
Strategic Plan for Adult Education and Literacy FY 2018 Progress Report



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Executive Summary

Texas' Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) program is assertively implementing the integrated employment and college readiness solution that the Texas legislature and the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) three-member Commission (Commission) envisioned when the program was transferred from the Texas Education Agency to TWC in 2013.

Service integration in Texas AEL is creating greater value for AEL customers.

AEL is delivering a dynamic system of services to Texas communities and customers that help under-skilled individuals increase their employment, improve skills, attain high school equivalency (HSE), and obtain recognized postsecondary credentials. Using innovative approaches that have demonstrated effectiveness, AEL is bringing extra value through integration with a broad variety of community partnerships.

AEL customers seek solutions to meet a wide variety of pressing career and life goals: Some participants desire to finish high school so that they can get or retain a job, and some desire to learn English to better support their children at school. Others seek a no-cost solution to brush up on the “three Rs” (reading, writing, and arithmetic) and become college-ready or find a job as a result of completing an integrated education and training program. AEL providers offer solutions for under-skilled Texans across the state, as they provide accelerated approaches to learning and guided support with respect to the customer's urgency to meet life goals.

AEL is not your typical one-dimensional, brick-and-mortar educational solution.

Under TWC's leadership, communities across Texas now benefit from a workforce education and training system that delivers no-cost training in in-demand occupations to workers with high career ambitions.

AEL is not your typical one-dimensional, brick-and-mortar educational solution.

Career navigators within the AEL provider network act as the guide-on-the-side to customers looking for jobs or to enter college, some of whom are the first in their families to do so. For hard-working Texans who desire to finish high school but are working multiple jobs and cannot find the time to attend classes, our statewide system of distance learning for English literacy and high school preparation is the answer. Avoiding the constraints of the traditional classroom ensures that students can access AEL at a time and place that accommodates their busy schedules. Additionally, a math remediation call center is available when customers need a live person for math support. AEL's career pathways options are the envy of the nation, with more than 22,000 students enrolled in these programs since 2015. Each solution leverages multiagency collaborations that provide customers increased and varied tools to help them achieve their goals.

In 2015, the Texas AEL program outlined its goals in its Strategic Plan 2015–2020 (strategic plan). This progress report on the AEL strategic plan describes how providers with employers, Workforce Solutions Offices, vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors, community and technical colleges, libraries, and community-based providers have created a dynamic system that leverages the strengths of each partner and offers a firm workforce development response to a growing workforce.

Snapshot of Innovation and Results

While the first strategic plan report described the foundational development and early results of an emerging workforce AEL system, this plan shows AEL hitting its stride. Highlights include the following:

- More than 660 career pathways programs were developed and distance learning solutions were offered in every provider's community across the state.
- More than 75 value-added employer partnerships customized curriculum to meet employer needs and close the skills gap for more than 2,131 workers so Texas employers can keep the Texas economy growing.
- Robust system collaborations were developed among TWC's workforce partners, which include Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards), VR programs, and apprenticeship providers, in addition to other services that brought AEL out of the margins and into the mainstream of workforce development and delivered career development expertise to AEL customers who stand to benefit from career advancement.
- Productive statewide partnerships with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Texas Association of Community Colleges (TACC), Texas Success Center, Literacy Texas, Texas State Libraries and Archives Commission (TSLAC), and other organizations bolstered the objectives of these organizations while supporting win-win objectives for each agency and delivering diverse support to AEL students.
- Local alliances with 44 Texas community colleges and AEL programs opened access and increased completion for lower-skilled college seekers, bolstering the state's higher education objective under the 60x30TX strategic plan and reducing the debt burden on students through no-cost AEL services.

TWC recognizes that value-added partnerships alone will not expand service delivery and reach new customers, and it has made strategic investments to support innovation and expansion.



Full implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) has supported TWC's vision of the AEL program as a key partner in the Texas workforce system through aligned service delivery.

