

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY FY 2016 PROGRESS REPORT

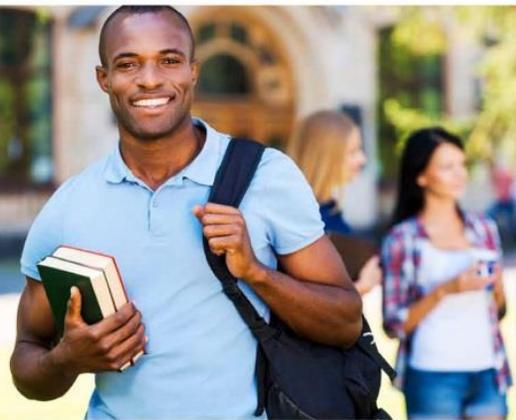


Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Background	3
Legislative Intent	3
Milestone Report.....	4
Report on Strategies	5
Strategy 1: Increase Workforce, Secondary, and Postsecondary Education and Training Outcomes	5
Strategy 2: Address Demand—To Implement Strategies That Address Projected Demand for AEL in Texas	9
Strategy 3: Increase System Coordination and Integration	11
Strategy 4: Improve Performance Excellence	14
Conclusion	16

Executive Summary

Texas Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) and Texas Workforce Solutions partners are implementing a system with the goal of increasing employment, postsecondary transition, skills gains, and secondary completions by using demonstrated approaches that fully integrate system services and leverage community partnerships. By doing so, Texas has become a leader in transforming AEL delivery in the United States.

This first-year report on the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Strategic Plan for AEL 2015–2020 (strategic plan) outlines unprecedented progress toward the alignment of program services across workforce and education programs. It describes associated accountability measures that support new opportunities, increase student success, and facilitate transitions to postsecondary education, training, and employment.

Service integration in Texas is creating greater value for AEL students. So far, AEL students have participated in 295 verified career pathways programs statewide. At 4,020 students, Texas is up from 1,551 students in 2014–2015 and is 20 percent of the way toward the five-year target of the strategic plan’s milestone performance measure of 20,000 students in career pathways programs by 2020. Strong progress is being made through collaborations with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to fully integrate AEL within Texas postsecondary education and training systems, and to support the overarching completion goal of the state’s higher education strategic plan, 60x30TX. Progress is also being made toward the plan’s goal of reducing student debt by offsetting tuition costs for developmental education through AEL services that come at no cost to the student.

The report demonstrates how greater flexibility and innovative service options have helped students achieve their career and postsecondary education and training goals. Strategic plan implementation has leveraged the strength of a larger network of organizations, such as Texas Workforce Solutions, the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Literacy Texas, and THECB to reach more students and provide greater support and services.

Additionally, the report details how employer partnerships are closing the gap between workers’ actual skills and the skills that employers expect. In 2015–2016, over 72 employer-based AEL programs served 1,160 students, using curriculum tailored to meet employer needs, supporting workers’ success, safety, and career advancement.

Because workers are working in a strong Texas economy, AEL is committed to ensuring that students can access services at a time and place and in a manner that accommodates their schedules. TWC’s three-member Commission (Commission) recognizes that value-added partnerships alone will not expand service delivery and reach new customers, and TWC has made strategic investments in distance learning to support learning that avoids the constraints of the traditional classroom. Furthermore, the report describes the innovative investments in distance learning services implemented under the strategic plan, which have led to an over 100 percent increase in the use of distance learning since the program’s 2013–2014 transition to TWC.

TWC and its partner agencies are ready and well positioned to foster and support local innovation and service expansion to deliver the outcomes expected by students, their families, Texas communities and business stakeholders. The report also describes TWC’s commitment to making long-term investments that enhance providers’ capacity to deliver improved services. As a result, programs are better able to implement research-based models offering accelerated options that promote student advancement in employment and postsecondary education and training.

