



**Wyoming Adult Education
SEA: Wyoming Community College Commission**

**Policy #07152020: Remote Testing and Performance in Adult Education and Literacy
During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Section I: Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide Adult Education grantees with information and guidance on remote testing options during the global COVID-19 pandemic, including the remote administration and use of:

- National Reporting System (NRS) approved assessments allowed for federal performance accountability; and
- Non-NRS approved tests that are approved for use to show participant readiness to take a high school equivalency assessment

Section II: Background

On March 19, 2020, Wyoming Governor, Mark Gordon, initiated statewide closures of schools throughout the State. Adult Education grantees quickly responded to these mandated closures by transitioning service delivery from on-site locations to distance and remote delivery platforms. This required a change to many aspects of service delivery, including education and training services and testing for performance accountability measures and follow-up services, all of which almost exclusively rely on on-site, in-person activity.

Section III: Performance Accountability

The Wyoming Community College Commission (WCCC) and the US Department of Education understand that performance results for many Adult Education performance measures will be impacted by pandemic-related service delivery disruptions, which immediately closed most educational facilities and suspended many on-site services; thus halting or slowing enrollments, and pausing all on-site performance testing on NRS approved assessments as well as high school equivalency testing center operations. WCCC anticipates that the volume of Adult Education services among participants will continue to be impacted and altered as programs transition to remote and distance learning options and also understand that not all students have access to participate in remote instruction.

The immediate closures of on-site services directly impacted WIOA measurable skill gain targets for FY 2019/20 and will undoubtedly affect established targets for FY 20/21 as Measurable Skill Gain (MSG) targets have traditionally relied almost exclusively on on-site proctored testing. With the June 2020 launch of remote testing protocols by DRC for TABE, HiSET, and GED, enrolled participants are now provided with additional testing options for performance accountability. These new options should be extended to participants as a means to increase program performance for FY 20/21.

Local programs, particularly those with Integrated and Education Training (IET) participants who are unable to posttest during the pandemic, must make a reasonable effort to track Measurable Skill Gains through non-testing options:

- 1) Postsecondary transcript
- 2) Completion of a high school equivalency certificate

The State anticipated that the effects of COVID-19 would have lasting impacts upon Adult Education program performance throughout fiscal year 20/21. It is for this reason that the State successfully negotiated lowered performance measure targets for FY 20/21. The outcome measure targets established for FY 20/21 are based upon a combination of factors:

- 1) A rolling three year average of performance for each of the outcome measures
- 2) Wyoming's ranking among all States
- 3) Successful negotiation of lowered targets due to the pandemic

Consequently, local programs are expected to make reasonable efforts to meet performance measure targets as well as outcome measure targets for FY 20/21.

Outcome measure targets, for Table 5, will continue to be data matched at both the State and local program levels. Local programs are required to data-match postsecondary enrollments through two sources:

- 1) **National Student Clearinghouse** to ascertain whether participants have enrolled in postsecondary at any place throughout the country and/or have earned an industry recognized credential. This data match must be conducted at least three times per year:
 - a. October (to include fall enrollments)
 - b. February (to include spring enrollments)
 - c. June (to pick up any late student registrations that may have occurred)
- 2) Beginning in FY 20/21, local programs will also be required to institutionally data match program enrollments in the **local community college**. This data match must include a request for enrollment in and credentials earned for non-credit workforce courses. Non-credit workforce courses are not recorded at the National Student Clearinghouse; consequently, these types of earned credentials must be data-matched locally and subsequently reported in LACES. The timing of these data matches is the same as outlined above.

The State will also conduct a final data match of postsecondary enrollments and of credentials earned by participants in September of each year, just prior to the submission of required federal reports to OCTAE.

Employment outcome measures will be data matched at the State level through two sources:

- 1) **UI**: to obtain employment records from the State of Wyoming
- 2) **SWIS**: to obtain nationwide employment records of participants employed outside the State.

Section IV: Remote Testing

Testing is a major function of Adult Education services in Wyoming. Remote testing will provide AE grantees with an option to determine both the skill needs and placement of students, as well as support performance reporting under the NRS.

