

# Workforce Solutions Education & Training Vendor Network Standards and Guidelines

## I. Background

Workforce Solutions helps employers meet their human resource needs and individuals build careers, so both can compete in the global economy.

To ensure that our region has an educated workforce, Workforce Solutions offers scholarships to help an individual get the basic or occupational skills and credentials he or she needs to get a job, keep a job or get a better job.

Workforce Solutions has a network of education and training vendors authorized to use our scholarship dollars for basic skills, upgrade or occupational skills training. Customers who are eligible for our scholarship assistance choose from our network of providers to obtain the training they want and need.

These standards and guidelines describe the rules and process we use to build and maintain the *Education and Training Vendor Network*.

## II. Categories

We have three categories of education and training vendors:

- ✓ *Basic Skills* – Providers of adult education/literacy or GED preparation, high school diplomas, English as a Second Language, developmental classes that prepare individuals to enter occupational skills training; basic computer literacy skills; and job readiness skills, which are not occupation specific, but are instead, skills that may be used across multiple industries and/or occupations.
- ✓ *Career Training* – Providers of certificates, associate degrees, and bachelor degrees that prepare an individual to enter employment in one of the Board’s High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations ([List](#)) ([Booklet](#)).
- ✓ *Career Advancement Training* – Providers of certificate, seminar or course-based training related to one of the Board’s High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations ([List](#)) ([Booklet](#)). Short-duration workshops, seminars, or courses equip customers with industry-recognized certifications and/or build on existing skills. Career advancement training may include testing/assessment to demonstrate competency and may also include training to allow an individual to transition existing skills from one occupation or industry to another.

### **III. Building the Education & Training Vendor Network**

There are two principal ways in which vendors join the Workforce Solutions network.

#### **A. Soliciting Vendors to Fill Gaps**

We solicit education and training vendors in order to fill specific gaps in our current training offerings – that is, new or specifically targeted occupations or skill needs – identified as a part of our work with the region’s employers.

At least once every year, we look at the vendors on our list and assess the availability of training in our three categories to ensure we have sufficient choices for customers.

We promote the addition of vendors to our network through the following methods:

- Publicizing education and training vendor opportunities on our website <http://wrksolutions.com>
- Soliciting vendors for specific needs related to a particular industry, occupation, or geographic location

#### **B. Open Application**

We accept applications from vendors at any time for:

- Basic skills training
- Career training for our High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations ([List](#)) ([Booklet](#))
- Career advancement training related to our High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations ([List](#)) ([Booklet](#))

### **IV. Applying to be a Vendor**

#### **A. Selecting the Appropriate Application**

We have two different applications for education and training vendors. Those who apply to offer basic skills training use our [Basic Skills Training Application](#). Vendors who want to offer career training or career advancement training apply using the Texas Workforce Commission’s [Eligible Training Provider System \(ETPS\)](#).

Vendors must have been providing education and training services for at least one year, and we may ask for proof, including performance information. We will not approve start-up organizations.

Workforce Solutions’ Financial Aid Payment Office staff will offer technical assistance to vendors wishing to apply to be part of the network.

## **B. Application Review and Approval**

- Workforce Solutions' Financial Aid Payment Office processes and approves vendor applications.
- The application review and approval process for basic skills training may take up to 60 days to complete.
- The application review and approval process for career training or career advancement training may take up to 120 days.
- All approved education and training vendor programs are listed on our Education & Training Vendor Network to provide easy access for our customers to approved programs and providers.
- If we deny an application, we will provide the applicant vendor with a written description of the denial and explain why.
- Once we approve an application, the Financial Aid Payment Office will contact the vendor to sign a vendor agreement, if one does not already exist.
- Approving a vendor's application to place basic skills, career training or career advancement training for one or more programs on our network does not mean we guarantee that any of our customers will choose that vendor or program. When we approve a vendor's application, we make that vendor available to our customers, should any of them choose that vendor and its program for training.
- Career training vendor program(s) (i.e. curriculum, credential, etc) must prepare students for employment within one of our High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations ([List](#)) ([Booklet](#)).
- Similarly, career advancement training must help students gain additional skills or credentials related to our one of our High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations ([List](#)) ([Booklet](#)).

## **C. Renewal**

1. Vendors must renew programs on the Education & Training Vendor Network annually.
2. We process renewals for the basic skills in the same way we process new applications.
3. Currently, career training and career advancement training programs are certified through 2017. We will provide information before the end date for these programs about how vendors may recertify. We may request updated information from the vendor before renewing the application.

