

AEL Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026–2031





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document outlines the strategic plan for Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) for fiscal years 2026–2031. This plan aims to enhance the Texas workforce by focusing on the customer experience and aligning with the “One Workforce” vision. This plan is designed around TWC’s mission: To promote and support a workforce system that creates value and offers employers, families, individuals, and communities the opportunity to achieve and sustain economic prosperity. The AEL Advisory Committee convened throughout 2025 to create the AEL Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026–2031 (FY 2026–2031). Each AEL committee member, bringing their own unique expertise, guided and designed the plan to align with the Texas Workforce Investment Council’s (TWIC) Strategic Plan 2025–2029.

VISION

To deliver education, workforce, and postsecondary education and training outcomes for students through innovative service delivery and partnerships that result in statewide alignments, efficiencies, and accountability.

MISSION

To promote and support a responsive and accountable system that creates value and supports local solutions for addressing the educational and workforce development needs of AEL students, businesses, and community stakeholders.

STRATEGY

To support increases in employment, postsecondary education and training transition, workforce skills, and secondary school credential attainment through demonstrated approaches that integrate workforce system services and leverage local and state partnerships.

OVERVIEW AND ORGANIZATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

This strategic plan is organized around three key system areas:

- **Learners:** Increase workforce, secondary, and postsecondary education and training options and outcomes for adult learners.
- **Partners:** Build and expand system partners’ capacity, responsiveness, and support for a unified workforce system that improves outcomes for adult learners.
- **Employers:** Provide relevant education and training programs that meet the evolving needs of employers.

Each system area includes a system strategy and three core objectives: Improve Program Effectiveness Through Quality Outcomes, Address Demand by Expanding Access, and Increase Alignment and Coordination. Action items are specific to the system strategy, with system-wide metrics to measure progress.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

This plan takes into consideration several key federal and state policies, plans, reports, and legislation as explained in this section.

FEDERAL POLICY AND GUIDANCE

America's Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age (2025): This strategy emphasizes integrating development systems, improving accountability, upskilling workers, and promoting alternatives to traditional college degrees.

STATEWIDE STRATEGIC PLANS AND REPORTS

Accelerating Alignment (TWIC): TWIC's *Accelerating Alignment, Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024–2031* (Accelerating Alignment) plan provides a budgeting and operating framework aimed to align efforts from a variety of stakeholders to strengthen Texas' workforce.

TWC Strategic Plan 2025–2029: This plan outlines TWC's approach to fostering a thriving workforce and economy in Texas. The AEL Strategic Plan FY 2026–2031 focuses on improving customer experience through coordination and integration among stakeholders. This supports TWC's efforts to support co-enrollment and referral efforts with Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards). To further TWC's efforts and to create an integrated workforce system centered on the customer experience—The No Wrong Door Approach—AEL also seeks to develop a joint TWC policy for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Titles I, II, and IV programs.

AEL Riders in Senate Bill 1, 89th Texas Legislative Session (2025):

- **Rider 29—Adult Education:** Program Priorities and TANF-Funded Services:
 - Sets priority for adult literacy programs, including those that incorporate financial literacy, digital literacy, and occupational foundation skills
 - Directs that out of TANF funds in Strategy A.2.I, Adult Education and Family Literacy, \$5,800,000 each year of the biennium must serve adults eligible for TANF, with an expanded definition of TANF eligibility based on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program, Child Care and Development Fund, or free/reduced-price school meals



- **Rider 30—Statewide Strategic Plan for Adult Basic Education:**

- Requires TWC, in consultation with TWIC, to develop a comprehensive statewide strategic plan for adult education, including goals, projected demand, system gaps, coordination, and outcomes
- Directs biennial progress reports every even-numbered year.

- **Rider 43—Adult Literacy Report:**

- Requires TWC to include, as part of its statutory report, an analysis of adult literacy activities and performance measures for the Adult Education and Family Literacy program, including types of literacy programs and measurable outcomes, with supporting documentation specified by the Legislative Budget Board

- **Rider 46—Federal and State Funds for Digital Inclusion:**

- TWC is required to allow workforce development grant programs for digital skills building and must use federal funds to provide digital skills training, device access, and digital support to workers in these programs.

