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 North Texas

Amendment Number

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

Applicant Information

Organization Workforce Solutions North Texas | CDN 09 | Campus | ESC 9 | DUNS 101606908

Address 1501 Midwestern Pkwy, Ste 101 | City Wichita Falls | ZIP 76302 | Vendor ID 16217956883

Primary Contact Sharon Hulcy | Email sharon.hulcy@ntxworksolutions.org | Phone 940-767-1432

Secondary Contact Lisa McDaniel | Email lisa.mcdaniel@ntxworksolutions.org | Phone 940-767-1432

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 Lisa McDaniel | Title Executive Director

Email lisa.mcdaniel@ntxworksolutions.org | Phone 940-767-1432

Signature Lisa McDaniel | Date 01/10/2025

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 North Texas (WSNT) is a non-profit organization governed by a local board of volunteer members from private industry. We are part of a statewide system of local boards that set policy and oversee the allocation and expenditure of federal funds provided by the Texas Workforce Commission. Our organization serves 11 rural counties near the Oklahoma-Texas border, covering a total population of 221,459 individuals, with approximately 8,000 employers, 36 independent school districts (ISDs), two community colleges, and a university.

The WSNT mission is to place North Texans in jobs and equip workers with skills that foster economic growth. While we have seen success in fulfilling this mission through our individual programs, we are now poised to make a regional impact by strengthening our efforts through collaboration with key community partners. This will allow us to better address workforce needs across industries and align our workforce development strategies to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving labor market.

Despite the successful programs and services currently in place, workforce development efforts in our region remain somewhat fragmented. Multiple entities, including community partners in economic development, education, and recruiting, are working in silos to address the skills gap and prepare individuals for in-demand careers. These efforts, while valuable, would be significantly strengthened by increased collaboration across sectors, which would create a unified approach to tackling workforce challenges. The funding from this grant will allow WSNT to take the lead in creating a regional workforce coalition, focused on streamlining and aligning efforts to meet in-demand career pipeline needs. Our priority will be to recruit a dedicated leader who can facilitate collaboration across educational institutions, industries, and other stakeholders, ensuring a more cohesive strategy to close skills gaps, align training programs with employer needs, and create a more connected pathway for job seekers.

The role of regional convener is directly within our wheelhouse, and we are equipped to lead this effort thanks to the expertise of our existing staff and board members. Specifically:

---BUSINESS AND OUTREACH MANAGER—a program administrator with over 10 years of success in workforce development and 19 years of staff development experience, will oversee the recruitment and mentorship of the project lead. This individual's project management background and deep knowledge of regional workforce needs make them an invaluable resource in guiding this initiative.

---COUNTY JUDGES from across our region are eager to partner with WSNT in this endeavor and support the unification of workforce development efforts.

---WSNT BOARD EDUCATION COMMITTEE—consisting of private-sector business leaders, educators, and community partners, meets annually to evaluate the region's top trending industries and occupations. This committee's expertise will be leveraged to guide the regional coalition's strategy and provide ongoing advisory support for education and training initiatives.

While WSNT has had success in connecting individuals to employment opportunities and developing workforce programs, our capacity to expand work-based learning opportunities has been limited due to the fragmented nature of current efforts. Our existing work-based learning programs primarily serve individuals within our federally funded programs (such as WIOA, Choices, and SNAP E&T), but we recognize the need to broaden this approach to serve a larger segment of the regional workforce.

We are poised to expand our impact by moving beyond isolated efforts and building a coalition of partners committed to a unified workforce strategy. By hiring a dedicated regional convener, we will build the infrastructure necessary to coordinate efforts and address the evolving workforce needs of the region. This individual will ensure the success of this initiative and will play a central role in building out our tea an coordinating the regional workforce coalition.

In addition, we will offer paid internships to assist with research, data collection, and outreach. These internships will provide valuable experience to students while contributing to the long-term success of our regional workforce strategy.

