2025-2026 Tri-Agency Grant for Regional Conveners

Informal Discretionary Competition (IDC) Application Due 11:59 p.m. CT, January 10, 2025

Texas Education Agency®

NOGA ID

Authorizing legislation

This LOI application must be submitted via email to **competitivegrants@tea.texas.gov.**

The LOI application may be signed with a digital ID or it may be signed by hand. Both forms of signature are acceptable.

TEA must receive the application by **11:59 p.m. CT, January 10, 2025**.

Application stamp-in date and time

Grant period from **March 01, 2025-April 30, 2027**

Pre-award costs permitted from **Not Permitted**

Required Attachments

1. Excel workbook with the grant's budget schedules (linked along with this form on the TEA Grants Opportunities page)
2. TRPN Regional Convener Assurance (linked along with this form on the TEA Grants Opportunities page)

Select Focus Area & Name Which of Texas' 28 Workforce Development Areas Being Applied For

- (●) **Focus Area 1**
- ( ) **Focus Area 2**

Workforce Development Area Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas

Amendment Number

Amendment number (For amendments only; enter N/A when completing this form to apply for grant funds):

Applicant Information

Organization NCTCOG/Workforce Solutions NCT CDN Campus ESC DUNS

Address 616 Six Flags Drive City Arlington ZIP 76011 Vendor ID

Primary Contact Stephanie Roberts Email Sroberts@dfwjobs.com Phone 817-695-9110

Secondary Contact Danielle Davis Email Drdavis@dfwjobs.com Phone 817-608-2332

Certification and Incorporation

I understand that this application constitutes an offer and, if accepted by TEA or renegotiated to acceptance, will form a binding agreement. I hereby certify that the information contained in this application is, to the best of my knowledge, correct and that the organization named above has authorized me as its representative to obligate this organization in a legally binding contractual agreement. I certify that any ensuing program and activity will be conducted in accordance and compliance with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

I further certify my acceptance of the requirements conveyed in the following portions of the LOI application, as applicable, and that these documents are incorporated by reference as part of the LOI application and Notice of Grant Award (NOGA):

- ☒ LOI application, guidelines, and instructions
- ☒ General and application-specific Provisions and Assurances
- ☒ Debarment and Suspension Certification
- ☒ Lobbying Certification

Authorized Official Name Mike Eastland Title Executive Director, NCTCOG

Email MEastland@nctcog.org Phone (817) 695-9101

Signature Mike Eastland Digitally signed by Mike Eastland Date: 2025.01.10 13:24:32 -06'00' Date 1/10/2025

Shared Services Arrangements

Shared services arrangements (SSAs) are not permitted for this grant.

Statutory/Program Assurances

The following assurances apply to this program. In order to meet the requirements of the program, the applicant must comply with these assurances.

Check each of the following boxes to indicate your compliance.

☒ 1. The applicant provides assurance that the application does not contain any information that would be protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) from general release to the public.

☒ 2. The applicant provides assurance to adhere to all the Statutory and TEA Program requirements as noted in the 2025-2026 Tri-Agency Grant for Regional Conveners Program Guidelines.

☒ 3. The applicant provides assurance to adhere to all the Performance Measures, as noted in the 2025-2026 Tri-Agency Grant for Regional Conveners Program Guidelines, and shall provide to TEA, upon request, any performance data necessary to assess the success of the program.

☒ 4. The applicant assures that any Electronic Information Resources (EIR) produced as part of this agreement will comply with the State of Texas Accessibility requirements as specified in 1 TAC 206, 1 TAC Chapter 213, Federal Section 508 standards, and the WCAG 2.0 AA Accessibility Guidelines)

☒ 5. The applicant acknowledges that Per Section 22.0834 of the Texas Education Code (TEC), any person offered employment by any entity that contracts with TEA or receives grant funds administered by TEA (i.e., a grantee or subgrantee) is subject to the fingerprinting requirement. TEA is prohibited from awarding grant funds to any entity, including nonprofit organizations, that fails to comply with this requirement. For details, refer to the General and Fiscal Guidelines, Fingerprinting Requirement.

☒ 6. To carry out the roles and responsibilities of a regional convener for a geographic region with boundaries identical to those of the workforce development area.

