

Supporting Career Shifters Discussion Paper

Background:

The average worker changes careers 3-7 times over their working life according to recent survey data. With changes in technology, the market, or personal preferences, most working adults will change careers at least once, even those with extensive training/education. In Texas, there are over 238,000 jobs available in middle skills occupations that could be attained with short-term training. Adult workers seeking a career shift do not have access to the same career exploration resources available to students and new entrants into the workforce, despite facing the same challenges identifying a new career that can best use their skills and align with their interests.

Issue:

To better support Texas workers seeking a career shift to improve their economic potential or better align with their interests, TWC should expand opportunities available to them to gain experience and skills in their desired field. TWC has seen positive outcomes from expanded internship initiatives. However, most internships are geared towards individuals who are actively enrolled in school. Even entry-level positions typically require experience in the relevant field, which makes it difficult for individuals to make a career shift despite having significant relevant skills and experience in another field.

Internships contribute to the overall success of the Texas workforce, and they have been shown to increase the odds that a recent graduate will be hired, as well as the odds that the employer finds and retains an entry-level employee with the necessary skills. To benefit and support those who wish to transition careers no matter their stage of life, and to support the hiring needs of Texas employers, TWC should launch a career shifter initiative with components like: internships, career exploration, and job shadowing, which will be available to all eligible Texans, regardless of age or school attendance.

Recommendation:

TWC should use \$1 million in WIOA funds for the development of career exploration initiatives serving individuals who wish to shift careers, offering a range of services to help eligible individuals gain awareness of the valuable in-demand careers available in Texas that would best suit their unique skills, experience, and preferences.