

Local Workforce Development Board Plan Program Years 2025–2028

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Part 1: Board Vision and Strategies	4
A. Vision and Goals	4
B. Board Strategies.....	8
C. High-Performing Board	11
Part 2. Economic and Workforce Analysis	13
A. Regional Economic and Employment Needs Analysis	13
B. Labor Force Analysis and Trends	31
C. Workforce Development Analysis	38
Part 3: Core Programs	45
A. Workforce Development System	45
B. Core Programs—Expand Access, Facilitate Development, and Improve Access.....	48
Part 4: One-Stop Service Delivery	50
A. One-Stop Service Delivery System.....	50
B. Employer Engagement, Economic Development, and Unemployment Insurance Program Coordination	54
C. Coordination of Wagner-Peyser Services	56
D. Integrated, Technology-Enabled Intake and Case Management.....	58
E. Third Party Partnership in SNAP Employment and Training Programs	60
Part 5: Workforce Investment Activities	61
A. Rapid Response Activity Coordination.....	61
B. Youth Activities and Services	63
C. Coordination with Secondary and Postsecondary Education Programs.....	65
D. Child Care and Early Learning	66
E. Transportation and Other Support Services	68
F. Coordination of Adult Education and Literacy	68
Part 6: Adult and Dislocated Workers	70
A. Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training	70

B. Service Priority.....	72
Part 7: Fiscal Agent, Grants, and Contracts	72
A. Fiscal Agent	72
B. Subgrants and Contracts.....	73
Part 8: Performance	73
A. Board Performance Targets	73
Part 9: Training and Services.....	76
A. Individual Training Accounts.....	76
B. ITA Limitations	79
Part 10: Apprenticeship	80
A. Registered Apprenticeship Programs	80
B. ApprenticeshipTexas	80
Part 11: Public Comment	81
Appendix: Texas Workforce Investment Council Requirements	82
Local Board Plan Requirements.....	82
Requirement for Workforce Systemwide Alignment.....	82
Demonstrating Local Alignment with Texas’ Workforce System Strategic Plan	82
Directions for Demonstrating Alignment with the Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan	83
System Goals and Objectives	83
1. Employers Goal – Delivery of Relevant Education and Training Programs	83
2. Learners Goal – Expansion of Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship	85
3. Partners Goal – Alignment to Support Career Pathways	86
4. Policy and Planning Goal – Relevant Data Sets	86
Strategic Opportunities.....	88
Strategic Opportunity 1 – Employer Engagement	88
Strategic Opportunity 2 – Improving Outcomes for Texans with Barriers to Employment	88
Strategic Opportunity 3 – Use of Data to Support Investment Decisions	89

Introduction

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) §108 (20 Code of Federal Regulations §679.500–580), each Local Workforce Development Board (Board) is required to develop and submit to the state a comprehensive four-year plan (Board Plan) that identifies and describes policies and procedures as well as local activities that are in line with the State Plan. This Board Plan must be developed openly and be available to the public for comment for at least 15 days, but no more than 30 days, particularly to business, labor, and education partners as well as members of the Board’s communities that focus on these issues. Along with submission of the Board Plan to the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), the Board must submit all public comments of disagreement with the plan to TWC.

At the end of the first two-year period, the appropriate chief elected officials (CEOs) and the Board will review the local plan and prepare and submit modifications to reflect changes in the labor market and economic conditions, factors affecting the implementation of the plan, changes in financing, changes to the structure of the Board, and/or the need to revise strategies to meet local performance goals.

The Southeast Texas Workforce Development Board, dba Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas (The Board) serves as the local workforce development board for a three-county region, including Hardin, Jefferson, and Orange Counties. It is one of 28 local workforce development boards in Texas. The Board operates four American Job Centers (AJCs), and in 2024 served approximately 16,900 job seekers and over 2,100 employers.

These centers are in Beaumont, Orange, Port Arthur, and Silsbee. The primary function of the board is to ensure that workforce funds and operations are invested in workforce development activities that address the needs of employers and job seekers in Southeast Texas.