☒ 7. Identify at least one staff person, who meets the qualifications and experience of a regional convener lead as outlined in these guidelines, with adequate time allocated to the work of this grant project and who will serve as the regional convener lead.

☒ 8. Identify multiple staff at the regional convener organization to engage in the work and participate in grant activities. This includes someone in an executive leadership position who has decision-making authority on behalf of the regional convener organization.

☒ 9. To complete all grant activities and deliverables in a timely manner, as described in the description of program and performance and evaluation measures.

☒ 10. To coordinate with their assigned coach, to be provided by TEA for technical assistance, and meet with their coach frequently throughout the project, including within the first month to align on program priorities and requirements.

☒ 11. To participate and engage in statewide training and convenings during the grant period.

☒ 12. **Focus Area 1:** To convene and engage a cross-sector pathways leadership team in the strategic planning process within the first three months of the grant project.

☒ 13. **Focus Area 1:** To develop an asset map and gap analysis within six months of the grant start date under the direction and guidance of their assigned coach. In addition, the applicant will keep this landscape analysis updated throughout the grant project.

☒ 14. **Focus Area 1:** To develop, in collaboration with members of the cross-sector leadership team, a strategic plan and supporting action plans within the first 12 months of the grant project.

☐ 15. **Focus Area 2:** The applicant assures it will begin implementation of the strategic plan, including taking action on deliverables included in the two-year implementation plan.

☐ 16. **Focus Area 2:** To execute work-based learning that will address K-12 gaps and will expand upon existing work-based learning within their region.

Summary of Program

Provide an overview of the program to be implemented with grant funds. Include the overall mission and specific needs of the organization. Also include the following in your response:

a. *Current Regional Landscape* - Describe the key career and education pathway initiatives and/or programs currently underway in your WDA, including those funded by TEA, THECB, and/or TWC.

b. *Regional Convener Priorities* - What are your priorities for strategic alignment across current state, regional, and local pathways initiatives in the WDA? What would be necessary for that alignment to take place?

c. *Regional Convener Responsibilities* - Describe any current work your organization performs related to the additional functions of regional conveners. Include analysis of labor market information, convening of cross-sector teams, engagement of employers, communication across the region, and efforts to drive sustainability.

Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas (WSNCT) promotes economic growth and a skilled workforce by aligning training programs with employer needs, aiming to help businesses stay competitive and provide workers with opportunities for self-sufficiency. North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) is the Fiscal Agent for WSNCT, and the Workforce Development Board offices at the NCTCOG campus in Arlington. However, the WSNCT Workforce Development Area (WDA) is comprised of 14 counties including: Collin, Denton, Ellis, Erath, Hood, Hunt, Johnson, Kaufman, Navarro, Palo Pinto, Parker, Rockwall, Somervell and Wise all of which surround Dallas and Tarrant counties. Our WDA includes 102 school districts, 9 community colleges, 4 public universities, and 3 education service centers. In the most recent completed Fiscal Year, we served over 87,000 career seekers, over 8,800 veterans, and over 7,700 youth and young adults. We supported 9,800 employers with various needs and services that make our North Central Texas economy stronger.
Partnerships play a crucial role in achieving regional success. By collaborating with local businesses, educational institutions, and community organizations, WSNCT leverages resources, shares expertise, and creates comprehensive solutions that address the region's workforce needs. These partnerships are essential for developing effective training programs, hosting career events, and ensuring that initiatives are aligned with the demands of the local economy, and these collaborations led to $22.5 million in grant funding being brought into our region.
As a regional convener, WSNCT will lean on existing and new partnerships to convene cross-sector teams, conduct thoughtful labor market analysis, engage employers, facilitate regional communication, and implement new strategies for sustainable work to meet the demands of local employers. Our strategic alignment priorities will include enhanced collaboration with our neighboring WDA conveners awarded, (Tarrant and Dallas). Bringing these three WDAs together ensures this grant funding will bring success to the North Central Texas region and the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex. Together, we will coordinate efforts, use data-driven decision-making, and ensure equitable access to high-quality career and technical education and work-based learning (WBL) opportunities that come out of the initial strategic planning phase of this grant. This "Tri-Board" effort will focus on establishing shared goals, maintaining regular communication, and sharing resources collaboratively to ensure a cohesive and responsive strategic plan for the region and restrict duplicative efforts.
WSNCT recognizes a need to focus on Manufacturing as an in-demand industry to springboard this work and will expand to other pathways in the region from data obtained in the regional labor market analysis.
WSNCT has several key career and education pathway initiatives and programs currently underway that are related to the additional functions of regional conveners. Examples include:
• Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Programs offer on-the-job training, skills training, certifications, and associate degrees.
• WSNCT has successfully hosted Teacher Externships which have supported teachers in learning about current skills and trends in various workplaces via job shadowing and lesson plan creation.
• Our WSNCT team has an apprenticeship navigator who helps build regional Apprenticeship Programs in sectors like construction, manufacturing, health science, and software development.
• WSNCT currently supports multiple Texas Regional Pathways Network (TRPNs) that build talent pipelines in multiple high demand industries.
• WSNCT helped establish a "Career Club" that has supported high school students in work readiness and employer engagement. WSNCT has also developed a guide to regionally scale this initiative.
• Youth Career Exploration Events are hosted annually in partnership with community colleges and external partners. These events are hosted to expose students to career opportunities.
• WSNCT is building an online data platform available to the public via our website. This data dashboard will also include a career lattice page, showcasing career pathways and details for multiple high demand occupations.
• WSNCT's Target Occupations List is built based on regional data and local wisdom and is reviewed and edited annually as needed.
• WSNCT regularly provides labor market data and grant support for career education program development.

