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## Youth Job Skills Initiative Discussion Paper

### Background

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) oversees and administers federal and state workforce development programs that deliver customized employment and training services and support to offer individuals the opportunity to achieve and sustain economic prosperity. A primary goal of the Texas workforce system is to help individuals overcome their specific barriers to employment by providing them with the necessary education, skills, training, and career services that lead to economically self-sufficient employment and opportunities for advancement. One way the system accomplishes that goal is by customizing service delivery strategies according to each local workforce development area's (LWDA) specific needs, including disadvantaged youth in need of assistance.

WIOA focuses on serving individuals with barriers to employment and seeks to ensure access to quality services for those populations. Individuals with barriers to employment include those who are low-income individuals; individuals with disabilities; homeless individuals or homeless children and youth; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners; and long-term unemployed individuals.

One of the required statewide activities under WIOA §129(b)(1)(F) and 20 CFR §682.200(k) is the provision of additional assistance to local areas that have a high concentration of eligible youth, which includes out-of-school youth (OSY) without a secondary school diploma or recognized equivalent. Dropping out of high school qualifies as a significant barrier to employment which WIOA is designed to address.

### Issue

Recent data from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) confirms a correlation between dropout rates and the unemployment rates for individuals under the age of 24. The five LWDAs with the highest number of dropouts in Texas are also LWDAs with the highest numbers of unemployment claimants aged 24 years or younger. Those five LWDAs are:

LWDA	Number of Dropouts (Rank)	Number of UI Claimants Under Age 24 (Rank)
Gulf Coast	18,534 (1)	4,327 (1)
Dallas	10,368 (2)	1,275 (3)
Alamo	5,564 (3)	734 (5)
Tarrant	4,232 (4)	757 (4)
Lower Rio Grande	2,437 (5)	1,668 (2)

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Boards with high concentrations of youth who are dropouts, and UI claimants under the age of 24, could benefit from additional funding to develop strategies to provide enhanced service delivery to these eligible youth, specifically OSY without a secondary school diploma or recognized equivalent. Boards would develop strategies for outreaching eligible participants and engaging them in services, with the goal of providing them with the skills they need to obtain and retain employment. Each participating youth will receive an assessment of their academic

1 levels, skill levels, and identification of services needed to assist the youth in reaching goals.  
 2 Boards will develop service strategies for each participating youth identifying career pathways  
 3 that include education and employment goals, achievement objectives, and appropriate services  
 4 to support youth in achieving goals.

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 6 Participating youth will be provided with:

- 7 • Services leading to the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized  
 8 equivalent, or a recognized postsecondary credential;
- 9 • Preparation for postsecondary educational and training opportunities; or
- 10 • Academic or career and technical training that leads to the attainment of recognized  
 11 postsecondary credentials.

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 13 These services will be designed to prepare participating youth for unsubsidized employment  
 14 opportunities, aligning with in-demand occupations in the LWDA. Active participation of  
 15 employers is critical, allowing youth to attain an awareness of opportunities in local communities  
 16 and access work-based learning opportunities. Boards will also be required to coordinate with  
 17 local community-based programs to assist with recruitment and provide additional services to  
 18 youth participating in the initiative. In addition, Boards will be responsible for providing  
 19 outcome information for youth participating in the initiative, including high school graduation  
 20 rate (attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent), employment rate,  
 21 enrollment in postsecondary education rate, and attainment of a recognized postsecondary  
 22 credential rate. TWC will assist Boards in identifying specific youth populations in need of  
 23 services, focusing on those youth with the lowest education and employment rates.

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 25 **Decision Point**

26 Staff seeks direction on the distribution of \$2.2 million in statewide WIOA funds to the five  
 27 Texas LWDA's with the highest number of dropouts and unemployment claimants under age 24  
 28 to provide enhanced employment and training services targeting the high concentrations of OSY  
 29 without a secondary school diploma or recognized equivalent in these workforce areas.

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 31 Staff seeks direction on distributing a base amount of \$80,000 to these Boards, with the  
 32 remaining allotment distributed based on each Board's percentage of the total number of  
 33 dropouts and UI claimants under the age 24, as follows:

LWDA	Percent of Total Dropouts and UI Claimants Under 24 years Old	Base Funding Amount	Distribution Based on Percent of Total UI Claimants Under 24 Years Old	Total Distribution
Gulf Coast	44.5	\$80,000	\$821,000	\$901,000
Dallas	24.5	\$80,000	\$441,000	\$521,000
Tarrant	11.8	\$80,000	\$213,000	\$293,000
Lower Rio Grande	11	\$80,000	\$198,000	\$278,000
Alamo	7.1	\$80,000	\$127,000	\$207,000

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