

**Operating Guidelines
of
The West Michigan Education-to-Employment Partnership**

**ARTICLE I
NATURE OF THE PROGRAM**

1. **Name.** The name of the program is the West Michigan Education-to-Employment Partnership (“*E²P*”). E²P is a program of Talent First, Inc. (“*Talent First*”).
2. **Purpose.** E²P aims to bridge the gap between education and employment by leveraging the resources and investments of stakeholders to increase the skills of entry and middle-skilled talent for member employers resulting in higher employee productivity, talent retention, and internal mobility. E²P will accomplish this by creating a cohesive ecosystem that pioneers career pathways, offers shared wraparound supports, utilizes public and private funding sources, and aligns education and training programs offered by member postsecondary institutions to upskill new hires and middle-skill talent.
3. **Goals.** By fostering close collaboration among employers, postsecondary institutions, workforce agencies, and community-based organizations, we are committed to developing a responsive and inclusive talent ecosystem. Below are the key goals that guide our efforts to create a seamless connection between education and employment within our region:
 - a. **Generate more skilled talent:** Increase the number of graduates with postsecondary credentials in West Michigan to meet the high demand for skilled workers.
 - b. **Improve internal mobility:** Provide individuals with personalized, skill-based career pathways to make informed decisions about career advancement.
 - c. **Leverage existing dollars:** Offer equitable access to education and training by leveraging existing resources to address direct and indirect costs of credential attainment.
 - d. **Increase efficiency of talent creation:** Reduce the time and cost required for individuals to obtain credentials, making education more accessible and aligned with employer needs.
4. **Key Performance Indicators.** To ensure E²P achieves its goals and fulfills its purpose, members will be asked to track and report on the following key performance indicators at regular intervals:
 - a. **Skill improvement and certification rate:** Measure the percentage of participants who successfully complete the training programs and obtain relevant certifications or skills enhancements. A successful outcome should reflect higher completion rates for relevant programs and shorter time-to-fill relevant middle- and high-skill positions.

- b. **Education and training cost per employee:** Track the effectiveness of utilizing public and private funds to reduce or eliminate the training costs per employee compared to the standard cost without such funding. A successful outcome should reflect reduced costs-per-hire.
 - c. **Internal mobility and retention rate:** Measure the percentage of new hires for middle- and high-skill positions who are graduates of the program, and the percentage who are retained with member employers over a specified period (e.g., 6 months, 1 year).
 - d. **Cost per user comparison:** Measure the average cost per user (employee) for employers utilizing the E²P program versus the average cost per user on other HR platforms.
 - e. **Training program completion time reduction:** Measure the percentage reduction in the time taken to complete the E²P training programs compared to the standard completion time of similar programs.
5. **Strategy.** E²P will partner with interested West Michigan postsecondary institutions and employers to help incumbent employees discover, access, and complete skills-based pathways into high-demand jobs requiring postsecondary training by establishing a regional opportunity marketplace, pioneering innovative pathways, and providing access to shared coaching, resources, and wraparound supports. In the near-term, the pilot will focus on upskilling employees into high-potential clinical, administrative, and operations pathways (exact roles are yet to be determined).
6. **Functions.** To pursue its purpose and strategy successfully, E²P will engage in, but will not be limited to, the following functions:
- a. **Establish regional opportunity marketplace:** Establish a local instance of the FutureFit AI platform to serve as the regional opportunity marketplace that helps individuals discover, access, and complete skills-based pathways into high-potential jobs requiring a postsecondary credential.
 - b. **Develop skill-centric, accelerated pathways:** Co-develop career pathways aligned to local education and training opportunities. The platform will clearly articulate these connections to all users to: (1) allow individuals and success coaches to design customized pathways that meet the unique interests, goals, and life circumstances of each user, (2) enable employers to easily source and develop talent with in-demand skills, and (3) empower educators to develop stackable credentialing programs aligned to employer demand that provide even greater on and off ramps for students and workers to transition between education and employment opportunities.
 - c. **Leverage existing resources:** Braid local, state, federal and employer funding sources to reduce, eliminate, or defer the individual's costs to obtain a credential leading to a high-potential career.
 - d. **Provide wraparound supports:** Partner organizations to ensure all participants have access to the highest-need supportive services required to obtain a credential and maintain employment, including career coaching and resource navigation.
 - e. **Link on-the-job learning to credentials:** Educators will award learners as many credits as possible for prior learning to accelerate their progress toward credential attainment. Employers will align

training and on-the-job learning to institutional requirements to ensure these activities qualify for college credits.

- f. **Generate regional affinity:** Partners will accelerate efforts to retain college students, attract imported talent, and engage local talent through incentives, services, and benefits that contribute to an overall regional marketing strategy.
- g. **Develop a business model:** Talent First and the Steering Committee will develop a business model for the prototype — including a value proposition, annual investment amount, and estimated return on investment for employers and postsecondary institutions — to ensure the sustainability of the project following the conclusion of the pilot in 2025.

