



Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative



Linking Education and Workforce: Spurring Economic Growth across Texas



TRI-AGENCY WORKFORCE INITIATIVE ¹

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About the Initiative

Tri-Agency Mission

To build a strong Texas workforce and ensure that Texans are prepared for jobs in the industries that power the state's economy today and tomorrow.



Tri-Agency Vision

Texans of all ages should have access to high-quality education and workforce training that empowers them to achieve their full potential.

The Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative, launched by Governor Greg Abbott in 2016, seeks to achieve the ambitious goal of ensuring that all Texans achieve their full potential and contribute to the state's continued economic growth. The Texas Education Agency (TEA), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) are working collaboratively to implement the vision of House Bill 3 (HB 3), the transformative school finance legislation passed in 2019, and to integrate the goals of that legislation with the goals in the state's 60x30TX plan to increase higher education completion and workforce readiness. The Tri-Agency partners have numerous ongoing projects that will advance this work and have identified additional priorities and action items in support of the Tri-Agency vision and mission.

History of the Initiative

Governor Abbott established the Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative in March 2016, when he tasked the Commissioners of TEA, THECB, and TWC to work together on five initial charges centered on

developing strong links between education and industry, with the goal of helping Texas grow in economic prosperity.

In 2019, the 86th Texas Legislature passed transformative school finance legislation, HB 3, that calls for sweeping reforms in education and will shape the future of the Texas workforce. To fully implement the vision of HB 3, Governor Abbott has charged the three agencies with streamlining implementation of the legislation and identifying solutions for long-term workforce needs across the state.

House Bill 3

HB 3, a sweeping and historic school finance bill, was passed by the 86th Texas Legislature in 2019 and signed by Governor Abbott. The bill was the result of months of work beginning with the Texas Commission on Public School Finance and culminating in bipartisan work by members of the Texas House and Senate. HB 3 is one of the most transformative Texas education bills in recent history and is foundational to the 2020 charges for the Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative. Major components of HB 3 include the following:

- Supporting teachers and rewarding teacher excellence
- Focusing on learning and improving student outcomes
- Increasing funding and equity
- Reducing and reforming property taxes and recapture

60x30TX

The 60x30TX higher education strategic plan was established in 2015 and contains four broad goals, each with a set of targets that will move the state toward reaching these goals. By charting a student-centered course and prioritizing higher education completion and workforce readiness, this plan enables the state, institutions of higher education, and the private sector to set Texas on a path toward continued prosperity. It recognizes that to do this, Texas students must earn quality postsecondary credentials with skills that employers need but do so without taking on unmanageable debt. THECB will revisit the plan over the next year to determine if and how these goals should be updated in response to the state's quickly evolving workforce and economy:

Overarching goal: By 2030, at least 60 percent of Texans ages 25–34 will have a certificate or degree.

Completion goal: By 2030, at least 550,000 students in that year will complete a certificate or an associate's, bachelor's, or master's degree from an institution of higher education in Texas.

Marketable skills goal: By 2030, all graduates from Texas public institutions of higher education will have completed programs with identified marketable skills.

Student debt goal: By 2030, undergraduate student loan debt will not exceed 60 percent of first-year wages for graduates of Texas public institutions.

Ongoing Projects

60x30TX Refresh

Prompted by the challenges and impacts of COVID-19, efforts are currently underway to reexamine and refine the 60x30TX goals to effectively meet the needs of the state's workforce, its economy, and individual Texans. The proposed framework for this project would reorganize the existing goals and potentially add new goals within three overarching, future-facing priorities: to advance economic resiliency by building a talent-strong Texas, to ensure opportunities for economic mobility for every Texan, and to harness innovation to create a more vibrant future for Texas and its residents. An extensive stakeholder engagement plan will be used, drawing from educational institutions and incorporating critical voices from students, employers, and other groups across the state.

