Texas

Analyzing the pathways matter framework in Texas.

Texas has a strong track record of supporting key learner pathway policies such as college acceleration offerings, outcomes-based funding for technical colleges and K-12 career and technical education. These are no doubt helping the state make progress towards its 60x30 attainment goal for adult learners. However, Texas’s efforts are challenged by a lack of deep cross-agency coordination around shared goals, data and accountability for results. While Texas collects a trove of learner data, it has not found a way to use it in a shared, transparent manner for understanding program outcomes across systems. Doing so could help the state go farther in eliminating dead end pathways, harnessing state pathway funding for greater returns, and ensuring all learners have equitable access to high-value offerings.

STRENGTHS

• Texas’ newly developed CTE programs of study that promote alignment to postsecondary credentials and high-demand, high-skill and high-wage occupations.

• Texas’ robust set of college acceleration offerings that provide multiple options for earning college credit in high school.

• Texas’ innovative outcomes-based funding model for Texas State Technical College system that promotes job placement and a premium for wage earnings.

OPPORTUNITIES

• Strengthen cross-agency collaboration and shared accountability by establishing clear metrics for success and regularly reporting against them.

• Increase the collection, connection and use of data across education and workforce systems to help policymakers and families make informed decisions.

• Phase out state funding and support for legacy CTE pathways that are aligned to low-wage and low-skill occupations.

Resources and additional information on the Learner Continuum can be found on the last page of this state case study. Please contact PathwaysMatter@ExcelinEd.org for questions about this state case study or about the policy continuum in your state.
LEARNER PATHWAYS

Ensure vertical alignment to workforce needs, robust funding, collaboration across agencies and equitable access for all students.

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HIGH-QUALITY CTE PROGRAMS
Align all CTE programs with high-demand, high-skill and high-wage occupations that reflect the state’s economic and workforce priorities. Ensure that these programs feature the academic and technical skills and knowledge learners will need to be successful.

TARGETED CTE PROGRAM FUNDING
Dedicate state funding for CTE programs—but only if they are aligned to high-demand, high-skill and high-wage occupations. Target specific funds for pathway completion and demonstrated learner outcomes.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT ANALYSIS
Conduct a biennial return on investment (ROI) analysis of CTE programs to assess whether all learners have access to high-demand, high-skill and high-wage pathways. Collect school- and student-level data to evaluate outcomes of CTE programs against established shared metrics for quality and equity.

STATE CROSS-AGENCY SHARED PRIORITIES
Establish shared priorities and collective accountability across state agencies and education systems for learner pathway development, supports and success. Ensure that business and industry have a seat at the table and can lead discussions related to demand and training requirements.
Texas has a long history of policies both establishing and supporting CTE. In terms of vertical alignment, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) recently developed a comprehensive set of CTE programs of study aligned with middle- and higher-wage, in-demand occupations in the state. The programs of study will go into effect in the 2020–21 school year and are aligned to the state’s Perkins V plan. While schools may offer CTE pathways that are not on the state-approved programs of study list, only approved programs of study will qualify for federal Perkins funding. Local education agencies (LEAs) may still use state CTE funding to offer nonapproved courses and pathways.

Highlights of the programs of study initiative:
- Includes occupations that meet labor market criteria such as projected job growth, annual job openings and the state median wage.
- Ensures course sequences provide district and campus flexibility in program offerings.
- Leads to postsecondary education and training opportunities.
- Expands opportunities for students to engage in occupations related to science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).
- Includes one-page resources to assist in scheduling as well as career planning conversations with students.
- Allows districts to request regional programs of study supported by regional workforce data.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
TEA’s programs of study work is a strong effort to improve the quality of CTE pathways. However, many LEAs will continue to offer lower-level pathway options due to the generous amount of state funding provided for CTE courses. The state can extend the funding qualifications for promoted programs of study to include state funds, as well as Perkins funds.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Delaware – Career and Technical Education Programs
- Tennessee – Career and Technical Education Programs

RESOURCES
- TEA Programs of Study Project Overview
- TEA Approved Programs of Study

POLICIES
N/A
TARGETED CTE PROGRAM FUNDING

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
In 2021, HB 1525 updated Texas’s weighted funding for CTE programs to help incentivize districts and schools for offering programs of study in high-wage, high demand occupations. The weighted funding model provides 1.1 for CTE courses not in an approved program of study. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) was charged with developing tiers, or levels, of programs of study to quality for additional weighted funds for each full-time equivalent student in average daily attendance. Levels 1 and 2 generate a weight of 1.28 and levels 3 and 4 generate a weight of 1.47. Additionally, districts are provided, $50 for each of the following in which the student is enrolled:
- A campus designated as a P-TECH school under Section 29.556; or
- A campus that is a member of the New Tech Network and that focuses on project-based learning and work-based education.