## V. Evaluating Performance

- A. Career Training and Career Advancement Training.** We evaluate the effectiveness of a vendor's career training and career advancement training programs by compiling performance information in the following critical areas:
- ✓ Attained Credential Rate (at least 60% of students attain a credential)
  - ✓ Entered Employment Rate (at least 60% of students get a job after training)
  - ✓ Average Hourly Wage at Placement (student earnings must be at least 80% of the statewide average entry-level hourly wage for the occupation as displayed in the performance area of the application on ETPS)
- B. Basic Skills.** For basic skills training programs, we gather performance information regarding attained credential and completion rate (at least 60% of students attain a credential or complete training).
- C. Customer Satisfaction.** Occasionally, we may survey our customers who have used basic skills, career training or career advancement training vendors and ask for feedback on the vendors and their programs. We may use the results in evaluating vendors.
- D. Report Card.** We will publish performance results for all Education & Training Vendor Network members and programs at least annually in our Training Provider Report Card. We may also publish results of customer satisfaction surveys.
- E. Monitoring.** We visit vendors periodically to monitor performance, payment arrangements, and training delivery.

## VI. Removing Programs and Vendors

- A.** We may remove a vendor and/or one of more of its approved programs from our Education & Training Vendor Network for any of the following reasons:
- The vendor submitted false or fraudulent information on an application.
  - The vendor changes its physical location and does not inform us prior to the move.
  - The vendor is no longer in compliance with standards set by its regulatory or accrediting organization.
  - We receive three separate complaints, which we determine to be valid through investigation, within a six-month time period concerning the quality of education or training (including hours of instruction, instructors, books, equipment, etc.).

- We find that a vendor and/or its program(s) are operating in a particularly harmful, offensive, discriminatory, illegal or otherwise egregious, inappropriate manner.
- The vendor does not renew its application for a program timely.
- We remove an occupation from the set of High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations ([List](#)) ([Booklet](#)), which causes the removal of a vendor's training program.
- We determine a vendor's career training program does not directly prepare a student for employment in one of our High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations ([List](#)) ([Booklet](#)) as described originally by the vendor.
- We will also remove a vendor's career advancement training program if it does not help students gain essential skills or credentials related to one of our High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations ([List](#)) ([Booklet](#)) as described originally by the vendor.
- The vendor does not submit information or documents we have requested.
- The vendor does not meet performance standards.

We will fully develop the operational process to remove vendors due to substandard performance during the next year. In the interim, we will report on vendors not meeting performance standards and also notify vendors when our data shows they are not meeting performance.

- B.** Workforce Solutions will issue a written determination to a vendor, notifying it that one or more of its programs, or the vendor organization, will be removed from our Education and Training Vendor Network.
1. Our written determination to remove a vendor will include the following information:
    - A brief statement of the adverse action
    - The mailing date of the determination
    - An explanation of the vendor's right to appeal the determination
    - The procedures for filing an appeal to the Board including applicable time frames
    - The address, email or fax number to which the appeal must be sent
    - The date upon which we will remove the vendor or its program
  2. We remove vendors from our Education & Training Vendor Network for at least six months. During this time, we do not list the vendor on our network or authorize payment to the vendor.
  3. Vendors may re-apply at the end of the removal period by:
    - Submitting a new application;

- Providing evidence that the problem(s) which caused the removal is resolved; and
  - Allowing Workforce Solutions staff to do an on-site visit and review.
4. If we remove a vendor's training program for failure to meet performance standards or other issues related to the vendor's delivery of education/training in that program, the vendor may submit a new or revised program for review after one year. The vendor must demonstrate that the revised program is meeting Workforce Solutions' performance standards during that year.
5. Appeals
- A vendor may file an appeal requesting a review of the removal of the vendor or one of its programs from the Education & Training Vendor Network. A vendor must submit the appeal in writing within 30 calendar days of the mailing date of the determination. The appeal must include the vendor's proper mailing address.
  - The Board will respond within 14 calendar days of receiving the appeal. If the determination is upheld, we deactivate a vendor and/or applicable programs within 90 calendar days from the date of the original determination.

## VII. Appendix

### A. Determining Occupations in Demand

Workforce Solutions analyzes a variety of data in order to project which jobs are expected to have the most growth over the next 10 years.

