

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1102
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Higher Education
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Background

Texas community college and technical school leaders have worked tirelessly to support the state's response to the COVID-19 national crisis, during which millions of Texans have filed for unemployment and the mismatch between workforce needs and skilled workers has deepened. A majority of these displaced workers lack the skills and education needed to successfully and quickly reenter the workplace.

As of October 2020, 3.7 million Texans have filed for unemployment relief since March 2020.

Texas' unemployment rate was 8.3 percent in September 2020, up 3.5 percent from September 2019.

In the post-pandemic workforce, students and displaced workers will need to acquire in-demand skills for available occupations in their region.

The Texas Reskilling and Upskilling through Education (TRUE) program is a collaboration between colleges and business partners across the state to rapidly provide well-designed short-term credentials ensuring displaced and underemployed workers are armed with the skills and credentials needed to fill high-demand industry needs that have shifted due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The TRUE program aims to prepare students for in-demand careers accelerating their transition to work while also building an enduring education infrastructure to support a thriving Texas economy throughout the diverse regions of the state.

Bill Proposal

TRUE is a competitive grant program to be administered by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Eligible colleges would receive grants to reskill and upskill the Texas workforce, put Texans back to work in high demand occupations, and accelerate the Texas economic recovery.

TRUE would invest funds to allow institutions to build capacity to expand new, accelerated, and redesigned workforce training programs that teach high-demand skills and confer certifications or credentials valued in growing, living-wage occupations.

TRUE will initiate employer engagement to highlight areas of future job growth, define high-demand skills, and inform credential development and training.

As proposed, S.B. 1102 amends current law relating to the establishment of the Texas Reskilling and Upskilling through Education (TRUE) Initiative to support workforce education at public junior colleges.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 (Section 61.886, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Subchapter T-2, as follows:

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

Sec. 61.881. DEFINITION. Defines "initiative."

Sec. 61.882. INITIATIVE: ESTABLISHMENT; ADMINISTRATION; PURPOSE. (a) Provides that the Texas Reskilling and Upskilling through Education (TRUE) Initiative is established.

(b) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to administer the initiative in accordance with this subchapter and rules adopted under this subchapter.

(c) Requires THECB, under the initiative, using funds appropriated or otherwise available for the purpose, to award grants to public junior colleges for creating, redesigning, or expanding workforce training programs that lead to postsecondary industry certifications or other workforce credentials required for high-demand occupations.

Sec. 61.883. USE OF GRANT. (a) Authorizes use of a grant awarded to a public junior college under this subchapter only for the support and maintenance of educational and general activities that promote workforce learning at the college, including:

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

(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; and

(3) expanding institutional capacity to provide high-demand postsecondary industry certifications or other workforce credentials for target occupations included on regional or statewide target occupations lists established by appropriate workforce agencies.

(b) Authorizes money received by a public junior college under the grant program in a fiscal year that is not used by the college in that fiscal year to be held and used by the college in subsequent fiscal years for the purposes prescribed in this section.

Sec. 61.884. RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATIONS OR CREDENTIALS. (a) Requires THECB, in collaboration with public junior colleges, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), and private employers, to identify new high-demand skills needed to earn postsecondary industry certifications or other workforce credentials valued in high-demand occupations.

(b) Requires THECB, in consultation with public junior colleges, to:

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

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

(c) Authorizes a public junior college awarded a grant under this subchapter to 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 (Coordination of Institutions of Public Higher Education).

(d) Requires THECB, in devising its funding formulas and making its recommendations to the legislature relating to institutional appropriations of funds for public junior colleges under Section 61.059 (Appropriations), to 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. Authorizes THECB to solicit, accept, and spend grants, gifts, and donations from any public or private source for the purposes of this subchapter.

Sec. 61.886. RULES. Requires THECB to adopt rules for the administration of this subchapter, including rules requiring public junior colleges awarded a grant under this subchapter to report necessary information to THECB.

SECTION 2. (a) Requires THECB to 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) Requires THECB to award grants to public junior colleges under Subchapter T-2, Chapter 61 (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board), Education Code, as added by this Act, beginning with the 2022 fall semester.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2021.