

**A**

**HOW TO PREPARE GUIDE**

**FOR THE**

**PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**  
**SPECIALIST I/II**  
**21230**

**WRITTEN EXAMINATION**

State Personnel Department  
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**HOW TO PREPARE GUIDE**  
**FOR THE**  
**PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST I/II (21230)**  
**WRITTEN EXAMINATION**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

A written examination is being given in order to establish a register for the classification of Planning and Economic Development Specialist I/II. The purpose of this booklet is to help you prepare for the written exam. Since all the material you will need to take the exam will be provided at test administration, you will not be allowed to bring this booklet to the exam with you.

**II. JOB PREVIEW**

The majority of Planning and Economic Development Specialist I/II positions are with the Department of Economic and Community Affairs located in Montgomery. However, some positions are with other agencies and are located in other areas of the state.

The Planning and Economic Development Specialist I/II job is professional work in support of local, regional or statewide planning or related evaluation, monitoring, review and implementation activities for state and federal planning and economic development or grant programs.

**III. HOW THE WRITTEN EXAMINATION WAS DEVELOPED**

A study of the Planning and Economic Development Specialist I/II classification was conducted prior to developing the examination. A number of employees who work in this position participated in this study. Incumbents determined what job duties are performed by Planning and Economic Development Specialists and what abilities a Planning and Economic Development Specialist I/II must possess in order to perform these job duties.

When the study was completed, the results showed that a new employee in the classification of Planning and Economic Development Specialist I/II must be able to perform several important duties. These activities are listed below.

**WB1 Plans/coordinates new projects to include duties such as gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data contained in legislation, reports, regulations, policies, or procedures *using* GIS (Geographic Information Systems) software, general office equipment, sub-grantees files, and state and federal legislation, regulation, and policies and procedures manuals *following* departmental policies and procedures, supervisor's directives, and own initiative *in order to* measure or interpret the impact of new rules and regulations on grant/program activities, secure funding, monitor expenditures, monitor accomplishments and compliance, and/or relay information.**

- T1.01 Analyzes scope of proposed new projects to include reviewing applicant files, applications, or financial reports and conducting site visits in order to prepare reports and/or presentations, gain an understanding of the project, or formulate methodology for implementation.
- T1.02 Develops a State Plan of goals and potential accomplishments for programs such as CSBG, WIA, Workforce Development, or CDBGs in order to secure federal, state, or private funding for proposed new programs or continued funding of existing programs.
- T1.03 Conducts financial analysis of projects to include reviewing monthly invoices and reports, reviewing purchases for adherence to budget, and/or comparing training activity expenditures with budget allowances in order to determine achievement or lack of achievement of performance goals or keep project within budget.
- T1.04 Enters information into desktop computer spreadsheets such as invoice dollar amounts or listing of submitted invoices in order to track expenditures, process payments, or create spreadsheets.
- T1.05 Reviews written material such as laws, regulations, policies, or project reports in order to detect changes which will effect programs, inform sub-grantees of changes to programs, cite violations of program guidelines, or determine if program is meeting objectives.
- T1.06 Reviews reports or minutes of meetings to include checking for proper grammar and punctuation and/or ensuring document is understandable and in proper format.
- T1.08 Conducts special research projects as directed by supervisor such as compiling program history or guidelines in order to promote or implement a program, plan or project future course of action, provide information to potential sub-grantee, relay purpose of program, and/or relay qualifications or the requirements of the program.
- T1.12 Prepares narrative and statistical reports such as annual reports, annual work plan, quarterly performance reports, and drafting report contents in order to disseminate information, report program performance, detail observation findings or recommendations, compare findings/results to expectations, or report information to federal agencies.

- T1.13 Develops reports such as annual reports, annual work plan, or quarterly performance reports on a personal computer in order to disseminate information, report program performance, detail observation findings or recommendations, compare findings/results to expectations, or report information to federal agencies.
- T1.14 Writes program policy/guidelines using existing federal regulations, state or federal law, or department policy in order to legally implement and administer program or educate recipients.
- T1.15 Prepares grant proposals in order to secure additional funding for projects.

