

**Background:**

Staff will provide updates to the Project Development Committee regarding public information activities, the status of new or recently approved projects, and projected available funds. Meeting materials include the following items for your review prior to the meeting:

- Grant Project Highlights – This report provides highlights of grantee accomplishments for a number of current TCDD funded projects. The Project Highlights for Project SEARCH will be presented by grants staff at the Committee of the Whole

Staff may also refer to the following printed materials, found behind other Tabs:

- Public Information Report - includes recent public information staff activities that create awareness and build connections. Tab 13
- TCDD Quarterly Financial Report –summarizes TCDD’s approved budget and year-to-date expenditures and is used in projecting funds available for additional projects in future years. Tab 6

**Project Development Committee**

**Agenda Item 6.**

**Expected Action:**

Information items only; no action is anticipated.

**Council**

**Agenda Item 11. A.**

**Expected Action:**

The Council will receive a report on key discussions of the Committee on these items. No action is anticipated.

# TCDD Project Highlights

## February 2014

### Project SEARCH

**RFP Intent:** The project intent is to provide support for school districts, businesses, and/or other entities who wish to contract with Project SEARCH. Project SEARCH is a business-led school-to-work transition model with demonstrated success in developing internships for students with developmental disabilities.

#### Grantee: Texas Tech University

Project Title: TechWorks for Texas!  
Project Location: Statewide

Year: 2 of 5  
TCDD Budgeted: \$175,000

The Burkhart Center at Texas Tech University will implement a statewide initiative, TechWorks for Texas, to facilitate development of newly licensed Project SEARCH sites across Texas in collaboration with the Project SEARCH national office, the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) and other state/local agencies. Project SEARCH is a transition program that trains individuals with disabilities to perform complex jobs and supports the intern in finding competitive employment.

#### **Accomplishments:**

- Planning and preliminary project implementation activities took place in the first year, including conference calls with the Project SEARCH national office and the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS).
- After long negotiations, a contract was finalized between the Texas Tech University and the Project SEARCH national office that can be utilized for the remainder of the project period.
- Communities for the first sites were selected: Lewisville, Garland, and Fort Worth; training and technical assistance were provided to all.
- All of the first cohort sites have developed their local teams, including school districts that provide a teacher and aide and DARS for a community rehabilitation provider (CRP) and job coach.
- All sites have arranged internships for 8-10 students each.
- A total of 4 communities have applied for Cohort 2: Houston ISD, College Station ISD, United Healthcare and Fort Bend ISD (together), and Brenham ISD.
- TechWorks for Texas will support the development of at least ten (10) newly certified sites in Texas by the end of Year 5 of this project and provide support as needed to veteran Texas sites located throughout the state.
- Project SEARCH sites will serve individuals with developmental disabilities who are ready to transition into adulthood and competitive employment opportunities.

#### **Sustainability:**

The long-term primary objective of TechWorks for Texas is to prepare individuals with disabilities to be equally qualified for competitive employment as their non-disabled peers. The variable that will determine the degree of sustainability will be how well Project SEARCH sites are supported across Texas as they work to provide vocational training experiences that are equally valuable to the interns with disabilities and the hospitals or businesses that provide internship experiences. That is, what will ultimately determine the degree of sustainability is the degree to which the project can demonstrate that both groups (interns and internship sites) benefit financially and in terms of societal attitudes about people with disabilities in the workforce.

TechWorks for Texas hopes to influence the vocational training system for individuals with disabilities in Texas and that system change will follow after the benefits and potential advantages of employing individuals with disabilities are made obvious to employers in Texas and across the country. As consumers and families become more accustomed to interacting with individuals with disabilities in the workforce, this will become the societal norm and expectation – to live, play, and work with individuals with disabilities in inclusive communities.