7. **Target Audience.** Segmented audiences intended to engage in E²P are as follows:

- a. **Employers:** Companies with a presence in Kent, Ottawa, and Muskegon counties seeking skilled talent aligned with one or more of the career pathways featured on the regional opportunity marketplace. Partner employers must commit to sponsoring employee development and building internal pathways, if they do not already exist.
- b. **Institutions:** Postsecondary institutions in Kent, Ottawa, and Muskegon counties offering programs and credentials aligned with the careers featured on the regional opportunity marketplace. Postsecondary partners must commit to awarding as many credits as possible for prior learning, including the recognition of transfer credits from other partner institutions through regional transfer agreements.
- c. **Individual Users:** Incumbent employees, or prospective new hires, of partner employers in Kent, Ottawa, and Muskegon counties who are looking to advance into the high-potential administrative and clinical pathways highlighted on the FutureFit AI regional opportunity marketplace.

8. **Offices.** E²P shall maintain its office at the offices of Talent First, or such other place as the Steering Committee and Talent First may from time to time determine.

ARTICLE II
LEADERSHIP

1. **Steering Committee.**

- a. **General.** The Board of Directors of Talent First (the “*Talent First Board*”) hereby delegates a Steering Committee to serve as E²P’s governing body, which will be composed of E²P members with a commitment in the fulfillment of E²P’s purpose and goals. The Steering Committee will play an active role in the areas of performance, strategy, finance, and governance, while providing oversight and guidance to Talent First to fulfil E²P’s purpose and activities, subject to the policies and bylaws of Talent First.

- b. Number and Composition of Steering Committee Members.** The number of members which shall constitute the Steering Committee will not be more than thirteen (13). The Steering Committee will take responsibility in electing and terminating its members, subject to the approval of the Talent First Board. The President of Talent First (the “*Talent First President*”) is an ex officio member of the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee shall be composed of representation from the following stakeholders:
- i. Business (6 members);
 - ii. Higher Education (5 members);
 - iii. Talent First President (1 member); and
 - iv. Workforce Development (1 member).
- c. Term of Office.** A term of office shall be three (3) years. A Steering Committee member may serve for consecutive terms if so elected by the Steering Committee and approved by the Talent First Board.
- d. Removal.** A Steering Committee member may be removed at any time, at a regular or special meeting of the Steering Committee, with or without cause, by a majority of all members who are then serving, other than the individual up for removal, or by the Talent First Board.
- e. Enumerated Powers.** In managing the affairs of E²P, the Steering Committee shall specifically have, but is not limited to, the following powers:
- i. **Performance:** Establish performance objectives and goals, develop quality control measures, define and uphold partner’s commitments, and identify areas for improvement and supporting initiatives.
 - ii. **Strategy:** Select target occupations featured on the regional opportunity marketplace, delineate areas of responsibility for education and training providers aligned to target occupations, determine inclusion of new education and training providers, advise on key project deliverables, develop sustainable business model, and advise on go-to-market strategy.
 - iii. **Finance:** Develop post-pilot pricing structure, review and modify budget and financial plans, and support fundraising efforts.
 - iv. **Governance:** Review and select Steering Committee members annually, select committee co-chairs, establish additional committees as necessary, review and approve data sharing agreements and MOUs, and develop and approve partner commitments.
- f. Meetings of the Steering Committee.**

- i. *Regular Meetings.* The Steering Committee shall meet at least once in each [quarter] of the year and such other times as the Talent First Board shall designate.
 - ii. *Special Meetings.* Special meetings of the Steering Committee may be called by the Talent First Board with at least twenty-four (24) hours' notice, or by any five (5) Steering Committee members with at least five (5) days written notice. Such notice by the Talent First Board or at least five (5) Steering Committee members shall include a statement of the purpose of the meeting as well as the date, time and location of the special meeting.
 - iii. *Quorum.* [Six (6)] members in attendance shall be considered a quorum.
2. **Officers.** The Steering Committee, in collaboration with the Talent First President, may appoint individuals as officers of E²P as is determined to be necessary or desirable to carry out the mission of E²P and may delegate to such officers such power and authority as deemed advisable.

ARTICLE III **GENERAL PROVISIONS**

1. **Relationship with Talent First.** E²P is a program of Talent First. E²P has the responsibility to act in a manner consistent with its purpose and mission and the purpose and mission of Talent First. For the avoidance of doubt, the Talent First Board retains full legal and financial responsibility for E²P. The Talent First President shall approve and sign all contracts, invoices, and legal agreements entered into by E²P, unless Talent First expressly permits otherwise.

In the event that a disagreement arises between the Steering Committee and the Talent First President which cannot be resolved between the parties themselves, the Steering Committee may take the matter to the Talent First Board for discussion and resolution.

2. **Expenditures.** The Steering Committee shall have the authority to direct Talent First to expend funds on behalf of E²P, provided such direction is consistent with the current budget and business plan as approved by the Talent First Board. Talent First must receive approval from the Steering Committee to spend \$500 or more if that expenditure is not budgeted in the current budget. All expenditures outside of the course of ordinary business are subject to prior approval by the Talent First President.
3. **Amendments.** These Operating Guidelines can be altered, amended, or repealed by a [two-thirds (2/3)] vote of the Steering Committee at any regular meeting provided that the amendment has been submitted to the Steering Committee in writing at the previous regular meeting. Amendments of the Guidelines are subject to the approval of the Talent First Board.