**WB2 Manages grant/program projects to include monitoring program activities *using* general office equipment such as computer and telephone *following* state and federal guidelines, grant/program guidelines, departmental policies and procedures, professional knowledge, and own initiative *in order to* assist sub-grantees, carry out objectives of grant/program, ensure continuation of funding, increase public awareness of program, monitor compliance with requirements, make suggestions for improvement, and provide feedback to section supervisor.**

- T2.01 Reviews project progress to include reviewing submitted progress reports and financial reports and/or comparing accomplishments to goals and objectives in order to prepare progress reports or presentations or monitor progress toward goal achievement.
- T2.02 Conducts desk top review of program operations to include making contact by phone, observing program operation on site, conducting on-site audits, preparing notes of observations, reviewing program guidelines, administering questionnaires, and/or notifying sub-grantee of deficiencies in order to detect errors or violations in program operation, monitor compliance with federal or state regulation, inform supervisor of any problems encountered, gather information about program operation, or detect deficiencies.
- T2.03 Monitors grant/program operation to include reviewing equipment or inventory purchased, balancing monthly ledger, or observing program operation in order to monitor grant/program compliance with regulations, achievement of goals, monitor funds spent, or account for funds spent.
- T2.04 Reviews grant applications to include such duties as reviewing and rating applications, checking for proper format, checking for requested information, ensuring applicant is eligible for grant program, ensuring cost effectiveness of proposed activities, and comparing grant proposal to program requirements and guidelines in order to make award recommendations to division director and/or agency director.
- T2.05 Prepares and updates materials such as user manuals, training material, or program manuals to include researching new policy, laws, or regulations in order to ensure the availability of current and accurate material and proper program operating procedures are in place.
- T2.06 Communicates with supervisor regarding such things as deficiencies noted during desk top review or of sub-grantee application grade.

- T2.07 Interviews sub-recipients, service providers, employers, and participants in order to detect deficiencies, monitor adherence to state or federal laws and regulations, ascertain staff's job duties, or monitor overall operation of project.
- T2.08 Reviews documents such as forms, questionnaires, or monitoring instruments in order to ensure documents are consistent with program guidelines, determine if revisions should be made, or determine if document is adequate for its intended purpose.
- T2.12 Completes all travel related requests and reimbursement forms for grant/program projects accurately and in compliance with departmental, divisional, and sectional procedures.
- T2.13 Coordinates with other sections of the division, department, private, state, or federal agencies in order to ensure full compliance with program guidelines, meet program deadlines, or provide requested information.
- T2.14 Examines program documents such as grant financial reports, monitoring reports, program reports, equipment inventory lists, requests for reimbursement, progress reports, time-sheets, job descriptions, bank records, forfeiture records, and other pertinent paperwork in order to detect deficiencies, ensure accuracy and readability, and ensure compliance with regulations.
- T2.18 Performs consultant duties for sub-grantees such as reviewing requests for equipment rental and determining if funds for equipment are budgeted, writing advisory interpretations of regulations, or explaining policies in order to answer questions about policy or guidelines, relay information about program, or ensure program is operating within budget.
- T2.19 Assists in grant/program operation to include submitting approved contractor's invoice for payment, consider and approve/deny request from grantee for payment draws, approve/deny amendments to program or program close-out, process close-out of project, assessing needs, recommending appropriate training, preparing budget, or review implementation plans in order to assist in achievement of program goals, ensure financial accountability, and ensure program is operating legally.

**WB3 Performs administrative duties *using* general office equipment such as computer, fax machine, and telephone *following* departmental policies and procedures, supervisor's directives, and own initiative *in order to* ensure program effectiveness, plan for program activities, enlist and maintain support for programs, or enhance operations.**

- T3.02 Conducts informational sessions for sub-grantees in order to inform about the application process.
- T3.03 Maintains files of items such as budgets, plans, invoices, applicable legislation, regulations, policies, reports, completed questionnaires, or approved applications in order to store information in a retrievable manner.
- T3.04 Attends professional meetings, workshops, or conferences in order to develop and maintain technical proficiency and share information learned with other staff members.

