



# 2021 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The 87th Legislature convenes on January 12, 2021. The mission of the Texas Business Leadership Council (TBLC) is to build a more globally competitive Texas. With each new legislative session there is opportunity to create and improve public policy that will promote our competitiveness and overall economic health.

As such, the TBLC will continue advocating for critical issues that our state must address for Texas to continue moving along a positive path. Those issues include education and workforce, economic development, state infrastructure, and cybersecurity policy. Additionally, the TBLC works on federal issues that have a significant impact on the state's economy.

## EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE

- Preserve and Fund the Comprehensive School Finance Reform initiatives in HB 3 (86th Legislature).
- Improve system alignment between K-12 and higher education by aligning the College, Career, and Military Readiness (CCMR) Outcomes Bonus as outlined in HB 3 with high school graduation endorsements to encourage more efficient pathways to degree completion and credentials of workforce value.
- Support reforms that promote the success of the state's 60x30TX goals.
- Support work-based learning, youth apprenticeships, competency-based education, credit for prior learning, and other related initiatives that save Texas students and families time and money, provide students with meaningful workforce experience, and create connected pathways to marketable skills, degrees, and industry-recognized credentials.
- Develop a Tri-Agency list of K-12, post-secondary, and work-based indicators that correlate with postsecondary and workforce success.
- Develop and adopt common rules, definitions, and aligned metrics for high-quality work-based learning and associated terms across the Tri-Agencies to help guide program implementation, messaging, and advising for students about relevant associated coursework.
- Improve coordination of grant making between TEA, THECB, and TWC to better ensure access to and funding for work-based learning initiatives, technical assistance, and regional intermediary development.
- Create an online portal for all Tri-Agency grants in a centralized, accessible location where organizations can learn about and apply for grant opportunities.
- Consider braiding and combining funding into a single grant for each initiative, with a specified owner for each initiative within the tri-agency.
- Allocate funding, including state funding through the Related Instruction of Registered Apprenticeship programs, to support technical assistance and the creation of resources for intermediary organizations related to developing cross-sector partnerships.
- Administer funding to intermediary organizations to act as fiscal agents who coordinate and administer high-quality work-based learning programs with an emphasis on first-generation, low-income, and/or students of color.

## EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE (CONT.)

- Invest in technology and infrastructure with funding from the Economic Stabilization Fund to make necessary improvements for the planning, personnel, and infrastructure necessary to implement an equitable statewide broadband strategy that gives every Texas student access to internet connectivity.
- Require sharing of aligned K-12, higher education, and workforce data compiled collectively by the Tri-Agency (TEA, THECB, TWC) to provide better public information that can be used to improve education access and success for the most vulnerable Texas students and families.
- Perform a Tri-Agency audit of current data collection and reporting requirements to identify and address gaps in existing data collection methods.
- Create and publish a Tri-Agency data dashboard to track student outcomes and progress measures to be included in an annual Tri-Agency Progress Report and 60X30TX Report.
- Require that the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board provide K-12 and postsecondary institutions with resources that deliver guidance on how to interpret the data and shift practices to promote 60x30 success.
- Improve data sharing within the Tri-Agency to support the efficient transfer of credits for students. Provide institutions of higher education with disaggregated transfer data (including student outcomes) to map pathways and help students understand their opportunities and choices for degrees and credentials.
- Support continued rigor and access in dual credit, Early College High Schools, and P-TECH, with a focus on increasing the number of students earning college credit, degrees, workforce certificates, and credentials while in Texas high schools.
- For the top 25 programs into which students are transferring, require universities to identify lower-division transfer courses that apply to that program, the courses that also count for core requirements, and any additional lower-division requirements from that program.
- Support the use of competency-based education (CBE), prior learning assessment (PLA), and other innovative course completion strategies.
- Support institutions offering competency-based education by exempting accredited programs from formula funding penalties developed for seat-based programs.
- Require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to develop new rules specific to CBE, PLA, and other innovative course completion programs. Additionally, the agency should provide tools and resources intended to guide programs implementing the new rules.
- Create an interim study exploring how to encourage institutions of higher education to accept credit for prior learning. Include guidance on best practices for assessing, incorporating, and reporting credits counted toward a degree plan.
- Provide property tax relief to charter schools by exempting leased facilities from property taxes.
- Prohibit public schools from using deed restrictions on surplus property sales that would prevent the properties subsequent use for educational purposes.
- Require local governments to follow the same zoning and permitting process for charters and ISDs.
- Ensure that charters don't take a disproportionate cut on facilities funding allocation.
- Support Outcomes Based Funding at Institutions of Higher Education.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Reauthorize the Chapter 313 Texas Economic Development Act to keep Texas competitive in attracting capital-intensive projects that bring high paying jobs and grow the tax base.
- Maintain a competitive Texas Enterprise Fund with a minimum balance of \$200M for the biennium.
- Maintain Texas' Production (Film) Incentive Programs.
- Maintain a tax and regulatory environment that encourages innovation and job growth.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

- Support continued fiscal stewardship in managing the corpus of the State Water Implementation Fund for Texas (SWIFT), and continued implementation of projects included in the State Water Plan and financed through SWIFT.
- Support efforts to further develop the state water planning process, including recommendations provided by the Interregional Planning Council (IPC).
- Support implementation of the historic Regional Flood Planning Groups (RFPG) and the Flood Infrastructure Fund (FIF).
- Through modern science and innovation, strive to implement strategies that capture excess flows resulting from floods, to increase water supply, needed during times of drought.
- Support an investment in science necessary to address water challenges facing the state. Monitor the implementation of fiscal resources invested by the 86th Legislature to update maps related to flood plains, Groundwater Availability Models, and Water Availability Models.
- Support public-private partnerships and regional authorities' ability to add infrastructure capacity through user pay models such as managed lanes and dedicated toll lanes.
- Foster a climate for innovation, additional investment, and modernization of Texas transportation infrastructure.
- Accelerate the deployment of smart infrastructure investments by updating policies and practices that impede progress.

## CYBERSECURITY

- Continue to improve state agency preparedness through legislation that increases cybersecurity preparedness, education, and training throughout state government.
- Support legislation that mitigates cybersecurity risks to election and voting systems.

## FEDERAL ISSUES

- Advocate for Congressional action to provide permanent legal status for Dreamers.
- Support a Congressional comprehensive immigration reform package with solutions for immigration policy that expands the H-1B high-skilled visa program, eliminates per-country caps, overhauls the existing H-2A and H-2B temporary visa worker programs, creates a pathway to earned citizenship for undocumented immigrants; and enhances the enforcement of immigration laws.
- Expansion of visas allotted for international students enrolled in institutions of higher education.