Looking to the future, TWC has high expectations for innovation and growth. In 2017, TWC held its second statewide competition for core AEL services, allowing communities to support the state's increased expectations for AEL service with new statewide grants that started on July 1, 2018.

AEL providers and partners have built a robust framework in their communities, fostering the support of employers and community partners and driving local innovation and

service expansion to deliver the outcomes expected by students, their families, Texas communities, and business stakeholders.

Background

Texas is a national leader in the transformation of adult education in the United States, implementing a system of solutions described in this report that are impacting the career prospects of AEL customers, Texas employers, and our diverse communities.

In enacting Senate Bill 307, 83rd Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2013), the legislature expressed the importance of AEL's role in supporting student goals related to obtaining and retaining employment, pursuing continued education and workforce training, and acquiring basic literacy skills.

In 2014, to support the legislature's intent, the Commission declared that local AEL providers and their partners continue to find new ways to ensure that AEL programs deliver on AEL's mission and deliver the vision of the Texas legislature and the Commission.

A statewide system of providers made up of community colleges, independent school districts (ISDs), education service centers (ESCs), Boards, and nonprofits in each local workforce development area creates a robust network across the state. Strategically deployed capacity-building projects supported these providers through the following initiatives in the last two years:

- Development and expansion of integrated education and training and workplace literacy models, using funds that supported the development of these models and helped establish mentoring partnerships that aided their development
- Expansion of distance learning across the state, using funds that built mentorship models from state leaders in this area
- The AEL distance learning call center, which helps to improve participants' math skills
- Alignment of content standards with more rigorous outcome expectations for AEL participants as well as entry-level skills needed for jobs in key industries in Texas
- Support of the continued growth of local AEL staff through robust professional development to both funded AEL providers and nonprofit, volunteer adult literacy providers

In its competition for new grants beginning in 2018, TWC built on the vast enhancements of program models in the first five years of TWC implementation and included strategic local grant requirements that further align AEL services with effective approaches that support trajectories to in-demand jobs.

Finding ways to innovate adult education and literacy and leverage education, training, support, and career development resources is critical to fostering student and system success. AEL and its Texas workforce partners share the goal of building a wider, and more valuable, array of services that better assist their mutual customers in attaining educational goals that support career development and higher education transition, as well as help strengthen families and communities.

***AEL 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 AEL customers, businesses, and community stakeholders.”*

Milestone Report

Mission Accomplished—Exceeding Expectations

In 2015, the Commission established a milestone of at least 20,000 adult learners in career pathways by 2020. The milestone provided a clear, measurable goal for adult educators to focus their efforts related to supporting increases in employment, skills, HSE, and recognized postsecondary credentials.

In 2018, AEL providers *exceeded this goal two years early with more than 22,000 students enrolled in career pathways.*

The following are the primary measures associated with meeting this milestone:

Utilization Measures	Performance
Career pathways students for State Fiscal Year 2018	9,545
Unduplicated career pathways students from 2015 to 2020	22,243
Employers participating in employer-based career pathways programs	75
Employer-based students for State Fiscal Year 2018	2,131

Capacity Measures	Performance
Number of verified career pathways programs	660
Number of providers with verified career pathways programs	111

Post-Program Employment Measures	Performance
Employed/Enrolled in the 2nd Quarter after Exit (exiters Jul. '16–June '17)	32.91%
Employed/Enrolled in the 2nd–4th Quarter after Exit (exiters Jan. '16–Dec. '16)	83.65%

Report on Strategies

The strategic plan includes four strategies to support AEL performance and enhancements toward increased innovation:

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 between 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

Enhanced delivery and service integration has been the driving focus for the AEL program since 2013. AEL providers use multiple strategies to fully implement service integration and reach new customers and support their employment, skills, HSE, and postsecondary and training objectives.

Strategy 1: Increase Workforce, Secondary, and Postsecondary Education and Training Outcomes

The expansion of service capacity fostered by the increases in organizational alliances has been instrumental to the system's progress.