- T3.06 Communicates in writing with sub-grantee/project personnel, other client personnel, public officials, and/or the general public to include preparing advisory interpretations of regulations, composing letters of regret, reward, or change and general correspondence in order to request pre-review documents or project information, explain program requirements, recruit support for programs, answer questions, coordinate or implement programs, or notify of needed changes in program operations.
- T3.07 Communicates orally with sub-grantee/project personnel, other client personnel, public officials, or the general public in person and over the phone in order to request pre-review documents or project information, plan workshops, explain program requirements, recruit support for programs, coordinate or implement program, or answer questions.
- T3.08 Prepares and presents oral presentations to include preparing presentation outlines, handouts, brochures, and PowerPoint program and securing adequate space in which to deliver presentations based on number/location of attendees in order to update concerned parties such as public officials, general public, or government officials on program progress and procedures or to train staff.
- T3.11 Participates in workshops such as compliance, technical assistance, training, and/or application in order to disseminate information and explain applicable program requirements.
- T3.14 Serves as section or division contact person in supervisor's absence to include locating requested information or answering questions about operations.

The study also showed that the following knowledge and abilities are associated with the above activities. A Planning and Economic Development Specialist I/II must possess the knowledge and abilities listed below on his/her first day of work.

## **KNOWLEDGES**

- K20 Knowledge of English language to include grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and word usage as needed to compose documents, complete reports and forms, conduct interviews, and communicate orally and in writing with various individuals.**
- K21 Knowledge of basic math to include addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division as needed to calculate dollar amounts, prepare and/or review budgets, evaluate invoices, verify and/or review cost estimates and/or contracts, reconcile bank accounts, review payroll, prepare and approve applications, reports, and forms such as grant applications, time sheets, and performance appraisals.**
- K22 Knowledge of statistics to include mean, median, and mode as needed to develop and interpret reports, analyze, interpret, and present data, make projections, determine compliance, and measure performance.**

## ABILITIES

- A02 Ability to communicate orally as needed to answer questions, explain information or ideas, and provide technical assistance.
- A03 Ability to communicate in writing needed to write/revise program policy, formulate reports and papers, convey ideas, write long range plans, prepare grant applications, and prepare general correspondence.**
- A08 Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with individuals and groups such as co-workers, subordinates, superiors, government representatives, education and business officials, and the general public as needed to maximize program effectiveness and achieve departmental goals.
- A14 Ability to read and interpret federal and state rules and regulations, contracts, and laws as needed to prepare grant applications, obtain or interpret information, apply for federal funds, or comply with programmatic operations.**
- A15 Ability to read and interpret instructions, letters, memos, and project reports as needed to prepare grant applications, evaluate grant applications, answer questions, or determine if time lines are being accomplished.**
- A18 Ability to operate office equipment such as telephone, fax machine, and copier as needed to exchange information, transmit information, and maximize work time.
- A19 Ability to use a personal computer as needed to document, access, transmit, store, and analyze information, run programs that evaluate policy and develop plans, develop spreadsheets, and prepare documents, reports, letters, and presentation aids.
- A20 Ability to work independently with little supervision as needed to perform required job duties.
- A21 Ability to negotiate with others as needed to resolve conflicts with contractors or subgrantees, contractual agreements, budget computations, participant plans and/or activities.
- A22 Ability to make formal and informal presentations as needed to conduct training sessions, deliver program information, and perform program outreach.
- A23 Ability to proofread documents such as training applications/materials, forms, and reports as needed to ensure information is accurate.**
- A24 Ability to plan and organize to include prioritizing tasks, scheduling appointments, arranging working papers and other documentation, and reevaluating/adjusting time tables as needed to meet departmental goals, objectives, and deadlines.**
- A25 Ability to use PC based programs such as Excel, Access, Word, Harvard Graphics, Word Perfect, E-mail, or PowerPoint as needed to create narrative statistical reports, maintain amounts invoiced by contractors, create general correspondence, develop monitoring instruments, and create presentations and graphics and/or task performance goals.
- A27 Ability to research information as needed to gather, analyze, and interpret data for use in planning/coordinating new projects.