WSNT is well-positioned to lead this regional convener initiative, drawing on our established partnerships, experienced staff, and strong community relationships. With the support of this grant, we will unify efforts across sectors, create a coordinated strategy to address in-demand workforce needs, and ensure a sustainable pipeline of skilled workers for North Texas employers. This initiative will have a lasting impact on our region's economic development and workforce, and we are committed to its success.

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.

Workforce Solutions North Texas (WSNT) is equipped with a dedicated and experienced team to support K-12 outreach, apprenticeship development, and building strong employer relationships across our region. The key personnel driving this initiative include:

---BUSINESS AND OUTREACH MANAGER: with over 10 years of project management and workforce development experience, plus more than 19 years in staff development and will oversee the hiring and mentoring of the project lead. This individual has a proven track record of successfully developing workforce programs and building strategic partnerships.

---STUDENT HIREABILITY NAVIGATOR: This role is critical in providing direct support to students with disabilities, ensuring their smooth transition from school to the workforce. This staff member will assist in connecting students with opportunities and resources to succeed in their career paths.

---EDUCATION OUTREACH SPECIALIST: This staff member focuses on establishing connections between K-12 schools, training programs, and the workforce, working directly within schools to bridge the gap between education and employment.

---BUSINESS SERVICES CONSULTANTS: These professionals are dedicated to supporting our local businesses by providing tailored services that meet their workforce needs, from job postings and hiring events to subsidized employment and on-the-job training.

While these roles provide foundational support, we recognize that the key component needed to further strengthen our workforce development efforts is a dedicated individual who can unite various stakeholders—education, industry, and higher education—into a collaborative effort to build a robust and sustainable workforce pipeline.

The gap we are addressing with this initiative is the lack of a central figure to bring together the diverse stakeholders necessary for a comprehensive workforce development strategy. The project lead will be responsible for creating and maintaining a coalition of education, industry, and higher education stakeholders, ensuring that all relevant parties work together to address regional workforce challenges and opportunities. By creating a cohesive strategy across sectors, the project lead will help establish a sustainable and future-focused workforce.

WSNT is deeply embedded in the North Texas community, with strong and long-standing ties to key educational institutions, community organizations, and employers including:

---VERNON COLLEGE, NORTH CENTRAL TEXAS COLLEGE, AND MIDWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY, which provide educational opportunities and workforce development programs to meet local employer needs.

---REGION 9 ESC and NORTEX REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION, which work closely with WSNT on regional planning, workforce development, and educational initiatives.

---CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS (EDCs) across the region, ensuring that local businesses are connected to the talent pipeline and have the resources they need to thrive.

We also maintain close relationships with a wide range of employers, from large institutions like Sheppard Air Force Base to United Regional Health Care System, to smaller local businesses such as those in our rural townships. In 2023, WSNT directly served 984 employers, providing 13,300 services—including job postings, hiring events, and subsidized employment—demonstrating the breadth and depth of our engagement with the local business community.

In 2023, WSNT facilitated the connection of 9,702 job seekers with 3,704 job orders entered into our job database. Our efforts go beyond recruitment; we provide a range of services to employers to help them build a skilled, reliable workforce. These services include coordinating hiring events, offering job training, and providing labor market data to help businesses make informed workforce decisions.

WSNT is governed by a local board composed primarily of volunteer members from private industry. This ensures that our workforce development strategies are closely aligned with the needs of employers and the broader community. The board sets policy and oversees the expenditure of federal funds allocated through the Texas Workforce Commission. As part of a statewide network of local boards, WSNT ensures that its workforce development strategies and services reflect both local needs and broader state priorities.

The WSNT organization has a solid infrastructure in place, a dedicated and experienced team, strong community partnerships, and a track record of success in workforce development. The request for funding will fill an essential gap by hiring a project lead who can bring all these pieces together to ensure a robust future workforce for North Texas.

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.

