

Texas Talent Connection Grant Program

Program Information and Application Process Overview

Purpose. The Texas Talent Connection grant program, funded by Wagner-Peyser 7(b) funds, is established to support workforce training and job placement services, with outcomes intended to increase wages and job retention, through:

- Labor exchange services – activities such as job search, job referral, and job placement that may include counseling, assessment, and occupational and labor market information
- Special needs populations – activities targeted to assist groups of workers who are traditionally underrepresented in a given occupation
- Youth programs – activities supporting programs that satisfy one or more of the 14 youth elements allowable under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)¹
- Training – activities that are tied to work experience, internships, entrepreneurship, or job placement

Funded grants should complement, not duplicate, existing workforce services or programs.

Key Roles. The grant program uses federal funds, allocated to each state governor, for grants that support the workforce system. In Texas, Texas Talent Connection grant funding for this program is administered through the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and includes responsibilities for grant contract negotiation, implementation, management, and monitoring activities. The Texas Workforce Investment Council, on behalf of the Office of the Governor, issues the call for applications and facilitates the grant selection process to recommend awards for funding. A selection committee provides an impartial review and scoring of proposals for grant funding.

Application Process. In Texas, the Texas Talent Connection grant application will be open to applicants for a period of 30 days. All of the required elements that constitute the application must be received in full and in the requested format no later than close of business on the due date. If any element of the application is not included, the application will be considered incomplete and will not be considered for funding. TWC conducts a preliminary review of grant applications for policy and legal compliance. Prior performance on workforce contracts is also considered. Applications that meet the required criteria are sent for consideration by a selection committee. The selection committee utilizes a blind review and scoring process for grant proposals that allows for an impartial recommendation for grant funding. Based upon the results of this process, a recommendation is made by the Office of the Governor to TWC regarding the funding of projects, and grant recipients are notified of any award. TWC then initiates contract negotiation with each grant recipient. All awards are subject to the laws, rules, and regulations which govern grant awards managed by TWC. Any grant award notification may be rescinded if, during development of the contract, circumstances arise that make the grantee ineligible.

¹ The 14 youth elements described by the WIOA are:

1. Tutoring, study skills training and instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to high school/GED credential or a recognized postsecondary credential;
2. Alternative secondary school services or dropout recovery services;
3. Paid and unpaid work experiences that include academic and occupational education summer employment and employment during the school year, pre-apprenticeship programs, internships and job shadowing, and on the job training.
4. Occupational skills training, which may include priority for training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials aligned with in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the relevant workforce area;
5. Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster;
6. Leadership development opportunities, which may include community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors;
7. Support services;
8. Adult mentoring;
9. Follow-up for at least 12 months after exit;
10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling (may include substance abuse counseling and referral);
11. Financial literacy education;
12. Entrepreneurial skills training;
13. Local market information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the workforce area; and
14. Activities to help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training.