Staff Responses to Commission Work Session Discussion Paper 1 **Middle Skills Gap** 2 **Commissioner Recommendations:** 3 TWC should invest additional funds into the following Middle Skills Gap elimination programs: 4 5 1. WIOA Statewide funding toward the UpSkill Texas Initiative. 2. WIOA Statewide funding to the Critical Occupations Apprenticeship. 6 3. WIOA Statewide and TANF funding to pay for exams and/or licensure/credential 7 8 assistance. 9 4. WIOA Statewide funding to Boards to connect jobseekers with new acquired credentials to employers with open jobs in their local areas. 10 5. Establish a fund to pay for costs associated with credentials issued as a result of CTE 11 coursework.1 12 **Staff Responses** 13 14 1. Outreach and Employer Initiatives Response to WIOA Statewide funding toward the Upskill Texas Initiative: Staff recommends waiting to add funding to the initiative 15 until we better understand grantee performance within the current pilot application round. 16 2. Workforce Development Response to WIOA Statewide funding to the Critical 17 Occupation Apprenticeship: On February 15, 2022, TWC's three-member Commission 18 approved the Critical Skills Apprenticeship Initiative to address workforce shortages in 19 middle skills occupations and the critical skills needed within those occupations. The 20 apprenticeship training model is a strong and proven approach in addressing employer 21 needs, in placing individuals on rewarding career pathways, and in ending the middle 22 skills gap. With this in mind, it is recommended that TWC continue this statewide 23 initiative in which apprenticeship training programs are created or expanded to support 24 middle skills occupations, including, but not limited to, the following: 25 Automotive service technicians and mechanics 26 • 27 • Nursing assistants • Patient care technicians 28 29 • Production machinists, assemblers, and fabricators • Logistics management and supply chain analysts 30 TWC services would continue to support Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) in 31

the development, launch, and/or sustainability of programs and may also include:

¹ This Commission request is cited in A Workforce Strategy for Rural Texas discussion paper and has been included in this response based on its potential to be combined with recommendations made in the Middle Skills Gap discussion paper.

1	• Department of Labor (DOL) registration; and
2	• costs related to critical skills RAP design and launch, such as:
3	 curricula development;
4	related instruction or training for apprentices (in-person, online, or
5	hybrid);
6	training supplies for apprentices;
7	instructor costs or mentor activities and other identified requests based on
8	employer needs, as allowable; and
9	other identified requests based on employer needs, as allowable.
10	Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends continuing to fund the Critical Skills
11	Apprenticeship Initiative, as laid out above, using \$2 million in WIOA statewide funds.
12	3. Workforce Development Response to Funding to pay for exams and/or
13	licensure/credential assistance, funding Boards to connect jobseekers with newly
14	acquired credentials to employers, and establishing a fund to pay for costs
15	associated with credentials issued as a result of CTE coursework: Staff makes two
16	recommendations for assistance with costs associated with exams and
17	licensure/credentials, connecting jobseekers with employers, and establishing a fund to
18	pay for costs associated with credentials issued as a result of CTE.
19	Recommendation 1
20	Staff recommends providing Boards with \$1.5 million of combined WIOA and TANF
21	funding to pay for exam and/or licensure or credential fees for middle skills jobseekers
22	who require financial assistance and then to connect those middle skills jobseekers who
23	have newly acquired credentials to employers with job openings in their workforce areas.
24	Local staff will determine the funding source to use based on specific characteristics of
25	each individual served. Each of the 28 Boards will receive a distribution and use the
26	funds to cover costs associated with exams, credentials, and licenses resulting from CTE
27	coursework and to pay staffing costs for connecting the job seekers with middle skills
28	jobs. To administer the program, Boards will partner with training providers, nonprofit
29	entities, community programs, and other state agencies that provide middle skills
30	occupations training and certifications.
31	Recommendation 2
32	Staff recommends providing an additional \$1 million in WIOA funds, using a
22	commetitive application process for Decade to address the specific peeds of much areas

Staff recommends providing an additional \$1 million in WIOA funds, using a
competitive application process, for Boards to address the specific needs of rural areas
that are defined as municipalities with a population of less than 25,000 and
unincorporated areas of counties with a population of less than 200,000. The funds will
be used to pay for exam and/or licensure or credential fees for middle skills jobseekers
who require financial assistance and then to connect those middle skills jobseekers who
have newly acquired credentials to employers with job openings in their workforce areas.