

## **Revision to Training and Certifications for In Demand and Targeted Occupations Discussion Paper**

### **Background**

On September 21, 2021, the Texas Workforce Commission’s (TWC) three-member Commission (Commission) approved a Training and Certification for In Demand and Targeted Occupations initiative to “procure and enter into a contract for a learning management system to upskill workers in occupations for which technological and advanced skills are required. The vendor will provide online training and certifications toward industry-required skills in technology, advanced manufacturing, and other occupations that are in demand by Texas employers. ... Based on experience with the current skills enhancement online learning provider, staff anticipate this contract would provide certifications for 2,500 individuals, with the goal of offering non-training courses to thousands more.”

### **Issue**

Based on research and a canceled request for proposals, TWC staff identified two interconnected challenges with this program and is seeking the Commission’s approval to revise the program in order to better respond to the identified limits in the market. The two identified challenges are as follows:

- There is a lack of industry-based certifications for hands-on work, such as health care and manufacturing, that are fully available online. Although many certifications are available online, they do not align with the essential certifications needed to advance in these hands-on industries. Certifications that are available online are often supplemental to these industries, such as Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) certifications, and do not focus on developing the primary skills required of hands-on occupations.
- Experience with the existing online learning provider indicates that participants have limited interest in the online certifications that are offered. Contrastingly, the public has shown interest in the general skills and job readiness courses available from a variety of online sources, including the existing TWC online learning provider, Metrix.

### **Recommendations**

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the following two proposed changes to the original September 21, 2021, directive to establish an online service for the Training and Certifications for In Demand and Targeted Occupations initiative, using \$3.8 million split between TANF and WIOA funds:

- Remove the requirement for online certifications and instead make online certifications an additional component that may be offered if the vendor has a selection of online certifications relevant to high-demand jobs in Texas.

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- Remove the emphasis on specific trainings for high-demand jobs and promote online courses in a variety of job skills that are in demand in Texas.