



STRATEGIC WORKFORCE INVESTMENTS PROGRAM REVIEW AND PROPOSED CHANGES

HIGHER EDUCATION
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ISSUE BRIEF

SUMMARY

Senate Bill 103, *Strategic Workforce Investments* was passed during the 2016 General Session, allows for appropriations to fund stackable credentialing programs. The purpose of this legislation, also known as the Strategic Workforce Initiative (SWI), is to provide resources for the establishment of educational pathway partnerships that serve regional industry workforce needs. These pathway programs provide workforce for high-growth and high-paying occupations.

This program did not include performance measures, sunset provisions or any kind of executive or legislative review processes. The analyst recommends several updates and changes to the program to provide the Legislature with better information and performance metrics to make informed policy choices regarding existing awards and future disbursements.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

As discussed during the 2019 Interim, none of the SWI programs that have been funded by this subcommittee have had consistent performance measures attached to their awards. There are also no controls on how funds are handled locally after they are awarded and appropriated, nor is there reporting to this subcommittee on how funds are allocated between partner institutions.

The Fiscal Analyst's Office has worked with The Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED) to include a number of performance metric request for the proposals you will consider this year. Outcomes that will be tracked and reported to the legislature on a yearly basis include:

- Timeline for full program implementation as proposed and funded;
- Targets for enrollment in program per year by secondary/non-secondary students;
- Targets for overall completions/certificate attainment; and
- Targets for job placements results.

GOED will also ask all current awardees to report on the same measures through the Spring 2020 and will have a report for this subcommittee to consider during the Interim.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Building on this reporting, we recommend that the subcommittee consider the following actions with regards to the SWI program:

- Implement a sunset provision for all newly funded projects - These projects are meant to support high-demand fields and to be responsive to industry. The level of demand for fields will change 5-10-15 years out and the Legislature should develop a system for regular review to ensure that funds are being directed to the clusters and fields that need investment;
- Develop a sunset and review plan for all existing awards – As all currently-funded programs were not passed with metrics or sunset provisions, the subcommittee should adopt common review criteria and schedules for all prior fiscal year awards based on the year they were awarded.
- The subcommittee should direct staff to engage with GOED, Utah System of Higher Education (USHE), Utah System of Technical Education (UTECH) and the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) to project yearly which industry clusters should continue to be supported, which should be phased out and have their funding reallocated and to forecast which industries should have new pathways developed.
- Develop a financial reporting mechanism that allows for a summary of spending to be submitted to the Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee by the lead agency for each funded project.