

# Texas Talent Connection Grant Program

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Are there specific requirements in the application for Texas Talent Connection grants?**

Yes. All applicants should closely review the application and contracting requirements, particularly the Performance Metrics and Quarterly Reporting section and the List of Grant Products to be Developed with Grant Funds section.

Submission of a grant application confirms agreement with the General Terms and Conditions, which now include the following: products developed with funds from this grant, including curricula, assessments, training models, tools, and other resources such as student/teacher guidebooks, will be remitted to the Texas Workforce Investment Council in electronic format 60 days prior to the end date of the contract.

As in previous years, increased emphasis references partnerships that engage employers and support self-sustained continuation without further grant funding. Please review the application carefully to ensure that your application meets any new requirements. If you have questions about the application, please click [here](#) for assistance.

### **When can we apply for Texas Talent Connection grants?**

Eligible entities may apply for Texas Talent Connection grant funds once the call for applications has been made by the Office of the Governor. Check this [site](#) for information.

### **Where is the grant application? How can I obtain a grant application?**

The Texas Talent Connection grant program application will be available during the 30-day open call for applications. The application will be posted on this [site](#) at that time.

### **Can I receive notices about the grant?**

Notice of the call for applications will be sent to the executive director of each local workforce development board and the president of each community and technical college. Partnership with workforce system partners is encouraged. Other interested parties will find information on the open call for applications [here](#).

### **What is the status of our application?**

To confirm the status of a Texas Talent Connection grant application that has been submitted, please click [here](#).

### **Will the application or selection process for Texas Talent Connection grants change from previous grants funded by Wagner-Peyser 7(b)?**

Standard processes have been developed to ensure efficient facilitation of the application process and objectivity in this offering's selection process. However, the Texas Talent Connection grant program will be moving to a more evidence- and outcome-based application for future offerings. Applicants will be asked to provide evidence data that supports their proposed program's model and outcomes. To read more about this new evidence approach, please click [here](#).

### **Can an applicant apply for three years of funding?**

Applicants to the Texas Talent Connection grant program in Texas may only apply for funding for one year. Successful applicants (grantees) may be eligible for two additional annual awards for a total of no more than three years maximum—consecutive or otherwise—for essentially similar grant activities that demonstrate successful outcomes.

Grantees must reapply each year for additional funding consideration. There is no guarantee of award in any year. An applicant may present a proposal for three years of a project or program to present the full scope of the proposal as part of the sustainability plan. However, the application must clearly delineate the outcomes,

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activities, deliverables, and timeline tied to a budget for the single year for which funding is being requested; otherwise, the application will be rendered ineligible for consideration.

### **What information is required in the sustainability plan?**

The Texas Talent Connection grant program is a limited source of funding. Therefore, all applicants must provide a sustainability plan that demonstrates how, by the end of the grant period, the grantee will have identified sufficient additional resources to continue the activities initiated under the grant without further Texas Talent Connection grant funding. Suggested elements include the following:

Plan for continuation beyond the grant-funded phases of the project—

- goals and strategies that will be implemented during the grant period to support continuation
- methods to document and evaluate project outcomes data and to identify promising practices that can be used to help jump start the next project cycle
- partner/stakeholder involvement during the grant to develop a foundation of committed support
- communication and public awareness primarily with industry and training providers in the region
- resources in the project design that can be developed or leveraged to sustain future operations
- project activities that are implemented and maintained by project partners to reduce or eliminate some expenses, attract additional partners, and identify additional sources of funding

Additional sources of funding identified to sustain the project—

- institution's commitment to continuing the project using existing financial or other resources
- in-kind contributions and other types and sources of funding and the terms of that funding
- development program for obtaining resources to continue and expand the project, including a plan and schedule for how the proposed project will secure continued commitment of resources and partners

### **What is the maximum amount of funding?**

Grant proposals are reviewed and awarded each year and are generally limited to \$500,000 per application.