Background

Texas is leading the transformation of adult education and literacy in the United States, implementing a system fully integrated with Texas Workforce Solutions partners with the goal of increasing employment, postsecondary transition, skills gains, and secondary completions through demonstrated approaches that integrate system services and leverage community partnerships.

TWC’s AEL programs support students in acquiring the skills needed to succeed in the workforce, earn a high school equivalency, or enter college or career training.

Finding ways to innovate educational services and, especially, to leverage various education, training, support, and career development resources available to students is critical to fostering student success. AEL and its Texas Workforce Solutions 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, and help strengthen families and communities.

Legislative Intent

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 acquiring basic literacy skills. In 2014, to support the legislature’s intent, the Commission declared that AEL’s mission is “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.”

Rider 32 to the TWC’s Legislative Appropriation for Fiscal Years (FY) 2015 and 2016, in consultation with the Texas Workforce Investment Council, directed TWC to report on the implementation and annual progress of a comprehensive statewide strategic plan, including goals and objectives.

This report provides an update on TWC’s progress toward implementing the Strategic Plan for AEL 2015–2020.

Milestone Report

The strategic plan establishes the Commission’s goal for AEL: To support increases in employment, higher education transition, skills gains, and secondary completion through demonstrated approaches that integrate system services and leverage community partnerships.

A corresponding milestone and related measures provide a clear, measurable goal for adult educators to set their focus:

Milestone—By 2020, at least 20,000 adult learners will enroll in career pathways¹ programs through partnerships among Texas employers, community and technical colleges, AEL providers, and Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards), positively impacting student employment and employer workforce needs.

The following are the primary measures associated with this milestone:

Utilization Measures	Performance
Career pathways students by year, Program Years 2015–2016	4,020
Unduplicated career pathways students from 2015 to 2020	4,020
Number of employers participating in employer-based career pathways programs	72

Capacity Measures	Performance
Number of verified career pathways programs	295
Number of providers with verified career pathways programs	66

Post-Program Employment Measures	Performance
Employed/Enrolled Q2	31.6% (for those exiting July 14 - June 15)
Employed/Enrolled Q2-Q4	82.1% (for those exiting January 14 - December 14)

The strategic plan includes four strategies to reach the plan’s milestone of 20,000 adult learners in career pathways programs by 2020:

- I. **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

- II. **Strategy 2: Address Demand** - to implement strategies that address projected demand for AEL in Texas

¹ In the Strategic Plan for AEL 2015–2020, career pathways are defined as integrated education and training models, workplace and work-based AEL models with employers, and services to internationally trained English language learner professionals.

- III. **Strategy 3: Increase System Coordination and Integration** - to support and facilitate increased coordination and collaboration between state and local system stakeholders
- IV. **Strategy 4: Improve Performance Excellence** - to support increased performance excellence; communicate impact; and ensure program accountability, fiscal integrity, and program effectiveness

Report on Strategies

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

Increasing education and work-related outcomes through enhanced delivery and service integration has been a central focus for the AEL program since the transfer from TWC to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) in 2013. TWC believes Texas Workforce Solutions customers—whether they enter the system through adult education, the workforce, or vocational rehabilitation—must have services that articulate paths to meeting their goals, in addition to well-structured service delivery to support the completion of their goals.

TWC has used multiple strategies to fully implement service integration and reach new customers. In 2014, the Commission adopted rules that establish the policy for integration. AEL general service contracts for AEL providers statewide generate innovative collaborations with Boards, employers, and postsecondary education and training providers.

To help foster strong collaboration across the system, the Commission approved funds to support efforts to increase the number of students entering training and those working or seeking employment. These efforts include workplace literacy programs partnering with Texas employers, increasing the share of students in integrated education and training programs with community colleges, and fostering integration with the services of Texas' market-driven workforce system.

