

DRAFT

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

ID/No:	AEL XX-21
Date:	
Keyword:	AEL
Effective:	Immediately

3
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
9 **From:** Courtney Arbour, Director, Workforce Development Division
10 **Subject:** **High School Equivalency Subsidy Program for Program Year 2021-2022**

11
12 **PURPOSE:**

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

16 **RESCISSIONS:**

17 AEL Letter 01-21, Change 1

18 **BACKGROUND:**

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

27 Currently, GED Testing Service LLC, publisher of the GED exam, is the only HSE exam
28 vendor approved by the State Board of Education to operate in Texas; test takers who
29 pass this exam are issued a State of Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency
30 (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, and TEA
4 may transfer up to \$750,000 for each fiscal year of the 2021-2023 biennium for this
5 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 **1.** It is TWC’s mechanism to send voucher codes to AEL grantees.

22 **2.** It provides grantees with a way to track voucher usage, with the student name,
23 TEAMS participant ID, and HSE voucher information providing information that allows
24 for reconciling voucher usage data against TEAMS and GED Manager. The terms
25 “online proctored,” “computer-based regular” and “computer-based retake” are used to
26 describe the different types of vouchers available for each GED test.

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

32 **Subsidy recipient** is an individual eligible to receive an HSE subsidy and a Texas
33 resident who (1) is 21 years of age or older at the time that a voucher for the subsidy is
34 issued to the individual and (2) lacks a high school diploma or its equivalent. A subsidy
35 recipient may be:

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

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

6 **Initial Voucher Distribution to Grantees**

7 **NLF:** AEL grantees must be aware of the initial number of vouchers that are available to the
8 AEL grantee, as shown in Attachment 1, Initial Voucher Distribution to AEL Grantees,
9 which were approved by the Commission on [DATE].

10 **NLF:** AEL grantees must request the type of HSE vouchers, which may not exceed the initial
11 distribution voucher amounts approved by the Commission as shown in Attachment 1,
12 from AEL staff at TWC.TXCHSE@twc.texas.gov and indicate the type of vouchers for
13 the GED exam as follows:

- 14 • The number of regular or retake online-proctored test vouchers (valued at \$42.25
15 each)
- 16 • The number of regular computer-based test vouchers (valued at \$36.25 each)
- 17 • The number of retake and computer-based test vouchers (valued at \$16.25 each)

18
19 TWC will send the requested types of GED voucher codes to the AEL director in the
20 HSE voucher tracker.

21 **HSE Subsidy Program Implementation**

22 **NLF:** AEL grantees must be aware that they are responsible for the management and local
23 implementation of the HSE subsidy program by following the rules in Subchapter E,
24 High School Equivalency Subsidy Program.
25

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

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

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

38 **NLF:** AEL grantees must be aware that HSE vouchers must not be used to pay for a test-
39 readiness assessment, such as the GED Ready Test.
40

1 **Requesting Additional Vouchers**

2 **LF:** AEL grantees may request additional vouchers from TWC, in addition those shown in
3 Attachment 1.

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

- 6 • the additional number of vouchers requested and a usage plan for the requested
7 vouchers
- 8 • confirmation that grantee has used at least 70 percent of the initial vouchers allotted
9 to the recipient
- 10 • assurance that the grantee is accurately tracking voucher usage, providing a
11 completed HSE voucher tracking tool and confirmation it has been reconciled against
12 GED Manager and TEAMS

13 **NLF:** AEL grantees must be aware that AEL will review the grantee’s request and may require
14 additional data prior to releasing additional vouchers. Grantees must be aware that AEL
15 staff may deny requests for additional vouchers.

16 **Requesting Different Voucher Codes**

17 **LF:** AEL grantees may request different voucher code types from those initially requested by
18 sending a written request to TWC.TXCHSE@twc.texas.gov.

19 **Subsidy Recipient Eligibility**

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

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

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

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

32 **NLF:** AEL grantees must have a process to distribute the HSE subsidy to eligible non-AEL
33 participants, which should include collection of minimum information needed to create a
34 student record in the Texas Educating Adults Management System (TEAMS).

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

1 **NLF:** **Test-Readiness Eligibility:** Before distributing a voucher to a subsidy recipient, AEL
2 grantees must ensure that the recipient is HSE test-ready by using an assessment tool.
3 The subsidy recipient’s instructor or assigned AEL program staff member will:
4 • determine that 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
8 If a subsidy recipient is test-ready, the instructor or staff member will recommend to the
9 AEL director that the individual receive an HSE voucher.

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

17
18 **LF:** Grantees may consider factors other than an assessment score to determine a subsidy
19 recipient’s test-readiness.

20
21 **NLF:** **Photo ID and Texas Residency:** Before distributing a voucher to a subsidy recipient,
22 AEL grantees must verify that the recipient has a government-issued photo ID and proof
23 of residency, following [TEA’s HSE test-taker requirements](#). If an individual does not
24 have the required documentation for taking an HSE exam as determined by TEA, then
25 that individual is not eligible to receive an HSE voucher.

26 **Redeemed GED Vouchers**

27 **NLF:** AEL grantees must be aware that once the subsidy recipient takes the scheduled test, the
28 voucher which was used to register for that test is considered “redeemed” and is counted
29 toward the recipient’s use of the HSE subsidy. If a recipient is a “no show” for a
30 scheduled test, that voucher code is also considered redeemed and will count towards the
31 subsidy amount. However, if the scheduled test is cancelled within GED’s cancellation
32 policy and is not charged, then the voucher is not “redeemed.”