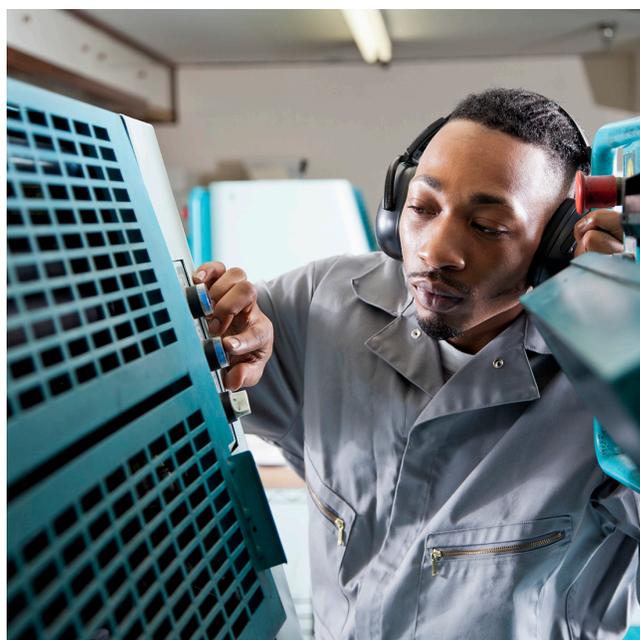
To help increase outcomes and strong collaborations across workforce partners, the Commission continues to approve funds to spark innovation and build service delivery, including results-based partnerships with community colleges, Workforce Solutions Offices, VR, Texas libraries, and nonprofits.

These efforts include workplace literacy programs that partner with Texas employers, assertive strategies to increase the share of students in integrated education and training programs with community colleges and other training providers, and fostering integration with the services of Texas' market-driven workforce system.

Employer Partnerships

The Texas economy is the fastest-growing in the nation and is thriving. This growth is driving employers' demand for skilled workers. More Texans are working than ever before, which means that AEL must deliver services that will support business competitiveness and economic growth.

In State Fiscal Year 2018, 2,131 students were enrolled in 75 employer-based programs, and a variety of employer partnerships supported AEL's desire to be part of an employment and training solution to Texas employers alongside programs like the TWC Skills Development Fund and Registered Apprenticeship programs.



Spotlight: Entergy Texas with Region 5 Education Service Center—Entergy Texas, a Fortune 500 company, found a willing ally in the Region 5 ESC to address the company's desire to recover high school dropouts and support employers in Southeast Texas through a career advancement model that provides an array of education and career counseling, technical skills development, and job development services. Region 5 ESC, in a partnership with Entergy Texas, Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas, and two campuses of Lamar State College, implemented the first Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) program in Texas. JAG is a state-based, national nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting young people, ages 16–24, who are most at risk due to physical, environmental, psychological, and work-related life barriers.

Entergy Texas dedicated \$100,000 to fund the first year of the project, and due to the success of the project, has dedicated another \$100,000 to continue the project for a second year. Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas provided a \$100,000 matching Texas Industry Partnership (TIP) program grant for the first year and received a second \$100,000 matching TIP grant to fund Region 5 ESC. Students are coenrolled in the Boards' WIOA youth programs.

Thus far, 51 AEL students have been coenrolled in JAG, with an average of 95 contact hours per person. Despite a disruption due to Hurricane Harvey, 91 percent of students experienced a reduction in their life barriers. Completion of an HSE is required by JAG, and 19 students earned an HSE credential the first year. Thirty-one students have earned at least one training credential in programs as diverse as business administration, welding, pharmacy tech, medical assistant, and dental assistant. Eighteen students benefited from the paid work experience program with 16 local employers.

Sallie Rainer, president and CEO of Entergy Texas, states, “The contribution goes beyond just funding organizations; it is a partnership with numerous state and local educational and job-focused organizations to bring the nationally recognized Jobs for America’s Graduates to Southeast Texas—the first JAG program in Texas.”