College and Career Advising

The Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative is leading a statewide effort—in partnership with institutions of higher education, school districts, employers, and state and national organizations—to innovate and strengthen college and career advising. The aim is to ensure that all Texas students—from middle school through adult learners—have access to high-quality college and career advising, including well-designed digital resources and well-trained counselors and advisors. These resources will include curated information for students and their families, virtual advising, an artificial intelligence chatbot that can text personalized reminders and guidance to students, data dashboards for advisers and institutional leaders, and the Texas OnCourse digital academy with extensive just-in-time training and support for counselors and advisors across the state.

College Credit for Heroes

The College Credit for Heroes (CCH) program enables veterans to earn college credit for their military experience, education, and training. Institutions of higher education participating in the program—known as CCH Partner Schools—complete local evaluations of veterans' joint service transcripts and award credit toward postsecondary credentials. Awarding this credit recognizes veterans for their military service as they transition to new career pathways.

Data Infrastructure Modernization

The Tri-Agency partners are working together to modernize the state's education and workforce data infrastructure to provide user-centric, purposeful tools, applications, and sites that are accessible, insightful, and useful for decision-making; improve the efficiency of collection, analysis, and reporting for the agency and for stakeholders through upgraded automation; and responsibly expand data access and availability to research and other partners. The partners are also focused on assessing existing governance structures and practices, including those involving shared assets, such as Education Research Centers and Texas Public Education Information Resource (TPEIR), and developing a road map for near-term governance improvements.

Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools

Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools (P-TECH) are innovative open-enrollment high schools that allow students least likely to attend college an opportunity to receive both a high school diploma and a credential and/or an associate's degree. The hallmark of the P-TECH model is its career focus and the provision of work-based learning. P-TECH programs enroll historically underserved students, targeting those who are at-risk and economically disadvantaged, and provide students with the opportunity to complete a course of study that combines high school and postsecondary courses and enables students to earn credentials and gain work experience in high-wage, in-demand industries. Texas is home to 79 designated P-TECHs that qualify for HB 3 incentive funding in 2020–2021.

Pre-Kindergarten Partnerships

A child care/pre-K partnership is a collaboration between a public school pre-K program and one or more quality-rated child care providers to provide high-quality care and education to three- and four-year-old children. This collaboration is sometimes referred to as an “early learning partnership.” Formal partnerships exist when eligible three- and four-year-old children are dually enrolled in subsidized child care with a Texas Rising Star three- or four-star facility and public school pre-K. The partnerships allow for eligible students to receive wraparound care to better support the needs of working parents. Both TWC and TEA support pre-K partnerships through funding. For dually enrolled children, TWC pays for wraparound child care that occurs before and after pre-K instruction. Both TWC and TEA make funding available to promote the development of partnerships between child care providers and school districts.

Registered Apprenticeship Programs

Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) are registered with the US Department of Labor and combine paid on-the-job training with related classroom instruction. RAPs enable apprentices to gain valuable knowledge and skills in a variety of occupations while working under the guidance of journey workers. While learning, apprentices embark on promising career pathways and earn valuable industry-based certifications. RAPs are present in hundreds of occupations in both traditional and emerging industries. Some programs, in coordination with community colleges, recognize the value of the apprenticeship training model and have launched initiatives in which apprentices earn postsecondary credentials.

Texas Regional Pathways Network

The Texas Regional Pathways Network (TRPN) builds regional talent pipelines that spur economic growth across the state and ensure that all Texans have the skills and credentials needed for economic advancement. The TRPN brings together state and regional leaders to build strong educational and career pathways that prepare Texans for careers in high-wage, in-demand industries. Leaders engaged in the TRPN represent multiple sectors, including K–12 education, postsecondary education, workforce and economic development, business and industry, government, and nonprofit and community-based organizations. The TRPN supports regional leaders by facilitating peer learning,

strategic planning, and sharing best practices, challenges, and lessons learned in pathways development.

Governor's Charges

In February 2020, Governor Abbott charged the Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative, consisting of the Commissioners of TEA, THECB, and TWC, to marshal the combined resources of the three agencies to carry forward the reforms adopted by the 86th Legislature through the passage of HB 3 and to identify strategies to address long-term workforce development needs across the state. These charges culminated with this report, which was presented to the governor in November 2020. The governor's charges follow.