AEL Advisory Committee: The Texas AEL Advisory Committee—comprised of education, nonprofit, employer, and Board representatives—makes annual recommendations to TWC’s three-member Commission (Commission) on how to enhance the AEL system. A few key topics of recommendations from FY 2023–2025 include:

- collaborating with employers to build talent pipelines;

- building direct talent pipelines using the Talent Pipeline Management model to develop contextualized, industry-specific curriculum and adopting best practices from successful corporate initiatives to meet employers’ workforce needs;
- creating a “No Wrong Door” approach through system integration;
- integrating partner agencies through shared data systems, cross-training frontline staff, colocating services, and establishing formal referral processes to ensure participants get comprehensive support;
- improving accountability with quantitative metrics and a public dashboard; and
- adding quantitative metrics to the next AEL strategic plan and creating a publicly accessible dashboard to display key performance indicators. This data-driven approach will allow the Commission to measure program effectiveness, guide improvements, and ensure transparency for all stakeholders.



TWC AEL ALIGNS WITH “THE 5 PILLARS OF AMERICA’S TALENT STRATEGY: BUILDING THE WORKFORCE FOR THE GOLDEN AGE”

To connect investments in people to the national strength of industry, innovation, and work, the AEL strategic plan aligns with the goals of “The 5 Pillars of America’s Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age,” which are:

- **Industry-Driven Strategies:** AEL must transform into a reliable pipeline of American talent led by industry and aligned with America’s economic priorities, particularly with pre-apprenticeships.
- **Worker Mobility:** More Americans must be brought into the labor force and be able to advance, including through the innovative use of technology and labor market data.
- **Integrated Systems:** The fragmented web of duplicative programs must be replaced with a streamlined, coordinated system that delivers unified workforce services.
- **Accountability:** Agencies must ensure federally funded workforce programs deliver measurable results by linking investments to outcomes and program performance.
- **Flexibility & Innovation:** New models of workforce innovation must be created to match the speed and scale of AI-driven economic transformation.

The AEL Strategic Plan FY 2026–2031 aligns with “The 5 Pillars of America’s Talent Strategy” across the three system areas of Learners, Partners, and Employers

through initiatives such as expanding integrated training, enhancing data systems, fostering strategic partnerships, and aligning policies with employer needs.

Specifically, the Learners area concentrates on expanding access to relevant training and credentials, while the Partners area fosters collaboration and policy alignment. The Employers area prioritizes industry-driven strategies by providing relevant education and training through apprenticeships and employer partnerships, ensuring programs meet evolving workforce demands and support adult learners facing employment barriers.

The AEL Strategic Plan FY 2026–2031 has also added the new element of indicators to directly measure the progress AEL makes throughout the duration of the strategic plan. These indicators exemplify the AEL strategic plan’s commitment to measurable outcomes related to student success, employment, partnerships, and program efficiency. They aim to provide quantifiable data that can be used to assess program performance, ensure that investments are yielding desired results, and promote transparency to stakeholders.

OVERVIEW OF AEL STRATEGIC PLAN FY 2026–2031

The AEL Strategic Plan FY 2026–2031 is organized using System Areas (Learners, Partners, and Employers) to focus on each major perspective involved in AEL. Each System Area focuses on a unique System Strategy and includes the “Big Three” System Objectives: Improve Program Effectiveness Through Quality Outcomes, Address Demand by Expanding Access, and Increase Alignment and Coordination.

Action Items are tailored to each System Area’s specific strategy, and system-wide metrics are used to measure the progress on the “Big Three” system objectives. The plan aims to empower AEL to meet the diverse needs of learners, strengthen the workforce, and demonstrate impactful program outcomes. The AEL strategic plan aligns with and supports the TWC strategic plan as well as TWIC’s plan, ultimately contributing to each plan’s success and Texas’ economic prosperity.

System Area: Learners

System Strategy: Increase Workforce, Secondary and Post Secondary Education and Training Options and Outcomes for Adult Learners.



System Objective: Improve Program Effectiveness Through Quality Outcomes

Action Items:

- Develop and implement a career and college navigation and advisory roadmap tailored to bridge students to postsecondary education and apprenticeships.

- Align professional development activities to statewide needs, as identified through data analysis, to meet goals and objectives laid out in statewide plans.
- Support the development or provision of adult education certifications to improve instructional quality and incentivize teacher retention.
- Expand integrated education and training programs for middle-skill occupations and increase learner persistence to completion, certification, and employment.
- Expand Apprenticeship Bridge programs for registered and industry-recognized apprenticeship programs.
- Continue enhancements of the statewide data management information system, allowing multiple AEL programs to serve students with greater coordination and transparency.
- Improve digital literacy through exposure to advanced education technology, including AI-powered tools and resources, alongside curriculum and hands-on practice.
- Develop and disseminate resources for AEL instructors on evidence-based strategies to train parents on how to support their children’s education at home.