The US Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) released Program Memoranda OCTAE 20-3, and 20-5, which provide guidance on service continuity to Adult Education programs during the pandemic, including clarifications on performance accountability and remote testing under the NRS. This guidance provides the federal basis for this policy.

Remote testing requires changes to most aspects of test delivery and an increased need for test security and protection of personally identifiable information. Although remote testing provides access for grantees to report performance, considerable delays and constraints are initially expected as test publishers release guidance, providers develop standard operating procedures, certified test proctors are trained on remote testing procedures, and technological equipment and related supplies necessary for testing compliance are purchased and put into place. Even though remote testing has become available, some AE participants will not have access to or be comfortable with remote testing and thus will not be able to test until on-site testing can be conducted.

As test publishers issue guidance on remote testing and local providers find innovative ways to implement such policies, WCCC anticipates remote testing guidance to evolve over the coming months.

Nonetheless, WCCC, has established new protocols for virtual testing of NRS approved assessments by allowing assessments to be given in a virtual classroom environment where the instructor/proctor controls the release of each test page virtually and where the testing environment ensures that:

- Test manufacturer guidelines for virtual testing can be implemented
- The instructor is able to verify the students identity
- Student responses to each test item are recorded by the instructor/proctor in either virtual form for the online TABE or on paper based answer forms.

For FY 20/21, virtual testing may be conducted for up to five students at a time.

Protocols for the post testing of participants is based upon total contact hours and proxy hours as follows:

- **Contact Hours:** Synchronous time spent instructing the learner. Contact hours include two-way interaction between instructor and learner by face-to-face interaction, telephone, video, teleconference, virtual classrooms, or other online communication where learner and program staff are able to interact and through which learner identity is verifiable.
- **Proxy Hours:** Asynchronous time a learner spends independently engaged with distance learning activities, such as using an approved distance learning platform or other approved instructional tools. Proxy hours are to follow protocols outlined in Adult Education State Policy#07132020.

Official Practice Tests

Although official practice tests are not NRS approved assessments used for reporting purposes, local programs in Wyoming are required to utilize these assessments as an indication of readiness to test for HiSET and GED. Traditionally, these tests have been paper-based and delivered to participants in-person. The State recognizes that the pandemic has created additional challenges for local programs needing to provide this assessment to students. As a result, the State has approved the use of the online official practice tests found in the AZTEC software program for individuals 18 years of age or older. AZTEC online official practice tests may not be used for age waiver students. As with the paper-based OPT's, these online assessments must be entered into the LACES system before a student commences testing for a high school equivalency.

Official practice tests that are available in electronic form (ie. FPT and PPT formats) may be delivered through virtual classrooms utilizing the aforementioned protocols for virtual testing. OPT's must be given in a secured test environment whereby examinee identity can be verified. This may be conducted through online virtual platforms, where the instructor/proctor can monitor student progress or through traditional means, such as an in-seat examination.

OPT's may **not** be given to students before the delivery of instruction has commenced, where instruction is defined as:

- 1) Completing a Career Service course, which includes intake paperwork and a pre-test AND
- 2) Completing a course of study where instruction is occurring at an ASE level

Participants who have not pre-tested at ASE levels must be given at **least** one post-test prior to taking the final OPT subject level test and must have demonstrated through TABE 11/12 scores and OPT scores a readiness to test. Participants who have met this criteria as well as those pre-testing at ASE levels must be enrolled in a class on the LACES database entitled 'ABE/ASE 9+' thereby indicating that classroom instruction is delivered at ninth grade or higher. Enrollment into this course must occur before the student

has begun a course of study in the last subject for the high school equivalency certificate and in-seat hours as well as proxy hours must be recorded accordingly. Local programs must make a concerted effort to ensure that all HSEC participants earn TABE 11/12 scores at the ASE level prior to taking a high school equivalency examination.

Official Practice Test scores must be entered into LACES before a student commences testing for a high school equivalency test. Scores must indicate readiness to test as follows:

- 1) GED: A Ready to Test level must be obtained
- 2) HiSET: Well Prepared or Prepared levels must be obtained