

Interim Charge #3 : 60x30TX

For the A&M System, Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) and Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station (TEES) have provided responses.

Responses from TEEX

1. How can the state meet the goals of 60x30TX?

Texas A&M Engineering Extension (TEEX) does not receive any type of funding to help the state meet the goals of 60x30TX even though TEEX has a proven track record of training individuals and getting them into the workforce. As a training provider to over 114,000 Texans a year, dedicated funding to TEEX would help the state meet its goal of Texans with industry-recognized certificates while maintaining low student loan debt.

Overarching: by 2030, at least 60% of Texans ages 25-34 will have a certificate or degree

- Currently, one of every four TEEX students falls between the 25-34-year age demographic. Additionally, TEEX recently started working with high schools to help them reach their HB5 Endorsement requirements. By the year 2030, current high school students will all be within the 25-34-year-old demographic the state is targeting. With appropriate funding, TEEX could intensify our high school efforts to greatly assist the state to reach its 60x30TX goal.

Completion: by 2030, at least 550k students in that year will complete a certificate/associate/bachelor/master degree from an institution of higher education in Texas

- TEEX already provides training certificates to over 114,000 Texans every year which could be counted towards the 60x30TX goal.

Marketable Skills: by 2030, all graduates from Texas public institutions of higher education will have completed programs with identified “marketable skills”

- The training provided aligns with industry standards and we are in the process of collecting job placement data for each of our vocational programs. For example, our cell tower technician program has a 90 percent job placement rate for our graduates.

Student Debt: by 2030, undergraduate student loan debt will not exceed 60% of first-year wages for graduates of Texas public institutions

- All TEEX training programs longer than 140 hours are eligible for Sallie Mae loans. Students utilizing Sallie Mae to pay for TEEX training are incurring minimum student loan debt. For example, even for our highest priced training program (Electric Power Line worker at a cost of \$13,500), student loan debt compared to first year wages is only 27 percent. For our firefighter program, the percentage is 15 percent.

2. How has the pandemic impacted our state’s workforce needs?

During the pandemic, thousands of Texans have been lost their jobs. Many of those individuals need training and upskilling as quickly as possible in order to obtain new employment.

During the pandemic, TEEX has continued to provide training to individuals wishing to acquire new job skills, particularly in the areas of infrastructure and essential services. Specifically, our programs in the areas of cell tower technicians, electric power line workers, cybersecurity, law enforcement and fire fighter recruits, and our OSHA safety training have continued to be in high demand. Observing state social distancing requirements, our classes are provided at maximum capacity and we have students registered well into 2021.

3. *Is there legislative action that could help expand work-based learning?*

The state can further support apprenticeship programs and require specific training and certification standards for industries wanting to do business with Texas (for example, cybersecurity).

4. *Do current community college district boundaries align with the needs of the communities they serve? If not, how should they be altered and why will those changes improve educational opportunities for Texans?*

N/A, as TEEX is charged with providing training throughout the entire state.

5. *What is the current capability to handle an influx of Texans seeking re-training or upskilling opportunities through state programs?*

Through community colleges, technical colleges and TEEX, the state has sufficient training providers to meet the increased numbers of individuals seeking training, re-training and upskilling. However, additional funding to these providers is needed in order to reduce the overall cost to the students to make this training more affordable and accessible to more individuals.

6. *What is needed in order to identify and address gaps in existing data collection methods?*

Bringing everyone to the table (training providers, TWC, THECB, and TEA) to discuss common goals and obstacles when it comes to data collection and analysis.

Does this sort of gathering/meeting not happen already, in any form/fashion via any kind of convener? Tough for us to say. TEEX is not always included in the discussions regarding these processes. While community and technical colleges are always considered, TEEX is sometimes left out of the loop although we train almost as many workforce students as all the community colleges combined.

7. *What improvements could be made to alleviate 'summer melt' and to facilitate streamlined student advising?*

N/A as TEEX programs do not provide a break in our training programs.

8. *What changes, if any, are needed to align data collection between the THECB, TWC and TEA in order to collect consistent metrics?*

As mentioned earlier, bringing all relevant parties together (in the form of a working group perhaps) to ensure that consistent metrics are being collected and utilized is critical. Our inability to discuss apples to apples is self-defeating.

