its high school and HSE programs with states' adoption of Common Core State Standards (CCSS), including College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards over the next 2 to 3 years.

This transition requires centers to make fundamental changes in the way they prepare students for the new tests. Centers cannot expect traditional approaches of individualized workbook practice and "teaching to the test" to be enough to meet the increased rigor of the tests.

They must prepare to make a significant investment in improving the knowledge and skills of their teachers, and changing classroom instructional methods.

Centers must ensure students are able to master rigorous test content, write an effective response to test questions, take computer-based tests, and apply critical thinking skills. Centers must carefully and strategically plan for these changes in teaching and learning, and use allocated start-up funds appropriately to make this significant transition.

4. Current State HSE Status and Test Publisher Information. In addition to changes in the rigor of the tests, there are large differences among states with regard to selecting one or more HSE tests. Centers should prepare for new tests, to the best of their abilities, according to current testing requirements of the states in which they are located. Recognizing the uncertainty in state test selection, OJC will authorize centers to invest in teacher professional development, and student instructional materials and equipment that will support students regardless of the HSE test they take. More information on authorized expenditures is provided in Section 5 below.

An OJC survey netted specific information on states' HSE status and reviews of test publisher information. This information will help with center planning and provide background on the status of state test selection. Specific state-by-state information was distributed weekly via OJC e-mail blasts. These updates were sent to all Job Corps centers through Points of Contact (POCs) who were designated by each region, operator and center. The POCs now have the necessary information (Web sites, telephone numbers and contact information) to stay on top of changes, and share information with centers regarding HSE test selection, teacher professional development, and other changes in their states. Below is a summary of the information gathered from the OJC survey of states:

- Many states are either in the procurement process or will issue Requests for Proposals (RFPs) within the next year for the final selection of an HSE provider. These states will use an interim HSE provider beginning January 2014 until their final award is made.
- The status of student preparatory materials is in flux. GED Testing Service (Pearson) has authorized many producers of support materials; ETS/ITP (publishers of the HiSET) recommends centers use 2002 GED preparation materials until additional materials are identified in November 2013; and CTB/McGraw-Hill (publishers of the TASC) is identifying preparation materials on a state-by-state basis.
- Almost all states are planning professional development for instructors of HSE preparation courses.
- The states estimate the average time required for HSE preparation will increase significantly for the 2014 GED, and potentially for TASC, given that both tests reflect the CCSS, which no students have previously encountered.

5. Guidance on Planning and Expenditures of Start-Up Funds. Centers are expected to use the following guidelines to plan for HSE test adoption and expend allocated funds:

- a) All centers must complete the “High School Equivalency (HSE) Planning & Expenditures Workbook” (Attachment) accessed electronically via the Job Corps Community Web site. The completed workbook should be uploaded to your regional SharePoint site in the “High School Equivalency (HSE) Planning and Expenditures Workbooks” folder in the site’s “Shared Documents” section.

The workbook provides a road map for helping centers plan for transition to a new HSE preparation program, a way to document expenditures that will support the transition plan, and offers suggested resources. Centers shall upload the workbook for review by the regions prior to the expenditure of funds. Please ensure your center’s name is in the file name. Once reviewed and approved, workbooks shall be submitted by the regions to OJC for final approval. **Following regional and OJC approvals, centers may expend funds.** Centers should check their workbooks within a week following completion to determine if approvals have been given. These will be located on an approvals tab in the document.

To access the workbook, each center should go to the home page of the Job Corps Community Web site and click on the tab for the center’s region on the menu at the top of the page. After accessing the regional page, click on “Shared Documents” on the menu at the left. In the “Shared Documents” section of the site, click on “HSE Planning and Expenditure Workbooks.” Finally, click on the “Add Document” button to upload the information. All workbooks must be uploaded by **May 15, 2014**.

- b) Funds may be expended between **November 15, 2013, and May 31, 2014**. This one-time augmentation to existing center budgets shall be used to transition to the new tests (i.e., materials, training, etc.). Continued implementation of the new tests shall be covered under existing contract funds. Authorized use of start-up funding includes the items below:

Professional Development (PD)

- Release/substitute time, travel, and registration costs, if any, to attend test publisher or state-sponsored HSE trainings.
- Release/substitute time for online training recommended in the “High School Equivalency (HSE) Planning & Expenditures Workbook.”

Instructional Resources

- Purchase instructional resources. Resources purchased must meet the criteria below. Rationale for purchase of any resources not meeting these criteria must be provided in the Attachment.
 - Knowledge and skill building resources are recommended in the “High School Equivalency (HSE) Planning & Expenditure Workbook.”
 - Test preparation resources are recommended by test publishers.

Equipment

- Purchase classroom technology and technology upgrades to support the use of purchased software and other resources. Technology purchased must meet the criteria below. Rationale for purchase of any technology not meeting these criteria must be provided on the “High School Equivalency (HSE) Planning & Expenditure Workbook.” Criteria include:
 - Test preparation software is recommended by test publishers.
 - Hardware meets specifications of test preparation and knowledge- and skill-building software providers.

Planning

- Contract with subject-matter experts to support lesson development and instruction.
- Release/substitute time to plan lessons and meet with subject-matter experts and academic managers on HSE transition planning and implementation.

Centers **cannot** use start-up funds to purchase equipment or supplies to become testing sites.

Centers may refer to test publishers’ Web sites for information on recommended test preparation resources (practice tests, curriculum, teacher resources, etc.). The Web addresses for test publishers are listed below:

- <http://www.gedtestingservice.com>
- <http://hiset.ets.org>
- <http://tasctest.com>

6. Action. All centers will complete the “High School Equivalency (HSE) Planning & Expenditures Workbook” and upload it to the “Shared Documents/HSE Planning and Expenditures Workbooks.” **Centers may only expend funds after the Regional and National offices’ approval has been documented on the workbook.** The deadline to upload Workbooks is **May 15, 2014.**

Centers will access their workbooks and fill in the “Date Received” column when resources arrive at the center. This information will be collected by the National and Regional Offices between November 2013, and June 2014, to confirm expenditure of funds.

7. Expiration Date. Until superseded.

8. Inquiries. Questions about this Information Notice should be addressed to John Chowning at (202) 693-3102, chowning.john@dol.gov; or Lynne Fry at (202) 693-3101, fry.lynne@dol.gov.

Attachment

High School Equivalency (HSE) Planning & Expenditure Workbook