

Work Session Briefing Paper

Ideas for Local Workforce Development Board Innovation Fund

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Local Workforce Development Boards implemented a number of innovations to serve customers differently, in ways that met changing needs while maintaining safety protocols. Examples of this varied by local need and included the use of mobile or loaned technologies, such as computers and Wi-Fi, in addition to the implementation of virtual meetings, customer appointments, orientations, hiring events, and contactless document exchanges. These innovations allowed Boards to help employers identify and hire equipped and ready workers and to aid job seekers in continuing job search, training courses, and/or classwork.

Due to challenges with data and performance during the pandemic and in recognition of the many innovations achieved by Boards this year, in a work session on May 4, 2021, the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) three-member Commission requested that staff suggest alternative uses of statewide initiative funds previously recommended for Board Awards for Program Year 2021/Fiscal Year 2022, calling this alternative use an "Innovation Fund" for the upcoming program year. The funds available for the Innovation Fund include \$880,000 in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds, \$60,000 for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and \$60,000 for Wagner-Peyser/Employment Service (ES), for a total of 1 million in funds.

The work session provides an opportunity for Commissioners to discuss, recognize and consider future innovations.