**Texas Workforce Commission**

**Vocational Rehabilitation Division**

**Pathways to Careers Initiative – August 2019 Update**

**Purpose**

The goal of the Pathways to Careers initiative is to effectively prepare students with disabilities to achieve competitive, integrated employment through participation in employability skills and work readiness training, career exploration activities, work experience, and postsecondary education. Pathways to Careers was first approved by the Commission in January 2017 and was subsequently expanded in September 2017 and again in May 2018. The initiative is funded with the portion of the federal Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) grant (15%) that States must reserve and expend to provide pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) to students with disabilities in the VR program. States may expend more than the required 15% on these services but may expend no less. To date, eight strategies have been implemented, one concludes this year, and the most recent will launch this fall.

**FY 2020 Proposed Budget ($17.3M)**

1. **72005**-Transition Planning for Students in Private and Home School Settings
   * Initiative put on hold following results of RFI.
   * Activities for student population incorporated into Charting the Course strategy.
2. **72006**-Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL)
   * SEAL provides work readiness training and paid work experience opportunities to students with disabilities through contracts with all 28 local workforce development boards (Boards). The Commission set a target of 2,500 students but encouraged Boards to exceed the target by serving more students.
   * SEAL is concluding its third year of implementation and has grown every year. In FY 2017, 1,522 students received work readiness training and paid work experience. In FY 2018 that number grew to 2,361. As of August 2019, 2,770 students are participating.
   * The proposed budget for FY 2020 is $9.7M, an increase of $1.7M from the GAA to accommodate the increased participation in the program.
3. **72007**-Charting the Course: Planning for Life and Careers after High School
   * Charting the Course provides a series of education, awareness and planning events to students and their parents or guardians, beginning in the eighth grade and continuing through the 12th grade. Charting the Course is conducted through contracts with 18 of the 20 Education Service Centers, which are responsible for providing training, coordination and support for events for the school districts in their region.
   * Charting the Course events launched in early 2019 in 15 ESC regions. Three more ESC regions will launch this fall. As planned, ESCs began with activities for grades 8 and 12, and will add grades over time.
   * The proposed budget for FY 2020 is $1.5M, a decrease from the $4M in the GAA. This amount will accommodate the launch of activities in three more ESC regions and the addition of activities for the third of five grade levels. Expenditures will increase each year until all five grades are participating in each ESC area, thereby expending closer to the GAA amount.
4. **72009**-Explore STEM!
   * Explore STEM! just concluded its second year of implementation. The goal of this strategy is to encourage students with disabilities to explore careers in STEM fields through participation in a non-residential summer camp.
   * Explore STEM! is provided through contracts with 10 public universities and community colleges. 228 students participated in camps in FY 2018; 256 registered for FY 2019 camps. Final numbers pending reports from the participating institutions.
   * The proposed budget for FY 2020 is $.5M, which is $.5M less than the GAA but consistent with estimated costs for students to participate in the current camps.
5. **72010**-Student HireAbility Navigators
   * Student HireAbility Navigators are funded through contracts with all 28 Boards.
   * Student HireAbility Navigators are dedicated to collaborating with local VR offices, other Workforce Solutions programs, employers, education, and community organizations to develop and implement partnerships and strategies to increase availability of pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities in the local workforce development area (LWDA).
   * The proposed budget for FY 2020 is $2.04M, a decrease of $1.56M. This reduction reflects a decrease in use of Pre-ETS funding for these positions, which is the funding source for Pathways to Careers. The decrease will be offset by $1.56M in VR Basic Support funds, which will enable the Student HireAbility Navigators to perform a broader scope of activities than those currently allowed under the federal restrictions associated with VR Pre-ETS funds.
6. **72011**-Capacity Building and Coordination with TEA and ISDs
   * In 2018, TWC contracted with Texas A & M’s Center for Disability and Development to create a statewide capacity building strategy to support implementation of the TWC Memorandum of Understanding with TEA and improve coordination between VR and IDEA services, thereby enabling more effective and consistent coordination of services between local VR and ISD staff serving students with disabilities.
   * The proposed budget for FY 2020 is $153,933, which is amount remaining on the $2M contract. The Capacity Building Strategy will conclude in FY 2020.
7. **72012**-Pre-ETS Elective Course Curriculum
   * This strategy launched in 2018 and includes development and piloting of an elective course curriculum that will provide instruction to students in Pre-ETS knowledge and skills during the school day. The curriculum is being created through a contract with Texas A&M University’s (TAMU) Center for Disability and Development. Development of the curriculum began in late FY 2018 and will conclude in FY 2022.
   * The proposed budget for FY 2020 is $300,000, which will fund the deliverables planned for the fiscal year. The total contract amount is $1M.
8. **72014**-Expansion of Pathway to Career
   * Activities and budget aligned under Advise Texas for Students with Disabilities.
9. **72015**-Advise Texas for Students with Disabilities
   * This strategy is conducted through an Interagency Agreement with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s (THECB) as an expansion of the THECB’s current Advise Texas initiative. The goal of the expansion is to increase the number of students with disabilities who pursue, and are successful in, post-secondary education.
   * Beginning in Fall 2019, Advise TX Advisers in 110 high schools throughout the state will provide postsecondary counseling to students with disabilities referred by VR counselors.
   * The proposed budget for FY 2020 is $3M, which will fund services to approximately 5,000 students during the 2019-2020 school year.