The Board consists of a minimum of 27 members. Of these volunteer members, the majority are employers from the private sector who consistently provide input regarding the needs of employers. The Board also includes representatives from other entities, such as adult education and literacy, education, economic development, child care, community-based organizations, labor, public assistance, public employment, and vocational rehabilitation which ensure that other workforce needs are also addressed regarding jobseekers and other targeted populations. Members are appointed by the Chief Elected Officials of the region with final approval by the Texas Workforce Commissioners. The region’s chief elected officials are the County Judges of Hardin, Jefferson, and Orange Counties, as well as the Mayor of Beaumont.

Board meetings are generally held on the second Wednesday of each month. All meetings are open to the public to allow the public an opportunity to make comments.

The Board employs 23 staff who are responsible for program planning, monitoring, and reporting. The Board has oversight over job training programs funded under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), as well as other federal and state workforce programs.

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

Part 1: Board Vision and Strategies

A. Vision and Goals

References: WIOA §108(b)(1)(E); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(5)

Each Board must include a description of the Board’s strategic vision to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. The description must contain:

- goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including the provision of early education services and services for youth and individuals with barriers to employment as defined by WIOA §3(24); and
- goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on the performance indicators described in WIOA §116(b)(2)(A).

BOARD RESPONSE:

The Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas Workforce Development Board has established its vision of creating “*A world class, competitive workforce for Southeast Texas.*” As the Board moves into the new strategic period, the board remains committed to building a highly skilled workforce that not only meets current employer demands but also anticipates future industry needs. By leveraging diverse perspectives from key stakeholders including employers, jobseekers, board members, economic developers, and workforce partners, the Board has crafted goals and strategies designed to ensure Southeast Texas remains economically competitive in an evolving marketplace.

The Board recognizes that in today’s dynamic economy, workforce development is more critical than ever. The challenges presented by the pandemic in 2020 served as a catalyst for reshaping the regional labor market. In response, the focus has shifted toward long-term recovery and sustainable growth, ensuring that Southeast Texas is positioned as a leader in workforce readiness. With renewed energy, the Board aims to build on past successes and meet the emerging needs of employers with innovation and adaptability.

The Board’s goals center on bridging the gap between workforce capabilities and industry expectations. Through close collaboration with local education and training providers, the board is identifying skill gaps and creating tailored solutions to narrow the gap. By aligning workforce training programs with the immediate and future demands of the region’s key industries, the board is ensuring a stronger link between education and employment. To ensure parents and childcare centers remain informed and actively engaged in children’s early learning, the Board has implemented a systematic approach for disseminating childcare quality developmental materials, resources, which align with current curriculum and developmental milestones. These

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

strategies will allow Southeast Texas to cultivate a resilient workforce that supports long-term economic growth that expands existing and attracts new business to the region.

WFSSET has established the following goals related to its strategic vision:

#1. Employer Engagement -- Promote a workforce system that supports employers in hiring, equipping, and retaining employees

Strategies	Results
Engage in meaningful outreach i.e. meetings, visits, tours, ongoing conversations, and timely follow-up. Continually assess and understand the needs of the businesses.	The number of employers receiving local workforce services during the performance period with a yearly increase of 4%: 2025: Goal 1,418 2026: Goal 1,475 2027: Goal 1,534 2028: Goal: 1,596
Partner with local industry to manage and continue Local First database for employability screening, online application assistance, and referrals	Provide referrals based on current need: 2024 Referrals: 981 2025 Goal: 600 2026 Goal: 100 2027 Goal: n/a 2028 Goal: n/a
Develop and maintain a database of the region's employers and track/report interactions, manage leads and follow-up activity.	Percentage of High Demand Industry Employer Participation in job fairs/hiring events: 2025 Goal: 40% 2026 Goal: 43% 2027 Goal: 46% 2028 Goal: 49%

#2. Education Integration – Enhance alignment and collaboration opportunities among secondary career and technical education programs, post-secondary education, and industry partners to provide southeast Texas with a supply of quality future workers, which are skilled to meet the needs of the region's employers.

