By:  Creighton, et al. S.B. No. 1102

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the establishment of the Texas Reskilling and Upskilling through Education (TRUE) Program to support workforce education.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1.  Chapter 61, Education Code, is amended by adding Subchapter T-2 to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER T-2. TEXAS RESKILLING AND UPSKILLING THROUGH EDUCATION (TRUE) PROGRAM

Sec. 61.881.  DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1)  "Eligible entity" means:

(A)  a public junior college or public technical institute;

(B)  a consortium of public junior colleges or public technical institutes; or

(C)  a local chamber of commerce, trade association, or economic development corporation that partners with a public junior college or public technical institute or a consortium of public junior colleges or public technical institutes.

(2)  "Program" means the Texas Reskilling and Upskilling through Education (TRUE) Program established under this subchapter.

Sec. 61.882.  ESTABLISHMENT; ADMINISTRATION; PURPOSE. (a) The Texas Reskilling and Upskilling through Education (TRUE) Program is established to strengthen the Texas workforce and build a stronger Texas economy.

(b)  The board shall administer the program in accordance with this subchapter and rules adopted under this subchapter.

(c)  Under the program, using funds appropriated or otherwise available for the purpose, the board shall award grants to eligible entities for creating, redesigning, or expanding workforce training programs and delivering education and workforce training that:

(1)  lead to postsecondary industry certifications or other workforce credentials required for high-demand occupations;

(2)  are developed and provided in consultation with employers who are hiring in high-demand occupations; and

(3)  create pathways to employment for students and learners.

(d)  In awarding grants under this subchapter, the board:

(1)  shall, to the greatest extent practicable:

(A)  award grants to at least one eligible entity in each region of the state; and

(B)  ensure that each training program:

(i)  matches regional workforce needs;

(ii)  is supported by a labor market analysis of job postings and employers hiring roles with the skills developed by the program; and

(iii)  does not duplicate existing program offerings within the region; and

(2)  may give preference to applicants that:

(A)  represent a consortium of public junior colleges and public technical institutes;

(B)  prioritize training to displaced workers;

(C)  offer affordable training programs to students; or

(D)  partner with local chambers of commerce, trade associations, economic development corporations, and local workforce boards to analyze job postings and identify employers hiring roles with the skills developed by the training programs.

Sec. 61.883.  USE OF GRANT. (a) A grant awarded to an eligible entity under this subchapter may be used only for the support and maintenance of educational and general activities that promote workforce learning, including:

(1)  providing training in existing, new, or redesigned accelerated programs that teach high-demand skills and lead to postsecondary industry certifications or other workforce credentials valued in growing occupations;

(2)  developing new industry-aligned, high-demand postsecondary industry certifications or other workforce credentials and certificate programs or other courses of instruction leading to those certifications or credentials that can be completed in six months or less;

(3)  redesigning existing postsecondary industry certifications or credentials and certificate programs or other courses of instruction leading to those certifications or credentials to meet the standards under Subdivision (2);

(4)  expanding institutional capacity to provide high-demand postsecondary industry certifications or other workforce credentials that are stackable in high-demand career pathways and address the needs of high-demand occupations identified by the Texas Workforce Commission or applicable local workforce development boards;

(5)  providing student aid awards to incentivize enrollment in and completion of industry-aligned, high-demand postsecondary industry certifications or other workforce credentials and certificate programs or other courses of instruction leading to those certifications or credentials; and

(6)  tracking and reporting enrollment, credential completion, and employment outcomes for students in courses and programs described by this subsection to gauge the impact on student success.

(b)  Money received by an eligible entity under the program in a fiscal year that is not used by the entity in that fiscal year may be held and used by the entity in the subsequent fiscal year for the purposes prescribed in this section if the entity provides to the board a reasonable explanation for holding and using the money in the subsequent fiscal year.

Sec. 61.884.  RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATIONS OR CREDENTIALS. (a) The board, in collaboration with eligible entities, the Texas Workforce Commission, and private employers, shall identify existing and develop new postsecondary industry certifications or other workforce credentials valued in high-demand occupations.

(b)  The board, in consultation with eligible entities, shall:

(1)  identify postsecondary industry certifications or other workforce credentials developed or redesigned using grant funds under the program; and

(2)  establish methods for collecting and reporting data related to the certifications or credentials identified under Subdivision (1).

(c)  An eligible entity awarded a grant under this subchapter may recommend outcomes related to the achievement or development of postsecondary industry certifications or other workforce credentials identified under this section to be considered by the board for inclusion in the state's long-range master plan for higher education developed under Section 61.051.

(d)  In devising its funding formulas and making its recommendations to the legislature relating to institutional appropriations of funds for public junior colleges and public technical institutes under Section 61.059, the board shall incorporate the consideration of the achievement or development of postsecondary industry certifications and other workforce credentials identified under this section.

Sec. 61.885.  GRANTS, GIFTS, AND DONATIONS. The board may solicit, accept, and spend grants, gifts, and donations from any public or private source for the purposes of this subchapter.

Sec. 61.886.  RULES. The board shall adopt rules for the administration of this subchapter, including rules requiring eligible entities awarded a grant under this subchapter to report necessary information to the board.

SECTION 2.  (a) The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall adopt rules to administer Subchapter T-2, Chapter 61, Education Code, as added by this Act, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act.

(b)  The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall award grants under Subchapter T-2, Chapter 61, Education Code, as added by this Act, beginning with the 2021 fall semester.

SECTION 3.  The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is required to implement this Act only if the legislature appropriates money specifically for that purpose. If the legislature does not appropriate money specifically for that purpose, the coordinating board may, but is not required to, implement this Act using other appropriations available for that purpose.

SECTION 4.  This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2021.