Spotlight: Tyson Foods, Inc. with Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County—Tyson Foods, Inc. (Tyson), along with Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County, Birdville ISD (BISD), and Tarrant County College (TCC), implemented the company’s Upward Academy initiative in two Tarrant County plants. The initiative addresses the significant gaps that Tyson recognized in English literacy, digital literacy, financial literacy, citizenship, and basic education needs of their workforce. The company believes these can have a negative impact on industry competitiveness, employee retention and satisfaction, safety, and quality. Tyson has approximately 1,225 employees throughout the entire Tarrant County area.

Tyson’s Upward Academy connects employees with AEL to receive the necessary foundational skills to perform at their fullest potential in the workplace and to reach their personal goals for citizenship and family. This initiative is currently being implemented in voluntary partnerships with AEL in 10 Texas plants, which together employ more than 12,000 workers.

In early March 2018, BISD started serving 36 students, which represents 10 percent of all team members at the North Richland Hills plant, and continues to serve this number of students. Students who show progress in their studies will receive a \$100 bonus from Tyson. TCC AEL began serving students at the 900-employee Haltom City plant in November 2018.

Although early in implementation, 72 percent of students have completed English as a Second Language and Citizenship (El Civics) standards at Tyson. Upon completion, enrolled students receive a \$100 bonus and the cost of the citizenship exam to be reimbursed by the company, which currently costs \$725 for the citizenship application fee and background check.

Effective College Transition and Completion Models

AEL college transition models have rapidly expanded across the state since the Commission established enrollment targets for career pathways in 2013. The Commission has approved additional enhancements to further expand models in the following years.

A strong engagement with the Texas Success Center at TACC has helped propel AEL integration within community colleges. The TWC-funded Texas Peer Mentor Community College Network, led by Amarillo College, provides colleges with a substantial professional development approach that supports career pathways and program enhancement from the classroom to college organizational leadership.

Spotlight: Amarillo College—Amarillo College has sustained forward momentum to fully integrate AEL into the college leadership, student services, academic, and workforce systems. Executive leadership support from the college president, Board of Regents, and deans has supported accelerated integration throughout the college. This leadership embrace of AEL as a solution to best serve under-skilled customers has enabled the college to leverage AEL as the primary provider for contextualized basic skills support for both Level I technical education programs and Level I developmental education programs, allowing Amarillo College to continue assisting students who statistically may be most at risk of dropping out, while pushing for 70 percent or higher completion rates every term.

From the Margins to the Mainstream of College Services

In the last two years, community colleges have markedly increased the sophistication of their integration models within their institutions. Colleges such as Howard College Concho Valley, Odessa College, Amarillo College, Houston Community College, and Southwest Texas Junior College are fully incorporating AEL students into the mainstream college service delivery processes.

For students, services as simple as getting a college ID or talking to a college campus advisor about how an AEL integrated education and training program can transfer to courses needed for an associate's degree can have profound impacts on a customer who has never previously seen college as an option.

AEL providers are benefitting from high-quality classroom space on the campus and inclusion on the college president's executive council and within the college's strategic plan. These actions rapidly accelerate the integration of AEL as part of the college business model and offer a solution to college readiness and completion objectives for lower-skilled students.

Spotlight: Southwest Texas Junior College—Southwest Texas Junior College has fully integrated AEL within college services by establishing essential strategies that improve the students' academic success. AEL students receive college IDs and have access to facilities, including college writing labs and tutoring and advising services. These efforts support student retention and transition into academically rigorous college classes and certification opportunities. Ultimately, the experience empowers students to make informed decisions about their education and career direction.

The college incorporated a college access program called Transitional Readiness Intervention via Accelerated Guided Education, or TSI-TRIAGE. These classes provide early intervention for entering college students who fall below the developmental education cutoff score. The classes use a curriculum specifically designed to bolster Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) readiness. These no-cost services support college access for students who might otherwise be deterred from continuing their education or use financial aid funds for services that do not count toward a degree. Last year 74 percent of students accessing these services increased their original TSIA scores and became college-ready.