Strategies	Results
Collaborate with school districts, colleges and businesses to offer frequent career exploration and advising experiences for youth.	Collaboration of education and industry through Teacher Externships. 2025 Goal: 60 2026 Goal: 60 2027 Goal: 70 2028 Goal: 70
Increase the number of youths prepared to enter the workforce after high school by earning industry-based certifications or credentials; facilitate this by promoting secondary Career and Technical Education (CTE) program opportunities through funding sources such as Career Coaches.	Workforce readiness career exploration and advising by Career Coaches. Student Engagements with 5% increase yearly: 2025 Goal: 3,226 2026 Goal: 3,388 2027 Goal: 3,557 2028 Goal: 3,735
Increase upskilling and reskilling programs, apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, internships, PROWD, and work-based learning.	Yearly Grants: 2025 Goal: 2 2026 Goal: 2 2027 Goal: 2 2028 Goal: 2
Partner with VR services and other agencies to assist individuals with barriers to employment	SEAL, VR Paid Work Experience & “Second Chance” participants: 2025 Goal: 60 2026 Goal: 65 2027 Goal: 70 2028 Goal: 75

#3. Child Care Early Learning (Quality Education) --Create and strengthen the foundation of early childhood education that will support a child's continuation into post-secondary education and then into the workforce. Include parents in all aspects of learning and development to allow the education to continue in the home.

Strategies	Results
Strengthening the early childhood education workforce to provide high-quality education for young children and support kindergarten readiness.	Child Care Staff Obtain CDA: 2025 Goal: 15 2026 Goal: 15 2027 Goal: 15 2028 Goal: 15
Mentoring TRS Centers to meet higher quality standards of childcare. Increasing the number of CCS providers and certified TRS centers and increasing current TRS centers Star levels.	Increase quality of care by maintaining or obtaining higher star levels for Texas Rising Star. Increase provider star level yearly: 2025 Goal: 7 2026 Goal: 8 2027 Goal: 9 2028 Goal: 10

#4. Strengthening Community Partnerships – Strengthen partnerships with economic development corporations, chambers of commerce and other business and community organizations to promote the region's economic prosperity by increasing the skills levels and earning power of the region’s workforce.

Strategies	Results
Provide partners with labor market information, hiring trends and wage occupation data.	TWC Grant (TIP, HDJTG, SDF) or 1 Non-TWC Grant
Engage in meaningful participation in regional economic development activities	2025 Goal: 1
Convene stakeholders across the region to track and report enrollments/completions, solidify educational pathways to high demand occupations, establish training opportunities, technical assistance, and data sharing	2026 Goal: 1 2027 Goal: 1 2028 Goal: 1
Leverage resources among all partners (i.e. Economic Development Corporations (EDCs), private businesses, TWC, education institutions, foundations, and non- profit organizations) to achieve training opportunities through grants such as skills development funds, apprenticeships, Texas Industry Partnership (TIP) program and High Demand Job Training Program (HDJTG)	

Strategies	Results
Leverage resources among all partners (i.e. Economic Development Corporations (EDCs), private businesses, TWC, education institutions, foundations, and non- profit organizations) to achieve training opportunities through grants such as skills development funds, apprenticeships, Texas Industry Partnership (TIP) program and High Demand Job Training Program (HDJTG)	

#5. Performance Accountability – Meet or exceed all the measures set forth by the Texas Workforce Commission. Utilize applied analytics to evaluate program outcomes and enhance quality results

Strategies	Results
Review Monthly Performance Report (MPR) to evaluate each performance report on its own merit.	Address areas not meeting or at risk.
Identify measures not meeting or at risk and correcting those negative trends prior to impacting performance.	Provide technical assistance to contractors and assist in the development of corrective action plans.
Review performance measures at each Board meeting to discuss ratings and actions.	Share Board feedback with contractors. 2025 Goal: Meet all YTD measures 2026 Goal: Meet all YTD measures 2027 Goal: Meet all YTD measures 2028 Goal: Meet all YTD measures

A. Board Strategies

References: WIOA §108(b)(1)(F); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(6);

Boards must provide a description of their strategies to work with the partners that carry out Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) activities to align the resources available to the local workforce development area (workforce area) to achieve the Boards’ vision and goals.