Qualifications and Experience for Key Personnel

Outline the required qualifications for primary project personnel and any external consultants to be involved in the program's implementation and delivery. Include the following in your response:

a. *Organizational Capacity* - Describe your current level of involvement in key career and education pathways initiatives in your region, how current staff is involved, and anticipated staff hires (including their qualifications and experience) for this grant.

b. *Regional Alignment Experience* - Describe your organization's experience in leading strategic planning for regional career and education pathways, including collaboration with industry, K-12 education, higher education, and workforce stakeholders.

c. *Regional Convener Responsibilities (related to staff involvement)* - Include experience in engaging employers, convening cross-sector leadership, and sustaining coordinated efforts.

WSNCT staff work closely with a wide range of stakeholders, including employers, educators, community organizations, and government agencies, in our planning processes around career and education pathways initiatives, aligning with industry needs and ensuring students and job seekers are career ready.

Staff engage with local businesses to understand their workforce needs and collaborate with education institutions to develop tailored training programs. Our team has extensive experience in managing grants, ensuring compliance, and achieving program outcomes.

Key personnel include:

• Executive Director and Senior Programs Managers: Oversee the implementation of workforce development programs, ensuring they meet objectives and deliverables.

• Business Outreach Specialists: Experts in business and industry needs, connecting them with workforce services and initiatives.

• Apprenticeship Navigator: Specializes in growing and supporting registered apprenticeships.

• Education Partnership Coordinators: Support and understand the needs of educational institutions, connecting them with workforce services and initiatives.

• Workforce Research Analyst: Conducts labor market analysis to inform economic development organizations, employers, and educational institutions about labor market trends, relevant qualifications, and skills needed.

Anticipated staff hires include an Administrative Assistant and Project Coordinators to support the efforts of this grant.

WSNCT has an active partnership with InterLink, a non-profit organization that has provided quality workforce planning for the region for the past 37 years. Like WSNCT, InterLink brings together K-12, Institutions of Higher Education (IHE), industry, and workforce through a dynamic advisory board of 72 members, which links education and business. WSNCT serves on this board. InterLink's team of experts, who have extensive experience in developing career pathways and business/education/workforce partnerships, significantly enhances our capacity to fulfill regional convener responsibilities.

WSNCT and InterLink have mutually agreed that, if awarded this grant, we will work collectively as a region and avoid duplicative efforts across the metroplex. InterLink's partnership will include shared high-level convenings and managing the grant requirements to ensure success and compliance for our region.

WSNCT aims to hire an administrative assistant with expertise in developing tailored strategies as part of our grant efforts. By identifying the unique populations that workforce development boards serve, this administrative assistant will support all efforts under this grant that will ultimately create strategies to make sure skill development and WBL opportunities are inclusive for all.

