



These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) were developed as a supplement to the Self Sufficiency Fund Proposal Submission Packet. The Proposal Submission Packet, FAQ updates, and more Self Sufficiency Fund information can be found at [Self-Sufficiency Fund – Training Providers – TWC \(texas.gov\)](https://www.texas.gov/self-sufficiency-fund-training-providers). Any questions about this document can be directed to [SSF@twc.texas.gov](mailto:SSF@twc.texas.gov).

## **TRAINING PROVIDER QUESTIONS**

### **1. What is the purpose of Self -Sufficiency Fund Program (SSF)?**

To provide training for targeted employment opportunities for Individuals who are identified as low-income, youth up to the age of 24 who are part of a low-income family or individuals at-risk of becoming dependent upon public assistance. Texas Labor Code 309.002(a)

### **2. How do we define low-income (eligible participants)?**

As an individual whose family receives:

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP)
- Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)
- Or participates in Women, Infants and Children program (WIC)
- Free or reduced-cost school lunch based on income
- Is eligible for or enrolled in Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act youth services (WIOA)
- Income does not exceed \$37,000 annually with a dependent child

### **3. What type of occupational trainings are allowable under the SSF program?**

Training must lead to an acceptable industry-recognized certificate or credential. An acceptable certificate is a document awarded in recognition of the attainment of measurable technical or occupational skills necessary to gain employment or advance within an occupation. Also, training must lead to employment in one of the State’s targeted industry clusters.

### **4. Would a certificate of completion be acceptable as an industry-recognized certification?**

A course that merely awards a certificate of completion cannot be used as an acceptable industry-recognized certification.

### **5. What are the targeted industry clusters?**

Training must be provided in one of the following clusters:

- Advanced Technologies and Manufacturing
- Aerospace and Defense
- Biotechnology and Life Sciences
- Construction, Logistics, Transportation
- Information and Computer Technology
- Petroleum Refining and Chemical Products
- Energy

Note: Eligible occupations for training are those in the core, ancillary, or support categories of these industries that establish a career path toward higher level occupations.

**6. What is the typical term period of a Self Sufficiency Fund grant?**

The standard term period for an SSF contract is twelve (12) months. Training projects should be developed and planned so that deliverables can be accomplished within this timeframe.

**7. Who are eligible grant recipients?**

Eligible grant recipients include:

- A private, nonprofit Community-based organization 501© (3)
- Public Community Colleges
- Public Technical Colleges
- Texas Engineering Extension Services (TEEX)
- State Extension Services

**8. What is the role of the business partner?**

The role of the business partner is to provide letters of support for the training being offered. In addition, trainees may be placed with any employer in the industry whether they provide a letter of support or not.

**9. What is required in the letter of support?**

Requires at least 3 letters from local businesses on company letterhead

- Identifying the number of open positions related to the training
- Identifying the type of industry certifications accepted by business
- The company supports you entering into a grant with TWC

**10. What evidence of status does a community-based organization must provide?**

A Community-based organization must provide their 501 (c) (3) status recognized by the Internal Revenue Service Code of 1986.

**11. What is the application process for Self Sufficiency Fund and approval time?**

TWC Business Liaisons are available to assist with the development of quality proposals and provide any technical assistance needed. Applicants will submit a draft application to the appointed outreach team member for a preliminary review of proposal. The final version of the application package will be submitted to TWC for evaluation and approval. The approval time could be up to 90 days.

**12. What is the application process for Self Sufficiency Fund and approval time?**

Proposals may be submitted year-round.

**TRAINING PROVIDER QUESTIONS**

**1. Who is an eligible training provider?**

Eligible training providers include:

- A community-based organization 501 (c) (3)
- Public community colleges.
- Public technical colleges.
- The Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX)
- A state extension service

**2. What is the definition of a community-based organization (CBO)?**

A community-based organization is a private nonprofit organization, including a neighborhood group or corporation, union-related organization, employer-related organization, faith-based organization, tribal government, or organization serving Native Americans that: (A) provides education, vocational, rehabilitation, job training, or internship services or programs; and (B) is exempt from the payment of federal income taxes under Section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, and its subsequent amendments, by being listed as an exempt entity under Section 501(c)(3) of that code.

**3. What is a CIP code?**

A CIP code (Classification of Instructional Programs) is a code system of instructional programs with the purpose to facilitate the organization, collection, and reporting of fields of study and program completions.

The CIP code directory can be found at the National Center for Educational Statistics website: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/Default.aspx?y=56>

**4. What is an SOC code?**

Standard Occupation Classification code is the system federal statistical agencies use to classify workers into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating or disseminating data. <http://autocoder.lmci.state.tx.us:8080/jc/onetmatch>

**5. Can SSF funds be used to pay for training that is delivered through distance learning?**

Yes. The same reporting requirements apply for training delivered via distance learning as that of traditional classroom-based training.