Employer Partnerships

TWC knows that Texas employers drive innovation and create opportunities for system customers. AEL providers across the state have partnered with employers to develop career pathways opportunities for their workers. In State Fiscal Year 2016, 1,160 students were enrolled in employer-based programs.

Spotlight—Harris County Department of Education (HCDE) and TAS Concrete deliver English as a Second Language instruction focused on specific work activities. TAS Concrete wanted HCDE to enhance employee safety through increased literacy and overall communication skills. TAS Concrete responded to HCDE's request by making class space and computer access available for classroom instruction. They also made a TAS Concrete employee available during classes for additional support. To expand the project, HCDE collaborated with a builder and contractor association in Houston to outreach to the

association's member companies. Other outreach efforts included working with the Gulf Coast Workforce Development Board to locate other industry employers in the region.

Effective College Transition Models That Reduce Student Debt

In 2013, the Commission established enrollment targets for career pathways and approved the expansion of enhanced models that develop the skills necessary to transition to and complete postsecondary education programs and to obtain and/or advance in employment. While college and career readiness skills are required for all students to develop, AEL providers have set statewide career pathways targets, which include integrated education and training models with postsecondary education and training in addition to college transition targets.

Since 2013, AEL and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) have been redesigning delivery strategies to more effectively engage lower-skilled students in community colleges. Best practices have included the summer bridge and boot camp programs to provide intensive support in targeted skills areas to entering students. These specialized programs are designed to accelerate the transition to postsecondary programs. The goal is to eliminate the need for developmental education, as much as possible, and to jump-start a student's career pathway through college knowledge and general college readiness activities.

AEL delivers no-cost and low-cost options for academic remediation and can offset the developmental education tuition burden many Texas students accrue. This activity supports the Texas higher education strategic plan—60x30TX—with the goal of reducing student debt. Community colleges with AEL providers across the state have seen alignment with AEL as a strategy to support this strategic goal.

Spotlight—In the Alamo area, the Region 20 Educational Service Center (ESC) AEL consortium and the Alamo Colleges Academic Success office created a universal referral form for students in developmental education programs who could benefit at no-cost from AEL remedial services. Alamo Colleges' advisors refer students to the Region 20 ESC AEL consortium in which students receive targeted remedial services integrated with a college knowledge curriculum, at no cost, supporting a rapid transition back to Alamo Colleges. System partners are currently developing a joint online universal referral form that all agencies can use to refer customers to the system.

Spotlight—Amarillo College, in the Texas Panhandle, refers incoming college students who test low on the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) for enrollment in the no-cost AEL College On-Ramp program from which they benefit by college and resource integration, workforce integration, and digital literacy skills for those entering integrated education and training. Among the topics covered in transition classes are career counseling; time management; note- and test-taking skills; team building; TSIA preparation; rapid review math, academic reading, and writing, including supports for English language learners; database research; work-citing skills; math lab use; Microsoft Word formatting for Modern Language Association/American Psychological Association styles; online system's Blackboard use; and financial aid counseling.

Increasing Value to Students through Workforce Solutions Integration

Receiving referrals from the state's robust Workforce Solutions system is another strategy for increasing the state's percentage of students looking for work.

In 2014 three Workforce Development Boards (Boards)—Greater Dallas, Gulf Coast, and Brazos Valley—made the strategic decision to lead AEL provider consortia in their local workforce development areas (workforce areas) as grant recipients. Additionally, Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County, though not the grant recipient, is both a member and strategic leader in a multiprovider consortium serving the Tarrant County workforce area. Leadership from Texas Workforce Solutions has provided AEL customers across these systems with fully integrated services.

To support statewide rapid integration, the Commission approved funding to facilitate accelerated integration with the Texas Workforce Solutions employment and training system and to support Boards' roles as local system builders and conveners.