BOARD RESPONSE:

WFSSET has established the following strategies related to its strategic vision and goals.

1. Employer Engagement

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

In October 2023, Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas held industry forums to engage employers and assess workforce needs in healthcare, education, manufacturing, and transportation sectors. These discussions revealed shared challenges, including talent shortages, skill gaps, and the need for stronger collaboration among employers, educational institutions, and workforce organizations. To address these challenges, the board will focus on expanding upskilling and reskilling opportunities through apprenticeships, internships, work-based learning programs like PROWD, and collaboration with Vocational Rehabilitation. Over the next four years, the organization plans to secure three targeted grants annually, leveraging funds from the Texas Workforce Commission and other sources. By partnering with employers, educational institutions, and community organizations, these initiatives aim to align training with regional industry demands, address critical skill gaps, and foster innovative learning solutions. Furthermore, the Board will continue to convene the Targeted Occupations List (TOL) Committee on an annual basis to gain local wisdom and to determine updates to the TOL.

Additionally, the Board will aim to increase high-demand industry employer partnership and participation in job fairs and hiring events through increased targeted outreach, business engagement, and partnership agreements.

The initial phase of the Local First program successfully issued 981 referrals to primary contractors, kickstarting the construction process by connecting them with skilled local workers. This effort met immediate labor demands, supported local employment, and helped establish the workforce necessary to drive the project forward. As the plant project transitions into its peak construction phase, referrals are expected to decrease naturally as hiring slows, reflecting the typical lifecycle of large construction projects. This shift allows Local First to focus on ensuring an established, skilled workforce is well-supported as contractors work toward key milestones. Looking ahead, the Local First program will continue evolving to meet the project's needs, shifting its focus from recruitment to retention as the plant nears its 2026 completion.

2. Education Integration

To enhance collaboration between education and industry, Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas is committed to strengthening the Teacher Externship Program, which equips educators with firsthand industry knowledge to better prepare students for high-demand careers. The program aims to involve 60 teachers annually in 2025 and 2026, increasing to 70 annually in 2027 and 2028, supported by grant funding from the Texas Workforce Commission and other sources. By collaborating with local industries, schools, and community stakeholders, the program will align educational objectives with workforce needs. Through expanded outreach, impactful externship experiences, and ongoing evaluation, the program seeks to build lasting partnerships and create a skilled workforce tailored to Southeast Texas employers.

Through the Board's Education Outreach programs led by the Career Coach, local high school students and youth will become better prepared to enter the workforce through hands-on virtual reality career exploration exercises and modules, along with career and life planning tools. Additionally, the Board will further collaborate and partner with local Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs to determine the skills and credentials necessary for the long-term sustainability and success of the future workforce.

The Student HireAbility Navigator will continue to play a crucial part in the Board's long-term plan for providing information and promoting Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services to community partners, employers, and local educational institutions and schools. With the Board's intention of increasing participation numbers in programs such as Paid Work Experience (PWE) and Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL), the Navigator's efforts in working with the community and collaborating with VR staff are essential strategies for achieving this important goal.

To ensure reskilling and upskilling the board has targeted pathways that empower individuals with the skills needed for high-demand industries and ensure businesses have access to a talent pipeline that meets their needs. At the core of this initiative are apprenticeships, internships, and work-based learning opportunities. Our plan prioritizes equity and accessibility ensuring underserved populations have the resources and support needed to succeed. Through career coaching, mentorship, and wraparound serves, we plan to remove barriers to promote economic mobility. By investing in upskilling and reskilling the labor force reflects our commitment to building a future ready workforce.