WSNT has a proven track record of creating impactful work-based learning opportunities that align with regional workforce needs. A key example is our "Summer Earn and Learn" (SEAL) program, which pairs students with disabilities (ages 14-22) with local employers for eight-week summer employment. In 2024, we successfully connected 22 youth with jobs, allowing them to earn a paycheck, develop new skills, and gain valuable professional experience. Simultaneously, employers benefit from accessing a qualified and diverse talent pool, supporting our community's inclusive workforce development.
Additionally, we were awarded a grant to place 25 teachers in externships in summer 2024 to directly connect them with in-demand industries. This initiative enabled educators to gain first-hand experience in high-demand occupations, and upon their return, they used their insights to develop curriculum and lessons to better prepare students for the workforce. The program's success has been well-documented and is a prime example of how we foster partnerships between education and industry to ensure a pipeline of skilled workers for regional employers.

In addition to our direct work-based learning programs, our organization is active in a range of career-based events and partnerships, providing resources to job seekers and employers including:
Job Readiness and Resume workshops for nursing students at Vernon College; Development of a Childcare Development Associate (CDA) credential course in partnership with Vernon College, which provides students with critical industry certification; PATHS for Texas, which offers upskilling opportunities to retail workers seeking to advance in the workforce; Annual events like the Youth Career Expo, which attracts over 1,200 eighth-grade students from North Texas, and the Transition Fair, which connects high school juniors and seniors with disabilities to local employers and educational opportunities.
Additionally, we host job fairs across 11 counties each year and provide labor market information to Economic Development Corporations (EDCs) and colleges, fostering a data-driven approach to workforce planning and supporting the development of targeted training programs that respond to the local labor market.
Our leadership team plays an active role in shaping workforce development efforts through membership on various boards and committees, both locally and statewide. For example:
---Our Business and Outreach Manager recently completed 10 years of service on the Burkburnett Chamber of Commerce Board, including a year as president, and has served on the Wichita Falls Human Resource Management Association (SHRM) Board for four years
---Our Child Care Contract Manager is an active member of the United Way Board and established a local chapter of the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children (TXAEYC) in 2024, advocating for improvements in early childhood education and care.
---Our Executive Director serves as the president of the statewide Workforce Solutions Board Executive Directors coalition, leading efforts to improve workforce policy and outcomes across Texas.
These relationships strengthen our ability to advocate, influence policy, and align our initiatives with regional and statewide priorities. The trust and connections we've built in the community also enhance our ability to collaborate effectively with employers, education providers, and government agencies.

Our ongoing programs and leadership in workforce development demonstrate our strong alignment with the goals of this grant. The success of initiatives like the SEAL program, teacher externships, and career expos show our capacity to facilitate meaningful connections between education, industry, and the workforce—directly contributing to the objectives of this grant and improving the local economy for years to come.

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.

Our organization is committed to improving employment outcomes for individuals, particularly those facing barriers to sustainable work. In 2023, we served 6,984 distinct individuals, with 763 enrolled in federally funded programs like WIOA, CHOICES, or SNAP. Through a variety of services—including job postings, job fairs, interview rooms, on-the-job training, and more—we help individuals find work, complete training, and obtain credentials. Additionally, we assist those who may exhaust their unemployment benefits by helping them return to work within a 10-week period. While we currently collect data on all individuals we interact with, our ability to coordinate and track activities across multiple stakeholders is limited by our fragmented data management systems.

Despite tracking key outcomes like credential attainment, job placement, and wages, our current data management processes are dispersed across multiple platforms and databases. This fragmentation leads to inefficiencies in tracking and sharing data across different stakeholder agencies, ultimately hindering our ability to fully evaluate and improve program effectiveness. A unified system would streamline our processes, allowing for real-time tracking of individual progress, more accurate reporting, and enhanced collaboration across agencies and service providers. This will lead to better outcomes for participants and more efficient program management.

