



VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

POSTING: 2025-05	ISSUE DATE: 4/1/2026	CLOSING DATE: 4/17/2026
TITLE: Program Specialist, Policy, Research & Planning (Program Specialist, Strategy & Operations)	TITLE CODE: 80135	RANGE: R27
UNIT: Office of the Chief of Staff	AVAILABLE VACANCIES: 1	
LOCATION: Quakerbridge Plaza, Trenton, NJ	SALARY RANGE: \$84,547.83 - \$124,365.93	

JOB DESCRIPTION:

The New Jersey Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA) is seeking a strategic, highly organized, and execution-focused Program Specialist to support the Chief of Staff in advancing agency priorities, strengthening organizational effectiveness, and driving operational excellence.

This role serves as a key extension of the Chief of Staff and is responsible for translating strategy into execution across the Authority. A critical component of this position includes leading efforts to develop, refine, and implement organizational policies and procedures, while identifying and driving efficiencies across processes, operations, and workflows. This role also supports research, planning, and evaluation activities using data, analysis, and reporting to inform organizational decision-making and program effectiveness.

Key Responsibilities:

Strategic Execution & Alignment

- Support the Chief of Staff in the development, prioritization, and execution of agency-wide strategic initiatives.
- Ensure alignment of initiatives across business units to achieve HESAA goals.
- Monitor progress against key performance indicators and provide actionable insights to leadership.

Organizational Policy, Planning & Process Improvement

- Lead the development, review, and refinement of organizational policies, procedures, and operational frameworks.
- Ensure policies are clear, consistent, compliant, and aligned with agency goals and regulatory requirements.
- Identify inefficiencies across departments, workflows, and processes; design and implement improvements.
- Standardize processes and establish best practices to improve consistency, accountability, and performance.
- Partner with business units to streamline operations and remove barriers to execution.
- Utilize data, reporting, and analysis to support planning, evaluation, and decision-making across the Authority.
- Assist in the development and maintenance of systems, tools, or processes used to track program performance and operational effectiveness.
- Prepare reports, analyses, and documentation to support planning, policy development, and program evaluation.

Operational Leadership

- Oversee and coordinate cross-functional initiatives across the Authority.
- Identify risks, gaps, and dependencies, and implement solutions to ensure successful outcomes.
- Facilitate collaboration across business units to support execution of agency priorities.

Program & Project Management

- Lead and manage high-priority initiatives, ensuring timelines, deliverables, and outcomes are met.
- Establish and maintain project management standards, tracking mechanisms, and reporting structures.

Organizational Effectiveness

- Support organizational design, workforce planning, and change management initiatives.
- Partner with leadership and Human Resources to enhance performance management and employee engagement.
- Promote a culture of accountability, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

Special Projects

- Lead and execute special assignments on behalf of the Chief of Staff.
- Conduct research, analysis, and develop recommendations on policy, operational, and strategic matters.

POSITION REQUIREMENTS:

Education:

- Graduation from an accredited college or university with a Bachelor's or Master's degree in public administration, public policy, higher education, business administration, social sciences, or a related field.

The Higher Education Student Assistance Authority is an Equal Opportunity Employer and is committed to inclusive hiring and dedicated to diversity in our staff.

Required Experience:

- A minimum of five (5) years of progressively responsible professional experience in strategy, operations, program management, policy development, or a related field.
- Demonstrated experience developing and implementing organizational policies and driving process improvements and operational efficiencies.
- Experience managing complex, cross-functional initiatives from planning through execution.
- Prior experience in or with the State of New Jersey is preferred.
- Experience with public-sector or higher education programs, and familiarity with compliance or regulatory frameworks, is highly desirable.
- Project Management certification (e.g., PMP, CAPM, Agile) is a plus.

Knowledge and Abilities:

- Strong ability to translate policies and procedures into effective operational practices.
- Proven ability to analyze processes, identify inefficiencies, and implement practical, scalable solutions.
- Strong project management and organizational skills, including the ability to manage multiple priorities simultaneously.
- Demonstrated strategic thinking and problem-solving capabilities.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
- Ability to influence, collaborate, and build relationships across all levels of the organization.
- High level of discretion, professionalism, and sound judgment.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

Interested candidates must submit a cover letter and resume via email to careers@hesaa.org, referencing **Job Posting #2026-05** in the e-mail subject line. Applicants applying for multiple positions must submit separate applications for each Vacancy Announcement and include the corresponding Job Posting Number in the subject line.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

SPECIAL NOTE: This position may be eligible for remote work up to two (2) days per week following completion of a four (4) month working test period.

SAME APPLICANTS: If applying under the NJ “SAME” program, supporting documentation (Schedule A or B letter) must be submitted with your resume by the closing date indicated above. For more information, visit the [SAME Program Website](#), email CSC-SAME@csc.nj.gov, or call CSC at (609) 292-4144, option 3.

Foreign Degrees: Degrees and/or transcripts issued by institutions outside of the United States must be evaluated for equivalency by a recognized credential evaluation service at the applicant’s expense. The evaluation must be submitted with the application. Failure to provide this documentation may result in an ineligibility determination.

Residency: In accordance with N.J.S.A. 52:14-7 (New Jersey First Act), all new employees must reside in the State of New Jersey, unless exempted by law. Employees have one (1) year from the date of hire to establish residency or obtain an exemption. For more information, please visit: [Civil Service Commission | NJ First Act](#).

Work Authorization: Applicants must be authorized to work in the United States in accordance with United States Citizenship and Immigration Services and Department of Homeland Security regulations. HESAA does not sponsor employment visas, accept student visas, or F1 or H1B work authorization visas.

License: A valid New Jersey driver’s license may be required if the operation of a vehicle is necessary to perform the essential duties of the position.

Background Check: All newly hired employees are subject to a thorough background check.

Employee Benefit(s): As employees of the State of New Jersey, the New Jersey Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA) offers a comprehensive benefits package, including:

Health and Wellness

- Health, Dental and Prescription Plans
- Life Insurance
- Flexible Spending Accounts
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Financial Security

- Pension, Retirement Plans
- Deferred Compensation Plan

Work Life Balance

- Paid Leave (Vacation, Sick and Personal Days)
- Alternate Work Week Options*
- Telework Opportunities*

Professional Development

- Tuition Reimbursement
- Learning and Development Opportunities

*Subject to agency policy, procedures and guidelines.

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