3. Child Care Early Learning (Quality Education)

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas Child Care is designed to address evolving needs of the Early Childhood Education across the three-county region. With strong focus on preparing programs for Texas Rising Star (TRS) certification and annual assessments. The strategy to prepare children for public education is early intervention for children that are eligible for subsidized child care. The Board will fund child care services to enable eligible families to work or train for work. The funding will subsidize approximately 2,700 children per day in care at child care centers that have agreements with the Board. To provide quality education the Board will assist child care provider staff to obtain Certified Development Associate certifications which will increase the knowledge of the teacher to provide a higher quality of education. Partnerships with local training institutions will provide CDA instruction to child care staff. To align with quality instruction, Mentors will provide targeted technical assistance to support providers in enhancing their knowledge, skills, and capacity to deliver a high quality of care with the potential of increasing child care provider Texas Rising Star levels.

4. Strengthening Community Partnerships

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

The Board intends to strengthen partnerships with economic development corporations, chambers of commerce and other business and community organizations to promote the region's economic prosperity by increasing the skill levels and earning power of the region's workforce through various initiatives.

Each month, and upon any request, the Board will provide the public and partners with up-to-date labor market information, hiring, and wage data which demonstrates important labor trends in the region. Staff will continue to participate in and engage with local chambers of commerce and other economic development organizations and initiatives, such as the Regional Economic Initiative (REDI) to provide information and determine regional needs and opportunities for long-term partnerships and collaborations.

Additionally, the Board will increase the number of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with regional stakeholders to track and report data that showcases enrollments and completions and establish training opportunities that lead to high-demand occupations. Furthermore, the Board will reestablish and expand "Sharing Solutions," an initiative driven towards community partnerships, and work closely with local educational institutions on potential Jobs & Education for Texans (JET), High Demand Job Training and Skills Development Fund grant opportunities to provide additional support to the future workforce.

5. Performance Accountability

The Board has set the goal of meeting or exceeding all performance measures required by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). Board Staff will consistently meet with the contractor to review Monthly Performance Reports, evaluating each performance report and identifying measures not meeting the targeted goal, or at risk. The board will continue to provide technical assistance to contractors in areas of need to meet all contracted performance measures.

B. High-Performing Board

References: WIOA §108(b)(18); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(17)

Boards must include a description of the actions each Board will take toward becoming or remaining a high-performing Board, consistent with the factors developed by the Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC).

BOARD RESPONSE:

The Board values high quality in its work and is committed to improving its processes and strategies for serving its customers and for providing high-quality customer service.

Through the procurement process for its contractors, the Board seeks management systems that are familiar with workforce service delivery and performance, excels in staff development and retention, committed to continuous quality improvement to ensure customer satisfaction, and committed to high performance in a cost-efficient manner.

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

The Board conducts ongoing data analysis to drive continuous improvement in its delivery of services to local businesses. Regular analysis conducted includes but not limited to:

- Monthly review of reports generated through WorkinTexas to identify current employer users of workforce program services, previous users, and potential new employers.
- Evaluation of industry and occupational employment projections by TWC, DOL, and other sources to evaluate workforce system alignment.
- Quarterly evaluation of Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) and Current Employment Statistics (CES) released by TWC to identify and react to local, state, and national labor market and economic trends.
- Quarterly evaluation of the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) released by TWC to evaluate current job growth trends.
- Customer satisfaction surveys are conducted to provide feedback to determine satisfaction and identify areas needing improvement.

The Board staff develop monitoring plans and annual risk assessments to ensure contractors are monitored regularly.

The Board monitors performance measures monthly through a tiered, team approach to identify measures at risk or not meeting performance. Performance measures are reported to the Committees/Board at each meeting. In case of performance measures not being met by a particular program, the Board staff will meet with the Managing staff of the Workforce Contractor to review the performance deficit and implement strategies to increase performance in the affected area. Technical assistance is provided in support of the attainment of performance measures.

