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Talent Search Program

**Project and Program Measures
for Government Performance
and Results Act (GPRA)**

Reporting Period: 2023–24

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Introduction

The Talent Search (TS) program aims to improve the college enrollment rate for middle school and high school students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The U.S. Department of Education’s annual *Government Performance and Results Act* (GPRA) report includes two measures of TS program outcomes and one measure of TS program efficiency. The 2023–24 reporting year was the third year of the 2021–26 funding cycle,¹ and calculation rules for participant outcomes and program efficiency in 2023–24 are the same as those used in previous reporting years.

Program Outcome Measures for TS Projects

The two TS program outcome measures are postsecondary enrollment (PSE) rates and financial aid application rates. These measures were calculated using the TS *Annual Performance Report* (APR). The definitions of performance measures and calculation methodology have remained the same between reporting years.

- The PSE rate was calculated as the percentage of college-ready senior participants² who enrolled in postsecondary education by the fall term immediately following high school graduation or by the next academic term if the institution deferred the participant’s enrollment. Tables also present the types of institutions in which these college-ready participants enrolled.
- The financial aid application rate was calculated as the percentage of high school seniors who completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Selected Findings for Program Outcomes

Table 1 (see Excel workbook) displays the percentage of participants who were college ready; the percentage of college-ready participants who enrolled in postsecondary institutions; the percentage of participants who were senior participants; and the percentage of senior participants who applied for financial aid. This table also displays the total number of participants served. The calculation methodology for Table 1 is discussed in the Appendix.

Postsecondary Education Enrollment

- In 2023–24, the TS program-level postsecondary education enrollment rate was 71.5 percent. This was 3 percentage points higher than the 2022–23 program-level postsecondary education enrollment rate of 68.5 percent. However, it fell below the U.S. Department of Education’s 2023–24 program-level goal of 81.0 percent.
- Among the 539 projects that submitted APR data and had PSE rates in both 2022–23 and 2023–24, the PSE rate between reporting years declined for 201 projects (37 percent vs.

¹ All the 548 projects were funded in both 2022–23 and 2023–24, and two of them were not in operation and did not submit APR data—Association for Education Excellence [P044A210294] and Association for Education Excellence [P044A210333].

² Please see the definition of “College-Ready Participants” in the Appendix.

39 percent between 2021–22 and 2022–23). Of the 201 projects that experienced decline, 131 projects experienced a decline of fewer than 10 percentage points; 48 projects experienced a decline of between 10 and 19 percentage points; and 22 projects experienced a decline of 20 percentage points or more.

Applications for Financial Aid

- In 2023–24, the TS financial aid application rate was 78.3 percent. This rate was about 1 percentage point lower than the 2022–23 financial aid application rate of 79.4 percent. This decrease in the financial aid application rate occurred due to the lower increase in the number of seniors who completed the FAFSA (the numerator) than in the number of senior participants (the denominator).
- Among the 541 projects that submitted APR data and had financial aid application rates in both 2022–23 and 2023–24, the financial aid application rate between two reporting years declined for 242 projects (45 percent vs. 43 percent between 2021–22 and 2022–23). Of the 242 projects that experienced decline, 134 projects experienced a decline of fewer than 10 percentage points; 56 projects experienced a decline of between 10 and 19 percentage points; and 52 projects experienced a decline of 20 percentage points or more.

Postsecondary Education Enrollment by Sector

Table 2 (see Excel workbook) displays the percentage of college-ready participants who enrolled in four-year; two-year; other (i.e., vocational, proprietary); or unknown types of postsecondary institutions at the program level and at the grantee level. The percentages are also presented by the grantee sector (i.e., four-year grantee institutions; two-year grantee institutions; and other organizations). The calculation methodology for Table 2 is discussed in the Appendix.

In general, TS participants who enrolled in postsecondary education in 2023–24 were more likely to enroll in a four-year institution (57.4 percent) than in a two-year institution (39.3 percent), other type of institution (2.0 percent), or unknown type of institution (1.3 percent). The percentages of participants who enrolled in each of the four types of institutions were similar to the percentages observed in 2022–23.