**6. Can SSF be used to pay for testing fees such as the GED?**

Yes, paying for GED testing is an allowable cost. Other testing fees for work-related exams may also be allowable.

**7. Will the grantee be required to ensure participants not only apply for a certification but also pass the exams?**

Yes. Participants are required to receive an industry-recognized certificate or credential that will lead to gaining permanent employment.

**8. If a Community College participates, can they use a third-party to provide training?**

Yes. There is no provision prohibiting the usage of third-party training.

**WORKFORCE BOARD QUESTIONS**

**1. Are Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB) eligible grant recipients for the Self Sufficiency Fund?**

No. However, eligible grant recipients must coordinate with the Board in the development of the proposed training project.

**2. What is the role of the Board in the SSF proposal submission process?**

Local Workforce Development Boards and Workforce Solutions Offices are to assist with recruitment determining eligibility, identify local businesses, and providing support services for trainees.

3. **Do the individuals who participate in an SSF grant have to be referred by the Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards)?**

While it's not required that each participant be referred by the local workforce development board, it is expected close coordination with the board will take place to ensure that the board is able to refer as many participants as possible.

4. **Is there a standard form for participants to use in providing proof of eligibility?**

There is not a standard form. However, TWC does have a list of acceptable documents that may be used to document eligibility. Grantees are encouraged to consult with their local workforce development board partners for assistance in developing an application form for participants to complete.

### **BUSINESS PARTNER QUESTIONS**

1. **Q. How are businesses involved in the development of an SSF project?**

They provide a Letter of Support indicating the demand for jobs in the occupations being trained by the project.

- Business partner will support the applicant going into the grant
- Identify the number of open positions relevant to the trainings
- Correlate with the applicant whether the training is relevant to the industry
- Identify the industry certifications acceptable to their organization

2. **Are businesses that provide a letter of support required to hire trainees upon completion of training?**

Businesses that provide letters of support are not required to hire trainees who complete training.

3. **Is there a template for the letter of support from the business partner? And what essential information should the letter include?**

There is no template. However, all letters must be on company letterhead and include the following:

- Identify the number of open positions relevant to the training project
- They support the applicant entering into a grant with TWC
- Identify the type of industry credentials accepted or recognized at their business

4. **Does the Letter of Support have to be notarized or on company's letterhead?**

TWC does not require notarization of the Letter of Support from business partners.

5. **Will a business still have to go through a Fraud Deterrence review process?**

No. The grant program no longer requires businesses to complete a private partner information form. However, all applicants that apply as a community-based organization will be submitted to Texas Workforce Commission's Fraud Deterrence & Compliance Monitoring Department.

## **FUNDING QUESTIONS**

**1. Are their unallowable costs in Self-Sufficiency grants?**

Yes. The purchase of proprietary or production equipment required for the training project is not an allowable expense. However, up to 10% of the total grant award can be used to purchase necessary training equipment. All costs will be reviewed to determine whether they appear reasonable and necessary.

**2. What support services can Self- Sufficiency Fund be used for?**

Support services may include job readiness training, case management, utility and rental assistance, work-related expenses and other services needed to help individuals prepare for and participate in training activities. Applicants must show that they have worked with the local workforce development board to leverage support services already provided through the Boards. .

**3. What is the target cost per trainee for the Self-Sufficiency Fund program?**

The cost per trainee is \$2,500.

**4. What does the target cost for trainee cover?**

Target cost covers both training materials, support services, administrative cost, instructor fees, certifications and some training equipment additions or upgrades.

**5. Can other funding sources be leverage with Self Sufficiency Funds?**

Yes. The grant allows for leveraging additional funds to help support the project and participants.

**6. Are there any monthly reporting requirements to be meet?**

Yes. Grantees will be required to complete and submit a Trainee Information Form (TIF) and narrative report monthly.

**7. How are funds disbursing to the grantee?**

Utilizing our Cash Draw and Expenditure Reporting (CDER) system. If the grantee is new to TWC, the grantee will be contacted to conduct training in CDER and set-up access to grant funds.

**8. Will the grantee gain access to all the grant amount once the proposal has been awarded?**

No. The grantee must meet measurable deliverables to receive payments.

**9. What is the percentage of the grant award is allowed for administrative costs?**

The percentage limitation of the direct training cost is 10% for admin cost.

**10. What are consumable supplies?**

Consumable supplies are goods used by trainees that must be replaced regularly because they wear out or are used up.