Regional strategic planning meetings in summer 2015 resulted in the development of both local gap analyses and solution-oriented strategies, with an increase of more than 21 percent of AEL students who were coenrolled in Board services by July 2016. Eighteen of the 34 statewide providers exceeded the statewide coenrollment average of 21 percent, with five exceeding 30 percent. Board services accessed by AEL participants included Temporary Assistance for Needy Families/Choices, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Trade Adjustment Assistance, Employment Service, and veterans services.

Spotlight—In the Southeast Texas workforce area, the Board and AEL provider, Region 5 ESC, have developed joint service arrangements that include shared assessments, cross-referral options, workforce training through WIOA Title I funds, training, case management, child care, transportation assistance, workforce preparation activities, and job placement. To further program integration, the Board provided Region 5 ESC training on using the Texas Workforce Information System of Texas and the Board and Region 5 ESC have a data sharing agreement to facilitate referrals and co-enrollment. Through a separate discretionary grant managed by the Board, AEL students received workforce training to prepare for the Child Development Associate certification.

Spotlight—Rural areas are perhaps the most stretched for resources. Two AEL providers—Community Action, Incorporated, and Angelina College—have implemented cross-referral systems across rural areas in their respective workforce areas, Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area and Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas. Customers who are basic-skills deficient participate in a comprehensive service model that includes utility assistance, workforce preparation activities, child care, and food and transportation for eligible customers.

Enhanced Curriculum and Standards Drive System Transformation

While partnerships with employers, Boards, and postsecondary education and training institutions are instrumental to improving workforce, secondary, and postsecondary education and training outcomes, AEL practitioners require enhanced curriculum, content standards, and assessments to meet Commission objectives and expected outcomes.

In 2015, TWC contracted with Texas State University to revise the AEL standards to align with current, more rigorous academic content standards that identify what learners should know and do in reading, language arts, and mathematics, including content areas for English language learners. The revision incorporated other standards, including the state-mandated Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), Texas high school equivalency assessments, and the TSIA to determine college and career literacy requirements. TWC also contracted with Region 6 ESC to develop reading and math course materials and teacher training to implement curricula that are aligned with the revised, more rigorous standards.

For 2016, the Commission has dedicated funds for a project to align the revised Texas AEL Content Standards with occupational and industry skill standards and certifications that are widely used and recognized by business and industry.

Capacity Building toward Innovation

Transforming services provided by over 4,000 employees into a fully integrated system that is responsive to college and career readiness objectives requires a robust capacity-building effort to ensure instructors and staff are prepared to deliver instruction that meets the rigor and duration needed to impact increased transition results.

The Texas Research-based Adult Instruction Network Professional Development Consortium (TRAIN PD), the statewide professional development center located at the Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning (TCALL), College of Education and Human Development, Texas A&M University, acts as the comprehensive statewide professional development system that provides in-person and online professional development to more than 3,186 individuals in 2015–2016. The center's professional development portal (PD Portal) offers online professional development through over 22 online curricula and supported 3,067 staff with PD services, of which 1,121 participated in on-demand online courses last year.

In 2016, TRAIN PD completely redesigned its professional development program. It has organized professional development services, resources, and research around multifunctional institutes in the areas of career pathways, literacy, program management, distance learning, and technology and stakeholder integration.

Spotlight—With more than 4,000 AEL staff members in the Texas AEL system, providing professional development in responsive, convenient formats is essential. TRAIN PD launched the AEL PD Portal for online professional development training in 2015. Staff members were using all 1,000 active seats statewide six months after opening the PD Portal to users. So far in 2016, the number of users has grown to 3,067. The PD Portal is available

to all AEL providers in Texas, regardless of funding. The PD Portal also is available to Texas Workforce Solutions staff, community stakeholders, and other literacy organizations.

Technology Use and Increased Distance Learning

The Commission recognizes that value-added partnerships alone will not expand service delivery and reach new customers, and it has made strategic investments in distance learning to support learning at a time, place, and manner that meets the needs of busy adults. The AEL general service contracts require that all grantees provide a distance learning option to their students. Since 2013–2014, the year of the AEL program transition to TWC, participation in distance learning increased from 6,574 to 13,013 participants, a gain of over 100 percent.