Our goal is to enhance service delivery and increase employment and training outcomes for individuals by implementing a unified system. Specific objectives include:

---OBJECTIVE 1: Integrate stakeholder data into a central CRM database, enabling comprehensive tracking of individual progress and services receive

---OBJECTIVE 2: Track and analyze key performance indicators (KPIs) such as credential attainment, employment outcomes, and job retention.

---OBJECTIVE 3: Enhance collaboration between agencies involved in service delivery, leading to improved client services and outcomes.

---OBJECTIVE 4: Reduce data entry errors and inefficiencies by automating data collection and reporting processes.

The implementation of a unified system will enhance our ability to track both federal program participants and individuals receiving support for unemployment. By centralizing all data, we will be able to:

---More accurately track outcomes such as job placement, wage progression, and credential attainment.

---Share real-time data with relevant stakeholders, improving collaboration and coordination of services.

---Identify trends and gaps in services, enabling us to make data-informed adjustments to programming. We will collect baseline data for all relevant KPIs upon system implementation and monitor progress regularly to ensure the system is meeting expectations and driving the desired outcomes.

Upon implementation, we will integrate the system into our daily operations, ensuring its use across all relevant programs and services. Staff training will be an ongoing process to ensure system proficiency, and we will continue to allocate resources in future budgets to support system maintenance, upgrades, and user support. By streamlining our data management processes, the CRM system will lead to long-term efficiency improvements, ensuring the sustainability of the benefits generated by this initiative.

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.

Workforce Solutions North Texas (WSNT) is requesting $300,000 in funding to support our role as the regional convener for the North Texas Workforce Development Area (WDA) 11, which encompasses 11 counties. This funding will enable us to create and implement a coordinated program that brings together multiple community organizations to improve work-based learning opportunities across education, industry, and higher education. By streamlining existing efforts into a unified program, we will better address regional workforce needs and build a sustainable talent pipeline for local employers.

A substantial portion of the requested funding, $255,472, will be allocated to staffing and personnel support to ensure the successful implementation and management of this initiative. These staff members will be responsible for the following key functions:

---PROGRAM LEADERSHIP: The project lead will oversee the development, coordination, and execution of the regional coalition. They will work closely with education, industry, and workforce partners to create and implement work-based learning strategies.

---DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS: Dedicated staff will collect, analyze, and track data to assess the success of the program, measure outcomes, and ensure that all activities meet the data requirements for this grant.

---STRATEGIC PLANNING AND CONVENING: Staff will coordinate and lead meetings with regional partners, fostering collaboration and aligning efforts toward shared goals. They will facilitate discussions on strategic planning and work to establish long-term regional workforce initiatives.

These positions will be critical in ensuring that the regional convener role is successfully fulfilled and that the program is properly managed and executed.

The remaining $44,528 will be allocated to essential supplies and operating costs to support the initiative’s infrastructure and ensure the team can carry out the project efficiently. This allocation will cover:

---LAPTOP COMPUTERS: Providing necessary technology to staff members for project management, data tracking, and communication.

---TRAVEL COSTS: Covering transportation expenses for staff and partners to attend meetings, site visits, and events across the 11-county region. These costs will ensure that the team is able to engage with stakeholders across all counties and build relationships with local employers, educational institutions, and community organizations.

---DATABASE TECHNOLOGY: Investing in technology to manage and track data on work-based learning participants, employer engagement, and other program metrics. This will allow us to monitor progress, meet data collection requirements, and report outcomes accurately to the grant funders.

The funding will directly benefit the entire 11-county region, enhancing the capacity of local employers and community organizations to support workforce development through unified work-based learning efforts. As we implement the program, we will consistently assess how funds are being utilized to ensure that we are meeting the goals of the initiative and delivering maximum impact to the workforce and the region. We are committed to utilizing resources efficiently and adjusting strategies as needed to best meet the needs of the project.

CDN 09 Vendor ID 16217956883 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