

TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION
Workforce Development Letter

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To: Local Workforce Development Board Executive Directors
Commission Executive Offices
Integrated Service Area Managers

From: Courtney Arbour, Director, Workforce Development Division



Subject: **Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists Program**

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this WD Letter is to provide Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) with guidance on the Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists program, specifically:

- funding;
- Board responsibilities; and
- Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists' basic duties.

RESCISSIONS:

None

BACKGROUND:

In July 2018, the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) three-member Commission approved the Workforce Career and Technical Education Outreach Specialist Pilot Program using Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) statewide reserve funds. This two-year initiative was designed to provide Texas students with information about educational opportunities, local labor market demand, and career information to help them make sound career decisions that lead to marketable skills after graduation. TWC issued a Request for Application (RFA) in November 2018 and awarded grants to seven Boards in June 2019. Currently, there are approximately 30 Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists working with Texas middle and high schools (grades 6–12).

Although this was a pilot initiative, outreach of this kind had been taking place at the state-level led by a small education outreach team in TWC's Labor Market and Career Information (LMCI) department. This team helped onboard the Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists and their team leads. Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists were trained on their roles, including receiving information about working with students using TWC career education tools and materials, navigating data-

gathering resources, using LMCI with students, and helping team leads determine how to track the work and success of their outreach teams.

Additionally, the TWC education outreach team hosted monthly booster training sessions on topics related to the work of the regional teams. Each month, TWC presented a different topic based on needs and requests, shared new resources, and discussed current issues or challenges, such as changing how resources and services are provided to students due to the COVID-19 pandemic (COVID-19).

By the end of the first year of the grant, Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists conducted 4,859 presentations for Texas students and provided 1,591 partner/teacher presentations. These efforts resulted in 223,086 students attending a career event, and, of those students, 122,552 received hands-on career engagement with a Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialist.

In the second year, the Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists diversified their scope by providing virtual and in-class presentations and services. Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists and Boards created uniform career exploration curriculum and training so that Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists would be consistent with independent school district (ISD) needs.

The grant awards that resulted from the competitive two-year Workforce Career and Technical Education Outreach Specialist Pilot Program end in August 2021. TWC is not anticipating any additional competitive funding for the pilot program at this time. However, due to the success of the program and limited TANF statewide funding, this WD Letter is informing Boards how to implement a Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists program using the TANF Choices allocation. TWC is implementing related reporting requirements to measure the continued success of this activity.

Program activities will include the use of the TANF Choices allocation to fund Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists and certain associated costs subject to the limitations described in this WD Letter. These activities meet TANF purpose 4.

PROCEDURES:

No Local Flexibility (NLF): This rating indicates that Boards must comply with the federal and state laws, rules, policies, and required procedures set forth in this WD 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 Boards have local flexibility in determining whether and/or how to implement guidance or recommended practices set forth in this WD Letter. All information with an LF rating is indicated by “may” or “recommend.”

LF: Subject to the requirements in this WD Letter, Boards may use the TANF Choices allocation to establish a Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists program

to hire and place Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists in ISDs to provide career guidance, career preparation, and workforce information to participating students regarding:

- high-growth, high-demand occupations;
- opportunities and training in middle-skill jobs;
- pre-apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs;
- internships;
- technical and/or community colleges; and
- career-readiness preparation.

NLF: Boards must meet their contracted target for the Choices Full Work Rate-All Family performance measure in the previous year to be eligible to use the TANF Choices allocation for this program. Board Contract Year 2020 (BCY'20) TANF Choices performance levels will not apply due to the COVID-19 response.

Funding

LF: Boards may use their TANF Choices allocation to fund the work of Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists and deliver virtual or on-site career guidance and workforce information to students, including underrepresented populations at area middle and high schools at designated ISDs. However, the first priority must continue to be the use of the majority of the TANF Choices allocation to deliver Choices services and serve customers in their local workforce development area (workforce area).

NLF: Boards that wish to use the TANF Choices allocation for this purpose must submit a letter of intent to outreach.specialist@twc.texas.gov on an annual basis, which includes an estimated percentage of the TANF Choices allocation to be used. The initial letter of intent must be received by March 31, 2021, for the BCY'21 award and by September 1, in subsequent years for the respective upcoming allocation.