The examination for Planning and Economic Development Specialist I/II measures only the knowledge and abilities listed above which appear in **bold** print.

#### IV. SAMPLE TEST INSTRUCTIONS AND ITEMS

Questions on the Planning and Economic Development Specialist I/II written examination measure the abilities identified as those a new employee must have the first day on the job. The following examples are indicative of the kinds of questions used to measure each knowledge or ability listed above that appears in **bold** print.

#### **KNOWLEDGE**

A Planning and Economic Development Specialist I/II must have Knowledge of English language to include grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and word usage as needed to compose documents, complete reports and forms, conduct interviews, and communicate orally and in writing with various individuals.

#### SAMPLE QUESTION

1. Select the most appropriate form of the sentence according to standard English from the options provided below.
  - A. I would be at work and supervise the work assigned to Ms. Public.
  - B. I will be working and will supervise the work assigned to Ms. Public.
  - C. I will watch Ms. Public do her work.
  - D. Ms. Public's assignments will be supervised and I will be at work.

The correct answer is "B."

## KNOWLEDGE

A Planning and Economic Development Specialist I/II must have the knowledge of basic math to include addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division as needed to calculate dollar amounts, prepare and/or review budgets, evaluate invoices, verify and/or review cost estimates and/or contracts, reconcile bank accounts, review payroll, prepare and approve applications, reports, and forms such as grant applications, time sheets, and performance appraisals.

A Planning and Economic Development Specialist I/II must also have the knowledge of statistics to include mean, median, and mode as needed to develop and interpret reports, analyze, interpret, and present data, make projections, determine compliance, and measure performance.

## SAMPLE QUESTION

Use the information in the following table to answer the questions which follow.

**Departmental Salaries and Leave Balances**

<b>Hourly Pay Rate</b>	<b>Number of Employees</b>	<b>Sick Leave Balance</b>	<b>Vacation Leave Balance</b>	<b>Comp Time</b>	<b>TOTALS</b>
\$21.50	2	787	410	0	1,197
\$16.50	5	414	220	25	659
\$10.00	18	553	635	87	1,275
\$8.50	30	629	995	154	1,778
\$7.50	45	798	887	213	1,898
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3,181</b>	<b>3,147</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>6,807</b>

\*Balances include time earned through 12/31/2005. Balances for sick leave, vacation leave, and comp time include all employees in these categories.

2. What is the average hourly pay rate in the department?
- A. \$8.50
  - B. \$10.00
  - C. \$12.80
  - D. \$64.00

The correct answer is "C."

3. The two employees who earn \$21.50 an hour plan to retire at the end of the year. The department must pay their accumulated vacation leave balance of 410 hours. How much will this cost?
- A. \$8,000.00
  - B. \$8,815.00
  - C. \$17,630.00
  - D. None of the above

The correct answer is "B."

4. What is the average sick leave balance for employees who earn \$10.00 an hour?
- A. 5.53 hours
  - B. 18.00 hours
  - C. 30.72 hours
  - D. 35.28 hours

The correct answer is "C."

## **ABILITY**

A Planning and Economic Development Specialist I/II must have the ability to communicate in writing needed to write/revise program policy, formulate reports and papers, convey ideas, write long range plans, prepare grant applications, and prepare general correspondence.

## **SAMPLE QUESTION**

**The sentences in the following paragraph may or may not be in the proper order. Choose the answer that lists the sentences in the most logical order.**

5.           (1) There is also good reason for careful attention to internal communication.  
              (2) Effective communication with those inside the organization makes for fewer misunderstandings and fewer disgruntled employees.  
              (3) Harmony within the department carries over into public relations with outsiders.  
              (4) In the area of communication, primary attention is usually centered upon relations with outsiders, park visitors, suppliers and others.
- A. 2-3-1-4  
B. 4-1-2-3  
C. 3-2-1-4  
D. 1-2-3-4

The correct answer is "B."

## **ABILITY**

A Planning and Economic Development Specialist I/II must have the ability to read and interpret federal and state rules and regulations, contracts, and laws as needed to prepare grant applications, obtain or interpret information, apply for federal funds, or comply with programmatic operations.