Spotlight—New certificate of high school equivalency tests have widened already lagging performance gaps in the area of mathematics. In response, the Commission dedicated funds to create a distance learning call center that provides customers with access to a real person who provides one-on-one mathematics tutoring through phone and online peer-to-peer support. Delivered through the Studentnest Foundation and launched in October 2016, AEL customers who are struggling with math concepts can now contact the call center and connect with a tutor who will walk them through the math problems using screen-sharing, an online whiteboard, and personal communication via phone, e-mail, or text. Students can save their tutoring session for reference later. Data from the call center will be shared with local programs so that they can track the number and types of issues that their customers have.

Spotlight—Northside Independent School District and College of the Mainland were awarded grants to implement distance learning mentor initiative projects designed to build local capacity, expand participation, and improve overall performance through distance learning. Each of the grantees mentored four providers, none of which had developed an effective distance learning program.

Mentee providers in the project increased the number of distance learning participants in the mentee programs to 1,716 participants. Of these, 58 percent made a gain of at least one educational level, compared to an average of 42 percent who only participated in face-to-face instruction. Other positive outcomes include the development of a summer distance learning program for participants housed in locations not open in the summer, use of free online networks to conduct direct instruction online in real time, creation of online communities of distance learners, and integration of technology tools into the face-to-face classrooms.

The Commission has dedicated funding for 2016–2017 to expand distance learning mentoring efforts.

Strategy 2: Address Demand—To Implement Strategies That Address Projected Demand for AEL in Texas

After over a decade of declining enrollments in Texas, AEL providers reversed this trend in 2015 and have already outpaced last year’s enrollments for the first quarter of 2016. AEL providers have accomplished higher enrollments despite additional capacity building brought about by an

unprecedented expansion of intricate models that incorporate increased use of technology, integration with workforce training, and accelerated learning. In many instances, instructors are implementing these advancements while shifting from the limited focus of increased educational achievement to a broader focus that includes tangible outcomes like jobs, wage increases, and entry into postsecondary education and training.

These advancements have begun to appeal to customers who were not previously attracted to stand-alone remediation, which was prevalent in the past. AEL customers are not only attracted to the system's new options, but they, like most busy adults, want to make a start toward their future now.

Increasing Access through Year-Round Enrollment

Adults aiming to improve their employment and higher education prospects usually do not have the comfort of waiting for traditional semester enrollment periods or taking time off during the summer. The practice of student wait-listing was often used to document evidence of high demand. In fact, the practice was less a sign of demand and more a symptom of enrollment models designed to accommodate rigid institutional practices, including inflexible enrollment periods based on traditional public school or college enrollment cycles.

In response, AEL providers have taken multiple approaches to engage students immediately and keep them engaged until a class becomes available. Options include open-enrollment labs that provide access to online distance learning options and other technology-based resources. Alignments with workforce system services also facilitate immediate engagement through workforce preparation classes, which include résumé development, interviewing skills, job search, and digital literacy. Several providers use online information request and enrollment systems and have a 24-hour turnaround time for contacting interested students.

Targeting Demand through Regional Gap Analysis

Increasing the collaboration and alignment of services among the AEL system, Boards, and Board contractors is critically important to support the state plans for service integration. The objective is to identify resource alignments and untapped efficiencies across TWC-funded and non-funded AEL organizations and workforce development stakeholders.

To support the development of regional networks, the Commission dedicated funds to support regional gap analyses to identify and document resource alignments and efficiencies. Boards were asked to organize a strategy session and assemble stakeholders to discuss strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with the integration of both systems. As a result, 10 regional meetings were structured to complete this process, with the intent of identifying gaps and solution-oriented strategies. Facilitators of the events submitted their findings to TWC.