HB 3 expanded the number of courses that can count under CTE, notably adding a suite of technology application courses to the list. HB 3 also expanded CTE funding to include courses offered in grades 7 and 8. It also provides outcomes-based funding for students who are deemed college and career ready.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
Providing the weighted funding is a great step to helping ensure all pathways and associated credentials (academic and industry) are aligned to high-demand, high-skill, high-wage occupations – and provide a clear pathways to a college credential. Texas should continue to monitor the implications of the new weighted funding to see if additional nudges are necessary to support districts and schools in retiring non-aligned programs of study. It also can identify alternative indicators for college and career readiness since not every pathway has an associated capstone credential. A credential-centric approach will likely lead to unintended outcomes for learners.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Indiana – Funding Methodology
- Ohio – Innovative Workforce Incentive Program

RESOURCES
- HB 3 Overview
- HB 3 Bill Summary
- HB 3 Two-Pager
- CTE Programs of Study
- HB 1525

POLICIES
- TX Education Code Section 48.106, Career and Technology Education Allotment
- TX Legislature HB 3
- Texas Education Agency HB 3
- TX Education Code Section 29.556, P-Tech
Return on Investment Analysis

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
In 2019, the Texas Education Agency did conduct a preliminary review of the state’s CTE program—in part to inform the development of its new programs of study list (see “High-Quality CTE Programs”). There is no legislative requirement that an audit take place or be updated. HB 3’s outcomes-based incentive model may be able to provide some insight into how well the program is providing returns on investment. It establishes an outcomes bonus to schools for each graduate above a certain threshold for readiness (measured in a number of ways). The bonus amounts are tiered with economically disadvantaged students at $5,000 each, nondisadvantaged at $3,000 each and special education at $2,000 each.

In 2021 Texas passed SB 1095, requiring all Texas school districts to notify parents of students in grade 9 or higher of the following: internship, externship, and apprenticeship opportunities in the area. Additionally, districts must provide information on assistance programs for fees for college advanced placement tests or international baccalaureate examinations. These new information requirements should help create more equitable opportunity and enrollment in CTE or work-based programs and advanced exams as more parents and students will be made aware of their available options.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
Texas can conduct a full return on investment analysis of both its CTE programs of study and available pathway options to ensure that they are (1) high quality and aligned to high-demand, high-skill and high-wage occupations; (2) equitably accessible to low-income, minority and rural/urban students; and (3) annually vetted and reviewed to maintain relevance to employers and postsecondary institutions.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
• Colorado – Return on Investment Reports
• Florida – Executive Order 19-31 and House Bill 7071
(NOTE: While promising, both could be strengthened by more focused analyses on equity and quality of offerings.)

RESOURCES
• HB 3 Overview
• HB 3 Bill Summary
• HB 3 Two-Pager

POLICIES
• HB 3
• SB 1095 - Notification Regarding College Credit and Work-Based Learning Programs
BACKGROUND
The state’s Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative—led by the commissioners of education, higher education and workforce agencies—serves as a focal point for collaboration. Currently, it is tasked with providing support, recommendations and actions to ensure that the state’s education to workforce pipeline can meet Texas’ goal for 60 percent of its citizens to possess a postsecondary or workforce credential by 2030 (60x30TX). Recently, the commissioners of the agencies have been tasked by the governor to set out a plan for improving the education to workforce talent pipeline as well as implementation of HB 3.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
The Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative can be a promising effort to integrate state priorities and articulate a shared vision for state success. However, there is still too little progress being made by it after five years of work. Texas can embed shared accountability for collective agency actions and programs into this initiative. It also can strengthen data collection, access and reporting across agencies to illustrate current progress and continued areas for improvement.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Delaware – Advisory Council on Career and Technical Education (DACCTE)
- Indiana – Governor’s Workforce Cabinet
- Washington – Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

RESOURCES
- Initial Charge to Convene the Initiative
- Charge to Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative in Response to HB 3
- Report to the Governor From the Tri-Agencies

POLICIES
- HB 3767 - Texas Education and Workforce Alignment Act
Streamline postsecondary learning and empower high school students to earn credit to reduce the time required to earn postsecondary degrees.