Overall, the AEL program exceeded targets at 116 percent for integrated EL Civics and 108 percent for integrated education and training program enrollments. Additionally, AEL college transition enrollments were 226 percent of target.

Finding Efficiencies and Reducing Student Debt

While integrated education and training models with college workforce training continues to expand, the last two years have also seen significant growth in the innovative ways that AEL providers and community colleges

approach the transformation of developmental education services for students who are not yet college-ready. AEL delivers no-cost or low-cost options for academic remediation and can offset the developmental education tuition burden that many Texas students accrue. These efficiencies support the Texas higher education strategic plan—60x30TX—with credential completions at a reduced cost, thus reducing a student’s debt load. Community colleges across the state have seen alignment with AEL as a winning strategy.

Texas House Bill 2223, 85th Texas Legislature (2017), focused on solutions related to college models such as corequisite enrollment with college credit classes. AEL programs across the state are being incorporated as a component of college efforts to accelerate entry of non-college-ready students into college credit programs. Mandatory tutoring assistance and interventions such as test prep and supplemental instruction to support student success through newly structured corequisite courses are providing results for many community college students.

Spotlight: Region 5 ESC with Lamar State College–Port Arthur—Through colocation of classes and integration with Lamar State College–Port Arthur, Southeast Texas AEL provider Region 5 ESC has dramatically increased integrated education and training enrollment. Forty-three percent of all AEL students who were served program-wide this year were served through the program’s integrated partnership with Lamar State College–Port Arthur. The integration enabled the program to meet 100 percent of Integrated EL Civics targets, 200 percent of its Transition to Post-Secondary Education targets, and 100 percent of its integrated education and training targets in programs. The diversity of workforce training



programs offered include instrumentation, Licensed Vocational Nursing, commercial driver’s license, certified nursing assistant, administrative assistant, process technology, and Microsoft Office Suite certification.

Increasing Value to Students through Workforce Solutions Integration

Partnerships with Boards and VR are delivering Texas communities and customers a dynamic system of services that help customers meet employment and training goals using innovative and effective approaches.

Spotlight: Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas (Greater Dallas) and Irving ISD—Greater Dallas and Irving ISD collaborated to implement the Entrepreneurship Literacy Program, which provides English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction and industry-specific training to English language learners to develop the skills necessary to prepare these emerging entrepreneurs for business ownership and supply them with transferrable work skills.

The collaboration with business partners and community organizations ensures that participants receive training that meets the current demands for small businesses in those industries. The 18-week training includes job shadowing, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training. The Irving Hispanic Chamber of Commerce provides the entrepreneurial skills training for business start-ups in clothing

and textiles, hospitality and tourism, and home improvement and carpentry, and it supports participants upon completion of the program by providing financial options and grant opportunities for starting their businesses.

Business partners include Stahls' (clothing and textile); The Irving Hotel Association's partners, including Embassy Suites, the Sheraton, the DoubleTree by Hilton Arlington DFW South, and the Hilton Garden Inn; and The Home Depot in Irving. The in-kind contributions from these partners include instructor training, supplies and materials, on-site presentations, job shadowing, and exposure to financial opportunities for starting businesses that support the companies. The Irving Hispanic Chamber of Commerce supplies experienced mentors in the applicable business field to provide on-site presentations and demonstrations for partnerships. Upon completion of the program, participants receive an industry-specific certificate from Stahls', Fuel Education®, The Hotel Association, or The Home Depot.

Last year 106 participants completed the program. Two students were featured on the Telemundo television network for starting clothing and textiles businesses, and six students have now joined a cohort of business women in the Irving Hispanic Chamber of Commerce's business leadership class.

Strategy 2: Address Demand

Addressing customer and business demand for AEL services has been a primary focus of AEL, as the system strives to meet local employers' needs for a skilled workforce and community needs for high-value services.

The expansion of and increases in enrollments in program models like integrated education and training and workplace adult education and literacy with employers reflect the results that AEL providers can deliver. These results are supported by agency efforts to reduce restrictive federal guidelines that impede enrollment.