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

37 **Local Distribution of Vouchers**

38
39 **NLF:** **Unique ID:** AEL grantees must enter all subsidy recipients, including non-AEL
40 participants, into TEAMS to create a unique TEAMS ID. Current and former AEL
41 participants will already have an assigned TEAMS ID, which must be used for HSE
42 voucher tracking purposes in the HSE voucher tracker and when registering the student
43 for the GED test.

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

1 **LF:** AEL grantees may partner with state leadership-funded AEL program partners such as
2 Accelerate Texas and Ability-to-Benefit to distribute vouchers to AEL participants in
3 those programs.
4

5 **NLF: Release of Voucher:** The AEL director or director-designated staff member is the only
6 AEL program staff member authorized to approve the distribution of a voucher to a
7 subsidy recipient. At a minimum, the director or designated staff member must confirm
8 the following elements before approving the release of a voucher to a subsidy recipient:

- 9 • Eligibility
- 10 • The recipient’s ability to take the test, according to the GED Testing Service LLC’s
11 retest policies
- 12 • That the recipient has not been given vouchers exceeding the value of a subsidy either
13 from the same AEL program or another AEL program, including in previous program
14 years
- 15 • **That the recipient has a GED account and has included his or her TEAMS ID number
16 on the account**

17
18 Upon approving the release of a voucher to a subsidy recipient, the AEL director or
19 designated staff member must enter the recipient’s

- 20 • assigned GED voucher code in the Support Services page in TEAMS; and
- 21 • assigned TEAMS ID and the GED voucher code given to the subsidy recipient in
22 the HSE voucher tracker.

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

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

29 **NLF: Test Registration:** Once a subsidy recipient is approved to receive a voucher, the
30 recipient’s AEL instructor or other assigned staff member must help the recipient register
31 for the HSE test online to ensure that:

- 32 • **the test is scheduled within 30 days based on the availability of test dates; and**
- 33 • the unique TEAMS ID is entered into the appropriate field when registering for the
34 test.
35

36 **Tracking Voucher Use Locally**

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

41

1 **NLF:** AEL grantees must enter the voucher code and a comment on the type of GED test for
2 which a voucher was redeemed for any subsidy recipient. These entries are made on the
3 Support Services page in the participant’s record in TEAMS.
4

5 **NLF:** AEL grantees must be aware of the following process for receiving and tracking voucher
6 codes from TWC:

- 7 1. The AEL director or designated staff member must email
8 TWC.TXCHSE@twc.texas.gov to request the types of GED vouchers – online
9 proctored, regular computer-based, or retake computer-based—from TWC AEL staff.
- 10 2. TWC AEL staff will send the AEL director a set of voucher codes for the requested
11 voucher types via the HSE voucher tracker.
- 12 3. Before releasing a voucher to a recipient, the AEL director or designated staff
13 member must confirm that the subsidy recipient
14 a. has created a GED Manager™ account, as appropriate, and
15 b. has entered the TEAMS ID into the account.
- 16 4. Upon approving the release of a voucher for a recipient, the AEL director or
17 designated staff member will enter all subsidy recipient information required in the
18 HSE voucher tracker, including the unique TEAMS ID, the voucher number, and
19 whether that voucher is for a regular or a retake test.
- 20 5. When a subsidy recipient is registering for a GED test online, the recipient must enter
21 the unique TEAMS ID and voucher code before completing the purchase transaction
22 for the test.
- 23 6. AEL grantees must enter all voucher numbers redeemed by subsidy recipients,
24 including non-AEL participants, in TEAMS on the Support Services screen by the
25 15th of each month, as outlined in the AEL Testing Guide’s policy on monthly data
26 validation dates.
- 27 7. At least biweekly, AEL grantees should reconcile redeemed vouchers, comparing the
28 vouchers assigned for a GED test as noted on the HSE tracker, TEAMS, and GED
29 Manager™ and compared to fully redeemed vouchers, meaning that the scheduled
30 test was actually taken.
- 31 8. By the monthly data validation date, grantees must ensure data entered into the
32 TEAMS Support Services page is accurate, verifying whether subsidy recipients have
33 redeemed a voucher by taking the GED test or if the released voucher was never fully
34 redeemed (i.e., cancelled). Additionally, grantees must verify that the total value of
35 vouchers granted to a recipient has not exceeded the cost of the HSE exam.
36

37 **Standard Operating Procedures**

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

- 40 • Eligibility determination of subsidy recipients that includes test-readiness
- 41 • Process for distributing vouchers to current, former, and non-AEL participants,
42 including referral of non-AEL participants to AEL
- 43 • Process for tracking vouchers offered to state leadership-funded AEL program
44 partners such as Accelerate Texas and Ability-to-Benefit and for distributing
45 vouchers to AEL participants in those programs

- 1 • Tracking voucher usage using the HSE voucher tracker and TEAMS
- 2 • Verification and reconciliation of voucher usage
- 3 • Tracking performance through GED Manager™ and/or Adult Educator Access and
- 4 notifying TWC if an earned credential is not showing in data match
- 5 • When requested by TWC AEL staff, reporting an accurate list of redeemed vouchers
- 6 via the HSE voucher tracker

7 **INQUIRIES:**

8 Send inquiries regarding this AEL Letter to AELpolicy.clarifications@twc.state.tx.us.

9 **ATTACHMENTS:**

10 Attachment 1: Voucher Distribution to AEL Grantees

11 **REFERENCES:**

12 §48.302, Texas Education Code
13 Texas Administrative Code Subchapter E, High School Equivalency Subsidy Program
14 House Bill 1525, 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2021)
15 AEL Testing Guide