### **If a grantee does not reapply for a second or third year of additional funding in the year following a grant award, does the grantee remain eligible to reapply for additional funding for the same project at a later time? Must the years be consecutive?**

If a project encounters challenges that require a contract extension, and, therefore, the grantee is not in a position to reapply for a second or third year of funding during the open application period of the year following the first, or second, award, the grantee would remain eligible to reapply for funding of the same project at a later time. An application submitted for a previously awarded project—with substantially *similar* grant activities and outcomes—will be considered a continuation grant and not a new grant. Prior performance will be considered for all previously awarded grant program applicants.

### **If the project is substantially *different* than the previous project, does the three-year funding limit apply?**

An application from any prior grantee that proposes substantially *different* activities and outcomes will be considered as a new project for a first year award of funding. The new project will still be limited to no more than two additional annual awards for a total of no more than three years maximum—consecutive or otherwise—and the applicant must apply for each subsequent year of funding.

### **Can a grantee organization both reapply for a continuation grant for one project and also apply for a new project?**

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Yes, a grantee institution or organization can reapply for both a continuation grant for one project and a new project; however, the sustainability plan for each of the projects must demonstrate that the relevant activities and outcomes of both projects can be continued after the term of the funding requested in the grant application. There is no guarantee of award for multiple projects or any one project in any year.

### **Are initiatives that “upskill” individuals (i.e. training IT professionals for cybersecurity jobs) eligible for funding?**

Yes, provided that the application addresses the following criteria:

- the occupations have been determined to be high-growth occupations by the local workforce development board(s),
- regional employers partner with the grantee to ensure that the need is addressed by the project, and
- the skills required for incumbent workers can be demonstrated to be substantially changing and require training to ensure job retention or lead to increased wages in the targeted industry sector.

### **The Program Requirements in the application include a requirement for review and comment on the proposed project by the local workforce development board director. How should that review be documented in the application?**

A Certification of Review and Comment form has been added to the application. The local workforce board executive director in each proposed area of service must review the application and provide comments indicating support for the proposed project in order to be considered for Texas Talent Connection grant funding. Applications that do not meet this requirement by the application deadline will not be considered.

### **The project in our grant proposal would be a new program, so there is no review from a workforce board. We work closely with workforce boards on other projects. Would comments from those programs be acceptable?**

This requirement applies to all new and continuation grant applications. It is not a letter of support or a performance review. The local workforce development board provides the selection committee with confirmation that the proposed programs and services address a need that is not currently met through existing services. This ensures that there is no duplication of or conflict between programs and services provided in the region. It also provides the board and project partners with an opportunity to identify any potential efficiencies that may be gained by aligning services. The review and comments must be specific to the currently proposed project.

### **The Program Requirements section states that “Applications may not be considered that duplicate existing workforce services or programs.” If a community college offers a program at the main college campus but wishes to expand it as a new program at a second site, is this allowable?**

A grant application to expand services may be allowable if the proposal otherwise serves the purpose and intent of this grant program, is expanding in a different geographic region, and if the application demonstrates the successful outcomes of current programs and services and leverages products and partnerships that support the existing program. The intent of this requirement is to prevent the funding of proposals that duplicate other programs or services that currently fill the same need within the region.

### **With regard to “duplication of existing workforce services or programs” (stated above), if a project is funded by a grant from another state or federal program, should our funding request exclude the items covered by this grant?**

Funded grants should not duplicate existing workforce services or programs. Similarly, applications must not request funding for services or programs that are identical to those funded under another grant, such that if awarded, would result in duplicate funding.

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**Will the contract number and Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) contract manager information requested on the Contract Information Form (CIF) in the application be completed by TWC, or will this information be provided prior to the application due date?**

TWC uses the CIF form for multiple grant programs. In the case of the Texas Talent Connection grants, the Contract Number and TWC Contract Manager information would refer to a previous grant award. It is not necessary to complete those blanks if you are applying to this program for the first time. TWC will provide that number to the grantee during contract development for any proposal that is awarded.

**Is any specific file order preferred for submission of the grant application and documents?**

Please submit the grant application in the order specified in the application forms.

**Should the original and copies of the application be stapled or unstapled, with dividers or without dividers?**

Please submit the original *and* copies unstapled using a binder clip to hold the application together.

**Is there a page limitation?**

No page limitations have been set, however character limits have been set in all text boxes. Given that the proposal is for one year of funding, the response is not expected to be extensive. Please be succinct, concrete, and on point.

