



Office of Council Member Kathie Tovo

301 W. Second St, Austin, TX 78701 | (512) 978-2109 | austintexas.gov/district9

CM Tovo Budget Rider #2 - Workforce Program for Students & Adults with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities (IDD)

Co-sponsors: CM Fuentes, MPT Alter, CM Vela

Background: This budget direction has no projected revenue impacts and is supported by staff. This direction is intended to memorialize the shared intent for this pilot program.

The pilot is based on a successful program in Wylie, Texas. The City of Wylie partnered with Texas Workforce Solutions and the Wylie Independent School District to participate in a transition-focused vocational preparation program for students with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD). The Council District 9 office conferred with the City of Wylie to learn more about their program, application process, and outcomes. The City of Wylie's Public Works Department and Animal Control Department provide paid internships and employment opportunities for post-secondary special needs students with the goal of assisting individuals in advancing their skills and experience in identified areas of interest. During the terms of employment, individuals are accompanied by job coaches who assist individuals with their transition into the workplace. Paid work experience in areas of interest provides individuals with special needs a tremendous advantage in the workforce, along with tangible benefits that are experienced by the employer.

Austin ISD's Supported Employment Special Education Department helps transition students with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD) from school into the workforce. The Council District 9 office met with Austin ISD to learn more about the program and its outcomes. Austin ISD currently collaborates with the following local employers: HEB, Randall's, Taco Cabana, P. Terry's, the Texas State Capitol, various local law firms, LuluLemon, local hotels, St. David's hospital, YMCA, and the UT Jester Hall dorm café. The Council District 9 office also met with HEB, who encouraged the City's participation in this program.

AISD has indicated that once the City launches this program and offers positions to students, they will provide technical assistance and supervision at no cost to the City. AISD staff offer observations at the place of employment and consults on how positions can be created to be mutually advantageous to the employer and individual. These services also include sensitivity training for other employees prior to and during an individual's employment. Individuals can work traditional part-time and full-time jobs. Austin ISD's case loads are typically 100-150 students, and they find jobs for these students based on strengths, skills, transportation, and interest. Austin ISD also provides bus training so the students can become as independent as possible. The program serves students with the age range of 18 - 22; however, were the City to implement this program, we could also expand the program to individuals above the age of 22, which would require a case manager from another source.

After a conversation with the Human Resources Department (HRD), it was determined that a pilot program with four participating City of Austin departments could implement this workforce program with no revenue impacts. While Municipal Civil Service rules do not allow the City to grant preference for the hiring of full-time employees, the City could begin by hiring participants into the program as temporary employees, and these employees could then compete for permanent City of Austin positions with their City experience listed on their applications. The pilot departments identified by HRD could absorb the cost of hiring temporary employees in their budget. HRD is also contemplating a job fair where students



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and adults with IDD can come learn about positions within the various departments so that they can identify which positions most interest them.

Studies show that there are cascading benefits to employing individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to both the individuals, the employers, and the workforce as a whole. The City of Austin has a great opportunity to experience these benefits and to demonstrate to other public sector employers the value of this type of workforce program to our community.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Manager is directed to provide the support needed to implement this program as soon as possible during the 2022-23 school year. The Manager shall report to Council no later than November 1, 2023.