In recognition of remaining a high performing Board, Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas has received the following awards or grants during the past four years:

- ApprenticeshipTexas Expansion grant awarded in 2022 and 2023
- Texas Talent Connection grant awarded in 2022, 2023, and 2024
- Vocational Rehabilitation Integration award received in 2022? And 2023
- Registered Apprenticeship Expansion award received in 2023
- Skills Development Fund grant awarded in 2024

Board members are provided the opportunity to attend the Texas Workforce Commission Annual Conference, and the National Association of Workforce Board Annual Conference. In addition, Board members are encouraged to attend local trainings such as Strategic Planning and Implementation training planned for later this year. Additionally, Board meetings include learning opportunities about Board responsibilities and community impact.

The Board is moving forward to encourage Center staff in becoming certified, so they are keenly aware as to how their work function supports and contributes to the overall vision of the Board, as well as within the American Job Center network.

Succession and continuity planning to include 1) encourage training and certifications for all staff for continuous improvement and 2) Management development for leadership opportunities.

Through these initiatives of education, knowledge, and planning the board plans to remain a high performing board in the workforce eco-system.

Part 2. Economic and Workforce Analysis

A. Regional Economic and Employment Needs Analysis

References: WIOA §108(b)(1)(A); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(1); WIOA §108(b)(1)(B); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(2); WD Letter 24-20, Change 1

Boards must include a regional analysis of the following:

- Economic conditions, including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations
- Employment needs of employers, including the knowledge and skills needed to meet such employment needs, within in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations

BOARD RESPONSE:

The Southeast Texas Workforce Development Area (WDA), encompassing Jefferson, Hardin, and Orange counties, is anticipated to experience moderate economic growth over the next decade. This growth will be primarily driven by key industries, including petrochemicals, liquefied natural gas (LNG), and hydrogen production.

1. Key Industries and Economic Impact

The petrochemical industry remains a cornerstone of the local economy, with significant projects such as the Golden Triangle Polymers facility in Orange County. This \$8.5 billion integrated polymer plant is expected to generate 4,500 construction jobs and over 500 permanent positions upon its completion in 2026. The facility will produce 2.08 million tons per annum of ethylene and contribute approximately \$50 billion to the regional economy over 20 years.

In addition, the LNG sector is seeing transformative developments. The Golden Pass LNG project, a partnership between QatarEnergy and ExxonMobil, will have an operational capacity of 18 million

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

tons per annum of LNG, creating thousands of jobs in construction and operations by 2025. The Port Arthur LNG facility's ongoing Phase 2 expansion, a \$2 billion investment, will further increase the region's liquefaction capacity, reinforcing Southeast Texas's role as a global leader in LNG exports. The project is expected to create 3,500 construction jobs and 60 permanent positions.

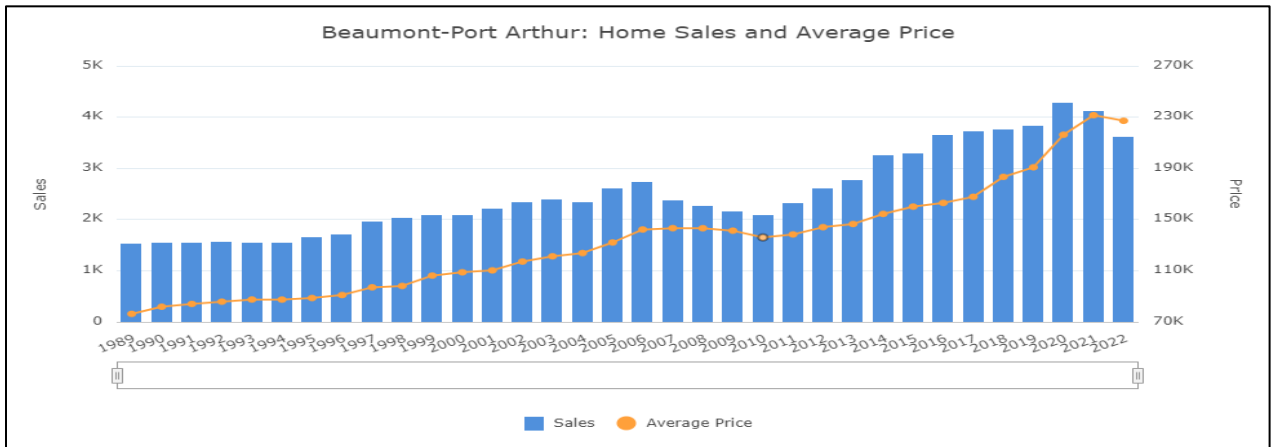
The hydrogen and ammonia sectors are also rapidly expanding. The Cormorant Clean Energy Project aims to produce 880,000 tons of ammonia annually while capturing 1.4 million tons of CO2. This project is expected to create 1,000 construction jobs and 100 permanent positions. Linde's investment of \$1.8 billion to supply clean hydrogen for OCI's ammonia project reflects the increasing importance of low-carbon technologies in the local energy landscape.