We use this research to compile a list of occupations that are currently in demand in the Gulf Coast region. We consolidate and present this information in a variety of lists:

- ✓ [Targeted Industries](#) – We use this list to help guide strategic investments of money and resources in our key regional industries. We also use this list to help guide actions of the Employer Service Division.
- ✓ [Where the Jobs Are](#) – This is our “hot jobs” list comprised entirely of occupations in which we expect to see substantial openings over the next 10 years. This list focuses on projected number of openings and does not factor in wages, skill levels or other criteria. We use this list to help provide general career information and guidance to customers.
- ✓ High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations ([List](#)) ([Booklet](#)) – This is our demand occupations list. We use it as the basis for our system’s career information and guidance work. The occupations on this list represent good jobs with higher than average wages, skill levels and employment opportunities for the next 10 years. We work to promote these occupations to our customers and the general public throughout the region. We also use this list to guide our offers of Workforce Solutions’ scholarships to customers interested in career training and career advancement training.

We review all lists every two years and update them as new labor market information becomes available.

A business or group of businesses may petition the Board staff at any time to add or drop occupations from the High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations list.

Our [High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations and Occupations Supported by Scholarships Lists – Adding and Dropping Occupations](#) document details how we create, approve and accept petitions to modify our industry and occupation lists.

**B. Course Catalog and Curriculum:**

We require vendors to have a published catalog that describes their courses, programs, services, cost to students, refund and attendance policies, and the criteria used to determine if students have successfully completed or graduated from the program. We may ask vendors to provide us with a written copy of curricula.

**C. Facility and Equipment Details**

Vendors must have ADA-compliant facilities including equipment, textbooks, and software that provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. These facilities must also meet fire and safety code standards and regulations. Vendors must own or lease the proposed training facility or have an agreement with the organization that does.

**D. Complaint Investigation & Resolution**

To provide high quality educational and training services to our customers, Workforce Solutions has a [Vendor Complaint Process](#). Any customer, Workforce Solutions staff member, or an interested or affected individual may file a complaint, at any time, about services received from Workforce Solutions education and training vendors.

We ask that all complaints be submitted in writing and, at a minimum, include the following information:

- The name of the vendor, physical and mailing address, telephone number
- The name of the educational program or service received from the vendor
- Contact information – name, phone number, mailing and/or email address – of the person filing the complaint
- A detailed description of the problem or issue

**E. Payment, Debarment, Disallowed Costs and Recoupment**

Workforce Solutions will not pay more than the cap limit per customer for training programs. Similarly, we will not pay more than a vendor’s advertised price for training programs. Furthermore, we will work with customers to identify quality, cost-effective training options, including free education and training options, when available. For education and training provided over several semesters, vendors must provide the price for each semester.

Vendors, with the exception of public colleges and universities, must provide evidence of financial stability prepared by a Certified Public Accountant. Vendors cannot solely rely on funds from Workforce Solutions.

We do not approve new applications for education or training vendors or refer new customers to existing vendors if the vendor is debarred or repaying disallowed costs to any state or federal agency. Vendors must be in a positive status and/or have fully repaid disallowed costs before being added to our vendor network.



Approved vendors who are paid while not eligible or receive overpayments from Workforce Solutions, must agree to a repayment plan or we will discontinue all new referrals. Continued non-payment may result in removal from our vendor network and potential collection and/or legal actions.

#### **F. Regulation Status**

All Career Training vendors admitted to our network must be licensed or approved by an applicable education regulating body such as, but not limited to, the [Texas Education Agency \(TEA\)](#), [Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board \(THECB\)](#), [Texas Workforce Commission Career Schools \(TWC\)](#), or the [U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship](#).

Basic skills or career advancement training vendors who are not licensed or approved (unregulated vendors) must provide an exemption letter from [Texas Workforce Commission Career Schools \(TWC\)](#) documenting that each program and location is exempt from TWC Career Schools regulation. These vendors must also submit information about the credentials and experience of the instructors who will be providing service such as resumes and curriculum vitae.

#### **G. Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and Special Initiatives**

TAA provides financial aid for education and training to help workers who have lost their jobs due to the adverse affects of foreign trade.

Occasionally, Workforce Solutions may also receive special funding to help specific customers get training and return to work.

Customers eligible for TAA or special initiative financial aid must work with career office staff to select an appropriate training program.

Depending on funding stipulations, there may be instances where it is not necessary for the training occupation to be included on our High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations list. Similarly, the vendor may not be listed on our Education and Training Vendor Network.

If a vendor agreement does not already exist, the Financial Aid Payment Office will contact the selected vendor to obtain one for payment purposes.