

1 **Teacher Externship Expansion**
2 **Discussion Paper**

3 **Background**

4 On November 20, 2024, the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) three-member Commission
5 conducted a work session to discuss statewide initiatives funded through Fiscal Year 2025
6 reserve balances. Among these initiatives was the expansion of the teacher externship program,
7 with a particular focus on how teacher externships can enhance educator effectiveness and
8 workforce relevance. The Commission directed staff to develop a discussion paper, including
9 recommendations for funding initiatives specifically exploring the expansion of the teacher
10 externship program.

11 **Issue**

12 The Teacher Externship program in Texas has been a valuable initiative since 2018. Program
13 funding has grown from \$958,567 in 2018 to \$1,317,973 in 2024. Both teacher and employer
14 participation has increased, demonstrating growing interest in the program. It has also
15 demonstrably impacted many students, with estimates indicating that the program has exposed
16 over 26,833 students in FY 2022 and over 66,438 in FY 2023 to industry-relevant
17 curriculum. Staff have identified the following expansion and enhancement mechanisms to
18 continue growing TWC's teacher externship program.

19 *Eligible Teacher Participation*

20 The current Teacher Externship Program in Texas serves middle and high school teachers,
21 school counselors, administrators, Adult Education and Literacy instructors, and instructors in
22 IHEs who teach high school students. Expanding participation to student teachers and all
23 career/trade/technical teachers in IHEs would broaden the program's reach and further enhance
24 its effectiveness. This would allow the program to provide valuable real-world experience for
25 aspiring teachers, accelerate their professional development, and extend its impact to additional
26 adult learners, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive and robust workforce development
27 strategy.

28 *Externship Duration*

29 The Teacher Externship Program currently requires externships to be five to 10 days in length.
30 Expanding the duration of externships to 10 to 15 days would significantly benefit the program
31 by providing teachers with a more immersive and meaningful experience. With more time on-
32 site, teachers could gain a deeper understanding of the employer's operations, foster more
33 meaningful interactions with employees, and develop a richer understanding of the industry. This
34 extended duration would also facilitate multi-employer externships, allowing teachers to gain
35 exposure to various aspects of a specific industry or related businesses, providing them with a
36 broader perspective and further enhancing their professional development.

37 *Enhanced Stipend and Resources*

38 The Teacher Externship Program currently offers a stipend of \$1,000 to participating teachers for
39 participating in an externship that is five to 10 days in length. To enhance the program, staff
40 propose increasing the stipend to \$2,000 to acknowledge the significant time investment from
41 teachers and encourage more teachers to participate in a longer, more intensive externship.
42 Additionally, staff propose establishing a dedicated \$500 stipend for each participating teacher to
43 purchase materials necessary for implementing their developed curriculum and lesson plans

1 within their classroom. This would ensure a seamless transition of the learning from the
2 externship experience to the classroom, making the program more practical and valuable for
3 teachers and students.

4 *Robust Externship Structure*

5 The Teacher Externship Program can be improved by emphasizing curriculum development and
6 lesson plan creation and delivery, while also equipping teachers with labor market training. This
7 training will enable educators to effectively guide students on the potential demand and wages
8 for occupations connected to their externship experiences. To further enhance the program, the
9 externship experience should integrate student field trips and bring employer staff into
10 classrooms. Demonstrating employer-relevant skills in these settings would provide students
11 with practical, comprehensive experiences and give teachers valuable insights for refining their
12 lesson plans. Collaborative curriculum development between teachers and employers would
13 ensure the program aligns with industry needs. To prioritize this focus, the RFA scoring should
14 emphasize applicants who demonstrate a commitment to incorporating these elements into their
15 externship proposals.

16 *Increased Funding*

17 These program enhancements will require an increase in the budget for the Teacher Externship
18 Program for more staff time, logistical support for field trips and activities, and more outreach
19 efforts to recruit participants. The grant could also fund externship-related transportation and
20 support services like the provision of tools or equipment. This would enable the program to offer
21 a more comprehensive and impactful experience for teachers and students, leading to greater
22 program effectiveness and student success.

23 **Decision Point**

24 Staff recommends approval of \$4 million in WIOA statewide funding to expand the Texas
25 Externship program for FY 2026, as described above.