As in 2022–23, PSE rates did not vary widely by grantee type in 2023–24. Participants who received services from TS grantees housed at four-year institutions had a PSE rate of 71.7 percent in 2023–24. Enrollment rates were slightly lower for participants who received services from two-year institutions (70.8 percent) and about the same for participants who received services from secondary schools, nonprofit organizations, and other types of organizations (71.8 percent). In 2023–24, participants were most likely to enroll in a postsecondary institution of the same type as the grantee through which they participated in the TS program:

- A considerably larger percentage of participants served by four-year grantee institutions enrolled in four-year postsecondary institutions (63.1 percent) than those served by two-year institutions (33.5 percent).

- A larger percentage of participants served by two-year grantee institutions enrolled in two-year postsecondary institutions (52.0 percent) than those served by four-year institutions (46.6 percent).
- More participants served by secondary schools, nonprofit organizations, and other types of organizations enrolled in four-year institutions (57.0 percent) than in two-year institutions (38.2 percent).

Limitations of Program Outcome Findings

First, it is important to note that the PSE rates (shown in the EXCEL workbook Table 1 and Table 2) and the financial aid application rates (shown in Table 1) are outcome measures of project performance. These outcome measures only reflect how the projects performed and should not be interpreted as evidence of TS impact.

Second, approximately 19 percent of TS participants were college-ready high school seniors (see Table 1). Although the PSE and financial aid application measures are the most important indicators of success for the TS program, the program also presumably provides services to many of the remaining four-fifths of program participants (who are not yet college ready) to assist their progress toward postsecondary education.

Finally, these data should be interpreted with caution. Comparing rates between projects could lead to unwarranted conclusions, primarily because the TS data do not permit an analysis of other factors that may affect PSE rates and financial aid application rates within an individual grantee. For example, a grantee may have lower-than-average rates because it serves more disadvantaged students—those who are at high risk of academic failure, have low educational aspirations, or are in low-performing high schools.

Efficiency Measure for TS Projects

The efficiency measure for the TS program is the gap (difference) between two cost figures: the annual cost per participant with a successful outcome and the annual cost per participant. A participant was considered to have experienced a successful outcome if the participant was (1) a high school senior during the reporting year who either enrolled in postsecondary education in the subsequent fall term or was notified of deferred enrollment or (2) a middle school student or a non-senior high school student who persisted in school for the next academic year at the next grade level or graduated from high school. All postsecondary enrollments were counted as successful student outcomes regardless of college-ready status. The annual cost per participant with a successful outcome was calculated by dividing the amount of TS funding available to the grantee during the reporting year by the number of participants who experienced a successful outcome.

The annual cost per participant was derived by dividing the amount of TS funding available to the grantee during the reporting year by the total number of participants served. The calculation

methodology for Table 3 (see Excel workbook), which contains the efficiency measures for TS grantees, can be found in the Appendix.

Selected Efficiency Findings

Table 3 (see Excel workbook) presents the efficiency measure at the program level, at the sector level, and at the grantee level.

- At the program level, the average cost per successful outcome was \$634, which is lower than 2022–23 (\$651) but higher than the U.S. Department of Education’s 2023–24 program-level goal of \$460
- The efficiency gap was \$48, which is smaller than the efficiency gap estimated for 2022–23 (\$54).
- The efficiency gap for four-year grantee institutions decreased from \$51 in the previous 2022–23 reporting year to \$46 in the 2023–24 reporting year.
- The efficiency gap for two-year grantees decreased from \$47 in the previous 2022–23 reporting year to \$45 in the 2023–24 reporting year.
- The efficiency gap for other types of grantees decreased from \$69 in the previous 2022–23 reporting year to \$59 in the 2023–24 reporting year.
- Across individual projects, the efficiency gap ranged from \$0 to \$8,422. Twenty-one grantees had a \$0 gap, indicating that all participants within these grantees experienced one of the successful outcomes (either postsecondary enrollment or secondary school persistence).

Limitations of Efficiency Data and Findings

The efficiency measure is the difference between the cost of serving all participants and the cost of serving participants who attain a successful outcome. A larger gap does not necessarily indicate lower efficiency in yielding desirable outcomes. Other factors—such as the number of participants served; the academic abilities of the targeted participants; and whether grantees served more participants or fewer participants than the number they were funded to serve—play a role in the observed difference between the two costs. These measures therefore should not be used to compare individual grantees in the absence of knowledge about project goals and target populations, as this could lead to flawed conclusions.