Readiness

To improve student readiness in Texas, a number of strategies have been identified related to high-quality child care, early reading, middle school, and college, career, and military readiness. These strategies will address many of the challenges that stakeholders identified for this charge, including robust literacy experiences starting at an early age. The impact of all of this work is significantly bolstered by deeper engagement with parents, who are always a child's first teacher. But this work critically depends on ensuring the availability of properly supported professional educators working hand in hand with those parents.



There is a shortage of qualified career and technical education (CTE) teachers and lack of high-impact professional development opportunities for those teachers, counselors, and administrators. These challenges are coupled with insufficient prioritization of counseling and advising activities, creating gaps in the education and career pathways that support the successful transition of young people into the workforce, ultimately building the state's economy. In order to support student enrollment in education and career pathways that reflect the needs of the state's economy, the Commissioners are committed to ensuring that students and families have the support, tools, and resources needed to achieve education and career success by expanding access to high-quality child care programs,

increasing kindergarten readiness, fostering career readiness in middle school, and promoting family and caregiver engagement.

Charge: The Commissioners should recommend strategies to ensure students are prepared for future growth at each stage in the educational pipeline. Specifically, the Commissioners should consider:

- **improvements to the state’s subsidized child care programs that will increase kindergarten readiness and options for working parents;**
- **the implementation of HB 3’s focus on early reading;**
- **methods to support middle school students in strengthening literacy and quantitative reasoning skills and improving readiness for high school and future success; and**
- **strategies to ensure students demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in their college, career, or military service.**

Completion

To increase completion rates in Texas, a number of strategies have been identified related to dual credit evaluation, direct college enrollment, community college completion rates, and postsecondary credential completion. While Texas has seen increases in the number of residents with a certificate or degree in the last few years, we are not making progress at the pace needed to achieve our 60x30TX goals on time. For example, the average rate of increase from 2016 to 2018 was 0.8 percent, while a 1.3 percent annual increase is needed to reach the 2030 target of 60 percent. The annual rates of increase for underrepresented groups, including African American, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students, are even further from the necessary rates.



Many students who begin an academic or workforce program fail to complete a credential; others spend more time and resources than necessary to finish their programs, amassing unnecessary debt or delaying entry into their desired career paths. Focusing on how we can help students overcome obstacles and complete high-value credentials will not only help the state achieve its higher education and workforce goals but will equip students with the tools necessary to obtain in-demand, high-wage employment.

Charge: The Commissioners should recommend strategies to ensure students are prepared for future growth at each stage in the educational pipeline. Specifically, the Commissioners should consider:

- strategies for strengthening dual credit offerings, ensuring rigor, and creating clear pathways toward credentials of value for dual credit students;
- factors that contribute to students' decisions not to enroll directly in college or workforce training following high school graduation;
- strategies for measuring and increasing completion rates at community colleges, including noncredit certificate programs; and
- strategies for increasing the number of Texans who complete high-value, high-quality credentials among populations who previously stopped out or dropped out of educational institutions.

Transitions

To improve transitions in Texas, a number of strategies have been identified related to educational and career advising, affordability, student success, and the Windham School District. Although many students enroll in college directly after high school, that approach is no longer the sole, or even most common, path. Today, more than 200,000 high school students in Texas enroll in college courses every year. Many more will pursue college after having first entered the workforce or the military, and an estimated four million adults in Texas have completed some college coursework without having completed a degree. The ability of this diverse group of students to navigate the education-to-workforce pipeline successfully and efficiently is vital to the state's economy.



Educational pathways can sometimes be unclear or poorly aligned with workforce needs, which can result in students stopping out due to frustration, bearing additional expenses due to the completion of excess credit hours, or being unable to find in-demand, high-wage employment upon completion. Academic and career advising can be inconsistent across different systems and is not always readily available for nontraditional students. For many students, the largest obstacle is financial, due to factors such as a lack of clear information about financial aid options, the need to work while completing a credential, and the need for resources to cover tuition, textbooks, or other necessary

items such as child care or broadband access. Clarifying pathways and improving student supports can help all students as they transition through educational programs and into the workforce.

