

SELF-SUFFICIENCY FUND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) 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 Web Page at http://www.texasworkforce.org/selfsufficiency](http://www.texasworkforce.org/selfsufficiency). Any questions about this document can be directed to customizedtraining.solutions@twc.state.tx.us.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

1. Q. What is the Self – Sufficiency Fund Program (SSF)?

A. The Self-Sufficiency Fund program provides grants to Community and Technical colleges and Community-Based organizations 501(c)(3) who deliver customized job training in cooperation with employers to help low-income individuals and those receiving public assistance achieve independence.

2. Q. What types of training are allowable in the SSF program?

A. 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. These technical or occupational skills are based on standards developed or endorsed by employers. Also, training must lead to employment in one of the State's targeted industry clusters.

3. Q. Would a certificate of completion be acceptable as an industry-recognized certification?

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

4. Q. What are the State's targeted industry clusters?

A. Training must be provided in one of the following clusters:

- Advanced Technologies and Manufacturing
- Aerospace and Defense
- Biotechnology and Life Sciences
- 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.

For more information on Industry clusters visit:

[Texas Industry Profiles Industry Clusters Web Page at http://www.texasindustryprofiles.com/PDF/twcClusterReports/ClusterInitiativeBackground.pdf](http://www.texasindustryprofiles.com/PDF/twcClusterReports/ClusterInitiativeBackground.pdf)

5. Q. Where can I attain a list of industry recognized certifications?

A. To list a few: NIMS, AWS, NCCER, and CCW. The link provided below is a resourceful tool in helping to identify the right certifications for the specific occupations.

[Assessment Program Web Page at http://www.texasindustryprofiles.com/apps/SWAP](http://www.texasindustryprofiles.com/apps/SWAP)

6. Q. Who are eligible to receive training under the SSF grant program?

A. Eligible participants for SSF grant are adult recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP); individuals who earn less than \$37,000 annually with a dependent child; and individuals at risk of becoming dependent on public assistance.

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7. Q. Who are eligible grant recipients?

A. Eligible grant recipients include:

- A private, nonprofit Community-based organization 501(c) (3)
- Public community colleges;
- Public technical colleges
- Texas Engineering Extension Services (TEEX)
- State Extension Services

8. Q. How is SSF different from the Skills Development Fund (SDF)?

A. The purpose of SSF is to provide training that will lead to permanent employment opportunities for adult Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients as well as individuals at risk of becoming dependent on public assistance. The purpose of SDF is to respond to industry and workforce training needs.

9.. Q. What is the typical length of a Self Sufficiency Fund grant?

A. The standard length for an SSF contract is 12 months. Training projects should be developed and planned so that deliverables can be accomplished within this time period.

10. Q. What is customized training?

A. Customized training is specifically designed to meet an employer's specific training requirements, including customizing the curriculum, scheduling classes around the employees' schedules, developing company specific instructional examples, as well as addressing needs in real time with real situations.

11. Q. What is an “upgraded job”?

A. An upgraded job is a position occupied by an existing (current or incumbent) worker who will receive training through the proposed project.

12. Q. What is a “new job”?

A. A new job is one occupied by an individual hired after the contract start date who will receive training through the proposed project.

13. Q. What are the proposal submission deadlines for the Self-Sufficiency grant?

A. Proposals may be submitted year-round. Project developers are highly encouraged to take advantage of technical assistance prior to final proposal submission. The Office of Employer Initiatives Outreach and Project Development Team will provide technical assistance; assist with development of quality projects; and review draft proposals prior to formal submission. To request technical assistance, call 877-463-1777 or e-mail - customizedtraining.solutions@twc.state.tx.us.

14. Q. How will I be notified about the status of my proposal submission form?

A. TWC will keep applicants informed of the status of their proposals throughout the evaluation period. An applicant will be notified within **10 working days from the date of receipt** that the proposal was received and whether or not it contains all the required components.

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TRAINING PROVIDER QUESTIONS

15. Q. Who is an eligible training provider?

A. Eligible training providers include:

- Public community colleges;
- Public technical colleges;
- The Texas Engineering Extension Service;
- A state extension service;
- A community-based organization; or
- A person, sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, association, consortium, governmental subdivision, or a public or private organization with whom a public community or technical college, community-based organization, or state extension service has subcontracted to provide training.

16. Q. What is the definition of a community-based organization (CBO)?

A. 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.

17. Q. What is a CIP code?

A. A CIP (Classification of Instructional Programs) code provides a categorical coding scheme

For accurate tracking, assessment, and reporting of a training activity. The CIP code directory can be found

at the National Center for Educational Statistics website: [IES>NCES Classification of Instructional Programs \(CIP 2000\) Webpage at http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/cip2000/](http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/cip2000/).

