

House Committee on Higher Education RFIs
Interim Charge 3

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Interim Charge #3

Review progress toward the goals of the 60X30TX plan, including institutional strategies for responding to diverse and rapidly changing workforce needs and demands, including workforce education, industry certification, and degree programs to address healthcare shortages.

Specifically review community colleges' capacity to meet the goals of 60X30TX, including a review of taxing districts and service areas versus geographic areas of need. Review the Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative's work-based learning, industry-aligned internships, and industry credential initiatives. Consider whether legislative action may be needed to expand work-based learning and recruitment efforts for adults who have previously completed some college level coursework.

Texas' Workforce Needs

Q2. How has the pandemic impacted our state's workforce needs?

Q3. Is there legislative action that could help expand work-based learning?

Q5. What is the current capability to handle an influx of Texans seeking re-training or upskilling opportunities through state programs?

Prior to the pandemic, the economy had been undergoing a seismic shift due to automation, the increased demand on digital skills, and globally integrated markets and supply chains. This transformation isn't pausing, in fact, it is growing as more employees work from home and our "normal" way of operating seems further back in our memories.

For some time before the pandemic, the city San Antonio had experienced a relatively low unemployment rate along with substantial job and population growth. However, while jobs were growing, wages were not growing at the same rate leaving our poverty rate in the community among the highest in the country.

The relatively low educational attainment rate has significantly contributed to San Antonio's poverty rate. According to census data, in 2018, 27% of the adult population in San Antonio had earned a high school diploma or equivalent, and 30% of the adult population had some college or an associate's degree. For those adults, the annual average earnings were \$26,754 and \$32,181 respectively. Meanwhile, only 16% of the adult population had a bachelor's degree and 10% had a professional degree of higher. The average annual earnings for these groups of adults were \$46,737 and \$64,577. This harsh reality for our San Antonio community set the foundation for how COVID impacted our local economy.

The Texas Association of Community Colleges (TACC) articulated accurately how community colleges statewide are always focused on “solving problems and removing barriers for our students, employers, and communities.” This is especially true for the Alamo Colleges as we partner with local leaders and employers to serve community members as they reskill or upskill for available jobs.

Utilizing funds received under the CARES Act, the City of San Antonio Council (COSA) and Bexar County Commissioner’s Court (Bexar County) have chosen to invest in talent development. This investment strategy will not only help community members in the short-term but also provide a pathway for residents to gain valuable training and increase their earning power. While COSA and Bexar County have chosen slightly different ways to allocate their funding, the goal is the same- to assist displaced worker reenter the workplace.

Common elements of both plans include investments in:

- Stipends for training participants
- Training and education costs
- Intake and career navigation services
- Wrap-around services for training participants (includes emergency aid for transportation, child care and food security)
- Business intelligence

Alamo Colleges will play a key role in this work with a focus on training approximately 6,000 of the 15,000 residents the city and county have set as target goals for this program. These students are in addition to the tens of thousands we currently serve in our academic and workforce programs, early college high schools, dual credit partnerships, and our inaugural class of AlamoPROMISE students.

To learn more about the Bexar County program please visit this [webpage](#). And for more information on the COSA program please see their most [recent report](#) on the program.

Where additional investment could be impactful is in support services for training participants. Even before the pandemic, many Texans struggled with food security, transportation and child care costs. This is especially true now as more than 3.2 million (200,000 in Bexar County) have filed for unemployment benefits. On the employer side, small and mid-size business who are willing to participant in OJT programs can’t subsidize the cost of wages for training participants. Investment by the state in these two areas: support services and OJT wages, would provide increased capacity and participation in training programs across the state.

In past legislative sessions, proposals for tax incentives for business who provide opportunities for internships, at the high school and collegiate level, have been discussed but none have made it out of committee. Building on those proposals with the addition of apprenticeships, OJT, and other work-based learning opportunities could assist to expand the availability of these important experiential learning opportunities for students.