Charge: The Commissioners should analyze and make recommendations regarding strategies to streamline educational pathways, ensuring students can seamlessly transition into high-wage and high-demand careers. Specifically, the Commissioners should:

- **recommend strategies to better support the advising needs and career exploration opportunities for current and potential students, including transitioning veterans and life-long learners;**
- **examine drivers of student debt and default and recommend strategies for improving the affordability and transparency of higher education;**
- **identify best practices to increase the efficiency of state educational institutions and private-sector training programs in adapting to state workforce needs; and**
- **evaluate existing efforts, particularly those at Windham School District, to reintroduce formerly incarcerated individuals into the workforce with skills and credentials for high-demand careers.**

Upskilling

To increase upskilling opportunities, a number of strategies have been identified related to workforce needs, career and technical education, student success, and regulatory barriers. TWC oversees numerous initiatives to facilitate the continuous learning and training of Texas workers. These activities are designed to increase an employee's abilities and to minimize skill gaps employers may experience in the workplace. The Skills Development Fund, a primary example of an upskilling initiative, provides local, customized training opportunities for Texas businesses and workers. Success is achieved through collaboration among businesses, public community and technical colleges, Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards), and economic development partners. As we continue this work, the Tri-Agency partners recognize the need to increase the state's capacity to provide education and training experiences that lead to high-value credentials aligned with the needs of high-wage and in-demand occupations.

Charge: The Commissioners should recommend strategies for improving the state's capacity to produce credentials of value aligned with the needs of high-wage and high-demand occupations. Analyses should include:

- **evaluations of workforce needs in various regions of the state and how these needs align with the credentials currently offered by educational institutions;**
- **recommendations to strengthen the value of CTE courses by ensuring multiple entry and exit points and opportunities for work-based learning;**
- **recommendations to improve the alignment of community college curricula with regional workforce needs, addressing the needs of first-time job seekers and lifelong learners;**

- **recommendations to improve access to privately funded internships and to increase employer-sponsored educational opportunities for current employees; and**
- **recommendations for reducing state regulatory and licensing barriers to the broader creation and adoption of apprenticeships and upskill and/or reskill programs by industry.**

Educator Pipeline

To improve the educator pipeline, a number of strategies have been identified related to teacher student debt, teacher recognition, and literacy training. These strategies will address many of the challenges stakeholders identified for this charge, including student debt accumulation due to high tuition costs and low wages, lack of knowledge about loan forgiveness programs, unpaid training requirements for Educator Preparation Programs, teacher shortages in certain subjects and rural areas, and how teaching as a profession is valued overall. These challenges create bottlenecks in the supply of highly qualified and well-trained individuals entering the teaching profession across the state.

In order to ensure that young people across the state receive high-quality educations that prepare them for future success, the Commissioners are committed to improving the educator pipeline by reviewing and streamlining the state's financial aid system, including supporting entry into the teaching profession. The implementation of HB 3's reading improvement strategies will enhance teacher education and recognition of effective performance. Similarly, HB 3's Teacher Incentive Allotment creates a pathway for high-performing teachers to obtain six-figure salaries, a development that is designed to create profoundly positive impacts on recruitment and retention for the teaching profession. Finally, certain other targeted efforts, including new teacher mentoring, grow-your-own educator pathway programs, and robust teacher residency systems will continue to develop a strong educator pipeline as those efforts are thoughtfully scaled.

Charge: The Commissioners should analyze and make recommendations to increase the supply of highly qualified and well-trained individuals entering the teaching profession across the state.