Spotlight—After an initial significant regional gap analysis led by Workforce Solutions Golden Crescent, a regional workforce integration event was held to identify commonalities and develop strategies to blend services across the area. The event was led by the Workforce Solutions executive director, the local Workforce Solutions Office director, the area

representative for VR, and the president and AEL director of Victoria College. Seventy-two participants from across these agencies attended.

Trainers from the Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning conducted training activities to emphasize common goals, characteristics of an entry-level customer, common accountability requirements, and the top 10 essential skills demanded by business and industry.

Integrated teams were designated for the area, including staff members from each of the three core WIOA programs. An overall integrated regional plan was developed to focus on needed next steps to advance integration included the following:

- Development of a uniform referral form and information release that could be sent via a secure network to be accessed by each agency
- Increased information sharing, including monthly scheduled presentations at each agency for both staff and customers, and weekly e-mail news blasts
- A comprehensive list of agency contacts with organization structures and a list of employees, job titles, and contact information to facilitate customer referral

Boards across the state facilitated similar events and activities to promote integration.

Strategy 3: Increase System Coordination and Integration

The Whole Is Greater Than the Sum of the Parts

Since 1995, the Texas workforce system has offered a diverse range of services within Texas communities that support current and future economic prosperity for employers, workers, job seekers, students, and communities. AEL aligns and augments the system by delivering the foundational skills and career pathways transitions needed to prepare Texans to support their families, careers, and communities.

Since the program's transfer to TWC in 2013, Texas has rapidly increased service alignment to create value to shared customers. This kind of alignment supports the development of skills needed for a wide variety of customers to transition to and complete postsecondary education programs and obtain and advance in employment. With the transfer of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services to TWC in 2016, AEL is developing a strategic alliance with the state's VR network to support both individuals accessing VR services and AEL customers in need of VR services.

Various projects support system enhancements and expansion and are collectively known as the Training, Resource and Innovation Network for Texas, or TRAIN Tex.²

² More at <http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/twcael/TRAINTex.htm>

TRAIN Tex projects aim to connect and coordinate statewide outreach, professional development, and support through strategic partnerships and training initiatives that support supplementary support systems and special initiatives.

Leveraging the Assets of Nonprofit Organizations and Libraries

The Commission funded certain TRAIN Tex projects to support systems that serve customers with needs similar to those of AEL customers, such as public libraries and nonprofit community-based organizations.

Spotlight—The Commission contracted with Literacy Texas to provide professional development services for nonprofit and community-based organizations. Literacy Texas is an AEL organization whose primary participants are tutors, instructors, program administrative staff, and trainers of nonprofit adult education providers in Texas. Much of the training provided by Literacy Texas has supported service alignment across workforce, education, and nonprofit support service organizations. In the previous program year:

- 160 training sessions were provided to non-funded AEL providers. The sessions were developed in close collaboration with TRAIN PD and AEL state staff to ensure delivery of the best possible content, and that the content was consistent with professional development delivered to funded AEL providers.
- 790 participants representing 345 different organizations across Texas participated in training provided by Literacy Texas—more than double the number of participants in the previous year.

Spotlight—The Commission contracted with the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) for another project to be fully implemented in 2017. The primary scope of this project is to develop a digital literacy toolkit that will be available in over 500 libraries throughout Texas. Participants from both funded and non-funded providers will have access to the toolkit, free of charge.

During the initial needs assessment conducted by TSLAC, it was clear that the library communities had not been widely engaged with AEL service providers. Through coordination of events with TRAIN PD, Literacy Texas, and TWC AEL, each of these partners will have a strong presence at each other's conferences and symposia to ensure alignment of information dissemination and to further strengthen collaborations on the local, regional, and statewide levels. This collaboration is the first of its kind in Texas, and in the first few months, TSLAC has already received positive feedback regarding the value of bringing these entities together with a focus on aligning services for students.

