

Adult Education and Literacy Advisory Committee

2019 SUMMARY REPORT

DECEMBER 2019

Committee Recommendations

Overview

In 2019, the Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Advisory Committee held several meetings, scheduled informational presentations by industry professionals, and called upon members' expertise to effectively advise the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) on matters related to AEL programs. This report includes recommendations to TWC that focus on the integration and promotion of AEL resources.

The nine-member committee consists of representatives from the public and private sectors across the state: David Barron (Texas Carpenters and Millwrights Training Trust Fund), Traci Berry (Goodwill Central Texas–Austin), Laurie Bouillion Larrea (Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas), Jesus Hernandez Jr. (Turner Construction), Tiffany Johnson (Victoria College), Samuel Keeler (Tyson Foods), Mignon Lawson (Abilene ISD), Mary Jo Ochoa-Hernandez (Socorro ISD), and Donald Tracy (Austin Community College). Topics addressed throughout the year related to the following:

- Building a Workforce of Excellence through High Schools for Adults—The Excel Center by Goodwill Central Texas
- Opportunity Youth and Young Adults in Texas—Educate Texas
- Apprenticeship Program Overview—TWC Apprenticeship Department

Background Information

The 2019 AEL Advisory Committee discussed the integration of AEL within existing workforce development programs, the public perception of AEL services, and AEL's contribution to serving special populations identified by TWC. The committee identified a need to promote and market AEL efforts that help Texans improve educational levels and employability skills. Recommendation 1 reiterates the focus of increasing public awareness of AEL opportunities and the partnerships that can be formed with AEL.

Recommendation 1: Develop a statewide brand to promote AEL

Historically, many AEL providers have been educational institutions with a strong focus on high school equivalency completion and English proficiency. Since the transfer to TWC, AEL providers have enhanced their services to develop the local workforce and contribute to the economic development of their communities. However, AEL providers continue to find it a challenge to create collaborative partnerships. The AEL Advisory Committee suggests the following strategies to expand public awareness and support AEL providers' outreach efforts:

- Develop a marketing strategy that will identify AEL as a resource to employers and the Texas workforce system. Strategies could include the development of a statewide brand and the creation of a comprehensive website for partners, such as employers, Workforce Solutions Offices, and community colleges, to use when researching AEL services.
- Organize meetings between local AEL providers and Workforce Solutions Offices to identify partners that might benefit from AEL services.
- Collaborate with community colleges on events to strengthen multiagency communication and promote integration.

- Provide state support by promoting successful projects between AEL and non-AEL partners.

Recommendation 2: Engage employers by integrating AEL services into workforce opportunities such as apprenticeships, internships, and workplace literacy

Recommendation 2 addresses the question of what AEL programs can offer the local workforce and employers through apprenticeship, internship, and workplace literacy projects. The following recommendations establish and support collaborative projects that lead to employment through hands-on training and maintaining a steady supply of skilled workers.

- Promote AEL services as preparatory paths to apprenticeship programs by creating AEL courses that help applicants pass apprenticeship aptitude/entrance exams
- Encourage AEL collaboration with existing apprenticeship programs to develop partnerships that benefit student referrals, program enrollment, and transition into apprenticeship programs
- Encourage alignment of instruction delivered by AEL and Apprenticeship programs
- Promote coordination with Boards' job developers to identify internship or work experience opportunities for AEL enrollees
- Encourage Workforce Solutions' Business Services departments to send quarterly updates to employers about AEL services related to local targeted industries
- Create more workplace opportunities by marketing AEL services through Workforce Solutions' Business Services departments, local chambers of commerce, and employers

- Promote AEL providers as a resource to employers to increase the preemployment and soft skills of applicants and incumbent workers via customized courses
- Coordinate local and regional meetings to connect local AEL grantees with existing TWC-sponsored projects such as Skills Development Fund grants and Apprenticeship programs
- Research and promote potential tax credits and subsidized employment options available to employers that partner with adult education programs

Recommendation 3: Enhance the services delivered to special populations in Texas by incorporating AEL resources with TWC program initiatives

Several presentations held during the 2019 AEL Advisory Committee meetings focused on special populations and provided information on how to engage them in the local Texas economy. The AEL Advisory Committee recommends that AEL be used as a resource for opportunity youth, internationally trained professionals, individuals with justice involvement, and any other special population identified by TWC. The following are strategies that the committee believes can result in multiagency coordination, elimination of duplication, and braided funding.

- Engage opportunity youth in AEL High School Equivalency (HSE), transition, and workforce training services through multiagency collaboration
 - Support Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) efforts to reduce student debt by promoting AEL-funded adult basic education courses to students identified by the Texas State Initiative
 - Encourage partnerships with AEL and Workforce Solutions Offices to minimize common barriers for opportunity youth through work-

based learning, mentoring and soft skills training, and rendering of support services

- Promote apprenticeships to opportunity youth enrolled in AEL HSE or transition courses
- Promote AEL services to internationally trained professionals that include career guidance and education on how to develop career pathways and integrate in the local community
 - Support initiatives for the evaluation of foreign degrees to facilitate employment or continuation into postsecondary education
 - Encourage multiagency collaboration to facilitate employment, English literacy, and workforce training for this population
- Collaborate with Workforce Solutions Offices and justice system partners to integrate AEL into employment and educational plans for individuals with justice involvement
 - Engage partners to identify employers that hire individuals on probation or parole to eliminate employment barriers for AEL students
 - Develop training initiatives for AEL programs to effectively provide soft skills, adult education, and workforce training to individuals in justice center facilities