

Discussion Paper: Statewide Initiatives to Support Texas Rising Star Four Year Review

1 Background

2 Texas Government Code §2308.3155(b)(2) requires the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to
3 adopt a timeline and a process for regularly reviewing and updating the Texas Rising Star quality
4 standards. The statute also requires TWC’s consideration of input from interested parties
5 regarding the quality standards. To meet this requirement, on February 23, 2016, TWC’s three-
6 member Commission (Commission) adopted TWC Chapter 809 Child Care Services rule
7 §809.130(e)(1), requiring review of the Texas Rising Star guidelines every four years.

8 Beginning in May 2019, TWC convened a workgroup to review the Texas Rising Star guidelines
9 and recommend revisions. The workgroup included early learning program directors from
10 around the state, early childhood advocacy organization representatives, professional
11 development providers, Local Workforce Development Board (Board) staff, and representatives
12 from TWC, Texas Education Agency, Texas Health and Human Services Commission’s (HHSC)
13 Child Care Regulation (CCR) Division, and the State Center for Early Childhood, Children’s
14 Learning Institute (CLI).

15 Over an eight-month period, the workgroup met regularly to review the Texas Rising Star
16 guidelines in detail and to engage in a collaborative effort to improve the guideline’s standards.
17 On January 21, 2020, the Commission approved the publication of the workgroup’s
18 recommendations for public comment. And, on October 6, 2020, the Commission will be
19 considering proposed rule changes to implement Texas Rising Star program changes.

20 Issue

21 The proposed rules modify several of the measures, reweight the categories, reduce the total
22 categories from five to four, and implement a Continuous Quality Improvement framework.
23 Corresponding automation changes will be needed to support these changes.

24 The rules also propose the creation of a new Texas Rising Star Mentor Micro-credential
25 framework. Funding will be needed to support the development of this Micro-credential
26 framework.

27 In addition, funding is needed to support the initial costs of certifying all TRS assessors, as well
28 as ongoing annual costs of maintaining both the Texas Rising Star Assessor Certification, and
29 the Mentor Micro-credential framework. In the initial year, funds will be used for

- 30 • Virtual kickoff training (printed manual, and assessor’s kit equipped with materials to
31 help support reliability)
- 32 • Initial training and certification on the Texas Rising Star assessment for both assessors
33 and mentors (171 TRS staff)
- 34 • Monthly PLC for Assessment Reliability for both assessors and mentors (171 TRS staff)

35 And, the ongoing annual costs will continue to support:

- 36 • Initial training and certification on the Texas Rising Star assessment for newly hired
37 assessors and mentors

- 1 • Ongoing quarterly reliability training for all Texas Rising Star assessors to maintain
2 reliability over time
3 • Ongoing Monthly Peer Learning Communities of practice for Texas Rising Star mentors
4 focused on coaching and mentoring strategies and continuous quality improvement
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6 Additional details on each of these three initiatives is included in Attachment 1.
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8 **Decision Points**

9 Staff seeks direction on:

- 10 • Approving \$733,000 to support the one-time cost of automation changes necessary to
11 implement revisions to the Texas Rising Star categories, weights and measures
12 (additional detail in Attachment 1).
13 • Approving \$450,000 to support the one-time cost of developing a Texas Rising Star
14 Micro-credential framework (additional detail in Attachment 1).
15 • Approving \$750,000 to support the first-year costs of assisting all TRS Assessors to
16 attain their required certification, and \$450,000 to support the subsequent annual costs of
17 Standards Training and Certification Program for mentors and assessors (additional
18 detail in Attachment 1).

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Statewide Initiatives to Support Texas Rising Star

Automation Changes to Support Texas Rising Star Revisions—\$733,000 one-time cost

The Children’s Learning Center (CLI) manages Engage, the online assessment platform used by Texas Rising Star Assessors to record Texas Rising Star facility and classroom assessments for all Texas Rising Star measures. Modifications to the categories and measures (reducing the categories from five to four), as well as reweighting the categories, will require corresponding automation changes within Engage.

