STRATEGIC PLAN FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY FOR THE FISCAL YEAR OF 2015 – 2020

TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION

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To promote and support
a workforce system
that creates value
and offers
employers, individuals,
and communities
the opportunity
to achieve and sustain
economic prosperity.

TEXAS
WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY FOR THE FISCAL YEAR OF 2015 – 2020

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PART 1: STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal: To support increases in employment, postsecondary education and training transition, skill gains, and secondary completion through demonstrated approaches that integrate system services and leverage community partnerships

In enacting Senate Bill 307, which passed in the 83rd Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2013), the legislature expressed the importance of Adult Education and Literacy's (AEL) role in supporting student goals related to obtaining and retaining employment, continued education, and acquiring basic skills needed for literate functioning.

Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) mission is to promote and support a workforce system that creates value and offers employers, individuals, and communities the opportunity to achieve and sustain economic prosperity.

This plan provides for an unprecedented alignment of program services across workforce and education programs, and outlines associated accountability measures to support new opportunities, drive increased student success, and facilitate transitions at all levels to postsecondary education, training, or employment.

Greater flexibility and service options will assist students in reaching their career and post-secondary education and training goals and support a higher-quality workforce, reduced public assistance dependency, and increased productivity and competitiveness in the state.

PART 2: STRATEGIC ALIGNMENTS

WORKFORCE SYSTEM ALIGNMENT

Since 1995, the Texas workforce system has offered a diverse range of services within Texas communities that support current and future economic prosperity for employers, workers, job seekers, students, and communities. TWC has a long-standing commitment to providing employment services, including job training and retraining programs that lead to obtaining and retaining productive employment.

The workforce system's vision is to maximize the power of innovation and partnerships to boost superior business outcomes and realize a competitive advantage for all Texans in the global economy.

AEL aligns and augments this vision by delivering the foundational skills and career pathway transitions needed to prepare Texans to support their families, careers, and communities. Growth in the state is buoyed by improving programs for individuals with literacy barriers to employment and advancement by identifying transferable skills valued by employers and delivering education and training solutions to upscale their skills in high-growth sectors.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

To lead in a global economy dependent on skilled and knowledgeable workers, tighter linkages are needed for AEL students to more directly benefit from our state's diverse postsecondary education and training options and achieve industry-recognized certificates and licenses that are portable and stackable.

Fully integrating and aligning AEL programs by ensuring students develop both the requisite foundational skills and the technical and marketable skills that employers deem valuable will ensure the workforce can adapt and compete at the highest levels to maintain a strong state economy.

These objectives augment the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's (THECB) strategic plan, 60x30TX, and address students' desires for a better life, employers' desires to remain competitive, and the state's need for a robust economy.

Through alignment, AEL provides not only a strategic asset to addressing state workforce objectives, but, as a no- or low-cost remedial option to the student, also supports the post-secondary education and training strategies outlined in 60x30TX to ensure students complete their postsecondary education and training programs with no debt or with manageable debt, relative to their starting wage at exit.

DEMONSTRATED EXPERIENCE

Over the years, TWC has continually reinforced its commitment to lower-skilled Texans by funding a variety of AEL projects across Texas, including:

- work-based projects with employers;

- learning disability screening through Workforce Solutions Offices;
- a technical assistance guide for effectively serving English language learners; and
- integrated education and training projects through community colleges.

These projects developed a diversified foundation of system expertise and practice and positioned TWC well for achieving workforce and AEL integration.

Because TWC provides services to targeted populations within communities (e.g., individuals on public assistance), AEL provides a robust mechanism to support the foundational skills development that so many Texans need to find or maintain employment and become self-sufficient. System services that support employment transition have allowed customers to increase their skills, achieve high school equivalency, and obtain certificate or other credentials, all with the goals of gaining employment, career advancement, and increased wages.

SUSTAINED SYSTEM ENHANCEMENT

TWC recognizes that the increase in career and post-secondary education and training outcomes for AEL will occur gradually over multiple years through:

- enhanced enrollment and performance criteria;
- incentives for accelerated innovation;
- integration and transition models; and
- associated technical assistance and professional development.

This comprehensive approach will allow continuity of local services and capacity building, while steadily supporting an upward trajectory in the program's overall direction toward increased employment and training outcome-based performance. These enhancements position Texas well to achieve high performance in the integrated services delivery system required under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014.

BUILDING ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY AS A WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Texans at all skill levels are working to support their families, build communities, and contribute to business expansion. TWC strongly supports using innovative models that provide opportunities for students at all levels to obtain incremental success and, ultimately, to achieve their goals and acquire the basic skills necessary to succeed in the workplace.

