C-4 refers to a specific performance measure in the Advancing Texas Action Plan for the Texas Workforce System. The strategic action plan calls for the design and development of adult education initiatives by 2013 to enhance employment outcomes for adult learners requiring workplace literacy skills.

The C-4 pilots being conducted in three regions of Texas (Houston/Coastal, Austin/Central, and San Antonio) target adult learners functioning at NRS levels 4, 5, and 6 who, while their intent is to earn a GED® credential, are functioning at a level where they are at risk of dropping out of the educational continuum before reaching this objective. The pilots are designed to provide these individuals with intensive GED® preparation and career readiness skills that will enable them to earn a GED® and better qualify for postsecondary education, occupational training, and/or employment.

Pilots recruit cohorts of adult learners who have begun their GED® testing and/or could be available for and benefit from an intensive fast track GED® course combined with career readiness. During the first year of the pilots, 483 adult learners were served in mostly short courses of 6 to 8 weeks offered by 7 providers at 21 sites. Two programs ran semester-long courses. To date, 123 participants have earned the GED®, and completions continue to come in.

C-4’s measurable objectives include:
- completing the GED®
- obtaining employment
- experiencing an increase in wages
- entering occupational training

Challenges
Partnerships with local workforce partners, from workforce boards to one-stop vendors, are critical components of the initiative. Adult education providers in each of the three regions have formed Workforce Literacy Resource Teams (WLRT) to facilitate dialogue and referrals to and from their workforce partners. The introduction of a cross-agency referral process has met with partial but growing success. In some instances, workforce partners have stepped up to assist learners with tuition, uniforms, and trade tools needed for postsecondary education and training.

Learners with an exclusive focus on obtaining the GED® present another challenge. Contextualizing instruction so that it also addresses career readiness requires a strong and positive commitment from both instructors and career counselors involved with the pilots. Constantly reminding learners to look beyond the GED® to career pathways and
postsecondary opportunities has become a mantra of sorts. Programs are also making the effort to introduce more work-related word problems and math reading strategies into the math component. Sites with regular access to computers, relevant software, and the internet are able to extend student learning beyond traditional face-to-face instruction.

Much of the success of the program has to do with the important roles of instructors and career or transition counselors. Their collaboration is the critical link to introducing learners to career readiness skills. The majority of instructors and counselors have been trained in the use of the Integrating Career Readiness into the ABE/ESOL Classroom (ICA) curriculum. Several C-4 staff will serve as Master ICA Trainers (MICATS) in 2012-2013. Together, instructors and counselors work to introduce learners to ICA activities such as SMART goals, career exploration, labor market information, job requirements and applications, resume’ writing and interview skills, as well as financial aid and advising for individuals wishing to pursue postsecondary education and training.

During year # 2 of the C-4 pilot, Texas LEARNS and program providers will be engaged in analyzing the first year’s data, determining if adult education data can be matched with more comprehensive workforce data, reviewing UI data match per federal schedule, and identifying best practices as well as policy-to-performance implications. Two providers are also hoping to expand their C-4 like initiatives, and all are tasked with increasing their use of the ICA curriculum.

For additional information about the C-4 initiative, or to request a copy of the Framework for the TX C-4 Pilot, contact Barbara Tondre at btongre@earthlink.net.