**COLLEGE ACCELERATION**
Provide and incentivize a range of options for learners to earn college credit while in high school. Ensure that all learners have access and financial support to accelerate their journey to a postsecondary credential.

**CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING AND CREDENTIALS**
Implement a consistent state policy for awarding postsecondary program or elective credit for prior learning, work experience and earned industry credentials.

**COLLEGE ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS**
Establish statewide articulation agreements to ensure college credits earned in K–12 or at one institution transfer and count toward a degree at another. Minimize or eliminate credit loss and misalignment for transitioning learners.

**REMEDICATION**
Replace outdated developmental and remedial education with college credit bearing options paired with intensive supports. Adopt co-requisite remediation programs or offer remediation to learners before they graduate high school.
POSTSECONDARY ACCELERATION

Texas

STATE CASE STUDY

KEY POLICY

College Acceleration

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

Texas has a long history of policies promoting college acceleration that include dual credit, Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate incentives, early college high school, P-TECH, New Tech and industry certifications. For instance, all Texas high schools are required to offer at least 12 hours of dual credit courses to students, and many school districts make these offerings available to students at no cost to them or their families. Texas also boasts the largest number of early college high schools among states across the nation.

Of recent note, Texas passed HB 3 in 2019, which further incentivizes college, career and military readiness. It establishes an outcomes bonus to schools for each graduate above a certain threshold for readiness (measured in a number of ways). The bonus amounts are tiered with economically disadvantaged students at $5,000 each, nondisadvantaged at $3,000 each and special education at $2,000 each.

In 2021, Texas established the Texas First Scholarship Program and requires TEA, in coordination with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), to establish the Texas First Early High School Completion Program. This program allows public high school students who demonstrate early readiness for college to graduate early from high school. Students who graduate early are then eligible to receive scholarships at eligible Texas postsecondary institutions for their first full academic year following high school graduation.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

Texas can regularly collect data and report outcomes related to all of its college acceleration options. Given the size and scope of offerings, the state can provide policymakers, families and students a clear understanding of the return on investment associated with the various options. To support equity, Texas can implement an automatic enrollment policy—for example, all students who score the highest level on the end-of-course assessment in math are automatically enrolled in AP Math. The policy should also consider how to expand multiple measures of eligibility.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Florida – High School Acceleration Programs and Statewide Agreements on Credit
- Idaho – Advanced Opportunities Funding
- Louisiana – TOPS-Tech Early Start Program
- North Carolina – Automatic Enrollment

RESOURCES

- Texas College and Career Readiness School Models
- Texas Advanced Academics Programs
- HB 3 Reimbursements

POLICIES

- SB 1888 - Texas First Scholarship Program
**Credit for Prior Learning and Credentials**

**STATE POLICY ANALYSIS**
There is no formal state statute or program in place that addresses credit for prior learning or earned credentials. Institutions of higher education in Texas typically develop their own policies, largely based on approved prior learning assessments.

**OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN**
Texas can adopt a standardized process for awarding credit for prior learning assessments, workplace and military experience, and earned credentials. These policies will help to accelerate student earning of postsecondary degrees or credentials.

**PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES**
- Colorado – Prior Learning Assessment Credit Policy
- Kentucky – Prior Learning Initiative
- Ohio – Military Strategic Implementation Team

**RESOURCES**
N/A

**POLICIES**
N/A
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

Most transfer and articulation agreements in Texas are developed across institutions. The state’s role is limited to two pieces: a core curriculum and a limited number of “field of study” curricula (FOSC). For students planning on earning a bachelor’s degree, Texas law requires that they complete a core curriculum of 42 credit hours. Each college or university identifies which of its courses fit into the core curriculum. If students complete the core curriculum with grades of C or better and transfer, the entire core curriculum transfers and substitutes for the core curriculum they would have taken at the new school.