System Objective: Address Demand by Expanding Access

Action Items:

- Conduct a statewide needs assessment that includes existing available data, surveys, and focus groups with adult educators, learners, and employers.

- Expand recruitment for special populations, including Internationally Trained Professionals, justice-involved individuals, and Opportunity Youth.
- Grow and maintain distance learning options for students through increased asynchronous, hybrid, and flex-learning options.
- Develop cost-effective strategies and leverage funding to support the expansion of AEL programming statewide.
- Support pilot programs that test new approaches to adult education through accelerated learning programs and competency-based education.
- Develop and implement fast-track High School Equivalency (HSE) attainment models to allow for more students to be served in AEL programs.
- Ensure students have access to portable postsecondary and training credentials and industry-based certifications to support their career pathways to sustainable employment or continued education.
- Promote development of alternate options for entry into postsecondary education or training programs for students who have not completed high school or obtained a HSE credential, such as with Ability-to-Benefit program models.
- Partner with community organizations and schools to offer AEL programs with integrated parent education components, focusing on literacy and engagement strategies for families.

System Objective: Increase Alignment and Coordination

Action Items:

- Align instruction to industry by promoting teacher externships with high-demand industry partnerships.
- Create and implement work-based learning opportunities for learners with local industry partners through coordinated partnerships.
- Continue enhancements of the statewide data management information system to allow multiple AEL programs to serve a learner with greater coordination and transparency.
- Establish a coordinated, single-entry system for learners to receive integrated services from multiple workforce system partners.
- Enhance data systems to provide timely reports to identify effective strategies and analyze student outcomes related to instructional gains, credentials, and employment.

System Area: Partners

System Strategy: Build and expand system partners' capacity, responsiveness, and support for a unified system that improves outcomes for adult learners.



System Objective: Improve Program Effectiveness Through Quality Outcomes

Action Items:

- Promote cross-referrals of low-level developmental education students into AEL programs to support college readiness at no-cost or low-cost, advancing Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) strategic plan goals of manageable student debt.
- Establish a platform for Tri-Agency partners to align and share policies on credit portability and articulation, supporting efficient and flexible career pathways.
- Analyze the conclusions from the Evaluation Study and develop partnerships with community-based organizations to expand access to comprehensive support services for AEL participants.
- Strengthen the integration of AEL within Texas postsecondary education and training systems by collaborating with THECB, postsecondary institutions, the Texas Association of Community Colleges, and other stakeholders.
- Establish partnerships with local school districts and parent resource centers to provide AEL students with information and training on school system navigation and parental involvement.

System Objective: Address Demand by Expanding Access

Action Items:

- Build strategic partnerships with community, faith-based, and non-TWC-funded organizations to expand AEL program capacity and offerings, particularly for low-literacy English language learners and internationally trained professionals, by leveraging shared funding and volunteer resources.
- Develop partnerships with Workforce Solutions Offices, nonprofits, and community organizations to conduct targeted outreach, expanding AEL program reach to individuals lacking digital access, particularly in rural areas.



- Create statewide AEL branding and outreach resources for local AEL programs to use for both recruitment in their respective communities and coordination with stakeholders.
- Partner with community and postsecondary institutions to expand AEL access through alternative entry pathways like Ability-to-Benefit program models.

System Objective: Increase Alignment and Coordination

Action Items:

- Develop and implement a joint TWC policy across WIOA Titles I, II, and IV to promote AEL co-enrollment and referrals for customers needing AEL support to achieve education or career goals.
- Evaluate co-enrollment data with WIOA core partners to determine its impact on AEL participants' rate of employment, increased wages, and job prospects.
- Coordinate with partners on the use of alternative testing options to promote streamlined access to AEL programs without duplication of student testing.
- Improve AEL and Board-administered program performance accountability by enhancing data collection, management, and reporting, including addressing data gaps, improving data systems and dashboards, and ensuring accurate and timely reporting of noncredit and short-term credentials.
- Facilitate opportunities for Board, Vocational Rehabilitation, AEL, and community stakeholders to share best practices for implementing strategic frameworks that support career pathways.
- Promote integrated education and training career pathway models across AEL, credit, and continuing education Career and Technical Education programs, including exploring and incorporating micro-credentials in collaboration with THECB.

