Staff Responses to Commission Work Session Discussion Paper
Texas Conference for Foster Youth

Commission Recommendations:

Seeking approval for a pilot conference, specifically for foster youth with possible future expansion to include former foster youth attendees. The first Conference for Foster Youth would focus on bringing together at least 200 youth participants from a singular Workforce Board Area, who are still currently in foster care. Participants would be invited through local Independent School Districts and Workforce Solutions Offices. It would encompass a full day (9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.). The morning will include a keynote address, workshop sessions, student panels. The afternoon will consist in a service expo to showcase a variety of service providers and information from the area.

During the conference, a separate session can be offered for teachers and chaperones with special topics that can earn 3 hours of CEU credit.

The anticipated cost of the Conference for Foster Youth will include, but is not limited to:

- Venue
- Transportation reimbursement for schools
- Speakers: keynote, panelists, session presenters
- Service Expo
- Conference materials for participants

We are requesting at least $65,000 WIOA Statewide Initiative funding to be used to fund a pilot Conference for Foster Youth during the upcoming school year 2023-2024.

Staff Responses

TWC staff recommends that a combination of TANF and WIOA funds be made available to host the Texas Conference for Foster Youth focusing on a target audience of a least 200 foster youth attendees from a Workforce Board Area. For a stand-alone conference, staff recommends increasing the initial budget of $65,000 to $125,000. This budget amount is based on expenditure data from similarly sized TWC conference events.

Additional Recommendations

1. Staff recommends a dual-focus approach to the service expo component:
    i. service and resource providers; and
    ii. employers.
2. Staff recommends creating an interactive service expo experience to encourage foster youth attendees to actively engage with exhibitors to get the full benefit of conference attendance.