

1 **Ideas for Reconnecting Texas**
2 **Statewide Initiatives Funding to Support Texas Employers and Workers**
3 **in the Return to Work**
4 **AEL State Leadership Funds**
5 **Briefing Paper**
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7 *These ideas are presented by staff for consideration and are not intended to be all-encompassing*
8 *or to limit discussion and consideration on additional concepts presented by Commissioners*
9 *during the work session.*

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11 The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and its partners have shown significant agility and
12 innovation to support changing employer and job seeker needs since early 2020. However, with
13 businesses reopened and many employers in need of workers, TWC has an opportunity to
14 expand services again.

15 To support recovery efforts, remaining statewide AEL State Leadership Funds from Budget Year
16 (BY) 2022/AEL Program Year (PY) 2021–2022 total approximately \$3.8 million (Note:
17 Amounts are as of June 2021 and are subject to change.)

18 In an effort to meet the primary needs of Texas employers and workers, staff presents the
19 following tools and workforce support approaches for consideration.

20 **Job Preparedness, Including Short-Term Training and Upskilling**

21 *For consideration—Statewide High School Equivalency Virtual Provider (AEL State*
22 *Leadership Funds)* Approximately 3 million adult Texans lack a high school diploma or
23 its equivalent, and pandemic unemployment insurance claimant data during March 2020–
24 June 2021 shows that more than half a million claimants lack a high school diploma or its
25 equivalent. Although current AEL grantees provide high school
26 equivalency (HSE) preparation as a service, TWC staff has identified a need for
27 additional support in the provision of HSE instruction in order to have a
28 wider reach to an AEL-eligible population that may not be currently accessing AEL
29 program resources and to support attainment of a Texas certificate of high school
30 equivalency (TxCHSE). Staff proposes funding a statewide virtual
31 provider initiative to provide HSE preparation instruction and support for the purpose of
32 TxCHSE attainment and transition into postsecondary education or training. This
33 initiative:

- 34 • supports House Bill 1525 from the 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2021),
35 which continues the TWC HSE subsidy program originally passed in the previous
36 legislative session;
- 37 • further supports efforts to make AEL services available in a variety of formats; and
- 38 • strives to reach new participants who are currently not able to participate in
39 traditional AEL settings.

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41 *For consideration—BY’21 Proposed Initiatives (AEL State Leadership Funds)*
42 Remaining balances from BY’22 may be used to fund initiatives discussed in the June 30,
43 2021, work session on BY’21 AEL state leadership initiatives.