

Briefing Paper: Ideas for Reconnecting Texas: Statewide Initiatives funding to Support Employers & Texans in the Return to Work (WIOA and TANF)

These ideas are presented for consideration and are not intended to be all encompassing or to limit discussion and consideration on additional concepts presented by Commissioners during the work session.

The agency and its partners have shown significant agility and innovation to support changing employer and job seeker needs since early 2020. However, with businesses now reopened and so many employers in need of workers, the Texas Workforce Commission has an opportunity to expand services again.

To support recovery efforts, statewide Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds and statewide Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds are available for a variety of projects to meet critical workforce needs. \$9,323,388 in WIOA funding and \$6,620,119 in TANF is currently available for obligation. **Amounts are as of May 2021 and are subject to change as grant balances change.*

In an effort to meet the primary needs of Texas, staff has considered several tools and approaches for workforce support for consideration:

Information and Job connection:

For consideration—Job coaching, available to unemployed individuals for extended hours, via online platform. Customers can access a personal coach, in real time.

Funded—TWC is continuing efforts of Workforce Call Centers to outreach claimants and advise of registration requirements in WorkInTexas.com. In addition, Workforce Call Centers inform claimants of services available at local Workforce Solutions offices, how to use WIT to search for jobs, and about the availability of Metrix Learning. Other/non statewide funds will be used for this continuation.

Job preparedness, including short-term training:

Funded—With Wagner Peyser 7B funding and at the direction of TWIC, the Metrix online learning contract was extended for 180 days from July 2021, allowing Texans to continue accessing more than 5,000 online courses. These courses are technical and non-technical in content, allowing users to add new skills to resumes and apply for jobs in expanded industries.

For consideration—Certifications for completers of Metrix online courses, in conjunction with a contract previously approved by the Commission. Certification courses offered include access to all training content in more than 130 industry certification tracks,

practice tests, practice labs, and test vouchers, as well as program support and mentorship.

For consideration—Training and Certifications in High Tech. Identify a Learning Management System that provides training and certifications to upskill Texans in the technological skills that are highest in employer demand. An analysis of data reports from Burning Glass identifies the highest in-demand tech certifications, including certifications such as: project management, Certified Scrum Trainer, Certified Information Systems Security Professional, IT Infrastructure Library, and Certified Public Accounting/Auditor.

Job progression or increased earnings

For consideration—Career Pathways. A number of companies specialize in using data to develop visualizations reflecting the job opportunities or the “career pathways” within specific industries. To support local boards in making career pathway information available to the local workforce, TWC may contract with a vendor to develop career pathway visualizations for the state’s most common targeted occupations.

For consideration - Career pathways visualizations may also provide information about certifications and licenses required when working in specific occupations. A career pathways project might also include information about required education, in each occupation within those targeted occupations. Additionally, career pathways visualizations may help local boards and AEL grantees better integrate WIOA Title I and Title II services, by providing workforce staff, AEL staff, and the public with information on how basic skills deficient individuals can progress through a career ladder, ultimately leading to employment in a self-sufficient, targeted occupation.

For consideration—Mobile applications are also available for virtual tracking of an individual’s credentials (HS diploma or equivalent), certification(s), and degrees, and for prompts about renewal dates.