In addition to the Texas Core Curriculum (TCC), Texas law authorizes the state to create FOSC. FOSC consist of freshman and sophomore courses that apply to a specific major. A student who successfully completes all or part of FOSC prior to transferring will receive degree credit for the FOSC coursework (as long as the student stays in a degree program in that discipline). Some of the disciplines for which there are FOSC are nursing, computer science, engineering technology, music, early childhood–grade 4 teacher certification, middle grades teacher certification, criminal justice, engineering, business and communication.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

Texas’ FOSC are growing in number but still represent a smaller number of credential options for learners. Texas can establish statewide transfer articulation agreements to ensure broader impact and maximum value for learners.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Florida – Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreements
- Indiana – Core Transfer Library
- Kentucky – Transfer Articulation Agreements

RESOURCES

- TCC Courses
- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board FOSC

POLICIES

- TX Education Code Chapter 61, Subchapter S. TCC
- TX Administrative Code Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 4, Subchapter B, Coordinating Board Rules for TCC
- TX Education Code Chapter 61, Section 61.823. FOSC
- TX Administrative Code Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 4, Subchapter B. Coordinating Board Rules for FOSC
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

In 2017, Texas passed HB 2223, which requires the use of a co-requisite remediation model. Co-requisite remediation places students in college-level, or gateway, English and math courses but pairs those courses with additional supports. The law gave all of the state’s public colleges and universities that have developmental education programs until 2018 to have 25 percent of their developmental students enrolled in a co-requisite course. The mandate increased to 50 percent by 2019 and to 75 percent by 2020.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

Implementation of HB 2223 is still in its earlier stages, so understanding (via research) the impact of the policy on student success, persistence and attainment is critical to evaluating improvements in student supports. From an equity perspective, the state can analyze which students are faring better than others and target additional supports to bolster their efforts.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Georgia – Complete College Georgia
- North Carolina – Multiple Measures of Placement Policy
- Tennessee – Co-Requisite Remediation and Seamless Alignment and Integrated Learning Support (SAILS)

RESOURCES

N/A

POLICIES

- HB 2223
POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT

Reduce barriers—such as funding, lack of alignment and missed opportunities—to help more students attain postsecondary credentials.

**REVERSE TRANSFER CREDENTIALS**
Establish a statewide policy to allow students to earn an associate degree while continuing to work toward a bachelor’s degree. Ensure two-year and four-year college credits can be combined toward the credential.

**LAST DOLLAR/LAST MILE FINANCIAL AID**
Provide dedicated state financial aid to qualifying learners that fills in gaps in federal assistance (last dollar) and promotes attainment for learners just shy of completing a degree (last mile).

**OUTCOMES-BASED FUNDING**
Transition postsecondary funding models from those based on learner enrollment to ones based on learner outcomes. Dedicate more funding to programs and institutions that show demonstrated success in meeting success metrics such as job placement and long-term wage earnings.

**STACKABLE DEGREES AND CREDENTIALS**
Define and promote a combination of industry and academic credentials that reflect articulated pathways to advanced learning and employment. Ensure that postsecondary credential programs are widely accessible to all learners and reflect value in the labor market.
POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT

KEY POLICY

Reverse Transfer Credentials

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

The Texas Education Code provides for lower-division institutions of higher education and general academic teaching institutions to acknowledge credit attained at the lower-division institution and award an associate degree while a student is also working toward a bachelor’s degree.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

While the vehicle for reverse transfer of degrees is clearly present in Texas, the state can promote the actual conferral of awards more broadly across institutions—and to learners. The state can also collect, report and use data on student eligibility for and participation in reverse transfer processes established by institutions. In addition, if there is considerable variation in the processes established by institutions, stronger state coordination can achieve a single, comprehensive, cross-agency approach.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Colorado – Reverse Transfer Process
- Florida – Reverse Transfer Statewide Articulation Agreements

RESOURCES

- Reverse Transfer Process

POLICIES

- TX Education Code Section 61.833. Credit Transfer for Associate Degree
Last Dollar/Last Mile Financial Aid

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
While specific institutions of higher education or regional initiatives offer last dollar scholarships (e.g., Lone Star College-Promise Scholarship and Dallas County Promise, respectively), there is no state-funded last dollar scholarship that could be identified. No “last mile” financial aid policy could be identified in Texas.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
Texas can provide last dollar scholarships for high school graduates and adults seeking retraining or college credentials in high-need fields, as well as last mile aid for those who are just a semester or two away from earning a postsecondary credential.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Florida – Last Mile College Completion Program
- Rhode Island – Rhode Island Promise
- Tennessee – Tennessee Promise and Tennessee Reconnect

RESOURCES
- Lone Star College-Promise Scholarship
- Dallas County Promise

POLICIES
N/A
POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT

KEY POLICY

Outcomes-Based Funding

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

Texas includes some outcomes-based funding in its postsecondary allocations for two- and four-year institutions. However, it is not at a rate that is driving systemic changes to ensure optimal program alignment and outcomes.