Bringing Value to Texas Employers

Strategic efforts to bring AEL to the workplace are addressing the fact that in the booming Texas economy, participants are either looking for work or are already working and need education at a time and place that accommodate their busy schedules. AEL is a sourcing and skills-training solution for Texas employers.

In 2017, the AEL Advisory Committee took on the charge of increasing career pathways opportunities and program success related to employment and training by recommending approaches to support stronger employer engagement with employers, economic development, and employer organizations, in addition to increasing the visibility of AEL as an economic and community development tool.

AEL is a sourcing and skills-training solution for Texas employers.

In its 2018 report to the Commission, the committee recommended a variety of TWC-led actions to spur increased employer engagement, including the following:

- Creating a website for employers to use that would increase the visibility of AEL and more directly connect employers to AEL program services across the state
- Promoting a more attractive brand and related promotional materials for AEL to support state, regional, and local campaigns and to promote AEL services, much like the approaches used for TWC Apprenticeship, Skills Development, White Cane Day, and Hiring Red, White & You! efforts

- Developing expanded workplace literacy opportunities through a strategic professional development model that replicates proven designs from effective projects that connect AEL to employers, Board business services departments, and community college Skills Development Fund projects

Spotlight: Howard College Concho Valley —When H&R Block approached Howard College for a solution to identifying and training potential employees, the college’s AEL department delivered. Located in the heart of the Concho Valley is a small college with a tremendous service delivery area, making outreach and services an extra challenge. Their 10-week training program was designed to train potential Certified Tax Associates and guaranteed employment at H&R Block upon successful completion of the course and attainment of appropriate CPE credits, which are required by the Internal Revenue Service to be recognized as a tax associate. Beginning in 2017, the program in this small community has enrolled 23 students, 18 of whom have completed the program, with 100 percent becoming employed by H&R Block. The company has been so satisfied with this job development solution that it is seeking to replicate the program in the Permian Basin and New Mexico.

Increasing Access through Year-Round Enrollment

Historically, AEL providers have struggled to maintain program performance across the year due to a US Department of Education performance model that creates a disincentive for late program year enrollments. Working with TWC’s Division of Operational Insight, AEL performance accountability staff developed a performance model in 2016–2017 that reduced this disincentive with the objective of promoting year-round program enrollments. TWC will review performance under this model in the coming year to see if it has achieved the desired results. Additionally, for Program Year 2018 (PY’18), TWC required year-round enrollment for all AEL grant recipients.

Strategy 3: Increase System Coordination and Integration

The Whole Is Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts

Since the program’s transfer to TWC in 2013, Texas has rapidly increased service alignment to create value for shared customers and promote transition to and completion of postsecondary education programs and career advancement for a wide variety of participants.

The transfer of VR services to TWC in 2016 created a strategic alliance with the state’s VR network to support both individuals accessing VR services and AEL customers in need of these services.



Spotlight: Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area—The Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area (Rural Capital) partnership provides a glimpse into how a fully developed collaboration with AEL can operate to better serve individuals with disabilities. Now, three years into the process, the partnership illustrates a strong commitment to systems alignment. Leveraging a TWC AEL capacity-building grant distributed to all Boards and intended to support solutions to local system gaps in service delivery, Rural Capital hired an outside facilitator to guide their emerging partnership across workforce, VR, and AEL through its crucial first year of partnership development.

Desiring to move beyond the typical high-level memorandum of understanding that might be vague on actionable operational procedures, Rural Capital stakeholders instead designed a structured, facilitated process to develop detailed policies that supported direct and impactful service delivery. From the start, the goal was to ensure that everyone from Board leadership to frontline staff had opportunities to become acquainted with their sister agencies and design customer-centric processes.