Leveraging our expertise in local labor market trends, data provision, and regional convening, WSNCT has a robust history of leading strategic planning that aligns with regional economic goals and addresses skills gaps. We have partnered with leading companies in sectors such as healthcare, manufacturing, and information technology to develop solutions that address their specific needs. We work with school districts and higher education institutions to create pathways from education to employment, such as WBL learning experiences and scalable career exploration opportunities. We have also partnered with and continue to support multiple Texas Regional Pathways Networks across the North Texas region, including but not limited to the NCTX Aerial Robotics Initiative we've supported for 5 years alongside InterLink and Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County. We've also worked on the electricity/electronics and software development pathways development with ESC Region 10 and other key education and industry partners across the metroplex.

WSNCT regularly addresses skill gaps by focusing on high-demand, well-paying jobs through Workforce WIOA Programs, offering Teacher Externships, increasing Apprenticeships, supporting Texas Regional Pathways Networks, Career Clubs, Youth Career Exploration Events, and our new Data Dashboard & Career Lattice platform. We have developed "Accelerator Sessions" across the region, which annually convene chief elected officials, education, industry, and community organizations to develop and implement workforce strategies and regional focus. WSNCT recently hosted its first Economic Development Forum that brought together workforce, education, economic development, and industry leaders to tackle our region's challenges and promote economic growth where stakeholders gained valuable insights into best practices that empower North Texas's economic future. These collective efforts are advancing sustainable economic development and workforce readiness in North Central Texas, positioning us advantageously as a Tri-Agency Regional Convener.

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Describe the major goals/objectives of the proposed program. Detail any strategies that will be implemented to meet those goals/objectives. Include the following in your response:

a. *Regional Work-Based Learning Experience* - Using the Tri-Agency WBL Continuum, describe your experience planning, implementing, and monitoring work-based learning activities and summarize gaps in work-based learning in your region.

b. *Regional Convener Responsibilities (related to goals)* - Include specific regional goals like aligning pathways to labor market needs, engaging cross-sector teams, and improving communication and sustainability efforts.

c. *Partnerships* - Describe your partnerships with industry, postsecondary education, K-12 education, and workforce/economic development, and detail specific collaborative activities.

WSNCT will develop a regional strategy for high-quality career and education pathways, WBL initiatives, and enhance workforce alignment and economic growth. This will be achieved by identifying and addressing labor market needs, educational program gaps, strengthening stakeholder partnerships, and promoting economic growth and inclusion in all WBL initiatives. WSNCT will create a cross-sector leadership team with thought leaders and experts from K-12, higher education, and industry to foster collaboration and strategic planning (SP). We will identify regional labor and skill gaps using our Target Occupations List (TOL), labor market information (LMI), and local wisdom to conduct an asset map and gap analysis of labor market needs and education programs. We will pinpoint industries of focus, establish and engage Industry Advisory sub-groups specific to industries of focus, and build sustainable strategies using the Tri-Agency Strategic Framework for WBL. Communication will be improved by creating a regional information hub accessible to stakeholders and communities, which will include newsletters, social media presence, and regular convenings. Additionally, we have launched and will advance a data dashboard for labor market information, economic profiles, and career lattices. This tool provides up-to-date LMI and benefits economic development corporations, chambers of commerce, and educational partners. The career lattice highlights multiple occupations from WSNCT's Target Occupation List, guiding students and job seekers from entry-level to advanced careers by showcasing the necessary educational, skills, and training requirements, as well as the associated pay progression. Our strategies, although uniquely suited for WSNCT, will also include collaboration with Dallas' and Tarrant's WDA regional conveners. Together, we will convene, lead, and collaborate with the leadership teams, collectively researching regional needs and expertise, and preparing a Tri-Agency SP to implement targeted training and WBL opportunities in high-demand industries for our WDA and the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. Throughout all practices of the grant strategy, WSNCT will uphold the 7 Quality Standards of WBL referenced in The Tri-Agency Strategic Framework. As a regional convener, WSNCT will prioritize WBL opportunities, including career exploration and job readiness to promote a healthy pipeline of workers. Based on industries of focus identified by the leadership team, we will establish industry advisory sub-groups where we will listen and respond to stakeholders, helping us assess and build strategies to meet workforce needs. Including regional economic development organizations in this work will further align workforce development efforts with broader economic goals. We will also develop specific outreach and opportunities to engage our diverse WDA, which includes urban, suburban, and rural communities. WSNCT is anchored in strong partnerships with local employers, and Education Service Centers (ESC) Region 10 and Region 11. These relationships are imperative to supporting WBL and reaching the 102 school districts we serve. We have successfully launched various initiatives, such as internships, apprenticeships, externships, and youth career exploration activities across multiple sectors. These initiatives provide hands-on experience and mentorship to students and job seekers. We continuously evaluate the effectiveness of our programs through feedback and performance metrics. We collaborate with leading companies in sectors such as healthcare, manufacturing, and information technology to understand workforce needs and develop targeted training programs. Examples include customized training programs and industry advisory boards. We work closely with colleges and universities to align curricula with industry demands and provide students with pathways to high-demand careers. Examples include leveraging the TOL and Eligible Training Providers List to offer training opportunities and providing customized labor market information. Our K-12 partnerships foster early career awareness and skills through events and teacher externships and working closely with the ESCs. We also collaborate with economic development groups to align efforts and resources, highlighted by hosting forums on regional growth and workforce challenges.