At the same time, the Texas State Technical College (TSTC) system boasts one of the boldest performance-based funding models in the nation. TSTC is the only college in Texas to adopt a funding model based on student employment outcomes—aligning with its purpose of strengthening Texas with a highly skilled, technically competent workforce.

In 2013, the Texas Legislature moved away from a traditional contact-hour funding model for TSTC to a “returned value” formula. The impetus behind the move was to align TSTC’s funding model with its dual mission of workforce training and economic development. As such, the majority of TSTC’s funding is outcomes based and variable depending on the wage earnings of placed graduates. Bottom line: TSTC collects state funding only when graduates are successfully placed in jobs; how much it collects depends on the wages those jobs pay.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

Texas can adapt components of TSTC’s “returned value” formula to its community colleges and four-year universities. One option is starting with a process to identify the academic and industry credentials of value in the state—and use those as a basis for adapting a more robust, outcomes-oriented funding model to those identified as most needed (with leading input from business/industry).

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

• Missouri – Performance Funding
• Tennessee – Outcomes-Based Funding Formula

RESOURCES

• TSTC Funding Model

POLICIES

N/A
State Case Study

Key Policy

Stackable Degrees and Credentials

State Policy Analysis

There is no comprehensive policy that could be identified defining or promoting stackable credentials.

Opportunity to Strengthen

Texas can develop a cross-agency list of stackable credentials from K–12 to postsecondary to skills retraining that align with high-wage, high-skill, in-demand fields. Texas can then provide a grant that for free job training in those credentials for certain high-demand fields.

Promising Examples from Other States

- Colorado – Stackable Credential Legislation
- Idaho – SkillStack
- Indiana – Next Level Jobs Workforce Ready Grant

Resources

N/A

Policies

N/A
WORKFORCE READINESS

Ensure the skills, credentials and apprenticeships students pursue help to prepare a strong workforce within the state.

WORK-BASED LEARNING
Establish a statewide K–12 and postsecondary work-based learning program that promotes learning through a series of progressive learner experiences both in the classroom and in a work setting. Provide guidance and support for how education and business and industry collaborate to achieve mutual priorities.

APPRENTICESHIPS
Establish clearly defined program guidance for state-promoted apprenticeships outlining prerequisites, requirements, funding, stakeholder incentives and participant outcomes.

INDUSTRY-VALUED CREDENTIALS
Ensure all industry credentials earned in K–12 or postsecondary are aligned with high-demand, high-skill, high-wage occupations and valued by state and regional employers.

SKILLS RETRAINING/credentialing
Identify and promote non-degree programs and credentials that support new, transitioning and displaced learners in career change and advancement. Ensure that supports include funding supports for learners and incentives for participating employers who train or retrain them.
Texas

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
The Texas Education Agency has not yet released a comprehensive statewide framework for work-based learning. Due to the state’s size, work-based learning efforts in Texas are largely led by regional intermediaries or through cross-sector partnerships. For instance, one of the most mature is SA Works, housed in the San Antonio Economic Development Foundation. It serves as an industry-led organization that aligns the work-based learning options with the needs of San Antonio business and industry. It convenes partners across K–12, postsecondary and industry. Other such intermediaries can be found in Dallas, Houston and the Rio Grande Valley.

In 2021, Texas passed HB 1247 that requires the Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative to develop a strategic framework that will increase work-based learning opportunities within the state. The report will also determine program priorities, stakeholder roles and responsibilities, and identify skills and competencies aligned with industry demand and talent needs, with a particular focus on high-demand, high-growth industries that offer livable wages.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
Texas can collect data on the various types of work-based learning placements and experiences to gauge student access to consistent high-quality placements and to ensure that the state’s K–12 framework (once implemented) is having its intended outcomes.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Delaware – Work-Based Learning Practicum
- Georgia – Work-Based Learning Framework
- Rhode Island – PrepareRI Work-Based Learning Navigator

RESOURCES
- SA Works

POLICIES
- HB 1247 - Tri-Agency Work-Based Learning Strategic Framework
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

The Texas Workforce Commission, as authorized in Texas Education Code Chapter 133, grants funds to local public educational institutions and apprenticeship committees to support the costs of related classroom instruction in registered apprenticeship training programs. Local education agencies and apprenticeship committees act as fiscal agents for registered apprenticeship training programs. To qualify for funds, apprenticeship training programs and apprentices must be registered with the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship.