Appendix

In this Appendix, calculation rules are provided for the following: PSE rate and the financial aid application rate (Table 1); the percentage of postsecondary enrollees who enrolled in specific types of postsecondary institutions (Table 2); and the efficiency measure (Table 3).

A. PSE Rate

The PSE rate is defined as the percentage of college-ready senior participants who had enrolled in a program of postsecondary education by the fall term immediately following high school graduation or by the next academic term if the institution deferred the participant's enrollment.

A.1 College-Ready Participants

The following APR data fields are used to calculate the number of college-ready participants:

- IV.B1 (RcvdRSDipNo): Received regular secondary school diploma within the standard number of years but did not complete a rigorous program of study
- IV.B2 (RcvdRSdipRigPgmNo): Received regular secondary school diploma and completed a rigorous program of study within the standard number of years
- IV.B3 (Part4BRcvdRSDipNotStdNo): Received a regular secondary school diploma but not within the standard number of years
- IV.B4 (RcvdAltAwdNo): Received an alternative award (e.g., certificate of attendance or a high school–equivalency certificate)

A.2 Count of College-Ready Participants Enrolled in Postsecondary Institutions

Postsecondary enrollees were identified using the following APR fields:

- IV.C1 (PSE_RcvdRDipNO): Received regular secondary school diploma within standard number of years but did not complete a rigorous program of study and enrolled in a postsecondary institution or notified of deferred enrollment
- IV.C2 (PSE_RcvdRDipRigPgmNo): Received regular secondary school diploma and completed a rigorous program of study within standard number of years and enrolled in a postsecondary institution or notified of deferred enrollment
- IV.C3 (PSE_Part4CRcvdRSDipNotStdNo): Received a regular secondary school diploma but not within the standard number of years and enrolled in a postsecondary institution or notified of deferred enrollment
- IV.C4 (PSE_RcvdHSEquCredNO): Received an alternative award (e.g., certificate of attendance or a high school–equivalency certificate) and enrolled in a postsecondary institution or notified of deferred enrollment

A.3 PSE Rate Calculation

The number of college-ready participants and the number of postsecondary enrollees were summed across the diploma and credential categories. The PSE rate was then calculated by dividing the aggregated measure for college-ready postsecondary enrollees by the aggregated measure for college-ready participants:

- $\text{PSE rate} = (\text{IV.C1} + \text{IV.C2} + \text{IV.C3} + \text{IV.C4}) / (\text{IV.B1} + \text{IV.B2} + \text{IV.B3} + \text{IV.B4})$

B. Financial Aid Application Rate

The financial aid application rate is defined as the percentage of high school seniors who completed the FAFSA during the reporting year.

B.1 High School Seniors

The denominator for the financial aid application rate includes all participants in the final (senior) year of high school.

- III.A5 (HighSchSNo): Seniors in high school or in alternative education organized by grade (12th grade only)
- III.A8 (HighSch5yrDEnrIno): Students in their fifth year of high school in a five-year dual enrollment program (III.A8)

B.2 Count of Senior Participants Who Applied for Financial Aid

The numerator for the financial aid application rate includes all seniors who completed the FAFSA.

- II.K1 (SenrCompFASFAPNO): Seniors who completed the FAFSA but did not enroll in postsecondary education
- II.K2 (SenrCompFASFAenrCollgPNO): Seniors who completed the FAFSA and enrolled in postsecondary education

B.3 Financial Aid Application Rate Calculation

The financial aid application rate was calculated by dividing the number of seniors who completed the FAFSA by the number of senior participants for each project.

- $\text{Financial aid application rate} = (\text{II.K1} + \text{II.K2}) / (\text{III.A5} + \text{III.A8})$

C. Types of Postsecondary Institutions in Which Participants Enrolled

Section IV.D of the TS APR form asks grantees to report the number of postsecondary enrollees who enrolled in different types of postsecondary institutions. Grantees provide counts of participants within secondary school diploma and credential categories for each postsecondary institution type.

