

1 **Expanded Externships for Teachers Program**
2 **Discussion Paper**

3 **Background**

4 At the March 28, 2023, Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) meeting, TWC Chairman Bryan
5 Daniel directed staff to compile information related to a possible expansion of the Externships
6 for Teachers program. As currently designed, the program awards funds to Local Workforce
7 Development Boards to finance teachers to:

- 8 • attend a three-day externship at a local employer site;
- 9 • develop a curriculum based on the employer’s industry; and
- 10 • gain the experience needed to convey the new knowledge and skills to their students.

11 The program has existed since 2016 and, prior to COVID-19, was serving on average more than
12 700 teachers a year, with the potential to reach more than 15,000 students a year. The program’s
13 ongoing success indicates that now is an opportune time to expand the service and increase
14 access to the program.

15 **Issue**

16 Staff identified three key components where access to the program may be increased: number of
17 teachers participating, types of teachers participating, and increased depth of experience.

18 Each key component is discussed briefly in this paper.

19 **Number of Teachers Participating**

20 Increasing access to the program may be achieved by adding new eligible grant recipients to the
21 program while maintaining the current program focus on secondary education. Institutions of
22 higher education (IHEs) and Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) providers have been identified
23 as two sources for expanding services. IHEs currently offer programs to provide skills expansion
24 for teachers and maintain relationships with local employers, meaning that they already have the
25 infrastructure necessary to provide the services. IHEs also have extensive experience with
26 curriculum design, which would allow them to provide additional support to participating
27 teachers. The addition of AEL providers would bring in a new group of teachers (see key area
28 two below) who also have existing relationships with local employers and who are required to
29 support their staff in obtaining new skills.

30 **Types of Teachers Participating**

31 All middle and high school teachers are eligible for the program; however, staff encourages
32 focusing on Career and Technical Education teachers. Many high school students participate in
33 dual credit programs, some of which may be taught at a local community college or other IHE.
34 Allowing college faculty who teach high school students to participate in the program would
35 improve student and faculty understanding of the careers being explored and foster connections
36 between educators, employers, and students.

1 Additionally, there exists a natural connection between the program and AEL providers that
2 provide career education as part of their adult education curricula, which includes Integrated
3 Education and Training services (IETs). Expanding the program to include AEL providers would
4 offer students who are looking to immediately enter the workforce an opportunity to benefit from
5 the program.

6 **Increased Depth of Experience**

7 Currently, the externship is a minimum of three days but may be longer. An initial understanding
8 of the employer’s business can be attained in this time; however, staff will require the following
9 changes in order to increase the depth of experience:

- 10 • Increasing the externship’s duration to five to 10 days on-site, with exceptions for
11 employers that are unable to offer a longer on-site opportunity but would still like to
12 participate in the program
- 13 • Allowing multiemployer externships where participants attend work sites on multiple
14 related facilities
- 15 • Expanding real-world work experience for students by including either a field trip to the
16 employer or a classroom visit by the employer’s staff members, depending on the
17 industry and employer capacity.

18 This component would be included in the developed curriculum. Additionally, it will be required
19 that both educators and the employer’s staff to provide input and support for teachers during
20 curriculum development.

21 **Decision Point**

22 Staff seeks direction on incorporating the three expansion components in the FY’24 Externship
23 for Teachers program. This item is presented for TWC’s three-member Commission’s
24 consideration and approval prior to the beginning of the FY’24 budget development process and,
25 if approved, will be incorporated into the FY’24 grant application for the program.