## **SAMPLE QUESTION**

**Read the following excerpt from the Alabama Water Resources Act and answer the question which follows.**

The general functions and duties of the Office of Water Resources shall be as follows: ...

(19) After the expiration of one year from February 23, 1993, to issue an order assessing a civil penalty against any person in violation of a. any provision of this chapter or b. any rule or regulation promulgated hereunder, other than such provisions or rules or regulations subject to the enforcement of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, or any person who fails to submit a declaration of beneficial use or makes a false statement in a declaration of beneficial use; provided, however, that no such order shall be issued to a person if a civil action to recover a penalty for such violation has been commenced against such person. Any order issued under this section shall set forth findings of fact relied upon by the Office of Water Resources in determining the alleged violation and the amount of the civil penalty and may be served in the manner provided for service of process in the Alabama Rules of Civil Procedure. Where the Office of Water Resources has issued an order finding that a violation has occurred and assessing a civil penalty, the person subject thereto shall pay the penalty in full within 30 days of receipt of the order unless such person files a request for a hearing in accordance with the rules and regulations promulgated hereunder. No order shall be issued under this subsection until the division chief or his designated representative has offered to meet with such person concerning the alleged violations and penalties. It is the intent of the Legislature that the director or division chief or their representatives shall attempt in good faith to reach a solution of alleged violations before any legal action is commenced. Civil penalties assessed by the Office of Water Resources and not paid may be recovered in a civil action brought by the Office of Water Resources in the circuit court of the county in which such person resides or does business. Any civil penalty assessed or recovered hereunder shall not exceed \$1,000 for each violation. Each day such violation continues shall constitute a separate violation for purposes of this chapter. In no event shall a civil penalty assessed hereunder exceed \$25,000 in any calendar year. In determining the amount of any penalty, the Office of Water Resources shall take into account the seriousness of the violation, the standard of care manifested by such person, any economic benefit accruing to such person as a result of the violation, the nature, extent, and degree of success of such person's efforts to minimize or mitigate the effects of such violation on the waters of the state, such person's history of serious violations, and the ability of such person to pay the penalty; ...

6. What action must be taken before an order assessing a civil penalty can be filed against someone who violates the provisions of the Alabama Water Resources Act?
- A. A representative from the division must offer to meet with the alleged violator.
  - B. The alleged violator must file a request for a hearing.
  - C. The Legislature must attempt to reach a solution of the alleged violations.
  - D. The amount of the penalty must be determined.

The correct answer to this question is “A.”

## **ABILITY**

A Planning and Economic Development Specialist I/II must have the ability to read and interpret instructions, letters, memos, and project reports as needed to prepare grant applications, evaluate grant applications, answer questions, or determine if time lines are being accomplished.

## **SAMPLE QUESTION**

### **Read the following passage and answer the question.**

Established mechanisms coordinate the programs' participant intake, referral, assessment, participant payment, training, and placement procedures. Efforts to minimize any overlap or duplication among these related services is a hedge against fragmented service delivery.

JTPA Title III/ES/UI/TAA coordination is strengthened through ES/UI common access to the Department of Industrial Relations' computerized participant information database, which provides for the sharing of both pertinent UI and Extended Unemployment Compensation (EUC) participant and program data.

Rapid Response staff will inquire while onsite whether a layoff/plant closing is due in whole or in part to foreign competition. In dislocation situations where this appears to be the case, Department of Industrial Relations officials will assist affected dislocated workers and company officials in completing "A Petition for Trade Adjustment Assistance", USDOL/ETA Form #8560. Other relevant information regarding the TAA program is distributed to dislocated workers and company management by Rapid Response staff.

The Governor's Economic Dislocation and Worker Adjustment Assistance Act (EDWAA) Guidelines, Section VII.E.1.b., states that such payments will "... not be provided to any participant for the period that such individual is... enrolled in or receiving on-the-job training, out-of-area job search, or basic readjustment services in programs under the Act. Nor will payments be made to any participant receiving trade readjustment allowances (TRA), or relocation allowances...."

