TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION
Adult Education and Literacy Letter

To: Adult Education and Literacy Grant Recipients
    Adult Education and Literacy Special Project Grantees
    Local Workforce Development Board Executive Directors
    Commission Executive Offices
    Integrated Service Area Managers

From: Courtney Arbour, Director, Workforce Development Division

Subject: Workforce Integration and Follow-Up Activities—Update

PURPOSE:
The purpose of this AEL Letter is to provide Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) grantees with updated information and guidance on implementing Workforce Integration and Follow-Up Activities, which includes increased funding and expanded allowable expenses as a response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (pandemic).

RESCISSIONS:
AEL 04-20

BACKGROUND:
On December 17, 2019, TWC’s three-member Commission (Commission) approved $2 million in funding for a state-leadership initiative focused on workforce integration, a required activity under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) §223(a)(1)(A). This funding is distributed to AEL grantees to support:
• increased AEL integration with and referrals to Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) and vocational rehabilitation (VR) employment services and enrollments in postsecondary education or training services; and
• the collection of post-exit information on educational outcomes, employment, earnings, enrollment and progress in postsecondary education or training, and credential attainment.

¹ For the purposes of this AEL Letter, AEL grantees are entities that receive AEL funds through the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).
On March 13, 2020, Governor Greg Abbott declared Texas a disaster site due to the pandemic. The declaration led to the closure of most educational and workforce development institutions across the state. AEL grantees and providers transformed service delivery from site-based to distance learning or remote delivery.

On April 14, 2020, the Commission approved modifications and additional projects to support AEL grantees as part of a pandemic response package using available funding at TWC’s disposal to make funding immediately available to providers as they redesign services and address local impacts. The Commission rescinded the Quarter 3 performance-based funding measure to release approximately $1 million, or 66.7 percent, of the 3 percent performance-based holdback, included in each grantee’s AEL allocation budget, as described in AEL Letter 02-20, Change 1, issued on June 4, 2020, and titled, “Program Year 2019–2020 Performance-Based Funding and Performance Allocation Holdbacks—Update.” Additionally, the Commission approved expanding allowable expenses under the Workforce Integration and Follow-Up Activities initiative, as described in this AEL Letter and its attachment, to support the increases in distance and remote learning resulting from school closures; the funding amounts approved in December 2019 remain unchanged.

The Commission also approved other AEL funds and activities in response to the pandemic.2

PROCEDURES:

No Local Flexibility (NLF): This rating indicates that AEL entities must comply with the federal and state laws, rules, policies, and required procedures set forth in this AEL Letter and have no local flexibility in determining whether and/or how to comply. All information with an NLF rating is indicated by “must” or “shall.”

Local Flexibility (LF): This rating indicates that AEL entities have local flexibility in determining whether and/or how to implement guidance or recommended practices set forth in this AEL Letter. All information with an LF rating is indicated by “may” or “recommend.”

Definitions

NLF: AEL grantees must be aware of the definitions below.

Follow-Up Activities are a variety of services and workforce preparation activities that occur after a participant is no longer active in AEL direct services and for up to 365 days after exit. Follow-up activities support participants in completing education and training objectives, including collecting information on educational outcomes, employment, earnings, enrollment and progress in postsecondary education or training, and credential attainment. While follow-up services must occur after a participant exits AEL services—“exit” is defined as 90 days with no direct contact hours—activities may occur during participation or in the period between the last date of participation and the exit date.

2 The discussion paper, approved by the Commission on April 14, 2020, is available at https://twc.texas.gov/materials-april-14-2020-900-amtexas-workforce-commission-meeting.
Follow-up activities include, but are not limited to, the following, which may be provided in an in-person or virtual setting:

- Support for students in the completion of a Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency or entering postsecondary education or training
- Support for the enrollment of participants in WorkInTexas.com
- Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local workforce development area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services
- Regular contact with participants and/or their employers to verify employment or help with work-related problems
- Counseling for participants about workplace culture and expectations
- Financial literacy education
- Peer support groups for job-search activities to support employment or postsecondary education or training success
- Mentoring
- Support service referrals
- Leadership development opportunities
- Assistance in securing better-paying jobs, career pathway development, and further education or training

Workforce Integration Services support the referral to and coenrollment in Board, VR, and other workforce system services as well as success in postsecondary education or training. Workforce integration services may include the following activities, which may be provided in an in-person or virtual setting:

- capacity building activities that support coenrollment in Board and VR programs; and
- processes that sustain system referrals and alignment of services among Board, workforce intermediaries, and postsecondary education or training institutions.