AEL supports employment and training awareness, readiness, and transition opportunities for all students, and TWC understands that these services must be customized across all skill levels and language abilities. AEL students return to education with unique and diverse objectives. Often those who seek services come with defined career and post-secondary education and training goals, have previous work experience, or may be functioning at higher levels of skill proficiency and need very targeted remedial strategies.

While these students are more likely to benefit from workforce and post-secondary education and training service alignment, they have historically been the smallest subset of the population served by the state. TWC's strategy supports program designs and objectives to deliver increased secondary education and career and post-secondary education and training outcomes, while maintaining a strong service delivery focus on individuals who are low income or have minimal literacy skills. All students need access to not only basic education, but career and post-secondary education and training opportunities as well.

TWC believes that the use of a number of innovative strategies, including expanded participation from interagency partnerships at the state and local levels, will support increased access, student success, and employment and workforce training outcomes over time.

POSITIONED WELL NOW AND FOR THE FUTURE

Texas is poised for AEL leadership. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act finally establishes the programmatic and fiscal flexibility needed to achieve a fully integrated system. Building upon its already robust network of AEL services, TWC will continue implementing great opportunities for AEL to support a wide variety of critical state education and workforce development efforts—from intergenerational literacy efforts supporting parents' conversations with their children about career endorsements under House Bill 5, to increased engagement with community and technical colleges through career pathway models that support Texas's higher education strategic plan, 60x30TX.

To achieve this level of excellence, AEL providers and their community partners will dig deep and work hard to seek local solutions and find resources to support change and arrive at the outcomes they desire for their communities. TWC and its partner agencies are ready and well positioned to foster and support local innovation and service expansion to deliver the outcomes expected by students, their families, and their community and business stakeholders.

GOAL AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY

VISION

To deliver education, workforce, and post-secondary education and training transition outcomes for students through innovative service delivery and partnerships that result in efficiencies, alignments, and accountability

MISSION

To promote and support a responsive and accountable system that creates value and supports local solutions to addressing the educational and workforce development needs of Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) customers, businesses, and community stakeholders

GOAL

To support increases in employment, post-secondary education and training transition, skill gains, and secondary completion through demonstrated approaches that integrate system services and leverage community partnerships

MILESTONE

By 2020, at least 20,000 adult learners will enroll in career pathways programs through partnerships between Texas employers, community and technical colleges, adult education and literacy providers, and Workforce Boards, which will positively impact student employment and employer workforce needs. The primary measures associated with this milestone goal are:

1) Utilization
   a. Career pathways students by year
   b. Unduplicated career pathways students from year 2015 to year 2020
   c. Number of employers participating in employer-based career pathways
2) Capacity
   d. Number of verified career pathways programs
   e. Number of providers with verified career pathways
3) Post-Program Employment
   f. Employed 2nd quarter post exit
   g. Employed 4th quarter post exit

STRATEGIES

Strategy 1 ▪ Increase Workforce, Secondary, and Postsecondary Education and Training Outcomes	To support increases in education and work-related outcomes through enhanced delivery and service integration
Strategy 2 ▪ Address Demand	To implement strategies that address projected demand for AEL in Texas
Strategy 3 ▪ Increase System Coordination and Integration	To support and facilitate increased coordination and collaboration among state and local system stakeholders
Strategy 4 ▪ Improve Performance Excellence	To support increased performance excellence, communicate impact, and ensure program accountability, fiscal integrity, and program effectiveness

PART 3: STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND TACTICS

STRATEGY 1	
Increase Workforce, Secondary, and Postsecondary Education and Training Outcomes	**To Support Increases in Education and Work-Related Outcomes through Enhanced Delivery and Service Integration**
Objective	**Tactics**
Objective 1: Increase workforce and economic outcomes by increasing the student population entering training and students working or looking for work.	**Tactic 1**: Increase the percentage of customers with workforce and/or postsecondary education and training goals by developing the capacity to reach new customers through enhanced recruitment and assessment models.
	Tactic 2: Facilitate the expansion of student referrals from Workforce Solutions Offices and lower-level community college developmental education.
	Tactic 3: Expand service capacity and the diversity of program offerings through increased organizational alliances, and provide support to community- and faith-based organizations, as well as other organizations not funded through TWC that augment efforts through outside funding and volunteerism.
	Tactic 4: Support and promote efforts to develop alternative options for entry into college for customers who have not completed high school or obtained a high school equivalence.
Objective 2: Increase employer and business community roles in AEL.	**Tactic 1**: Engage businesses, chambers of commerce, and the Texas Association of Business in developing strategies for increasing employer engagement in AEL.
	Tactic 2: Fund and support with technical assistance work-based projects with employers to support business expansion and build employers as AEL allies.
	Tactic 3: Engage employers and employer organizations, and expand investments that have proven effective within the 28 Local Workforce Development Boards in efforts to align AEL levels to occupationally specific skills and work-readiness requirements, including industry-recognized certifications.