Analyses should include:

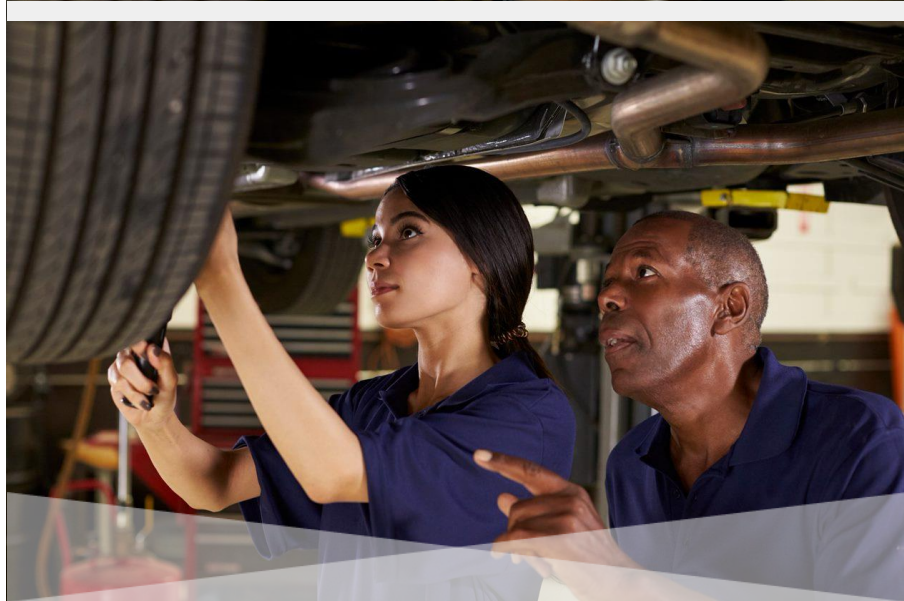
- **an evaluation of existing programs that seek to lower the education costs and debt for future teachers, including recommendations for efficiency improvements and innovations;**
- **recommendations to ensure that teacher education and training will fully implement HB 3's reading improvement strategies; and**
- **recommendations to ensure that high-quality teachers are recognized for the value they provide to students and our state.**

Partnerships

To strengthen regional partnerships in Texas, a number of strategies have been identified related to rural economic development and workplace educational opportunities. The Tri-Agency partners

continuously explore ways to encourage economic growth in all communities, including rural communities, throughout Texas. The best opportunities for economic growth occur when stakeholders work together as partners to strengthen education and workforce programs within their communities and regions. When considering this charge, the Tri-Agency partners are well aware of

the many times stakeholders come together for in-person and virtual meetings. These gatherings, large or small, can be very important for developing common goals and forming partnerships. One challenge for those who take part in these gatherings is that some individuals are often asked to attend multiple



meetings and to take part in the same conversations. As a result, fatigue sets in, and once-robust partnerships lose their momentum. Another challenge is the absence of voices that could greatly inform a new initiative or program. Those who have the greatest insights or new perspectives are often absent.

As we continue this work, the Tri-Agency partners see the need to alleviate the demands and constraints often associated with bringing groups of people together—whether locally, regionally, or statewide. As we promote and support the formation of partnerships, we recognize that the best partnerships are those that are formed and sustained at the local level. Going forward, we will challenge ourselves and others to build partnerships in a new light: make exceptional use of our limited time together, seek out new partners, welcome new perspectives, and find innovative solutions that leverage new technologies.

Charge: The Commissioners should explore and recommend options for increasing economic activity in rural Texas, including innovative collaborations among employers, institutions, and rural communities, and easing of regulatory burdens that may inhibit economic growth and collaboration. The Commissioners should also explore ways for businesses, school districts, and institutions of higher education to partner together to offer expanded educational options to employees and their children and to strengthen educational and workforce programs across the state.

To address the Governor’s charges, the three agencies worked together to gather stakeholder feedback. Through analysis of the feedback, the Tri-Agency partners identified three key priorities, which are listed below. Each priority is followed by strategies, which describe how a priority can be accomplished. Strategies are followed by Action Items, which give detail on work that will be done to accomplish the strategies. To visualize the organization of this section, consider the following:

PRIORITIES → STRATEGIES → ACTION ITEMS

Priority I: Pathways

Support efficient and flexible pathways to earning high-value credentials linked to high-wage, in-demand jobs.

