

1 **Texas Conference for Foster Youth**
2 **Discussion Paper**

3 **Background**

4 Since 2011, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) has made youth in or formerly in foster
5 care a priority population over all other equally qualified individuals except eligible veterans.
6 TWC recognizes the paramount importance of providing comprehensive care and support to
7 young Texans in foster care. In addition to service priority, TWC supports 18 Foster Youth
8 Transition Centers (Transition Centers) across the state through Temporary Assistance for Needy
9 Families (TANF) funds, which provide an array of services supporting foster youth as they
10 transition into adulthood and the workforce. TWC also hosts an annual statewide foster youth
11 conference that brings together Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards), Transition
12 Centers, and other partners who are helping youth in or formerly in foster care achieve and
13 sustain economic prosperity.

14 **Issue**

15 While the Annual Foster Youth Conference does offer valuable information regarding services to
16 foster youth and former foster youth, the target audience of the conference is service providers.
17 In addition, the support TWC provides to the 18 Foster Youth Transition Centers has a powerful
18 impact, which has room to grow.

19 The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services reported 2,368 youth in foster care
20 between the ages of 14 – 17, not including youth in substitute care. According to an analysis of
21 state data led by Texas State University only 51% of former foster youth completed high school
22 or a GED. A conference with the target audience of foster youth will establish a platform to
23 provide foster youth with critical information, resources, supports, networks, and workforce
24 training, as well as educational opportunities to drive lasting positive change. This conference
25 seeks to empower these young Texans to realize their innate potential, overcome barriers,
26 cultivate confidence, and access a nurturing and supportive community of peers and providers. It
27 is also a launch pad to introduce foster youth to the wrap-around services provided by Texas
28 Workforce Solutions and other community organizations.

29 **Decision Point(s)**

30 Seeking approval for a pilot conference, specifically for foster youth with possible future
31 expansion to include former foster youth attendees. The first Conference for Foster Youth would
32 focus on bringing together at least 200 youth participants from a singular Workforce Board Area,
33 who are still currently in foster care. Participants would be invited through local Independent
34 School Districts and Workforce Solutions Offices. It would encompass a full day (9:30 a.m. to
35 4:00 p.m.). The morning will include a keynote address, workshop sessions, student panels. The
36 afternoon will consist in a service expo to showcase a variety of service providers and
37 information from the area.

38 During the conference, a separate session can be offered for teachers and chaperones with special
39 topics that can earn 3 hours of CEU credit.

1 The anticipated the cost of the Conference for Foster Youth will include, but is not limited to:

- 2 • Venue
- 3 • Transportation reimbursement for schools
- 4 • Speakers: keynote, panelists, session presenters
- 5 • Service Expo
- 6 • Conference materials for participants

7 We are requesting at least \$65,000 WIOA Statewide Initiative funding to be used to fund a pilot
8 Conference for Foster Youth during the upcoming school year 2023-2024.