**If a particular field in the application is not applicable, may the applicant enter the characters “n/a”?**

Application fields are not programmed to accept the characters “n/a.” If a field is not applicable to your submission, please leave that field empty.

**Is it acceptable to drop off our original grant application and copies in person?**

All applications must be submitted in the format requested by the specified deadline. Please click [here](#) to request assistance well in advance of the application deadline if you wish to deliver the applications in person.

**For the electronic copy that is required with the hard copies of the grant application, what form of data storage is preferred for submission? Is Word or PDF format preferred?**

The application must include submission of an electronic copy in PDF format in addition to the original and four printed copies. The electronic copy must follow the same format as the hard copy application and include all of the required elements in order to be considered complete. The use of a USB flash drive is preferred. Information for submission of the electronic copy will be provided in the application. If you experience difficulty with electronic submission, please click [here](#) for assistance. Assistance will not be provided after the deadline.

**The grant application references the availability of up to \$5,000 for grantees without capabilities to obtain the services of a qualified Certified Public Accountant (CPA) with experience in the management and review of the use of federal funds, if the grant amount exceeds \$100,000. How should this cost be listed in the budget?**

The costs incurred for accounting and audit functions, including those for the referenced CPA, can be listed under “Administration: Other” in the proposed budget, as these costs are defined as necessary for the overall administration and program management of a project. TWC will clarify all requirements associated with the provision of up to \$5,000 for the services of a qualified CPA during the contracting of the grants with any successful grantees who qualify for this provision.

**What factors would render an application ineligible for consideration for funding?**

The following list provides guidance as to the types of issues that will automatically exclude an application from being included in the selection process:

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- The application—or any element of the application in any format—is received after the deadline.
- The application is incomplete and does not include all of the required documents in the required formats, including clearly defined supporting documents.
- The applicant uses an outdated form of the application which does not include all of the required information.
- The applicant submits a proposal that duplicates existing workforce services or programs within their organization.
- Proposed outcomes, activities, deliverables, timeline, and budget are not clearly delineated for one year of funding only.
- The certification of review and comment from the local workforce development board for any area of proposed service is not included or is not signed. This document ensures that the board has reviewed the proposal and confirmed that proposed programs and services complement existing programs and services.
- Regulatory and contract compliance reviews render the applicant ineligible.
- Prior performance of a current grantee/applicant did not meet the proposed objectives of the prior/current contract.
- The application proposes an additional year of funding for a grantee project that has already received three years of grant funding for similar activities and outcomes.

### **To whom should letters of support from our local workforce development board be addressed?**

Letters of support should be addressed to the same contact and address listed on the front of the grant application.

### **The Budget Form shows in-state travel only. Can applicants request grant funding for out-of-state travel?**

There is no prohibition against out of state travel under this funding. As such, the travel could be requested but would be reviewed and approved only when deemed necessary and reasonable in light of the proposed project and the greater intent of the grant funding, which is providing labor market assistance leading to employment outcomes.

### **Could a prospective applicant request to preview the application for last year in order to prepare for the upcoming application date?**

Unfortunately, previous year grant applications cannot be shared. Applications must be submitted using the current year PDF application form. This policy is intended to reduce instances of applicants supplying incorrect or incomplete information due to changes in the application, as has occurred in the past. The application information content is reviewed prior to the open call for applications. If appropriate, new or additional information may be posted to the website.

### **The Program Requirements state that "Eligible partnerships may include various combinations of local workforce boards; employers, industry, or trade organizations; institutions of higher education; faith-based organizations; local school districts; and not-for-profit community-based organizations." If an applicant is a not-for-profit provider of workforce development training that is operating in Texas but is based out of state, would the organization qualify to submit a grant application as a not-for-profit community-based organization in the state of Texas?**

For the purposes of this grant program, the term community-based organization is defined as a private nonprofit organization (which may include a faith-based organization) that is representative of a community or a significant segment of a community and that has demonstrated expertise and effectiveness in the field of workforce development. Additional supporting information as to why the organization meets this definition

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of a community-based organization would need to be provided with the application, including how the organization (1) is representative of a community or a significant segment of a community and (2) demonstrates expertise and effectiveness in the field of workforce development.