- The number of participants enrolling in two-year institutions was calculated by summing the APR data fields IV.D1.b (pub2_RcvdRDipNO); IV.D1.c (pub2_RcvdRDipRigPgmNo); IV.D1.e (pub2_Part4CRcvdRSDipNotStdNo); and IV.D1.f (pub2_RcvdHSEquCredNO)—which refer to public two-year institutions—

and the fields IV.D2.b (pvt2_RcvdRDipNO); IV.D2.c (pvt2_RcvdRDipRigPgmNo); IV.D2.e (pvt2_Part4CRcvdRSDipNotStdNo); and IV.D2.f (pvt2_RcvdHSEquCredNO), which refer to private two-year institutions among participants who received a secondary school diploma or an alternative secondary school credential during the reporting year.

- The number of participants enrolling in four-year institutions was calculated by summing the APR data fields IV.D3.b (pub4_RcvdRDipNO); IV.D3.c (pub4_RcvdRDipRigPgmNo); IV.D3.e (pub4_Part4CRcvdRSDipNotStdNo); and IV.D3.f (pub4_RcvdHSEquCredNO)—which refer to public four-year institutions—and the fields IV.D4.b (pvt4_RcvdRDipNO); IV.D4.c (pvt4_RcvdRDipRigPgmNo); IV.D4.e (pvt4_Part4CRcvdRSDipNotStdNo); and IV.D4.f (pvt4_RcvdHSEquCredNO), which refer to private four-year institutions among participants who received a secondary school diploma or an alternative secondary school credential during the reporting year.
- The number of participants attending other types of institutions was calculated by summing the APR data fields IV.D5.b (voc_RcvdRDipNO); IV.D5.c (voc_RcvdRDipRigPgmNo); IV.D5.e (voc_Part4CRcvdRSDipNotStdNo); and IV.D5.f (voc_RcvdHSEquCredNO)—which refer to vocational/trade institutions—and the fields IV.D6.b (prop_RcvdRDipNO); IV.D6.c (prop_RcvdRDipRigPgmNo); IV.D6.e (prop_Part4CRcvdRSDipNotStdNo); and IV.D6.f (prop_RcvdHSEquCredNO), which refer to proprietary schools among participants who received a secondary school diploma or an alternative secondary school credential during the reporting year.
- If the grantee did not know the type of institution in which participants enrolled, the institution type was reported as “unknown” in fields IV.D7.b (unk_RcvdRDipNO); IV.D7.c (unk_RcvdRDipRigPgmNo); IV.D7.e (unk_Part4CRcvdRSDipNotStdNo); and IV.D7.f (unk_RcvdHSEquCredNO).

To calculate the percentage of enrollees within each type of institution, the numbers described above were divided by the total number of college-ready participants who enrolled in postsecondary education (IV.C1 + IV.C2 + IV.C3 + IV.C4).

D. Efficiency Measure

The efficiency measure for the TS program is the gap (difference) between two cost figures: the annual cost per participant with a successful outcome and the annual cost per participant.

D.1 Annual Cost per Successful Participant Outcome

The annual cost per participant with a successful outcome was calculated by dividing the amount of TS funding available to the grantee during the reporting year by the number of participants who experienced a successful outcome. The total amount of TS funding is the amount of funding received by grantees that submitted APR data. The following APR data fields are used to identify successful participant outcomes:

- IV.C.i (PSE_Tot_d_h): High school seniors during the reporting year who enrolled in postsecondary education in the subsequent fall term or were notified of deferred enrollment
- IV.A1 (PersistedNextNo): Middle school students or non-senior high school students who persisted in school for the next academic year at the next grade level or graduated from high school

The program-level cost per successful participant outcome was calculated by dividing the total amount of funding by the number of successful participant outcomes across grantees:

- Annual cost per successful outcome = 2023–24 funding / (IV.C.i + IV.A1)

D.2 Annual Cost per Participant

The program-level annual cost per participant was calculated by dividing 2023–24 funding by the total number of participants grantees served within the reporting year (APR data field II.A3 [TotPNO]):

- Annual cost per participant = 2023–24 funding / II.A3

D.3 Efficiency Measure

The efficiency measure was calculated by subtracting the annual cost per participant from the annual cost per successful outcome:

- Efficiency measure =
annual cost per successful outcome – annual cost per participant