7. Which of the following is a method by which the coordination of services is strengthened?
- A. through efforts to minimize any duplication or overlap of services to prevent fragmented service
  - B. through the Governor's Economic Dislocation and Worker Adjustment Assistance Act
  - C. through access to a computerized database with information about participants
  - D. through presence of the Rapid Response staff on the site of a layoff or plant closing

The correct answer is "C."

## **ABILITY**

A Planning and Economic Development Specialist I/II must have the ability to proofread documents such as training applications/materials, forms, and reports as needed to ensure information is accurate.

## **SAMPLE QUESTION**

**Read the paragraph below, then identify the word that is misspelled.**

8. The winter weather forecast for Alabama will likely result in icy roads and hazardous driving conditions in some areas. Alabama's State Troopers are encouraging all motorists to drive with extreme caution.
- A. icy
  - B. forecast
  - C. likely
  - D. caution

The correct answer to this question is "A."

## ABILITY

A Planning and Economic Development Specialist I/II must have the ability to plan and organize to include prioritizing tasks, scheduling appointments, arranging working papers and other documentation, and reevaluating/adjusting time tables as needed to meet departmental goals, objectives, and deadlines.

## SAMPLE QUESTION

Using the table and background information presented below, answer questions 9-10.

PROJECT	DEADLINE	# OF CLERICAL HOURS	# OF PROFESSIONAL HOURS	PARAMETERS OF PROJECT
1 (high)	November 20	25	300	You cannot work on this project while working on project 4. You may have other clerical personnel assist you in this project.
2 (low)	June 8	29	82	You cannot work on this project while working on projects 4 and 5.
3 (medium)	June 15	21	65	You may have other professional staff assist you on this project. This project has 3 steps that have to be done in order and independently. Step 3 of project 4 must be completed prior to beginning step 2 of this project.
4 (high)	March 5	65	35	You cannot work on this project while working on project 1. This project has 3 steps that must be completed independently and in order.
5 (low)	September 25	102	215	You must have the final product approved by your supervisor before submission, a procedure which will add approximately two weeks to your working time.

You have five projects you are responsible for completing by the deadlines given. It is now January 1st. All of these projects must be completed this year. Assume you have a forty-hour work week with no overtime allotted. Each project has specific parameters in which you must work. The number of clerical hours and the number of professional hours that have been projected to complete the project are also provided in the table above. The professional hours needed to complete the projects are estimates of the time you will spend on the projects yourself. The number of clerical hours needed to complete the projects is an estimate of the time one or more members of your staff will spend on the projects. Unless specifically stated, you cannot receive assistance from other professional or clerical staff. The level of importance of the projects is in parentheses next to the project number. Projects with deadlines of high levels of importance take precedence over projects with low and medium levels of importance.

9. Which of the following combinations of projects would be plausible to begin work on concurrently?
- A. Projects 1 and 4
  - B. Projects 2 and 3
  - C. Projects 3 and 4
  - D. Projects 2 and 4

The correct answer is “B.”

10. It is June 1, and you have completed Projects 2 and 4. Which project(s) must you have already started working on in order to meet the deadlines set?
- A. Projects 1, 3, and 5
  - B. Projects 1 and 3
  - C. Project 3
  - D. Projects 3 and 5

The correct answer is “C.”

## V. STUDY SUGGESTIONS

You may find some of the following ideas helpful in preparing for the exam.

- Study the Sample Test Instructions and Items in this How to Prepare Guide. Become familiar with the instructions and examples so you will know what to expect on the examination.
- Think of possible test questions as you study. Anticipate what the test questions will be like based upon the sample questions and the knowledge and abilities being measured (pages 7-8).
- Practice reading passages such as instruction manuals or "how-to" books you may have at home. Try to pick out the key information. Highlight important aspects of the sections of take brief notes.

