

## **Discussion Paper**

### **Adopting An Evidence Framework for Workforce Programs**

#### **Background**

Over the past year, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), in partnership with the Office of the Governor, Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC) and Rural Capital Area Workforce Board, have worked together to develop a new Evidence Framework to better measure the impact of publicly funded workforce development programs. Grant funding can be used to facilitate innovative approaches to improve job training programs and to scale proven methods that lead to better employment outcomes for workers and higher productivity for employers in Texas.

Texas is implementing an approach that will link grant funds directly to common priority outcomes while continuing to support innovative practices. This approach will create incentives for grant applicants to identify and use program models that have demonstrated a record of effective outcomes. To continue to encourage innovative, but less- tested program models, the state is designing a tiered strategy. Evidence tiers have been defined to support a graduated method for programs and applicants to adapt to evidence-based grants.

#### **Issues**

Currently TWC collects compliance data from their grantees and other data related to program enrollment and short-term outputs. As TWC shifts data collection efforts to focus more on the evidence of impact using the new performance tiers, work will be needed to improve data collection and data-sharing efforts to create a more holistic picture of program effectiveness.

The team is now preparing to implement the first part of the Evidence Framework, which will include incorporating the new metrics into the upcoming Building and Construction Trades grants, a skills-training initiative, for which the RFA will be released in the fall. Specifically, we are interested in adding a focus on models for training opportunity youth – those youth who are not in school or work. Opportunity youth have an ongoing need to connect to training opportunities that provide in demand skills that can be learned and applied quickly.

While the Texas team has begun the initial steps of integrating the Evidence Framework into their program procurement process, significant work is still to be done to develop a plan to utilize these new metrics throughout the contract management lifecycle, including using these new data sources to better understand what's working and to better support providers in improving services to support their clients.

A critical piece of this work is evaluating the project to ensure that we are learning from the grantee training projects – figuring out what works and providing real-time adjustments to programs so that training participants are positioned for success. TWC staff are working to

develop an RFP that will allow us to evaluate each of the Building Construction Trades grantees and other grant initiatives from our partners.

Once we have piloted the evidence framework initially, the Framework will be incorporated into other discretionary grants, i.e. Wagner-Peyser and the WIOA Governor's Reserve.

**Decision**

Staff are seeking Commission approval to incorporate a focus on serving Opportunity Youth as eligible participants in the 2020 Building and Construction Trades RFA for \$1.8 mi. From this funding, staff are requesting that \$300,000 be used to procure a program evaluator who can support the implementation of these grantees as we work to jointly build the evidence base for youth workforce development programs.