Strategy 1.1: Identify students’ most efficient paths to attaining high-value credentials by:

- aligning training programs and associated credentials with in-demand, high-wage industries;
- mapping clear pathways to high-value credentials for all Texans, including veterans, incumbent and dislocated workers, and youth involved with the justice system;
- improving alignment across secondary and postsecondary CTE pathways; and
- creating clear on- and off-ramps for pathways through expanded credit and credential portability.

Action Items

- Coordinate efforts to increase short-term training leading to high-value credentials in order to reskill and upskill Texans.
- Develop criteria for a shared definition of “high-value credentials” and ensure they are aligned across the Tri-Agency partners and provide clear career pathways.
- Create a regional model to provide clear career pathways and opportunities for adult learners to return to postsecondary education and workforce training to complete high-value postsecondary credentials.
- Work in consultation with institutions of higher education to develop a joint services transcript review process to determine if a transitioning service member or veteran may be close to earning a high-value credential.
- Perform a comprehensive review of Texas transfer policies and adopt options to improve student success.
- Collaborate with partner agencies to create secondary and postsecondary CTE pathways for articulated adoption by institutions of higher education and local education agencies through the alignment of secondary and Workforce Education Course Manual (WECM) courses.

- Promote curricular innovations in CTE and the incorporation of industry-based certifications into course and program objectives, prioritizing regional coordination and labor-market alignment.
- Encourage institutions of higher education and local education agencies to provide equitable access and ensure rigor in dual credit programs that lead to academic and workforce credentials.
- Provide resources and guidance on the incorporation of employability skills into the training and education experience.
- Provide guidance on best uses of online vs. hands-on learning when technical expertise is needed in technical and trade training services.
- Guide the development of specialized trainings for high-wage, in-demand jobs that require specialized skills and may not require a standard certification.
- Assist Windham School District completers with submission of occupational licensing applications before release.
- Align reentry services across Windham School District, Workforce Solutions Offices, and TWC.
- Improve data collection for, reporting on, and accountability for dual credit offerings.
- Complete a comprehensive review of dual credit memoranda of understanding between institutions of higher education and local education agencies.
- Work in consultation with institutions of higher education to build multiple mathematics pathways from high school through higher education and into the workplace.
- Merge Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps with career and technical education.
- Review, update, and maintain certification and credential inventory in coordination with the Texas Workforce Investment Council and the Tri-Agency partners, as required by HB 2729 (85th Texas Legislature, Regular session).

Strategy 1.2

Strengthen and streamline collaboration among key education and workforce system stakeholders who are developing pathways at the regional level by:

- integrating state strategies and supports for regional collaboration; and
- leveraging existing structures to better connect regional education and workforce systems.

Action Items:

- Examine existing regional collaborations and implement improvements, considering options such as recognition for high-quality regional partnerships and regional intermediaries.
- Develop informal and formal pre-K partnerships between the Texas Rising Star child care and public school systems to support transitions and readiness.
- Strengthen coordination across state agencies overseeing the multiple components of early education.

- Work with regional partners to identify and publish information about skills and credentials needed for emerging industries.
- Disseminate best practices for regional upskilling initiatives to multiple audiences across the state.
- Create programs to encourage and facilitate the continuous training and upward movement of Texas' workforce.
- Enhance employer outreach regarding Workforce Solutions Business Services, Work Opportunity Tax Credits, and fidelity bonding.
- Create an online application process for entities seeking funding through grants such as the Jobs and Education in Texas (JET) Grant Program and the Skills Development Fund.
- Increase collaboration between TEA and Education Service Centers to develop a train-the-trainer model for professional development for teachers, especially for teaching literacy aligned with the Science of Teaching Reading curriculum.
- Leverage existing tax and abatement and incentive programs to expand industry and employer partnerships with local education agencies to support local CTE programs.

