

Internship Pathways

Discussion Paper

Background

Texas has invested in multiple internship-based initiatives designed to expand career exploration, provide structured work-based learning, and strengthen pathways into high demand occupations. These initiatives have historically operated as separate programs with distinct eligibility, reporting, and administrative structures.

Issue

While each program has demonstrated value, the separation has resulted in duplicative processes for Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) staff, inconsistent reporting frameworks, and fragmented pathways for students and young adults. To streamline administration, improve statewide consistency, and strengthen alignment with workforce needs, staff recommend consolidating three existing internship initiatives into a single, modernized statewide strategy, the **Internship Pathways Initiative**. This consolidated initiative would allow grantees to select from multiple allowable activity types under one grant structure, while TWC tracks performance consistently across all models.

The following initiatives currently operate independently:

- Career Exploration Internships (74096) - 2027 Operating Budget \$0
- Rotating Internships (74102) - 2027 Operating Budget \$0
- Texas Internship Initiative (75027) - 2027 Operating Budget \$1,500,000

Each program uses different eligibility rules, reporting structures, and performance measures. Administering these programs separately requires TWC to issue and manage three solicitations, three sets of reporting requirements, three monitoring processes, and three separate grant structures. This increases administrative workload for TWC staff, creates duplicative oversight activities, and results in inconsistent reporting across similar internship models.

Staff recommend consolidating the three internship initiatives into a single statewide strategy. Under this model, grantees would select an allowable activity type, each representing a broad category of internship programming. These categories replace legacy program names and allow flexibility while maintaining clear performance expectations. This consolidation will streamline administration, reduce TWC's internal workload, improve monitoring consistency, and strengthen Texas' statewide internship strategy.

Proposed Allowable Activity Categories and Eligible Applicants

Allowable Activity Categories (Applicants could select an allowable activity and design their grant program around that activity.)

1. **Career Exploration Experiences** Short-term activities that expose students to multiple industries and occupations, including career fairs, industry visits, simulated workspaces, and introductory work-based learning.
2. **Rotational Work-Based Learning** Structured internships that rotate students through multiple departments, occupations, or industries to build broad exposure and support informed career decision making.
3. **Targeted Industry Internships** Paid internships aligned to high-demand occupations, targeted industry clusters, or middle skill pathways, developed in partnership with employers and education partners.

Eligible Applicants

Any eligible applicant may apply for any allowable activity type. Eligible entities include:

- Texas Independent School Districts (ISDs) and Open-Enrollment Charter Schools
- Public Junior Colleges, Public Technical Institutes, and Public State Colleges
- General Academic Teaching Institutions (Universities)
- Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards)
- Education Service Centers (ESCs)

This structure provides flexibility while ensuring broad statewide access.

Decision Point

Staff recommend approval to consolidate the three internship initiatives into the **Internship Pathways Initiative**, using the activity categories and eligibility outlined above.