18. Q. What is a SOC code?

A. 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. All workers are classified into one of more than 840 occupations according to their occupational definition. You can access SOC codes on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics website [Bureau of Labor Statistics Standard Occupational Classification Web Page at http://stats.bls.gov/soc/home.htm](http://stats.bls.gov/soc/home.htm)

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

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

20. Q. Can SSF be used to pay for testing fees such as the GED?

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

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

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

22. Q. If a Community College participates can they use a third-party to provide training?

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

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WORKFORCE BOARD QUESTIONS

- 23. Q. Are Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) eligible grant recipients for the Self Sufficiency Fund?**
- A.** No. However, eligible grant recipients must coordinate with the Board in the development and design of the customized training project.
- 24. Q. What is the role of the Board in the SSF proposal submission process?**
- A.** Local Workforce Development Boards and Workforce Solutions Offices are to assist with screening and identifying eligible participants, and to be a source of referral for eligible participants.
- 25. Q. Do the individuals who get trained with SSF grants have to be referred by the Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards)?**
- A.** 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.
- 26. Q. What incentives are there for local workforce development boards to participate in these project?**
- A.** Local Workforce Development Boards (Board) may request payment of \$5,000 under the Self-Sufficiency Fund Program (SSF) when they have agreed to assist SSF grantees, who are awarded SSF funds, with one of the following activities:
- Assist grantees with screening and identifying eligible participants who will receive training and services under the SSF project;
 - Agree to be a referral source of participants to the SSF grantee;
 - Identify local business(es) to provide letters of support for proposed training in project.
- 27. Q. How do I verify trainee eligibility?**
- A.** The most efficient and effective method is to establish referral and eligibility procedures with the Board contractors and one-stop centers because the staff can more readily determine eligibility. Grant recipients that do not establish these procedures must have a defensible methodology in place to ensure that participants meet the eligibility criteria needed.
- 28. Q. Is there a standard form for participants to use in providing proof of eligibility?**
- A.** 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

- 29. Q. How are businesses involved in the development of an SSF project?**
- A.** They provide a **Letter of Support** indicating the demand for jobs in the occupations being trained by the project.

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- 30. Q. Are businesses that provide a letter of support required to hire trainees upon completion of training?**
A. Businesses that provide letters of support are not required to hire trainees who complete training.
- 31. Q. Is there a template for the letter of support from the business partner? And what essential information should the letter include?**
A. There is no template. Letters should indicate job openings for the occupations included in the project and the need for particular job-skills and certifications for the job openings identified.
- 32. Q. Does the Letter of Support have to be notarized or on company's letterhead?**
A. TWC does not require notarization of the Letter of Support from business partners. However, submission on company's letterhead makes it more official.
- 33. Q. Will a business still have to go through a RID review process?**
A. No. The private partner information form is no longer a required document for this grant process. Therefore, the RID review process is no longer required.

FUNDING QUESTIONS

- 34. Q. Are there unallowable costs in Self-Sufficiency grants?**
A. Yes. The purchase of proprietary or production equipment required for the training project of a single local employer is not an allowable expense. However, up to 10% of the total grant award can be used to purchase necessary training equipment for a consortium of employers. All costs will be reviewed to determine whether they appear reasonable and necessary.
- 35. Q. What support services can Self-Sufficiency Fund be used for?**
A. Support services may include transportation assistance, case management, work-related expenses and other services needed to help individuals prepare for and participate in training activities, begin work, and remain employed. Applicants must show that they have worked with the local workforce development board to leverage support services already provided through the Boards for TANF/Choices recipients, as well as those individuals at risk of becoming dependent on public assistance.
- 36. Q. What can Self Sufficiency Fund grants pay for?**
A. Self Sufficiency Fund grants may be used for customized job training projects and for support services to address the barriers participants may face so that they can prepare for and participate in the workforce.
- 37. Q. What is the target cost per trainee for the Self-Sufficiency Fund program?**
A. The cost per trainee is \$2,100.
- 38. Q. What does the target cost for trainee cover?**
A. Target cost covers both training materials, support services, administrative cost, instructor fees, certifications and some training equipment additions or upgrades.

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39. Q. Can other funding sources be leverage with Self Sufficiency Funds?

A. Yes. Funds may not be used to pay for activities or services which are being paid for by other funds.

40. Q. Why are Social Security Numbers (SSN) required for trainees?

A. One of the key pieces of information required for reporting monthly participation and status in a Skills Development or Self-Sufficiency Fund project is the trainees' Social Security Number (SSN). TWC has always required SSNs for reporting purposes and has never allowed substitute numbers (e.g., employee numbers) to be used. Failure to report the SSN for a trainee results in the contractor not being able to count that trainee in their performance.