Performance and Evaluation Measures

Describe the performance measures identified for this program that are related to student outcomes and consistent with the program's purpose. Include tools and processes that will be used to ensure effectiveness, such as annual labor market needs assessments and tracking project outcomes. Include the following in your response:

a. *Regional Data Experience* - How do you monitor progress and measure the quality of career and education pathway programs or initiatives? Include metrics or key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess the strength of your region's pathways.

b. *Regional Convener Responsibilities (related to performance)* - Focus on ensuring career pathways align with in-demand industries and convening cross-sector leadership teams.

c. *Anticipated Project and Student Outcomes* - Outline the anticipated outcomes for each grant activity and the projected student outcomes. Include the projected number of students from each partner school district that will participate in the activities related to this grant activity.

WSNCT uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative data to monitor the progress of our core programs and services. This includes regular reports, monthly meetings, surveys, and feedback from participants and employers.
Our goal upon completion of the grant is to better track the number of students enrolling in career pathway programs and analyze participation across different demographics to ensure inclusivity. This grant will support strategies to measure future percentages of students completing WBL programs for in-demand industries.
As part of our proposed activities, we plan to maintain and establish strong partnerships with local businesses, industries, and educational institutions to create a network that supports career pathways aligned with regional workforce needs. We will explore and enhance various types of WBL opportunities, including internships, apprenticeships, job shadowing, and industry projects, to provide students with hands-on experience and practical skills relevant to their career goals.
We anticipate that these activities will significantly benefit students by enhancing their career readiness and employability. Across our 102 school districts served, we estimate that a substantial number of students from each partnering school district will participate in these programs, with specific targets set for enrollment and completion rates. The expected impact on students includes improved proficiency in key skills, higher rates of employment in their field of study, and a positive economic impact on their earnings and stability.
By addressing gaps in WBL opportunities, particularly for underserved communities, and ensuring alignment with the evolving demands of the labor market, we aim to provide equitable access to high-quality WBL experiences for all students. This comprehensive approach will help us achieve our goals and support the long-term success of our programs and participants.

Budget Narrative

Describe how the proposed budget will meet the program's needs and goals, including staffing, project design, and resources needed to support the grant's implementation. Include the following in your response:

a. *Funding Allocations and Justification* - Provide justification for the specific funding allocations in the proposed budget and describe how each item will support the team's needs.

b. *Grant Activities Support* - Detail how the specific funding allocations will support the grant activities in each of the domains: Regional Alignment, Regional Work-Based Learning, Regional Data, and Regional Communications.

c. *Coordinated Funding Strategies* - Outline the coordinated funding strategies the team will use to incorporate other funding sources to support the implementation and future sustainability of this project.

