

1 **Ending the Middle Skills Gap**
2 **Pre-Apprenticeship and Employer Engagement Adult Education and Literacy**
3 **State Leadership Initiatives**
4 **Discussion Paper**

5 **Background**

6 On [June 30, 2021](#), the Texas Workforce Commission’s (TWC) three-member Commission
7 (Commission) held a work session on statewide initiatives and earmarked funding for a series of
8 comprehensive statewide strategies. The Commission directed staff to research multiple
9 initiatives using statewide program funds for job creation, job preparedness, and/or job
10 progression activities.

11 To support these efforts, approximately \$3.7 million statewide Adult Education and Literacy
12 (AEL) State Leadership Funds from Budget Year 2021 (BY’21)/AEL Program Year 2020–2021
13 are available for projects to meet critical workforce needs.

14 **Proposed Initiatives**

15 Proposed initiatives funded with AEL State Leadership Funds and the proposed method of
16 distribution for each are as follows:

17 ***Pre-Apprenticeship Bridge Program for Building Trades¹—\$500,000, Request for***
18 ***Applications***

19 This initiative would require grantees to provide remediated instruction to applicants entering
20 building trades–related Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) to build and practice
21 reading and math skills before transitioning into the first year of a RAP. Staff suggests issuing a
22 Request for Applications (RFA) in which eligible AEL providers, as outlined in Workforce
23 Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) §203(5), are the eligible applicants. Grant activities
24 will include reading and math support, workforce preparation activities, and digital literacy
25 services to ensure that participants are prepared for the rigor of the RAP.

26 ***Employer Engagement²—\$1.2 Million, Request for Applications***

27 Applicants awarded this grant will be required to offer employees eligible to receive AEL
28 services one of the following activities:

- 29 • Workplace literacy activities
30 • Workplace literacy activities with employer-provided training

¹ A permissible state leadership activity under WIOA Section 223(a)(2)(D), which allows funds for “developing content and models for integrated education and training and career pathways.”

² A permissible state leadership activity under WIOA Section 223(a)(2)(H), which allows funds for “activities to promote workplace adult education and literacy activities.”

- 1 • Workplace literacy activities with integrated education and training, leading to an industry-
2 recognized credential

3 Applicants for this RFA are eligible AEL providers, as outlined in WIOA §203(5), in partnership
4 with an employer. All grantees will be required to develop curricula for workplace programs as a
5 deliverable, which will be disseminated to workforce system stakeholders as educational
6 resources for job readiness and progression within the industry sector. In the June 30, 2021, work
7 session, the Commission requested that three awards of \$400,000 be awarded through this
8 initiative to build replicable models that can be shared statewide.

9 **Decision Point**

10 Staff seeks direction on implementing AEL state leadership initiatives as outlined above and in
11 Table 1, below.

12 *Table 1: Proposed Initiatives with AEL State Leadership Funds*

State Leadership Initiatives	BY'21 Budget
Pre-Apprenticeship Bridge Program	\$500,000
Employer Engagement	\$1,200,000 ³

13
14 Staff will present other AEL state leadership initiatives that were approved in the June 30, 2021,
15 work session for consideration at a future Commission meeting.

16

³ This amount includes the \$300,000 previously considered for the AEL innovation funds.