Career and Technology Training Program Alignment

To participate in a global economy dependent on skilled and knowledgeable workers, AEL customers must directly benefit from Texas' diverse postsecondary education and training options by achieving postsecondary credentials of value that respond to local business demand.

Accelerating participant completion and placement into in-demand and targeted occupations is a critical objective of models that provide concurrent enrollment in college training and AEL services. To accelerate progress and reduce attrition, integrated education and training (IET) models admit customers who would otherwise fall below academic admission requirements into college-level workforce training that is provided concurrently with intensive and contextualized AEL and workforce preparation activities. This two-pronged approach leads to credential completion and employment in a much shorter time. Accelerate Texas, first developed by the THECB and then jointly expanded with TWC starting in 2013, is the brand name for these models and is unique to Texas.

Spotlight—Both South Texas College and Austin Community College have taken bold steps that accelerate completions and leverage external funding sources through strategic IET models. These models admit students without a high school completion credential to career pathways models funded under the ability-to-benefit (ATB) alternatives. These capacity-building projects leverage federal financial aid under Title IV alternatives and deliver options for customers desiring both high school equivalency and a recognized postsecondary credential.

Spotlight—Literacy Council of Tyler (LCOT) is collaborating with Tyler Junior College, Kilgore College, Northeast Texas Community College, and Panola College to develop and expand IET models in their 14-county region. Workforce training is being implemented in the following areas:

- certified medical assistant
- certified nursing assistant
- automotive instruction
- welding
- heating, ventilation, and air conditioning
- early childhood development
- retail management
- community health worker
- medical office management
- licensed vocational nurse

This has resulted in industry-recognized credentials and college credit. LCOT is expanding its college partnerships to leverage ATB alternatives for those students who have not completed high school to fast track their credential attainment in both credit training and the Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency.

Overall, the result of integrated education and training and other college transition efforts is an increase in student enrollments in postsecondary education and training, with 2,491 students in IET programs in driver industries, including health services, manufacturing, and distribution and logistics.

Alignments with the Texas Education Agency

As the state-designated agency for awarding the Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency (TxCHSE), TEA works with TWC to support AEL students preparing to earn the TxCHSE. Daily data matching between TEA and TWC for TxCHSE awards is a critical collaboration that provides updates for TxCHSE passage to programs and for state and federal reporting. Texas dramatically expanded options for high school equivalency when the State Board of Education voted on January 29, 2016, to award contracts to three separate companies that provide high school equivalency assessments. During this transition, TEA staff collaborated with TWC for data matching revisions, and TEA staff provided the AEL advisory committee updates on TxCHSE at three separate advisory committee meetings.

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 the year 2020 represents TWC's commitment to delivering a transparent and straightforward approach to communicating program outcome goals and expectations, and performance reporting. This goal clearly established the strategic direction for AEL toward which TWC was moving, and also established a clear, measurable target to which the program director and staff continuously return to for reference.

Delivering Accountability through Data Collection and Management

Evaluation of local provider services is a key priority for the AEL program. TWC staff has worked to develop a strategic evaluation and monitoring process that draws from best practices developed across TWC's divisions. TWC is implementing a quality program model that links evaluation of monthly program performance and information and findings from TWC's monitoring department to just-in-time technical assistance and the deployment of targeted professional development to support continuous program improvement and student success.

AEL programs are required to validate their data monthly and submit quarterly Data Sign-off Reports through the Texas Educating Adults Management System (TEAMS). The report requires programs to describe areas of strength as well as weaknesses and is augmented by monthly expenditure reports and quarterly narrative reports on specific TWC objectives and overall program objectives.

The AEL department provides a Monthly Performance Report (MPR) to the Workforce Development Division Director. AEL program and contract management staffs facilitate the MPR meeting. The MPR includes a monthly snapshot of both program and financial performance across all Adult Education and Family Literacy Act programs, including discretionary projects. This multiphased process uses timely data gathered from TEAMS to measure program performance against contract deliverables as well as state and federal performance targets.