- CLI will implement the following changes to the Texas Rising Star online assessment tool:
 - Automatically activating schools on CLI Engage and assigning schools to their appropriate Local Workforce Development Board (Board) community
 - Implementing item-level changes, including removing obsolete items and adding new items
 - Implementing new scoring calculations for individual items and category weighting
 - Integrating the Texas Rising Star interest form, screening form, and application with CLI Engage to support more efficient data collection and entry for providers and Texas Rising Star staff
 - Implementing a common classroom naming convention to streamline assessment scoring and technical assistance
 - Integrating the Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System’s (TECPDS) Texas Workforce Registry professional development reports for automatic scoring of category 1 items
 - Supporting infrastructure for the CLI Engage platform to support new tools and integrations
- CLI will implement a new continuous quality improvement plan (CQIP) specifically designed for Texas Rising Star Mentors to provide targeted technical assistance, goal setting, and resource links at the facility level. This new CQIP tool and reporting will be based on an existing tool on CLI Engage currently used by Texas School Ready and school district coaches.
- CLI will complete updates to the Texas Rising Star website, including web-based content and Texas Rising Star documents available for download, such as the Texas Rising Star Guidelines. Web and document updates will include translation into Spanish and Vietnamese, and all PDF documents will meet Level AA of the Web Content accessibility guidelines.
- CLI proposes to create the following new reports and technology integration to better support Texas Rising Star staff:
 - Integration of Child Care Licensing data to create a daily report with notifications in the event log on CLI Engage when a provider exceeds the Texas Rising Star standards on licensing violations.

- 1 ○ Report that integrates specific initial eligibility requirements for all providers,
2 based on data from Child Care Licensing.
- 3 ○ Implement login federation between UTHealth and TWC, and possibly Boards
4 (dependent of technology infrastructure at the regional level), for easier access to
5 reports and data on CLI Engage and TECPDS.

6 **Texas Rising Star Mentors Coaching Micro-credential Project—\$450,000 one-time cost**

7 TWC previously funded CLI through the Strengthening Texas Rising Star Implementation project
8 (Track 76029) to develop a Texas Rising Star Assessor Certification. Building on this
9 foundation, the Commissioners may consider supporting the development of a Texas Rising Star
10 Mentor coaching credential. CLI, using funds from the Texas Education Agency provided
11 through a TWC Rider (GAA, Article VII, Rider 25, 86th Texas Legislature, Regular Session
12 (2019)), has begun developing a coaching micro -credential aimed at Texas School Ready
13 coaches. This foundation can be expanded to support Texas Rising Star Mentors.

14 The current CLI coaching credential is composed of three micro-credentials and is designed to
15 award badges to users based on successful demonstration of the individual competencies via
16 submissions of videos and other artifacts. This proposed development project will enhance the
17 existing coaching credential to incorporate additional resources aligned with the Texas Rising
18 Star mentoring role, as well as technology integrations with TECPDS. Upon completion, TWC
19 may choose to make this coaching credential a requirement for Texas Rising Star mentors.

- 20 • CLI will publish modified coaching competencies, contextualized to Texas Rising Star.
- 21 • CLI will develop coaching competency overview online courses for each of the
22 competency areas, to be included with the coaching credential on CLI Engage. The
23 courses will include exemplar video demonstrations of each competency, which provide a
24 resource for Texas Rising Star mentors as they learn about the competencies and
25 complete competency demonstrations for badges.
- 26 • CLI will develop additional submission assignments for competency demonstration
27 aligned with Texas Rising Star goals, including submissions related to supporting
28 directors and discussing Texas Rising Star assessment results and use of Texas Rising
29 Star–specific CQI framework.
- 30 • CLI will enhance the existing technology integration between CLI Engage and TECPDS
31 to develop a new specialist role in the Texas Workforce Registry and enabling Texas
32 Rising Star mentors to link their CLI Engage account, and all professional development
33 and badges earned on CLI Engage, to their personal specialist accounts on TECPDS.
- 34 • CLI will partner with TWC to develop collateral materials for change management, so all
35 boards and Texas Rising Star staff are notified of the new coaching credential and desired
36 program expectations for staff completion.