Strategy 1.3

Expand opportunities for work-based learning experiences by:

- accelerating the development of high-quality work-based learning experiences that provide participants with meaningful opportunities; and
- supporting engagement by industry partners.

Action Items:

- Work in consultation with Boards and economic development organizations to increase the number of employers participating in the TXWORKS paid internship program for undergraduate students and increase usage of the program.
- Assist employers in recognizing and implementing upskilling opportunities.
- Expand internships, apprenticeships, and other work-based learning experiences that allow participants to earn wages and/or course credit.
- Develop pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs in which the first year is completed in high school and serves primarily as an instructional year.
- Match employers with successful job training programs in their industries.
- Increase access to insurance and liability coverage for employers who host students under the age of 18.
- Expand opportunities for students to earn industry-based certifications through participation in work-based learning.

Priority 2: Support

Ensure students receive the supports necessary to succeed at all stages of their educations and in their transitions to the workforce.

Strategy 2.1

Ensure students and families have the support, tools, and resources needed to achieve education and career success by:

- supporting early childhood education, foundational literacy pedagogy, and high school and postsecondary readiness in middle school; and
- designing effective family engagement strategies.

Action Items:

- Expand Texas Rising Star certifications, supports, and school-readiness enhancements.
- Strengthen the early childhood education workforce to provide high-quality education for young children and support kindergarten readiness.
- Develop stronger coordination across state agencies providing early education, linking key data sets to support a higher degree of collaboration and data-driven decisions.
- Work with employers to establish on-site, high-quality child care facilities.



- Ensure availability of curricular resources and teacher training specifically to support the growth of biliteracy in the student population.
- Create and align coursework, training, and curriculum for Educator Preparation Programs with the principles of the Science of Teaching Reading.
- Create certifications that focus on foundational literacy pedagogy for Educator Preparation Programs.

- Move the deadline for completion of educator training from before the first year of placement to the end of the first year.
- Provide differentiated options for implementing Reading Academies to meet teacher and district needs.
- Create a centralized point of access for families to retrieve information about the early childhood system, as detailed in the Statewide Early Learning Strategic Plan.
- Continue implementation of Reading Academies and professional development aligned with the Science of Teaching Reading.
- Relaunch Texas Adolescent Literacy Academies.
- Expand algebra readiness initiatives at the elementary and middle school levels.
- Study the effectiveness of middle school CTE coursework in contributing to high-value pathways.
- Promote the use of Teacher Incentive Allotment designations and the Teacher of the Year celebration as strategies for teacher recognition.

Strategy 2.2

Expand access to effective college and career advising by:

- streamlining and modernizing advising offerings and services for students to support informed decision-making about postsecondary education and careers; and
- offering professional development to educators and guidance counselors on advising services.

Action Items:

- Improve alignment among advising programs to better leverage resources, ensure quality, and provide more consistent information across the education and workforce systems.
- Expand the reach and impact of advising programs across different student populations.
- Provide coordinated guidance and professional development opportunities for secondary and postsecondary advisors and workforce career and education outreach specialists to improve the advising services students receive as they transition from secondary to postsecondary and the workforce.
- Create a central online portal where returning adult learners, including dislocated workers, can connect with institutions of higher education that fit their educational and career goals and receive academic and career advising.
- Explore options to expand the central portal to benefit other user groups, such as students in high school or currently enrolled in college.
- Conduct outreach to encourage student interest in high-wage, in-demand jobs.

Strategy 2.3

Reduce financial barriers in education by:

- addressing gaps such as broadband internet and early child care;
- refining the Texas financial aid system; and
- providing financial supports to Texans who pursue careers in teaching.