Funding

NLF: AEL grantees must be aware that the per-grantee distribution of funds for workforce integration and follow-up services is a proportionate distribution with a base of $10,000 to ensure that grantees with smaller allocations have sufficient capacity to conduct activities. The distribution is shown in Attachment 1: Workforce Integration Initiative Distribution. Funds will be provided through a separate contract that will have a May 15, 2020, start date and expire on June 30, 2021.

NLF: AEL grantees must be aware that funds may be used to support distance learning, including purchasing laptops, computers, tablets, or similar items. Additionally, funds may be used to increase the number of licenses for distance learning and related remote education services, such as mobile messaging applications.

NLF: AEL grantees must be aware that workforce integration and follow-up funds must be used to develop related deliverables, including, but not limited to, the development of individualized participant case management and referral procedures with Boards, VR, and community-based workforce intermediaries as well as data collection and information-sharing agreements with postsecondary education or training organizations.
AEL grantees may elect to purchase workforce integration and follow-up services from Boards or from community-based workforce intermediaries.

**Standard Operating Procedures**

NLF: AEL grantees must develop and maintain a standard operating procedure that outlines workforce integration and follow-up services and addresses specifically how the grantee will:
- implement workforce integration services, including referrals to Boards and VR employment services and enrollments in postsecondary education or training services; and
- ensure follow-up services through 365 days after exit to collect information on educational outcomes, employment, earnings, and enrollment and progress in postsecondary education and training, and credential attainment.

**Services**

NLF: Workforce integration follow-up activities are designed to support specific activities, from student participation through 365 days after exit. AEL grantees must be aware that workforce integration and follow-up funds must support individualized case-management staff time to provide services and collect data on employment, earnings, enrollment, and progress in postsecondary education or training, and credential attainment. Although the definitions for workforce integration and follow-up activities are unique, the activities are often the same or similar and are distinguished only on the basis of whether the student has exited AEL services. The distinction between workforce integration and follow-up activities is inconsequential to budget tracking and reporting in the Texas Educating Adults Management System (TEAMS).

NLF: AEL grantees must prioritize follow-up information collection on participant earnings and employment information for participants who have not provided Social Security numbers.

LF: AEL grantees may assign workforce integration and follow-up duties to career navigators.

NLF: AEL grantees must be aware that, as one method of student support provided under the AEL program, workforce integration and follow-up services must be explained to the individual:
- during the individual’s comprehensive assessment; and
- after the individual exits.

**Data Entry**

NLF: AEL grantees must be aware that follow-up services do not extend a period of participation if the participant is no longer attending classes and no direct contact hours are being reported. Similarly, follow-up services do not trigger a change in the exit date or delay an exit flag. Grantees must begin providing follow-up services to participants who have not had a direct contact hour for 30 days or if the participant has indicated that he or she is obtaining employment, changing employment, or entering postsecondary
education, postsecondary training, or the military. Follow-up services must be provided to all former participants for a minimum of 365 days after the exit date.

**NLF:** AEL grantees must enter workforce integration and follow-up services into the TEAMS Career Services screen.

**NLF:** AEL grantees must document information on educational outcomes, employment, earnings, enrollment and progress in postsecondary education or training, and credential attainment in the participant’s file.

**Reporting**

**NLF:** As required by the 5.2 reporting deliverable of the Workforce Integration Initiative grant, AEL grantees must provide a monthly report on the use of the released funds, using a reporting template provided by TWC staff, by the 24th day of each month. The monthly reporting template is located at [https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WIIDeliverables](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WIIDeliverables). The survey will be updated and modified as needed to collect information requested by TWC leadership or the US Department of Education. Grantees must send any questions about this survey to [AELContracts@twc.state.tx.us](mailto:AELContracts@twc.state.tx.us).

**NLF:** AEL grantees must report supplemental cost categories for the Workforce Integration Initiative grant in the Cash Draw and Monthly Expenditure Reporting (CDER) system by the 20th day of each month.

**Evaluation**

**NLF:** AEL grantees must be aware that the TWC Division of Operational Insight (DOI) and the AEL department will review the effectiveness of workforce integration and follow-up services to determine whether these efforts increase WIOA employment and training performance outcomes, including exit-based measures. Depending on the results of DOI’s review, AEL grantees may be expected to budget for such follow-up services through their standard core AEL grant, requesting changes to local administrative budgets when required and approved by TWC.

**INQUIRIES:**

Send inquiries regarding this AEL Letter to [AELTA@twc.state.tx.us](mailto:AELTA@twc.state.tx.us).

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1: Workforce Integration Initiative Distribution
Attachment 2: Revisions to AEL 04-20 Shown in Track Changes

**REFERENCES:**

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act §223(a)(1)(A)
AEL Letter 02-20, Change 1, issued on June 4, 2020, and titled, “Program Year 2019–2020 Performance-Based Funding and Performance Allocation Holdbacks—Update”