The partnership successfully developed several deliverables and processes that facilitate stronger referrals across the agencies, including the following:

- A referral database developed to allow any of the partners to efficiently enter brief information about a new customer into the system and trigger appropriate next steps for referral to a sister agency without cumbersome data collection and/or risk of disclosing the customer’s personally identifiable information
- Policies and procedures that specified the type of evidence that would trigger a referral as well as information needed to track referrals using SharePoint software to standardize procedures and track the outcomes of referrals
- Cross-training and other activities designed to improve awareness of each other’s work and instill confidence in frontline staff about navigating their sister agencies’ resources on behalf of their mutual customers
- The work in Rural Capital resulted in 342 integrated referrals for 2018 and has exemplified the type of interagency coordination envisioned under WIOA and made possible through integrated service delivery.



Leveraging the Assets of Nonprofit Organizations and Libraries

Texas’ vast network of nonprofit organizations and libraries provides critical access and service points for AEL to reach customers’ educational and workforce services needs. The Commission continues to fund projects to support systems that serve customers whose first access point may be from nonprofit community-based organizations or public libraries.

To support nonprofit literacy organizations and their tutors, instructors, and program administrative staff, TWC funds Literacy Texas, the primary statewide resource network for nonprofit literacy providers. Literacy Texas training has supported service alignment across workforce, education, and nonprofit support service organizations.

Spotlight: Texas State Library and Archives Commission—In 2016, TWC contracted with TSLAC to develop a digital literacy tool kit and provide training to library staff to better support the more than 500 public libraries in Texas.

A needs assessment survey of existing practices in public and community college libraries across Texas relative to AEL revealed that 87 percent of respondents reported having unmet digital literacy needs in their community, and 75 percent indicated a need for partnerships with local literacy providers.

Under the TWC grant, TSLAC developed digital literacy tool kits in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese to bridge the digital literacy gap. More than 500 copies of the tool kit have been distributed free of charge upon request at the 10 regional professional development workshops hosted by libraries and facilitated through a collaboration between TSLAC and Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning, and Literacy Texas. In addition to the tool kit, the TSLAC collaboration resulted in 38 libraries being awarded mini-grants for capacity building to support the expansion of AEL through libraries and supported scholarships for librarians providing AEL services to attend adult literacy conferences.



On this effort, Emma Hernandez, NTEN/Google Fiber Digital Inclusion Fellow at the San Antonio Public Library, commented:

“We’ve had a great experience with the tool kit and are very appreciative of the team that put it all together. Having the curriculum available in Spanish has been of great help to us. We trained 232 participants in digital literacy skills. All participants received a free USB drive, which came preloaded with the student folders so they could keep the learning going at home or using our public computers.”

Career and Technology Training Program Alignment

TWC grants under WIOA provide the primary source of funding for AEL, but AEL providers continue to find ways to creatively leverage funds to support services. One major federal source that can support workforce training in integrated education and training models is the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, commonly known as the Perkins Act.

Perkins funds support and improve workforce education in Texas high schools and community and state technical colleges. By incorporating Perkins funds, AEL providers can reduce AEL grant costs resulting in an expansion of services in local communities.

Spotlight: Socorro ISD—AEL leadership at Socorro ISD in El Paso reached out to their peers in the district’s Perkins-funded Career and Technical Education (CTE) high school program to implement a collaborative integrated education and training program model that would use the district’s high school CTE classrooms, equipment, and teachers to teach adult learners during the evenings.

The use of Perkins resources allowed Socorro ISD to substantially exceed their state target for 76 students in integrated education and training, serving 184 individuals across four programs: security services; heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning; computer repair and maintenance; and an electrician pre-apprenticeship.

The cost efficiencies from leveraging the Perkins-funded infrastructure and staff resulted in an average reduction in cost of almost \$1,500 per student. The CTE program provided classroom space and use of equipment free of charge.

Strategy 4: Improve Performance Excellence

Driving Transformation through Measurable Outcome Goals and Data

The strategic plan’s goal of enrolling 20,000 students in career pathways by 2020 represents TWC’s commitment to delivering a transparent and straightforward approach to communicating program outcome goals and expectations, in addition to performance reporting through clear, measurable targets to which the program leadership can establish local direction and priorities. TWC exceeded this goal two years ahead of schedule with 22,000 students enrolled, which exemplifies the results of having a well-defined goal for adult educators to focus their efforts.