The accountability process for poor performance or weak program management includes program support plans, technical assistance plans, and corrective actions. These actions include targeted technical assistance, directed professional development support, one-on-one training in specific areas of weakness or concern, and technical assistance visits by TWC staff to meet and address particular issues. Members must meet specific benchmarks for a period of four consecutive months to be removed from the remedial action.

Spotlight—Through the quality model, a provider that shows poor performance from month to month in reading or oral language scores will be advised by their TWC AEL program support specialist or assigned professional development specialist to schedule professional development in these areas. Once the program receives professional development services, the AEL department monitors program improvement to report in the MPR.

While local program improvement is perhaps the most direct means of assessing the quality and effectiveness of service delivery, improved performance itself relies on rigorous standards and quality of curriculum.

Enhancements to Standards and Curriculum

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

In 2015, TWC contracted with Texas State University to lead the standards revision project and they coordinated with public stakeholders and subject matter experts, including representatives from K-12 education, Developmental Education, Adult Education, Texas industries, and universities. The completed content standards included the content areas of English Language Arts and Literacy, Mathematics, and English as a Second Language and were aligned with the following state and national standards:

- Texas College and Career Readiness Standards
- Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills curriculum standards for public schools under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
- Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency
- Texas Success Initiative Assessment
- Other recognized educational, college, and career performance indicators

The central purpose of the Texas AEL Content Standards was to raise the rigor of adult education content so that AEL participants are adequately prepared for enrollment in non-remedial, for-credit courses in postsecondary educational institutions, and are able to meet occupational and industry skill standards and certifications that are widely used and recognized by business and industry.

To support implementation of the content standards through curriculum revision, the Region VI Educational Service Center is leading the Focus on the Basics project to build capacity in local programs by developing curricula and professional development for reading and math teachers.

A compendium project is under development for 2017 to align the new content standards with entry-level and middle skills jobs in specific in-demand industries in Texas.

Conclusion

TWC is committed to making long-term investments that enhance the providers' capacity to implement research-based models, including programs that support accelerated options, such as integrated education and training, workplace AEL, distance learning, and service models that support the career advancement of English language learners. These services are required of all AEL grant recipients statewide and promote the employment and postsecondary education and training advancement of students.

TWC will continue to encourage activities that uphold the following priorities, including those that leverage workforce development opportunities and efficiencies offered through concurrent enrollment:

- Expand integration with Boards and Workforce Solutions Offices, including concurrent enrollment in workforce system programs under WIOA, TANF, the state child care program, TAA, VR, and other Workforce Solutions Offices services
- Establish or expand partnerships with community colleges and other training organizations that create greater opportunities for adult learners to transition to postsecondary education and workforce training programs, including concurrent enrollment
- Develop innovative strategies to meet adult learners' needs, including strategies based on local resources that:
 - enhance, support, and use educational delivery mechanisms to facilitate immediate service delivery to students; or
 - facilitate the progress of students from standard AEL programs toward a service-delivery activity that results in employment, a training certificate or certification, or college degree.

To meet these objectives, AEL providers, Boards, and their community partners are working diligently to seek local solutions and find resources to support change and arrive at the outcomes they desire for their communities. TWC and its partner agencies are ready and well positioned to foster and support local innovation and service expansion to deliver the outcomes expected by students, their families, and their community and business stakeholders.



TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION
101 East 15th Street
Austin, Texas 78778-0001
(512) 463-2222

Email: adulthoodeducation@twc.state.tx.us
Call: 855-594-0012

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program
Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.
Relay Texas: 800-735-2989 (TTY) and 711 (Voice).

Copies of this publication (12/2016) have been distributed in compliance with the State Depository Law, and are available for public use through the Texas State Publication Depository Program at the Texas State Library and other state depository libraries.

WWW.TEXASWORKFORCE.ORG