

1 **Statewide Workforce Readiness Training for High School Students Enrolled**
2 **in Career and Technical Education Programs**
3 **Discussion Paper**

4 **Background**

5 On November 20, 2024, the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) three-member Commission
6 (Commission) conducted a work session to discuss statewide initiatives funded through Fiscal
7 Year 2025 reserve balances. During the work session, the Commission discussed programs to
8 assist Texas employers and employees in the development and demonstration of workforce
9 readiness skills (also known as soft skills). The Commission directed staff to develop discussion
10 papers with recommendations for funding initiatives in this area.

11 **Issue**

12 Texas employers have identified a lack of workforce readiness skills—especially in individuals
13 who are new to the workforce—as a critical and consistent challenge in the hiring and retention
14 of employees. Noted gaps in workforce readiness skills include, but are not limited to,
15 communication, organization, teamwork, problem-solving, critical thinking, adaptability, conflict
16 resolution, and time management skills.

17 The [Career and Technical Education \(CTE\) Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills \(TEKS\)](#)
18 contain specific references to “...professional standards/employability skills as required by
19 business and industry.” While all applicable local education agencies (LEAs) must ensure
20 coverage and mastery of these TEKS, some have partnered with local employers, community-
21 based organizations, non-profit organizations, and other stakeholders to engage in various
22 activities that enforce the importance of these skills and provide real-world applications as
23 students prepare for future careers.

24 In recognition of these partnerships, staff recommends WIOA Statewide funds be made available
25 for the development, implementation, and support of workforce readiness training as described
26 above. Grants will be awarded through a competitive procurement process and will seek to create
27 new or expand existing workforce readiness training programs used by LEAs, employers, and
28 other community partners.

29 **Decision Point**

30 Staff recommends the development of a grant application using \$8 million in WIOA Statewide
31 funds for the development, implementation, and support of training designed to build students’
32 workforce readiness skills and meet the needs of local employers.