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1 **Ongoing Support for the Texas Rising Star Standards Training and Certification Program**
2 **— \$750,000 year 1 cost; \$450,000 ongoing annual cost**

3 The Texas Rising Star Standards Training and Certification Program, to be operated by the
4 Children’s Learning Institute, includes several components designed to support Texas Rising
5 Star assessors and mentors to become certified on the Texas Rising Star assessment, support
6 assessors in maintaining reliability over time, and support mentors. The program’s tiered training
7 plan coordinates additional support with online training content, ensuring that Texas Rising Star
8 assessors and mentors have opportunities to achieve and maintain role-based expectations.

9 To ensure ongoing skill development for Texas Rising Star assessors and mentors, funds would
10 also support ongoing Peer -Learning Communities (PLCs). PLCs are an evidence-based method
11 to help educators develop and maintain key competencies. Through PLCs, educators stay abreast
12 of current best practices and regularly reflect on their own practice.

13 The program’s design optimizes remote, web-based delivery to offer opportunities for more
14 efficient staff training over time. It provides both mentors and assessors training related to the
15 program guidelines and the categories contained within the Texas Rising Star assessment, along
16 with specialized ongoing support for the specific roles of assessor and mentor. Standardizing
17 training and certifying staff ensures that the Texas Rising Star certification process is reliable and
18 credible across the state. The training and certification program includes a tiered approach of
19 learning and practice through self-study online modules, small group facilitated sessions for
20 additional support, and individualized support for staff needing one-on-one assistance.

- 21 • Initial training and certification on the Texas Rising Star assessment (Year 1 additional
22 costs are associated with supporting approximately 171 Texas Rising Star Assessors &
23 Mentors in completing the training, and for approximately 66 assessors in the attainment
24 of their certificate)
- 25 • Ongoing quarterly reliability training for Texas Rising Star assessors to maintain
26 reliability over time
- 27 • Ongoing PLCs for Texas Rising Star mentors focused on coaching and mentoring
28 strategies and continuous quality improvement

29 After all Texas Rising Star assessors and mentors achieve initial reliability on the Texas Rising
30 Star assessment, TWC will offer ongoing support to maintain reliability (assessors) and use of
31 coaching and mentoring strategies (mentors). Quarterly reliability training is required for all
32 assessors to maintain reliability; each quarter, all assessors will complete a coding reliability
33 assignment on one facility type and one classroom age group, followed by a group feedback
34 session. Texas Rising Star mentors are required to join an ongoing mentor PLC to discuss
35 coaching and mentoring strategies, support for directors and teachers, and continuous quality
36 improvement. CLI will develop a comprehensive monthly schedule of webinar-based
37 collaborative PLCs for Texas Rising Star Mentors and Assessors. CLI also will host The PLC
38 and include regular video evaluation on Assessor and Mentor practices, which is based on CLI’s
39 research-based reflection process of observation, goalsetting, and taking action to support
40 continuous improvement.

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- CLI will develop a monthly schedule for PLCs to meet, targeting specific needs of Texas Rising Star mentors and supporting their ongoing development of the coaching competencies and completion of the coaching credential. The number of PLCs will be determined based on the number of Texas Rising Star mentor participants. A group of three to four mentors (optimal group size) will be assigned to each PLC, which allows multiple PLCs to be hosted each month.
 - CLI staff will review competency demonstration submissions submitted by Texas Rising Star mentors working toward completion of the coaching credential. The CLI staff will award badges when a mentor successfully demonstrates competencies through the submissions (for example, videos and artifacts) or provide support to enable them to resubmit later.
 - CLI will use the certificate-generation tool on TECPDS to award certificates to all PLC participants, supporting Texas Rising Star staff annual training requirements.