Objective 3: Increase postsecondary education and training completions.	**Tactic 1**: Increase and support engagement with postsecondary education and training institutions, partners, the Texas Association of Community Colleges, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to fully integrate AEL within Texas post-secondary education and training systems and support the overarching goal of 60x30TX.
	Tactic 2: Support efforts to encourage cross-referral of low-level developmental education students into AEL courses at no-cost or low-cost to students to support the 60x30TX goal of manageable student debt.
Objective 4: Align AEL curriculum, standards, and assessments with Commission objectives, expected outcomes, and new external drivers.	**Tactic 1:** Support the incorporation, expansion, and articulation of employment-related postsecondary education and training credentials and industry-based certifications in order to boost the employability of students and their portability across careers.
	Tactic 2: Fund Adult Education and Literacy Standards alignment project that will revise AEL Adult Basic Education (ABE)/Adult Secondary Education (ASE) standards to align with external requirements including, but not limited to, the work-readiness and marketable skills requirements of employers(Goal 3 of 60x30TX), industry-recognized certifications, high school equivalency and Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills standards, the Texas Success Initiative Assessment, and Texas College and Career Readiness Standards.
	Tactic 3: Fund the development and facilitation of train-the-trainer activities on revised AEL standards.
Objective 5: Align professional development requirements for AEL staff to meet sufficient rigor and duration to impact increased workforce transition results.	**Tactic 1:** Review grant recipient performance outcomes and provide professional development activities to draw correlations between professional development and performance.
	Tactic 2: Determine costs associated with increasing professional development requirements for local staff and instructors, and recommend funding to address gaps.
Objective 6: Support advances in the application of technology across all segments of curriculum, as well as program management functions.	**Tactic 1:** Fund a distance-learning mentor initiative to: support and coordinate local providers new to distance learning with regional distance learning consortia; ▪ manage the establishment of new distance-learning curriculum adoptions and U.S. Department of Education approvals; ▪ develop a statewide inventory of distance-learning programs, curricula usage, and local implementation/blended learning models; and ▪ establish and maintain a resource platform for distance learning.
	Tactic 2: Match customer demands to learn at times, places, and platforms that meet their needs through support for distance-learning innovation and deployment of cost-effective models.

STRATEGY 2	
Address Demand	**To Implement Strategies that Address Projected Demand for Adult Education and Literacy in Texas**
Objective	**Tactics**
Objective 1: Reduce waitlist time through alternative student-service designs.	**Tactic 1:** Create a culture of year-round enrollments and a dynamic and adaptive system that promotes continuous enrollments, rewards innovation, and effectively balances federal performance requirements.
	Tactic 2: Assign a professional development center contractor to review data supporting promising practices in managed enrollment among both TWC-funded and nonprofit providers, and develop recommendations for replication.
	Tactic 3: Promote models of immediate customer engagement for waitlisted students in meaningful activities, including distance learning options and service integration provided by volunteer organizations and Workforce Solutions Offices to support retention and customer responsiveness.
	Tactic 4: Assign TWC's professional development and support contractor and professional development center contractor to develop and implement managed enrollment training.
	Tactic 5: Require programs to enter waitlisted students in the Texas Educating Adults Management System (TEAMS) to develop a baseline number for Program Year 2016.
Objective 2: Use data to describe the costs and impacts of undereducated residents, and then build support for the costs associated with the benefits of a better-educated workforce.	**Tactic 1:** Task professional development center contractors with developing an analysis report on costs and impacts of undereducated residents and the benefits of a better-educated workforce using TWC internal expertise; employer expertise, data, and input; and previous research from other agencies and organizations.
	Tactic 2: Increase opportunities to gain support from employers, economic development organizations, and employer organizations through a statewide campaign to increase AEL visibility as an economic and community-development tool.
Objective 3: Promote models for local funding and leveraged resource opportunities that lead to increased capacity and long-term sustainability and success.	**Tactic 1:** Identify and document best practices for leveraging and braiding external funding, and promote effective models and provide associated contract compliance support.
	Tactic 2: Identify and document best practices achieving noncash local resource allocations and service colocation across education, nonprofit, and workforce partners, on-site classes with businesses which promote effective models.
Objective 4: Support regional gap analysis to identify and document resource alignments and efficiencies.	**Tactic:** Support and assist in the development and execution of regional workforce integration events to have, as one objective, the identification of resource alignments, untapped efficiencies, and existing gaps across TWC-funded and non-funded AEL organizations and workforce development stakeholders.

