

1 **Adult Education and Literacy Advisory Committee Report**
2 **2021 Annual Recommendations**

3 **Overview**

4 In 2021, the Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Advisory Committee held four virtual
5 meetings, scheduled informational presentations by industry professionals, and called upon
6 members' expertise to effectively advise the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) on matters
7 related to AEL programs. This summary report includes milestones that focus on the integration,
8 promotion, and value of AEL resources.

9 The nine-member committee consists of public and private-sector representatives from across the
10 state. The 2021 members are: **David Barron** (Gulf Coast Carpenters and Millwrights Training
11 Trust Fund), **Traci Berry** (Goodwill Central Texas–Austin), **Diana Contreras** (Dollar General
12 Corporation), **Paul Fletcher** (Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area), **Rita Hernandez**
13 (Cameron County Education Initiative), **Samuel Keeler** (formerly with Tyson Foods), **Mignon**
14 **Lawson** (formerly with Abilene Independent School District), **Brenda Schofield** (Region 5
15 Education Service Center), and **Donald Tracy** (Austin Community College).

16 **Background to the Committee Recommendations**

17 In 2021, the committee decided to extend and build upon the previous year's suggestions that
18 were submitted to TWC's three-member Commission (Commission). The 2020
19 recommendations were the following:

- 20 • Increase awareness of AEL opportunities and the potential for partnerships by promoting and
21 marketing AEL efforts
- 22 • Establish and support collaborative projects between employers and AEL providers,
23 particularly for preemployment and soft skills training opportunities
- 24 • Support multiagency coordination, elimination of duplication, and braided funding related to
25 serving special populations

26 In addition to the committee's regularly scheduled meetings, members of the committee formed
27 a workgroup and met on two occasions with TWC AEL staff this year to discuss and provide
28 input on the development of the [Fiscal Year 2021 to 2026 Adult Education and Literacy](#)
29 [Strategic Plan](#).

30 The meetings in 2021 provided different perspectives on employer, workforce development, and
31 AEL provider points of view. Throughout the year, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to cause
32 logistical and programmatic challenges for the organizations represented by the committee.
33 These challenges were addressed by holding virtual meetings and identifying best practices and
34 areas needing further collaboration. The committee proposes that TWC continue promoting AEL
35 services as an integral part of economic development efforts in Texas and as a resource that,
36 when integrated with other TWC programs, successfully contributes to increased educational and
37 employment outcomes.

1 **Expand Access and Build Service Support Networks**

2 Opportunities to expand access to AEL services and build service support networks were
3 highlighted in several presentations throughout the year.

4 Building upon our 2020 recommendation around enhanced marketing and the promotion of AEL
5 services and support, TWC leadership gave presentations to the committee on the launch of the
6 Move Ahead with Adult Ed marketing campaign and on how better data usage could improve
7 effectiveness across AEL programs. Additionally, social venture firm Aunt Bertha gave a
8 presentation to the committee on its model for cataloging and offering service provider
9 information to those in need of services. These presentations provided excellent insight on the
10 work being done around the state to increase access to AEL and support services to help
11 individuals who could benefit from such services.

12 2021 Recommendation: The committee continues to suggest focusing on marketing and
13 promoting AEL services and partnerships, particularly to untapped populations, such as military
14 veterans, formerly incarcerated individuals, and individuals with disabilities. Broader awareness
15 of AEL services and support as well as robust local connections to needed wraparound services,
16 which provide stability to individuals participating in AEL programs, will be essential to serving
17 largely untapped populations.

18 **Enhance Career Readiness Skills**

19 In a summer meeting, the committee heard presentations on the delivery of Integrated Education
20 and Training (IET) programs in Texas’ rural areas as well as the important role that
21 Internationally Trained Professionals (ITP) programs play in preparing individuals for work in
22 their professional field in the state.

23 2021 Recommendation: The committee continues to suggest collaborating with Texas employers
24 on projects and partnerships that provide preemployment vocational and employability skills
25 opportunities for AEL customers. Furthermore, basic digital literacy skills are becoming
26 increasingly more important to employability in the modern workplace and are foundational to
27 success in subsequent vocational training and certificate programs. Developing digital literacy
28 skills requires reliable access to and the use of broadband networks as well as the ability to
29 effectively meet employers’ needs through the use of different device types across a range of
30 operating systems and software applications. Funding support for this type of pre-certificate
31 skills development is foundational to subsequent success in TWC AEL’s IET, ITP, and other
32 basic education and vocational training programs.

33 **Engage Special Populations**

34 Throughout the year, the committee discussed the issue of engaging with and providing robust
35 support for special populations, particularly populations that include individuals who are
36 currently or formerly incarcerated. Engaging individuals who are returning to our communities
37 from incarceration in both pre- and post-release education and training programs will reduce
38 recidivism rates across Texas’ criminal justice system and prepare a largely forgotten potential
39 workforce to meet employer needs in an increasingly competitive labor market.

40 2021 Recommendation: The committee continues to support a coordinated multiagency approach
41 to serving special populations in Texas, particularly for individuals who are reentering our

1 communities after incarceration. As part of this effort, it is proposed that a tri-agency workgroup
2 be formed by representatives from TWC, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission,
3 and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to identify coordinated strategies for:
4 • providing support services to the formerly incarcerated;
5 • identifying and engaging second chance employers willing to hire individuals with a criminal
6 background;
7 • developing and delivering technical assistance and human resource management training to
8 employers that hire formerly incarcerated individuals; and
9 • enabling individuals participating in pre-release education and training programs to complete
10 certificates and certifications at other justice-system facilities or through education partners
11 in their respective communities.

12 Additionally, the committee suggests developing strategies on how to use AEL funding for pre-
13 release education and training programs in the state’s correctional facilities and for the braiding
14 of funding opportunities across partner state agencies and community-based organizations that
15 support formerly incarcerated individuals.

16 **Additional Committee Recommendations**

17 The committee’s additional recommendations are as follows:

- 18 • Developing and deploying an AEL learning platform that is culturally relevant and targeted
19 toward the specific needs of adult learners
- 20 • Providing digital literacy training and technical support to AEL instructors who teach in
21 online environments