

1 **Ending the Middle Skills Gap—Certifications for Metrix Users**
2 **Discussion Paper**
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5 **Background**

6 On June 30, 2021, the Texas Workforce Commission’s (TWC) three-member Commission (Commission)
7 earmarked funding for a comprehensive statewide strategy to close the “middle skills” gap in Texas. Due to
8 technological advances in the workplace, employment demand has dramatically increased for individuals with
9 middle skills, defined as workers with some education beyond high school but less than a four-year degree. The
10 Commission directed staff to research multiple initiatives and programs using statewide funds for job creation,
11 job preparedness, and/or job progression activities to help put more Texas workers on a path to a career in a
12 rewarding middle skills job.
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14 Industry certifications significantly increase employment opportunities and salaries. The Metrix Learning platform
15 offers courses for more than 130 industry-recognized certifications, including online training in high-demand
16 occupations. Metrix users can take the courses, which include TestPrep practice tests, to prepare for a certification
17 exam at an authorized testing center, such as Certiport and Pearson VUE. Certifications are issued from the
18 certifying authority and recognized by employers. Self-paced courses that can lead to certifications through Metrix
19 Learning cost around \$375–\$900 per exam, whereas other programs may charge thousands of dollars.
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21 Statewide Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds are available to meet this critical
22 workforce need.
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24 **Proposed Initiative**

25 **Certifications for Metrix Users—\$1.1 Million Contract Amendment**

26 Among the proposed initiatives is amending the existing Metrix Learning training contract to provide additional
27 training courses as well as certification services.
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29 Although certifications are not currently available to Texans through the Metrix Learning platform, many users
30 have taken courses in more than 130 industry certification tracks. As of April 16, 2021, 1,841 Metrix users in Texas
31 have completed at least 90 percent of an industry certification track, up from 888 on January 14, 2021.
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33 Metrix Learning offered a proposal to provide certifications for approximately 1,250 individuals at a cost of \$1
34 million. This price includes access to all training content, practice tests, practice labs, and test vouchers for the
35 1,250 individuals. Metrix Learning would also provide \$100,000 for program support to TWC and the 28 Local
36 Workforce Development Boards, including case management, mentoring services by phone and email, monthly
37 progress reports, and a bimonthly review. The total cost of these certification services would be \$1.1 million for one
38 year.
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40 **Decision Point**

41 Staff seeks guidance on amending the existing contract with Metrix Learning as outlined above, including
42 adding certifications. Additionally, staff requests latitude to make adjustments to address the technical aspects of
43 this initiative.
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