NLF: Boards must ensure that costs charged to the TANF Choices allocation for the performance of the Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists activity are necessary and reasonable as well as allocable to and allowable in accordance with applicable cost principles. Costs must also conform to the terms and conditions of the award and the limitations specified in this WD Letter.

LF: Boards that wish to use the TANF Choices allocation for this purpose may use Board staff members or make a subaward or contract to another entity to perform the activity.

NLF: If Boards choose to use Board staff, Boards must ensure that those staff members do not provide direct services relating to career services, education, or training, except as listed below. These direct services must be provided by a contractor or subrecipient, as appropriate.

NLF: Boards must report the programmatic expenditures for this activity in the Cash Draw and Expenditure Reporting (CDER) system using the new CDER system supplemental cost category, WF Career Outreach Specialist. Additionally, Boards must report expenditures

in the appropriate direct cost category or categories in the CDER system. Boards that implement the Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists program with their own staff must report those programmatic costs in the direct cost category 708 Program Management & Support (Direct Recipient Only). For Boards that instead carry out the program through a subaward or contract, most, if not all, the programmatic activities are anticipated to fall within the direct cost category 612 Direct Program—Career Services. Examples of costs to report in the new WF Career and Education Outreach Specialist supplemental cost category are:

- salary or wages and benefits for one or more Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists and other program staff members who support the activity (for example, supervisors);
- direct in-state travel costs;
- direct outreach and associated printing costs;
- direct communication costs, if any;
- the purchase of additional computing devices and related direct costs necessary to carry out the activity, such as the purchase of additional laptops or Wi-Fi hotspots;
- costs associated with in-state events and site visits held or conducted to carry out this activity; and
- other direct costs to carry out the program, including, but not limited to, direct costs for office supplies, and necessary and reasonable furniture.

Board Responsibilities

NLF: Boards must ensure that the program model includes, but is not limited to:

- providing information on opportunities and training requirements in growth and high-demand occupations and making well-informed postsecondary decisions using TWC resources and other existing tools, including:
 - Texas Reality Check;
 - Texas Career Check;
 - Texas Consumer Resource for Education and Workforce Statistics (Texas CREWS);
 - Texas OnCourse;
 - Texas Internship Challenge;
 - AutoCoder;
 - Texas Skills to Work; and
 - Jobs Y'all;
- organizing training workshops on using TWC resources, such as the LMCI website, for employment and education;
- coordinating with school districts to ensure that needed background checks are conducted before employees work in the school;
- exposing students to a variety of career pathways, including pre-apprenticeship and RA programs, technical and/or community colleges, and employment, through presentations, TWC tools, job fairs, and site visits;
- coordinating with local and state workforce services, employers, and educational institutions to build pathways into pre-apprenticeship and RA programs and encourage local employers to offer pre-apprenticeship and RA programs;

- providing career support workshops for students, parents, and guardians;
- fostering employer/ISD collaboration and encouraging employers to provide internship opportunities and serve as mentors;
- encouraging partnerships between ISDs and technical and/or community colleges and pathways;
- collaborating on annual workshops with subject matter experts within TWC, local business and industry leaders, chambers of commerce, and technical and/or community colleges to build a network of partnerships among local organizations and support local delivery of integrated career and education services;
- organizing job development and career fairs; and
- attending monthly and annual trainings provided by TWC staff to all Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists.

NLF: Boards must ensure that formal letters of agreement are developed with the ISDs and any other partners (for example, community colleges and educational service centers) and maintain those letters in their records to be available upon request during TWC on-site reviews or visits.

NLF: These letters of agreement must, at a minimum, include:

- a point of contact at the ISD, Board, and all schools with whom the Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists will be working;
- a description of the process that the Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists and the schools and/or ISDs will use to amend the on-site schedule for the Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists;
- an assurance that the Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists will serve solely in the roles listed in this WD Letter (that is, the Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists will not be expected to serve in other ISD-related roles such as substitute teacher or testing facilitator);
- an assurance that the Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists will be required to adhere to an ISD's policies and procedures; and
- information on how the Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists may outreach students, including distributing flyers, handouts, announcements, and outreach to parents.