We would have to defer on this one as we are not intimately familiar with all the current software systems being utilized across agencies. It is our understanding that some agencies utilize legacy software which do not always integrate across systems. The more we are involved, the better we could help with this alignment.

9. Does the overall financial status of small and rural community colleges affect their capacity to meet the goals of 60x30TX?

N/A

10. How has the overall financial status of small and rural community colleges been affected since COVID-19? How does that affect their ability to carry out normal operations?

N/A

Responses from TEES

1. How can the state meet the goals of 60x30TX?

Texas Engineering Experiment Station: Expand what “counts” towards meeting these goals by revising what counts as a certificate, certification, etc. There could be opportunities with customized and non-certificate/certification type programs. For larger companies with high tech product lines, may require specific training that prepares individuals for tasks/jobs – those programs may not neatly fit into the 60x30 parameters.

2. How has the pandemic impacted our state’s workforce needs?

This may sound odd, but teaching and instruction at all levels have been adversely impacted, which will impact how we prepare, maintain and advance the workforce’s knowledge, skills and abilities. The use of technology to deliver content and the readiness of instructors to most effectively use the available tools needs to be addressed so that things previously thought to require F2F can be assessed to determine effective options.

Knowledge and skills that are similar from course to course should be assessed to determine whether technology can improve and/or maintain the quality and ROI of training content.

3. Is there legislative action that could help expand work-based learning?

Financial incentives for companies if they invest in certain types of training that can impact the state in terms of a trained workforce. This type of approach would also benefit the individual worker since their skills would be in demand.

A private industry example might be that if you have a safety plan in place, the company has lower insurance premiums.

4. *Do current community college district boundaries align with the needs of the communities they serve? If not, how should they be altered and why will those changes improve educational opportunities for Texans?*

If it could be advantageous to partner with another CCD that has a high demand for the same training and both districts could benefit with the funding formula, we could avoid duplication of effort and support high quality delivery regardless of location.

5. *What is the current capability to handle an influx of Texans seeking re-training or upskilling opportunities through state programs?*

One of the issues is that there is not enough effort and detail put into the needs assessment. For example, when there were discussions related to new LNG facilities building plants in the Port of Brownsville, educational units were ready to train up welders for the construction phase (1000s of jobs). When you listened to the company representatives, they indicated that they would not hire newly trained welders for the construction jobs since it was a specialized welding process. Their worry was that they would be bringing in contractors for the construction phase who need transportation, shelter, etc. So, welders were a perceived need not a real one.

If, as a state, we could assess specific needs instead of relying on the grand numbers that often come out of the demographic reports, then we could make specific plans and impacts. This would benefit the companies, educational institutions and individual workers.

6. *What is needed in order to identify and address gaps in existing data collection methods?*

Depends on the investment we are willing to make. It could be helpful to start with the best practices in other states. We need data collection and analysis to be MUCH quicker. There also needs to be a way to gather some qualitative data to inform the quantitative data that is generally processed. Identifying ways to work with industry groups and individual companies at a local level to provide periodic narrative data.

7. *What improvements could be made to alleviate 'summer melt' and to facilitate streamlined student advising?*

N/A

8. *What changes, if any, are needed to align data collection between the THECB, TWC and TEA in order to collect consistent metrics?*

There is a similar issue in the Texas criminal justice system with the data continuum. TxDOT has the crash data, DPS has license information, individual police agencies have their data and the court system has theirs. The data fields are different and there is minimal collection between agencies. It severely impacts the effectiveness of countermeasures and strategy because you cannot measure pre- and post-treatments.

In a perfect world, it would be economically powerful for us to understand how our PK-12 education yields workers (do they have a living wage, did some HS program prepare them to work in the power plant in their county, did they complete any higher education, if so were they prepared, did they pick a program that allowed them to find a job in hometown or elsewhere or are they under employed, etc.).

9. Does the overall financial status of small and rural community colleges affect their capacity to meet the goals of 60x30TX?

N/A

10. How has the overall financial status of small and rural community colleges been affected since COVID-19? How does that affect their ability to carry out normal operations?

N/A

