

First Generation College Student Initiative Summary Workforce Investment Act Incentive Grant Application

Background

On May 6, 2002, Governor Rick Perry announced a plan to implement several higher education initiatives. The plan included the recruitment, preparation, enrollment, and retention of first generation college students—youth who would be the first in their families to pursue and achieve a higher education through two- and four-year postsecondary institutions (e.g., colleges, universities, community colleges, and/or technical schools).

In the past year, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), the Texas Education Agency (TEA), and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) worked together to develop and implement a series of project activities to address the First Generation Initiative set forth by Governor Perry. This comprehensive program includes activity components that are intended to complement one another and provide the supportive structure necessary for disadvantaged, first generation youth to succeed throughout high school and into postsecondary education (see “Proposed Activities” below). Each component is geared toward enhancing the coordination between institutions of higher education, public school districts, and Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards). This collaborative effort is critical to a student’s academic and workforce success.

The following six local workforce development areas (workforce areas) were identified as pilot areas to develop and refine programs that address the First Generation Initiative:

1. Cameron County Workforce Development Area
2. Deep East Texas Workforce Development Area
3. Gulf Coast Workforce Development Area
4. South East Texas Workforce Development Area
5. South Plains Workforce Development Area
6. Upper Rio Grande Workforce Development Area

These workforce areas represent urban, rural, and border regions throughout the State, and contain over two-thirds of the high schools with low college-going rates. The pilot areas were selected based on the following criteria:

- ✍ The workforce areas contain high schools that are in the lowest 10 percent of all the public high schools with regard to the number of seniors that continue into public, postsecondary education in the year following graduation.
- ✍ The workforce areas have high concentrations of disadvantaged youth and high percentages of first generation students.
- ✍ The Boards in the workforce areas have existing partnerships with the selected school districts, institutions of higher education, and employers, which ensure the efficacy of the projects.

It is proposed that the program activities in these existing pilot areas be continued and that the number of pilot areas participating in the initiative be expanded. In addition to the existing pilot areas, the following workforce areas also meet the above criteria and are eligible to receive funding:

- ✍ Alamo Workforce Development Area
- ✍ Dallas Workforce Development Area
- ✍ North Central Workforce Development Area
- ✍ North East Texas Workforce Development Area
- ✍ Panhandle Workforce Development Area
- ✍ Tarrant County Workforce Development Area

Funding Source

TWC, in coordination with TEA and THECB, will submit an application to the U.S. Department of Labor for \$3 million in Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Incentive Grant Funds to continue the First Generation Initiative.

Texas is eligible to receive the incentive funds because of the State's successful performance in workforce and education programs. The provisions authorizing funding for incentive grant awards are found in WIA §174(b) for workforce development services; Adult Education and Family Literacy Act §211(a) for adult education activities; and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act §111(a) for vocational education activities.

Proposed Activities

1. TWC will receive \$1.5 million to provide subgrants to consortia in the selected pilot areas to continue current projects or to implement innovative new first generation model programs at the secondary and postsecondary levels. Consortia composed of Boards, targeted high schools, institutions of higher education, and local employers will be eligible for funding in the existing and newly proposed pilot areas. The goals of these programs include, but are not limited to:
 - ✍ Increasing the number of students who take the Recommended High School Program.
 - ✍ Increasing enrollment in key areas of high school study, including mathematics, science, computer literacy, problem solving, and communications.
 - ✍ Increasing employer participation in workplace mentoring and learning activities that may include paid work experience, job shadowing, on-the-job training, or school-sponsored enterprises.
 - ✍ Increasing college enrollment of minorities and economically disadvantaged students.
 - ✍ Increasing retention rates of college students.
 - ✍ Increasing the preparation of underachieving students for higher education opportunities.
 - ✍ Increasing career awareness, career exploration, and counseling services.
2. TEA will receive approximately \$300,000 in WIA Incentive Funds to provide certification training to teachers who will go on to teach Career Orientation programs in middle schools and high schools in the pilot areas. While many Texas school districts require their students to participate in Career Orientation courses offered at the middle grade and high school levels, there are not enough teachers certified to teach the courses. These courses help students explore possibilities for various adult roles in education and the workplace, and guide them in developing a plan to achieve their goals. Career Orientation programs often include two courses: Career Investigation (a middle grade course), and Career Connections (a grade 9–10 course).
3. THECB will receive approximately \$1.2 million to provide the following services:
 - ✍ On-site College Enrollment Workshops for grade 9–12 students and their parents in the targeted high schools. These workshops provide students and parents with the opportunity to fully complete applications for direct enrollment in the local community colleges, financial aid assistance, and registration for college tests.
 - ✍ Award competitive subgrants to accredited institutions of higher education in Texas that enroll and retain first generation college students from the targeted Texas high schools with low college-going rates. These institutions must show that they have campus-based student support services to keep students on the path to completion of a recognized degree or certificate. The subgrants from THECB to the institutions would be used for supplemental scholarship funding and limited to \$500 per student, per year.
 - ✍ Provide on-site “GO” Centers in selected high schools in the pilot areas. These centers will provide follow-up assistance to students and parents for the academic and financial aid information necessary to transition seamlessly from high school to college.

These program activities combine the resources of both State and local entities to recruit, counsel, and help prepare first generation youth in grades 9–12 for postsecondary education and to retain first generation students already enrolled in college. It is a comprehensive project that seeks to coordinate and enhance the available educational and workforce activities and services so that first generation students may successfully pursue a postsecondary education.