STRATEGY 3	
Increase System Coordination and Integration	**To Support and Facilitate Increased Coordination and Collaboration among State and Local System Stakeholders**
Objective	**Tactics**
Objective 1: Integrate and align workforce development and AEL system services.	**Tactic 1:** Review and document promising practices in service integration from AEL grant recipients.
	Tactic 2: Support the creation of professional development curriculum for—and support, training, and technical assistance to—Local Workforce Development Boards and Workforce Solutions Offices to increase referrals and service coordination based on identified best practices and input from stakeholders.
	Tactic 3: Review TWC workforce program policies and guidance to identify areas in which program model enhancements could encourage and support increased AEL student engagement.
Objective 2: Facilitate coordination of service delivery between nonprofit organizations and libraries.	**Tactic 1:** Fund unique professional development opportunities for nonprofit literacy providers and libraries.
	Tactic 2: Continue support for nonprofit organizations and libraries in TWC-funding opportunities.
Objective 3: Strengthen career and technology training program alignment at community colleges and technical institutes in coordination with the THECB.	**Tactic 1:** Support 60x30TX goals and coordination efforts with THECB to ensure that policies, programs, and guidance that are common across integrated AEL and career and technology training programs are well coordinated and aligned, including deployment of the Texas Success Initiative Assessment, integrated education and career pathways training efforts, Texas Success Initiative Assessment implementation, and developmental education enhancement.
	Tactic 2: Initiate a professional development and technical assistance effort to promote adoption of integrated education and training career pathways models across AEL and credit and non-credit career and technology programs.
	Tactic 3: Coordinate with TWC Skills Development Fund (SDF) staff to support basic skills training needs of Texas businesses cooperating in SDF applications.
Objective 4: Strengthen alignments of AEL efforts with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to ensure alignment.	**Tactic 1:** Standardize TWC communication efforts related to high school equivalency testing requirements and developments.
	Tactic 2: Continue to coordinate AEL efforts to address high school dropouts with related TEA policy, efforts, and data, including an effective high school equivalency process.
Objective 5: Encourage coordination with departments and entities providing counseling and support services for students with disabilities.	**Tactic 1:** Initiate a learning-needs assessment and referral initiative in coordination with TWC's Vocational Rehabilitation Services.
	Tactic 2: Task professional development center contractor to implement professional development training to support learning needs identification subsequent service delivery and instructional strategies.

STRATEGY 4	
Improve Performance Excellence	**To Support Increased Performance Excellence, Communicate Impact, and Ensure Program Accountability, Fiscal Integrity, and Program Effectiveness**
Objectives	**Tactics**
Objective 1: Develop and communicate measurable program outcome goals and uniform data collection and performance reporting criteria that reflect agency program goals and objectives.	**Tactic 1:** Establish clear definitions of program success based on Program Years 2014–2015 baseline for agency objectives.
	Tactic 2: Continue realignment and training to prepare local providers for a performance measure shift under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
	Tactic 3: Review administrative burden requirements related to increasing data integrity, program compliance, and deployment of outcome goals and reporting requirements.
Objective 2: Develop a data collection and analysis approach to address multifaceted service delivery structures and diverse customer populations and to ensure accurate and accountable data collection, management, and security.	**Tactic 1:** Identify gaps in data collection, including data that may be collected elsewhere, but is not aligned to AEL.
	Tactic 2: Pursue enhancements to TEAMS to address data input of innovative service delivery models.
	Tactic 3: Research approaches and then pursue near and long-term efforts to capture data on community-based AEL efforts that do not get reported in TEAMS.
	Tactic 4: Incorporate training on data security and personally identifiable information into professional development requirements.
Objective 3: Increase the quality, accuracy, and speed of data sharing across agencies and organizations.	**Tactic 1:** Explore and implement strategies related to employment and postsecondary education match results in coordination with TWC's Division of Operational Insight by: • decreasing cycle time in match results; and • increasing match results for postsecondary match results by ensuring multiple postsecondary data sets are matched.
	Tactic 2: Develop training and certification requirements for TEAMS users.

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