Aligning Commission Objectives with Measurable Program Outcome Goals

Efforts to support the expansion of career pathways models have been stimulated by a differentiated cost model that provides a higher cost-per-participant calculation for the purposes of setting targets for all career pathways models. This additional funding is expected to support curriculum alignment costs, partnership development, participant training, and support costs in workforce training.

Spotlight: State Target Setting to Support AEL Workforce Alignment—With an understanding that AEL providers “treasure what is measured,” TWC facilitated rapid growth in career pathways by setting a state milestone of 20,000 students enrolled by 2020 and by taking steps to adequately fund these services through a differential funding model.

In PY’16, the Commission first approved local targets for service delivery that reflected both the program enrollment goals and a cost allocation to ensure that providers were adequately funded to meet career pathways goals.

The investment in career pathways provides a \$500 premium in addition to base costs per student for intensive AEL career pathways models that require more customized approaches, such as those provided for employers or customized services for internationally trained professionals seeking to reenter their careers in the United States, or post-release models for individuals exiting corrections facilities. An \$1,800 premium for models include postsecondary education or training to cover increased costs of integrated education and training models.

Ensuring Educational Outcomes While Delivering an Employer-Focused Solution

PY’18 was the first year TWC had sufficient data to substantiate the belief that participants in career pathways models would outperform standard enrollment students in basic education (reading, writing, math, and ESL).



Results found that participants in integrated education and training models performed, on average, 14 percent higher in basic education gains, confirming the TWC’s vision of supporting not only a stronger workforce but also one that is more academically prepared.

To deliver the skills that Texas employers demand and college success requires, in 2016, TWC initiated long-overdue enhancements to the Texas AEL Content Standards (content standards) and the development of reading and math curricula.

These standards were deployed statewide during the spring and summer of 2017 in a series of professional development workshops. Each AEL provider identified an instructional lead nominated by the director to participate in a yearlong rollout process that was a distributed learning model reaching more than 130 participants. A variety of webinars bolstered the effort and allowed coaches to share best practices in their implementation of content standards–based instruction during the year.

Once the 2016 academic standards were deployed, TWC funded the Standards Alignment to Industry Sectors, a project that aligned the 2016 academic standards with the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for success in in-demand entry- and intermediate-level jobs.

Spotlight: Literacy Texas and Standards Alignment to Industry Sectors—In 2017, TWC took strategic steps to better ensure that students in career pathways models were not only receiving skills training but also developing the basic education competencies needed to thrive in postsecondary education or training and advance in employment.

TWC funded Literacy Texas, the statewide literacy coalition, to align the 2016 content standards with the literacy demands of entry- and intermediate-level occupations. Four industry clusters were selected based on their anticipated growth in the next decade, their presence across most regions of Texas, and their potential for adult learners to access well-defined pathways from entry-level to middle- and higher-skilled occupations.

- Advanced manufacturing
- Construction and extraction
- Health care sciences
- Transportation, distribution, and logistics

“This project is important now. There is an urgent need for the employer voice that can’t wait another two to eight years to set educational standards for industry.”

—Candy Slocum, Executive Director, InterLink

Literacy Texas convened employers from across Texas, adult educators, workforce researchers, and assessment experts to examine the content standards and align them with detailed work activities across the clusters. The project resulted in a revision of the standards which will be implemented statewide in 2019. The project illustrates how the standards are relevant to work while maintaining the competencies needed to prepare students for educational progress and transition to postsecondary education or training.

Conclusion

AEL providers delivered on TWC’s expectations to implement research-based models that accelerated completions and provided AEL customers with a wide variety of engaging services, from integrated education and training, workplace, and distance learning, to an array of service models that supported the career advancement of English language learners.

TWC and its partner agencies remain well positioned to continue a path toward increases in student success and foster innovative service expansion to deliver the outcomes expected by students, their families, and their community and business stakeholders.