- Establish partnerships to develop outreach and follow-up services for AEL populations requiring additional support, including justice-involved individuals, adult learners with disabilities, opportunity youth, and internationally trained professionals.
- Partner with employers, economic development organizations, and employer organizations to launch a statewide campaign showcasing AEL as an economic and community development tool.
- Establish partnerships for cross-training among AEL programs, Local Workforce Development Boards, and Workforce Solutions Offices to develop integrated intake models and increase referrals and service coordination.

System Area: Employers

System Strategy: Provide relevant education and training programs that meet the evolving needs of employers.

System Objective: Improve Program Effectiveness Through Quality Outcomes

Action Items:

- Develop and expand Apprenticeship Bridge programs to support a pipeline to apprenticeships in high-demand and emerging industries.
- Partner with employers to implement career pathway models, incorporating micro-credentials and incumbent worker training, to improve employee retention and promote growth opportunities.

- Provide curriculum resources for AEL programs to develop work-based learning strategies and frameworks that include employability skills and digital literacy.

System Objective: Address Demand by Expanding Access

Action Items:

- Develop partnerships with employers to develop targeted training programs that address specific skill gaps in the workforce.
- Promote AEL partnerships with employers to actively hire adult learners facing employment barriers, such as with employers who participate in TWC's We Hire Ability program or hire justice-involved individuals.
- Launch a statewide campaign to increase AEL visibility as a crucial economic and community development tool to gain support

from employers, economic development organizations, and employer organizations.

System Objective: Increase Alignment and Coordination

Action Items:

- Align Tri-Agency policies and credit transfer pathways with industry skill requirements through employer partnerships, ensuring the workforce development system directly addresses employer needs.
- Support teacher externships for adult educators to learn more about industry needs and to engage in hands-on industrial experience to incorporate real-world lessons into classroom curriculum.
- Enhance AEL program relevance by incorporating occupation-specific skills and work-readiness training, informed by employer needs assessments and active employer engagement.

- Conduct a comprehensive economic impact study of adult education and literacy within the state/region and disseminate the findings of the report to policymakers and community leaders to advocate for increased AEL investment.



- Actively participate in regional economic development initiatives to position AEL as a key partner in developing talent pipelines for critical industries.

Strategic Plan Indicators

To ensure the successful implementation of the AEL strategic plan and foster a culture of accountability, we have established the following strategic plan indicators. These indicators are tangible measures of our progress toward the plan's central strategy: to increase employment, postsecondary transitions, credential attainment, and skills development for adult learners. Each indicator will provide quantifiable data to assess program performance, inform continuous improvement efforts, and ensure that our investments are yielding the desired results for Texas' workforce.

- Increase in AEL students earning recognized postsecondary credentials
- Increase in AEL students enrolling in postsecondary education or training programs
- Growth in the number of Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs that include or bridge to pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship programs
- Increase in AEL students placed in jobs in high-demand fields
- Increase the number of HSE attainments
- Growth in employer partnerships established to provide AEL training programs, career pathways, or work-based learning opportunities



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Indicator Alignment

AEL Indicator	System Area Coordination	America's Talent Strategy Alignment	TWIC's Strategy Plan Alignment
Increase in AEL students earning recognized postsecondary credentials	Learners	Pillar II Pillar IV	FM ¹ : Educational Outcomes LFM ² : pp. 24 and 26
Increase in AEL students enrolling in postsecondary education or training programs	Learners	Pillar I Pillar II Pillar IV	FM: Educational Outcomes LFM: pp. 19 and 26
Growth in the number of IET programs that include or bridge to pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship programs	Learners; Partners	Pillar I Pillar II Pillar IV	FM: Educational Outcomes LFM: pp. 19, 23, 24, 26, 31, and 34
Increase in AEL students placed in jobs in high-demand fields	Learners; Employers	Pillar IV	FM: Entered Employment; Employment Retention LFM: p. 23
Increase the number of HSE attainments	Learners	Pillar III	FM: Educational Outcomes; Customers Served
Growth in employer partnerships established to provide AEL training programs, career pathways, or work-based learning opportunities	Learners; Partners; Employers	Pillar I Pillar IV	FM: Educational Outcomes; Customers Served

1 FM = TWIC Formal Measure

2 LFM = TWIC Less Formal Measure





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