## VI. EXAM ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

- Do **NOT** bring this Booklet to the exam location. You will not be permitted to bring it in the testing room.
- Do **NOT** bring any of your study materials to the exam.
- Bring several No. 2 pencils with erasers to the exam. If you wish, you may also bring a highlighter pen to use while reading passages that are a part of the test.
- You **WILL** need to bring a hand held calculator to the exam. Planning and Economic Development Specialists use calculators to add and subtract numbers in the calculation of dollar amounts. A basic calculator with addition and subtraction functions will be acceptable. You will not be allowed to use a calculator with printing capability. **Calculators as a feature on a cell phone will not be permitted.** Also, you will not be allowed to share calculators and pass them back and forth during the exam.
- You will **not be allowed** to enter the exam location or take the exam without your NOTIFICATION CARD **and** PICTURE IDENTIFICATION. Please remember to bring the NOTIFICATION CARD from the State of Alabama Personnel Department informing you of your test time and location. To protect your own interests, you also must bring one form of PICTURE IDENTIFICATION to the exam site. Examples of valid identification are a valid driver's license, a military identification card, and a student identification card.

## **VII. TAKING THE EXAM**

You will have 3 hours to complete the exam. Use your time efficiently, and keep track of the time. Try to budget your time so you will be able to complete the exam. Think about each question carefully, but do not spend too much time on any one question. Try to work at a steady pace so you can finish as much of the test as possible.

Do not give up on difficult test questions. If the question or problem seems hard, many people do not even try. Attempt to get the right answer to every question, but do not spend too much time on any one question just because it is hard. This may not leave you enough time to answer questions that you know later in the test.

Use all of the time allowed to you in taking the exam. If you complete the exam early, review the questions and answers you have marked. The exam is not a test of how quickly you can answer questions.

For every question, be sure to mark an answer on your scantron answer sheet. If you do not know the answer, eliminate as many distractors as possible, and then make a guess. You will not be penalized for guessing.

## **VIII. BANDED SCORING**

When the written exam for Planning and Economic Development Specialist I/II is graded, the scores will be grouped into bands. When you receive notification of how you performed on the exam, you will not be given a numerical score (i.e., 67 out of 80, or 93 out of 100). Rather, you will be informed into which band (i.e., 1, 3, 6, 10) your score fell. The following information is provided to help you understand the banding procedure.

### **What is Banding?**

Banding is one way to reduce the impact of fluctuations in test scores that do not provide meaningful information about differences in the ability to perform the job. One important purpose of testing is to identify the differences in test scores that reflect real differences among candidates. Banded scoring is a statistical procedure for grouping raw test scores that statistically are not meaningfully different from one another. In banded scoring, bands are set objectively and statistically. They are not manipulated arbitrarily.

## Misconceptions about Banding

There are many misconceptions about banding and the use of banded scores. Some of the most common misconceptions are listed below. Each misconception is followed by a clarification.

□ **Misconception: Each band should have the same number of people.**

We do not force bands to be a certain size. The people in a band are similar to each other in that statistically there is no meaningful difference in their scores. Sometimes Band 1 may be very large, and at other times it may be small. People's scores determine the size of the bands. We never know how many people will be in each band until we receive the test scores.

□ **Misconception: Band numbers have no meaning. I don't have a score.**

Band numbers do have meaning. Think of a band as a group of tied scores. Consider that in school two students with average grades of 94.5 and 94.3 would both be grouped into the same band. Just because one student made a 94.5 and one student made a 94.3, the teacher cannot be sure that 0.2 of a point means that the student who scored 94.5 is smarter or is a better student. The scores are so close to each other that they are basically the same.

For example, think of the achievement tests that children take in school. The fine print on these tests always informs you not to focus on the numerical score but rather on the comparative score, which uses some type of grouping technique such as percentiles, stanines, standard deviations, grade levels, etc. These grouping techniques are considered forms of banding. Banding compares your performance on the test to the other test takers' performance and groups your score with others that are statistically the same.

□ **Misconception: Band numbers are the same as letter grades.**

Band numbers are not the same as letter grades. Band 1 does not equate to an "A," Band 2 to a "B," and so on. In school, a predetermined numerical range of scores (i.e., 90-100, 80-90, 70-80) equals an alphabetical value (i.e., A, B, C). This grading system is a form of banding. In this case, unlike grade school, the width of bands is not set in advance. Scores are banded only in relation to one another, so you compete against other test takers. The scores of all test takers determine the width of the bands, and your score is set in relation to the scores of your peers.