Action Items:

- Perform a comprehensive review of the Texas financial aid system and its impact on student participation and success, including an exploration of ways to encourage innovation and improve alignment of the system with 60x30TX goals.
- Explore ways to encourage institutions of higher education to offer and expand high-quality, evidence-based student support programs.
- Enhance the quality of financial aid information made available to students, their families, and advisors.
- Develop shareable, customizable, and scalable digital resources to expand OERTX, the state repository for postsecondary open education resources.
- Work with employers to develop strategies to address child care issues experienced within the community and/or by their employees.
- Work in consultation with providers to expand and support online workforce training and education opportunities.
- Address statewide challenges in accessing digital devices and broadband internet.
- Address unpaid teaching requirements, such as field residencies, for Education Preparation Programs.
- Maximize the effectiveness of existing programs providing financial assistance to those entering teaching.
- Build a hub or central website that distills all information for loan forgiveness programs to create a coordinated approach to reducing debt for educators.

Priority 3: Infrastructure

Create a robust infrastructure for agency collaboration around common goals, data, and processes to ensure improved student outcomes.



Strategy 3.1

Align statewide education and workforce systems with statewide priorities and goals by:

- updating and aligning goals and priorities across the agencies;
- ensuring finance systems support these goals and priorities; and
- braiding funding to better leverage resources.

Action Items:

- Update the 60x30TX plan to include broader attention to adult learners, strengthen efforts to identify and prioritize high-value postsecondary credentials, build capacity to address existing and emerging challenges through innovation, and drive equitable economic opportunity for all Texans.
- Review higher education funding formulas to explore ways to encourage the completion of credentials through efficient pathways and improve equity.
- Analyze distributions and uses of funds such as the Skills Development Fund to ensure employer needs are met across regions and industries.
- Develop state-level braided funding strategies for major public education and workforce funding streams, including Perkins, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and Wagner-Peyser.
- Align existing college, career, and military readiness CTE indicators with Perkins career and technical education completer indicators.
- Research the feasibility of adding Registered Apprenticeship completion to the approved industry-based certification list.

Strategy 3.2

Make educational and workforce data accessible and useful to the public, stakeholders, and decision-makers by:

- developing a modern data infrastructure; and
- integrating data systems and research and development efforts.

Action Items:

- Develop a vision and conceptual design for a modern data infrastructure that supports better access to data, delivers more timely and useful information to decision-makers, and improves access to data resources, such as those contained in the Education Research Center and the Texas Public Education Information Resource.
- Assess and strengthen cross-agency data and website governance related to combined agency data assets using industry-based best practices.
- Ensure all data operations are cross-functional and track the impact of initiatives across different stages and all three agencies.
- Align definitions of data elements used for matching student data across agencies.
- Develop shared interpretations of Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) parameters across agencies.
- Identify and streamline overlapping or related reports across agencies, specifically seeking opportunities for joint reporting, such as postsecondary outcomes and student pathways reporting, and more meaningful stakeholder reporting, such as providing occupation demand reports by Education Service Center region and/or Higher Education Region.
- Enhance usability and value of current data, including employment and wage data.
- Provide timely supply-and-demand projections and other data resources in user-friendly formats.
- Improve regional workforce data collection and analysis by including skill requirements for occupations.

Strategy 3.3

Ensure coordination and collaboration across all three agencies' operations by:

- adopting and working toward shared outcomes;
- developing shared processes, including planning and monitoring processes, and infrastructure; and
- creating clear communication channels.

Action Items:

- Articulate a specific, consistent planning process shared across the three agencies for all work in which at least two agencies share responsibility.
- Formalize responsibility for and oversight of planning and monitoring to specific units, offices, or roles within each agency to ensure system sustainability.
- Establish a protocol for review across agencies of relevant bills and potential statutory changes to identify potential conflicts or opportunities as early as possible.
- Create and support interagency workgroups on issues that are enriched by collaboration, cooperation, and consistency across the three partner agencies, such as advising and data governance.
- Create a shared register of experts and responsible parties within each agency to bolster communication across agencies and foster connections beyond individuals' personal networks.
- Develop policies that focus primarily on outcomes rather than on compliance.
- Develop and track high-quality performance indicators to ensure grants and programs are delivering a high return on investment.
- Explore the potential for colocating personnel across the Tri-Agency partners to identify and establish alignment of all career education and exploration programs and initiatives with shared target populations.