Other apprenticeship efforts are regional or local in nature, typically through an intermediary organization and partnership across K–12, postsecondary and employers.

In 2021, Texas passed SB 1094, which allows students to use 529 plans to pay for apprenticeship programs and qualified expenses such as fees, books, supplies, and required equipment. This policy change helps reduce the financial burden on students who participate in registered apprenticeship programs.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

Given its size, Texas can incentivize and/or financially support public-private partnerships to develop high-quality apprenticeship programs that leverage state and federal funds for CTE or workforce development. This can also include youth apprenticeships, more specifically.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Iowa – [Earn and Learn](#)
- Kentucky – [Tech Ready Apprentices for Careers in Kentucky](#) and [Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship](#)
- New Jersey – [Apprenticeship Network](#)
- South Carolina – [Apprenticeship Carolina](#)

RESOURCES

- [TWC Registered Apprenticeships](#)

POLICIES

- [TX Education Code Chapter 133](#), Apprenticeship System of Adult Career and Technology Education
- [TX SB 1094](#) Apprenticeship Education Expenses
KEY POLICY

Industry-Valued Credentials

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

In 2015, Texas passed HB 2729, which requires the state to include industry-based certifications as part of the state’s accountability system. The state currently uses credential attainment as one of its metrics indicating whether a student is college, career and/or military ready. The list is reviewed and updated annually. HB 3 provides funding to schools for any student to earn one credential on the approved list.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

According to ExcelinEd’s research with Burning Glass for CredentialsMatter.org, in 2017–18, just 31 percent of industry credentials earned by Texas K–12 students were asked for by employers and were associated with occupations that pay at least $15 per hour. Texas can take a more rigorous approach to evaluating which credentials are actually aligned with high-demand, high-skill and high-wage occupations across the state’s diverse regions. It can also ensure the collection and reporting of postsecondary data and outcomes.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Indiana – Promoted Industry Certifications
- Kentucky – Valid Industry Certifications
- Louisiana – Industry-Based Certification State Focus List

RESOURCES

- 2019–20 Approved List of Industry-Based Certifications
- Credentials Matter Texas Summary

POLICIES

- HB 2729
Texas

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
The state-funded Skills Development Fund provides local customized training opportunities for Texas businesses and workers to increase the skill levels and wages of the Texas workforce. Training providers can use grant funds for curriculum development, training materials, instructor certifications, and training equipment additions or upgrades. The Texas Workforce Commission administers funding for the program, which involves collaboration among businesses; public community and technical colleges, which serve as grantee training providers; the workforce development boards; and local economic development partners.

In 2021, Texas created the Texas Reskilling and Upskilling through Education (TRUE) Program to support workforce education. TRUE awards grants to eligible entities (such as postsecondary institutions, local chamber of commerce, and/or technical institutes) that offer workforce training programs that lead to industry certifications or other workforce credentials required for high-demand occupations. The legislation requires that training program must match regional workforce needs, be supported by a labor market analysis of job postings and employers hiring roles with the skills developed by the program, and not duplicate existing program offerings.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
Once implemented, Texas can collect and analyze data on the TRUE program to ensure that it is having the intended outcomes and determine if any additional supports or changes are necessary.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
• Indiana – Next Level Jobs Workforce Ready Grant
• Ohio – TechCred
• Washington – Worker Retraining Program

RESOURCES
• Skills Development Fund

POLICIES
• SB 1102 - Texas Reskilling and Upskilling through Education Program

KEY POLICY
Skills Retraining/Credentialing
EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Incentivize workforce engagement in student pathways and reduce the barriers that keep employers from participating.

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INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT INCENTIVES
Establish, sustain and promote a comprehensive set of industry and employer engagement incentives for supporting education to workforce pathways. Incentives may include grant funds, tax credits, or local and regional support services.