NLF: Boards must ensure that there is coordination with the TWC LMCI department to onboard Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists, who will then be trained on all TWC and non-TWC resources used for career and postsecondary education exploration.

NLF: Boards must ensure participation in monthly meetings (either virtually or in person) with TWC's Workforce Development Division and LMCI staff.

NLF: Boards must ensure that a survey is administered with standard questions developed by TWC to collect feedback from students, ISD staff, and other partners on the Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists program, including activities that are

successful and activities that need improvement or revision. Boards may add questions but must use the TWC-developed survey questions as the foundation. Results of these surveys must be included in the final report. Additionally, at the request of the LMCI department, the Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists will arrange an opportunity for LMCI staff to observe and provide feedback on the Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists' work with students.

Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists' Basic Duties

NLF: Boards must ensure that Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists travel within the workforce area with limited overnight travel to attend regional or state conferences, workshops, meetings, or trainings.

NLF: Boards must be aware that Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists may conduct activities including:

- coordinate with any TWC program personnel to ensure the appropriate coordination of resources, for example, coordinate with the regional Student HireAbility Navigators, whose primary role and responsibility is the system planning, coordination, and promotion of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students with disabilities within their workforce development area who are age 14 to 22 and are enrolled in secondary or postsecondary education;
- work in coordination with school counselors and administrators;
- maximize availability to students through a published schedule that includes virtual and on-site office hours for each location and structured meeting times for students;
- conduct an orientation for school staff at each participating school to explain the Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialist's role and the resources to be provided;
- develop a multifaceted communication and support service model for connecting professional development services with students, including, but not limited to:
 - on-site and virtual visits;
 - strategic planning meetings;
 - mentoring; and
 - phone and text communications (if allowed by the ISD);
- become familiar with TWC programs such as Adult Education and Literacy, Vocational Rehabilitation, Foster Youth, Career Signing Day, and Apprenticeship; and
- conduct the following activities:
 - Provide classroom presentations, virtually or on-site, in the assigned ISDs that have agreed to partner in the program to provide career information, career awareness, and career resources to students in grades 6–12 and their parents/guardians and district staff
 - Serve as a primary resource to the assigned ISDs for labor market information, including growth and high-demand occupations at the county, region, and state levels
 - Engage assigned school districts by offering opportunities to establish partnerships and connect with industry and postsecondary training providers, especially those leading into growth and high-demand occupation areas

- Engage and train district staff members on using career tools and resources
- Develop and maintain community partnerships with businesses, educational organizations, and community stakeholders that align with current and future Workforce Solutions projects and initiatives
- Foster employer/ISD collaboration and encourage employers to provide internship opportunities and serve as mentors
- Establish strong working relationships with employers and invite them to connect with the classroom through classroom presentations or encourage them to offer industry tours, job-shadowing opportunities, internship/apprenticeship opportunities, and so forth, at their place of business
- Support activities such as statewide initiatives, local job fairs, and special events

Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists’ Experience, Education, and Other Requirements

LF: Boards may use the following preferred experience, education, and other requirements below to develop the job description for the Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists or may modify these to meet their needs:

- A bachelor’s degree in human services, business, education, or a related field from an accredited four-year college or university (One year of qualifying experience may be substituted for each year (30 semester hours) of college up to a maximum of two years.)
- Experience in workforce development or Career and Technical Education (CTE), preferably in gathering and reporting outcomes
- ISD experience as a teacher or counselor working with at-risk middle or high school populations
- A valid driver’s license and access to reliable transportation (local, in-state, and out-of-state travel is required)

Other Reporting Requirements

NLF: In addition to required reporting in CDER, Boards must submit to TWC:

- quarterly performance reports (see attachment 1);
- ad hoc reports as requested; and
- an annual work plan.

INQUIRIES:

Send inquiries regarding this WD Letter to wfpolicy.clarifications@twc.state.tx.us.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists Reporting Spreadsheet

REFERENCES:

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (CFDA 93.558), Social Security Act, 42 US Code 601–619, as amended
 Code of Federal Regulations Title 45, Part 75
 Code of Federal Regulations, Title 2, Parts 200 and 300
 TWC Request for Applications 32019-00049, issued November 9, 2018