

1 **Briefing Paper: Ideas for Reconnecting Texas: Statewide Initiatives Funding to Support**
2 **Employers & Texans in the Return to Work —AEL State Leadership Funds**

3 *These ideas are presented by staff for consideration and are not intended to be all-encompassing*
4 *or to limit discussion and consideration on additional concepts presented by Commissioners*
5 *during the work session.*

6 The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and its partners have shown significant agility and
7 innovation to support changing employer and job seeker needs since early 2020. However, with
8 businesses reopened and many employers in need of workers, TWC has an opportunity to
9 expand services again.

10 To support recovery efforts, statewide AEL State Leadership Funds from Budget Year
11 2021/AEL Program Year 2020–2021, currently unencumbered, total approximately \$3.7 million.
12 *(Note: Amounts are as of June 2021 and are subject to change as grant balances change and*
13 *become final by the end of July 2021.)*

14 In an effort to meet the primary needs of Texas, staff has considered several tools and
15 approaches for workforce support for consideration:

16 **Job Preparedness, Including Short-Term Training and Upskilling**

17 *For consideration—Integrated Education and Training (IET) in Corrections (AEL State*
18 *Leadership Funds)* This is a three-year pilot initiative to develop and expand IET models
19 for incarcerated individuals within two years of their release. Grantees will be required to
20 provide post-release and reentry services as well as disseminate best practices on
21 developing such models for AEL and workforce system stakeholders. This initiative
22 complements TWC’s participation in a national technical assistance initiative overseen by
23 the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) for the development of
24 IET in corrections models.

25 *For consideration—Employer Engagement (AEL State Leadership Funds)* This initiative
26 responds to both new federal guidance from OCTAE, which expands skill gains options
27 for employees in workplace literacy programs, and work-based focused legislation passed
28 during the 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2021). Eligible offerors—including
29 AEL eligible providers in partnership with an employer—that are awarded the grant will
30 be required to offer employees one of the following activities:

- 31 • Workplace literacy activities
- 32 • Workplace literacy activities with training specific to the employer
- 33 • Workplace literacy activities with IET, leading to an industry-recognized credential.

34 *For consideration—Family Literacy Supports (AEL State Leadership Funds)* To support
35 literacy through the nonprofit and library space statewide, staff proposes a family literacy
36 initiative in collaboration with AEL nonprofits to provide another support service for
37 adults with low literacy levels. Literacy Texas’ executive director states, “We must
38 reboot our efforts to improve tele-literacy training.”

1 **Job Progression or Increased Earnings**

2 *For consideration—Career Pathways (AEL State Leadership Funds)* A number of
3 companies specialize in using data to develop visualizations reflecting the job
4 opportunities, or the career pathways, within specific industries. To support Local
5 Workforce Development Boards (Boards) in making career pathways information
6 available to the local workforce, including AEL providers building career pathways
7 models, TWC may contract with a vendor to develop career pathways visualizations for
8 the state’s most common targeted occupations.

9 Career pathways visualizations may provide information about certifications and licenses
10 required when working in specific occupations. A career pathways project might also
11 include information about the required education in each occupation within those targeted
12 occupations. Additionally, career pathways visualizations may help local Boards and
13 AEL grantees better integrate WIOA Title I and Title II services by providing workforce
14 staff, AEL staff, and the public with information on how basic skills–deficient individuals
15 can progress through a career ladder, ultimately leading to employment in a self-
16 sufficient, targeted occupation.

17 To support a career pathways ladder initiative, AEL state leadership funds may be used to
18 evaluate the current status of workforce integration WIOA Title I, II, and IV programs
19 providing local delivery; facilitate regional discussions with workforce system partners to
20 identify ways to improve integration efforts, including career pathways development;
21 provide state-level and evidence-based recommendations to further support a “One
22 Workforce” system (as promoted by DOL in TEN 13-20) in Texas; and develop
23 resources related to regional career pathways ladders.

24 *For consideration—Adult Education Teacher Academy (AEL State Leadership Funds)*
25 This is an initiative that responds to an ongoing teacher shortage in Texas and supports
26 the certification of adult educators who provide instruction in AEL statewide, the
27 majority of whom work part-time and/or have a K–12 teaching background. AEL
28 program administrators report high turnover, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic,
29 which provides a great challenge in creating set class schedules and retaining students.
30 Staff proposes an initiative to increase the number of AEL instructors certified to teach
31 adult education. Such an initiative would provide both an incentive to instructional staff
32 to stay employed with an AEL program and to make these historically part-time roles
33 more stable with institutions.