LEGAL BARRIERS
Remove or lessen legal barriers such as liability insurance, workers’ compensation and worksite age restrictions to provide more learners with work-based learning opportunities.
Industry Engagement Incentives

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
The Texas Workforce Commission’s Skills Development Fund program assists businesses and trade unions by financing the design and implementation of customized job training projects. This can include grants to businesses that partner with eligible applicants to provide training for new employees.

In 2021, Texas passed SB 1542 which is piloting an apprenticeship incentive program which offers a $2,500 sales tax refund for each apprenticeship hired and retained for 7 months, with a limit of 6 per taxable year for up to 5 years. The bill encourages employers to focus on historically underserved populations such as women, rural areas and emerging fields.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
Texas can provide incentives directly to employers who support education to workforce pathways or work-based learning.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Georgia – Work-Based Learning Premium Credit
- Indiana – Next Level Jobs Employer Training Grant
- Iowa – Tax Credit

RESOURCES
- Skills Development Fund

POLICIES
- SB 1524
Texas has been taking steps to reduce legal barriers to encourage participation in work-based learning programs. In 2017, the Texas governor signed a bill into law that allows public schools to purchase certain insurance coverage for the benefit of businesses and students participating in CTE programs and provided for some immunity from liability of certain public school students participating in these programs.

Texas can partner with an external staffing agency or company to employ work-based learning students who are then placed at businesses. This helps to reduce many of the burdens such as workers’ compensation liability and other restrictions.

### Promising Examples from Other States
- Kentucky – Apprenticeship Programs & Partnerships
- Rhode Island – Work Immersion Training Grant

### Resources
- Insurance Coverage

### Policies
- HB 639
DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

To ensure the strength of all the other policies, there must be cross-sector agreement on outcomes, strategies to get there and data to track progress.

PROGRAM QUALITY MEASURES
Establish shared statewide definitions and measures for quality of and success in education to workforce pathways. Ensure these shared priorities extend across agencies and systems and inform decisions about program offerings, funding and outcomes.

STATE LONGITUDINAL DATA SYSTEM
Ensure the state’s cross-agency data system collects and reports on data needed to evaluate education workforce programs against shared metrics for quality and success. Data should span agencies and education systems and into the workforce to inform decision-making and drive outcomes.
DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

Texas

KEY POLICY

Program Quality Measures

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

60x30TX sets a broad attainment goal—that by 2030, at least 60 percent of Texans ages 25–34 will have a certificate or degree, broken down across the spectrum of options. It also sets additional goals and completion targets at various years and for specific underrepresented student populations: African American, Hispanic, economically disadvantaged and male students. An additional target addresses enrollment in postsecondary by high school graduates.

The definition for qualifying credentials includes:
• A level I, level II or advanced technical certificate, as defined in the Guidelines for Instructional Programs in Workforce Education; and
• Any degree—associate, bachelor’s, master’s, professional or doctoral.

In addition to the attainment and completion targets, 60x30TX has goals for ensuring that students learn marketable skills (via postsecondary programs) and that student debt is limited to no more than 60 percent of first-year wages for graduates of Texas higher education institutions.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

While the state’s laudable 60x30TX attainment goal outlines the goals and metrics, the work is largely being done independently across the various agencies (as opposed to integrated). Texas can align its policies and various agency programs so that they are progressive, interconnected and complementary. Data collection and reporting of progress toward metrics can be more interconnected, as opposed to data from the Texas Education Agency, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and Texas Workforce Commission independently.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

• Colorado – Talent Pipeline Report
• Indiana – Governor’s Workforce Cabinet
• Rhode Island – PrepareRI

RESOURCES

• 60x30TX
• 2019 60x30TX Progress Report

POLICIES

N/A
The Texas Education Research Centers (ERCs) house the state’s longitudinal data system. The datasets span prekindergarten through higher education and into the workforce. While Texas is awash in data and the ERCs can connect data across agencies, there is questionable availability of this interconnected data to the average user. Only researchers can gain access to the ERCs, and even their projects must be applied for and approved.

Because Texas has so much data available through individual agencies, it can create a one-stop shop for different audiences of users, not just a research center for select users.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Colorado – Talent Pipeline Report
- Florida – Talent Development Council
- Kentucky – KYStats

RESOURCES
N/A

POLICIES
N/A