□ **Misconception: A banded score on one test has the same value as a banded score on another test.**

Banded scores are test specific and cannot be compared from test to test. Consider that a test taker scored 88 on one test, and the highest score of all test takers was 89. It is likely for this exam that the test taker who scored 88 would be in Band 1. However, if the same person scored the same grade on another test, and the highest score of all test takers was 100, he/she may be in Band 2 or Band 3. Candidates' scores vary on each test, and since candidate scores determine the width of bands and into which band test takers fall, the value of a banded score varies from test to test.

□ **Misconception: People with the most seniority who have been on the job longest should be in the top bands.**

People with the most experience do not always fall into the top bands. Time spent in a job may not be the same as possessing a knowledge, skill, or ability needed to perform the job. The people with the strongest knowledges, skills, and abilities (or who did best on the exam) will be in the top bands. Some of the people in the top bands will have been in similar jobs for a long period of time, and others will have been in similar jobs for a short period of time. Years of service do not always equal proficiency. Candidates with seniority or experience do not automatically perform best on the test. Regardless of seniority, candidates who display the appropriate knowledges, skills, and abilities perform best on the test.

- **Misconception:**      **A standing in Band 4 or below automatically indicates failure or ineligibility for jobs.**

A band number of 4 or lower is not automatically equated with failure. For one test, there may only be 4 bands, and for another test, there may be 14 bands. So, your success on the test based on your position in a band varies from test to test. Your standing in a band does not indicate whether or not you pass or fail the test. The true test of success in your employment opportunities is whether or not you can be certified and considered for a job vacancy.

- **Misconception:**      **Banding replaced the “Rule of 10.”**

Banding did not replace the “Rule of 10.” The “Rule of 10” determines the number of bands to be certified. In the past, tied scores referred to an actual numerical score (e.g., two candidates with a score of 98.98 were considered tied) while now all of the scores within a band are considered tied.

- **Misconception:**      **People in a band do not differ.**

When several people are placed in the same band, it does not mean that those people do not differ at all. Instead, it means that their scores on the exam do not differ enough to be separate scores.

## **IX. STATE PERSONNEL INFORMATION**

### **Terminology**

The following are terms that are used by State Personnel regarding test scores and employment that results from those scores. This section is provided to help you understand State Personnel terminology and procedures.

**Register:** A register is a list of all individuals who have successfully completed the selection procedure for a State Merit System job. The register is a complete list of individuals who are eligible for employment in a certain job classification.

**Certification:** A certification is a list of the top ten individuals on an employment register. These are the individuals who are immediately appointable to positions. A register that uses Banded Scoring may produce a certification with more than ten names. If Band 1 contains 15 names, then all 15 individuals will be on the Certification. Likewise, if Band 1 contains 3 people and Band 2 contains 25 people, then all individuals in both Bands 1 and 2 would be on the certification. Since individuals within a Band are considered to be tied, the certification cannot split up a Band. Certifications may be state-wide or specific to a county within the state.

## **X: TEST RESULTS**

Four to six weeks after completing the exam, you will receive a Notice of Examination Results postcard in the mail. This postcard will identify your score, or Band placement, for the written exam. If you have not received your score within four to six weeks, you should call the State Personnel Department.

In addition to your Band placement, you may also obtain your standing, or rank on the register, online at [www.personnel.alabama.gov](http://www.personnel.alabama.gov). From the home page, you should click on “Applicants” and then “Register Standings”, and follow the instructions. For security purposes, you must now create an online profile in order to access your standing.

## **XI: REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS**

If you would like to request special testing accommodation or have any questions concerning the test site or testing conditions, please contact the State Personnel Department at (334) 242-3389.

## **XII: RESCHEDULING A WRITTEN EXAMINATION**

If there is a conflict in your schedule, and you are unable to attend the written exam at the time and date for which you have been scheduled, you must resubmit your Application for Examination. The State Personnel Department will schedule you for the next available administration of this written test.