Total Grant Amount Requested: $300,000
6100 Payroll Costs: $73,552 - Includes estimated salaries for the following: Sr. Education Partnerships Coordinator: This position is included in the "Project Director" line 4 of Payroll 6100 tab due to inability to add additional lines to budget template; Education Partnerships Coordinator: This position is included in "Project Coordinator" line 5 of Payroll 6100 tab; Marketing Support: Will support all aspects of the project. This position is included in "Marketing Support", line 22 of Payroll 6100 tab; Sr. Accountant III: This position will support billing and other grant accounting processes. This position is included in "Grant Accountant/Bookkeeper", line 10 of Payroll 6100 tab; Apprenticeship Navigator: This position is included in "Apprenticeship Navigator + Research Analytics Support", line 21 of Payroll 6100 tab; Workforce Research Analyst: This position is included in "Apprenticeship Navigator + Research Analytics support, line 21 of Payroll 6100 tab. (More details can be found within the response to application question #2.) This budget also includes fringe benefits at a rate of 47.8% of salaries in accordance with the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG's) cost allocation plan. NCTCOG is the fiscal and administrative agent for Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas (WSNCT). 6200 Professional and Contracted Services: $177,060 – Of this budget, $120,000 will support two part-time project coordinators and one administrative assistant. $57,060 of this budget will be allocated for developing an information hub, including a data dashboard and website presence. 6300 Supplies and Materials: $2,500 is budgeted for supplies and materials needed to achieve the grant's goals. 6400 Other Operating Costs: $33,869 - This includes: $29,440 for travel to in-state and out-of-state conferences and convenings for staff and leadership team members. Of this amount, $20,000 is estimated for out-of-state travel for employees, $5,000 is budgeted for out-of-state travel for leadership officials, and $4,440 is budgeted for in-state travel for employees and leadership officials (this amount is reported on line 10 of Other Operating Costs 6400); $4,429 for the estimated portion of the network services allocation for the NCTCOG agency in accordance with cost allocation plan. This amount is included on line 10 of Other Operating Costs 6400. Indirect Costs: $13,019 – Calculated as 17.7% of salaries and fringe benefits in accordance with the indirect cost rate approved by the Federal Transit Administration, NCTCOG's Cognizant Agency. This amount is less than 15% of the modified total direct costs ($300,000) per the "Maximum Indirect Costs Worksheet". To meet the grant objectives, WSNCT will form a cross-sector leadership team of experts from K-12, higher education, and industry. This team will foster collaboration and strategic planning, using the Target Occupations List to guide workforce efforts. By sourcing labor market data and local insights, WSNCT will conduct an asset map and gap analysis of North Central's labor market needs and education programs, identifying key industries. Business and industry partners will drive work-based learning opportunities aligned with high-wage, high-need career pathways, starting with Manufacturing. Additional pathways will be developed as the team collaborates. WSNCT's marketing team will enhance communication through newsletters, social media, and regular meetings. The Workforce Research Analyst will support the data dashboard which will provide up-to-date labor market information, benefiting economic development corporations, chambers of commerce, and educational partners by highlighting 15 occupations from the Target Occupation List. WSNCT will also partner with neighboring WDAs (Dallas and Tarrant) to develop relevant career pathways for the metroplex. Together, we will prepare a Tri-Agency strategic plan to implement targeted training and work-based learning opportunities in high-demand industries. WSNCT will uphold the 7 Quality Standards of WBL, believing that strong collaboration among workforce, business/industry, and education will benefit students in selecting high-demand career pathways, earning dual college credit, obtaining industry credentials, and participating in quality work-based learning experiences. This regional collaboration will ensure effective project implementation and sustainability.

CDN | Vendor ID | Amendment #

Appendix I: Amendment Description and Purpose (leave this section blank when completing the initial application for funding)

An amendment must be submitted when the program plan or budget is altered for the reasons described in the "When to Amend the Application" document posted on the Administering a Grant page. The following are required to be submitted for an amendment: (1) Page 1 of the application with updated contact information and current authorized official's signature and date, (2) Appendix I with changes identified and described, (3) all updated sections of the application or budget affected by the changes identified below, and, if applicable, (4) Amended Budget Request. Amendment Instructions with more details can be found on the last tab of the budget template.

You may duplicate this page

Amended Section	Reason for Amendment