Major projects in Southeast Texas Workforce Development Area			
Project Name	Investment	Construction Jobs	Permanent Jobs
Golden Triangle Polymers	\$8.5 billion	4,500	500
Golden Pass LNG	\$10 billion	9,000	200
Port Arthur LNG Phase 2	\$2 billion	3,500	60
Linde Hydrogen Facility	\$1.8 billion	1,200	30
Cormorant Clean Energy	\$1 billion	1,000	100

Various sources – see sources page

The Linde project will create more than 1,200 construction jobs and 30 permanent jobs.

Impact of industrial expansion on housing: The impact of industrial projects on the housing market is profound. As major projects like the Golden Triangle Polymers Company and the Golden Pass LNG plant ramp up, there is a heightened demand for skilled labor, driving the need for affordable housing options. The expected influx of workers will likely increase competition for available homes and rental properties, pushing up prices. Additionally, the anticipated job creation will attract younger demographics, shifting housing preferences toward urban living spaces and rental properties. Looking ahead, ongoing industrial projects are likely to drive population growth, increasing the demand for both rental and ownership housing.



Source: Texas A&M University Texas Real Estate Research Center

Notable In-Demand Careers

- Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations:** Manufacturing and Construction industries in Southeast Texas are driving an increased demand for installation, maintenance, and repair occupations. As large-scale projects and facilities expand, the need for skilled professionals to maintain and service complex machinery and infrastructure is critical. Careers like Industrial Machinery Mechanics (12.5%) are essential for ensuring the smooth operation of equipment in manufacturing plants, while Telecommunications Line Installers and Repairers (4.4%) are crucial for supporting the area's growing infrastructure needs. Similarly, Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines (2.7%), play a key role in keeping construction and industrial machinery running efficiently. This rising demand for these occupations is a direct result of the region's booming industries, creating a steady stream of opportunities for skilled workers.
- Construction:** The demand for careers in the construction industry and skilled trades in Southeast Texas is being fueled by billions of dollars in expansion projects and new construction across the region. Major investments in energy, petrochemical, and infrastructure sectors are driving the need for a skilled workforce to support these developments. While some occupations may not exhibit dynamic growth, careers like Electricians (2.3%) and Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers (1.8%) are projected to see steady growth over the next decade. These roles are critical to maintaining and expanding essential infrastructure and continue to offer stable, well-paying job opportunities, ensuring the region's long-term economic vitality. With 20,859 employees in the Southeast Texas WDA, the construction industry continues to be a vital pillar of the region's economic foundation.
- Healthcare:** The healthcare industry is projected to experience substantial growth in support roles over the next decade, creating a wealth of opportunities for those seeking stable and rewarding careers. Notable positions such as Physical Therapist Assistants are expected to see

a 24.8% increase in demand, while Occupational Therapy Assistants are projected to grow by 20.4%. Medical Assistants will see a 9.4% rise, Diagnostic Medical Sonographers 8.3%, and Respiratory Therapists 6.8%. These occupations not only offer significant opportunities for advancement but also provide a sustainable living wage, making them attractive career paths in a rapidly evolving healthcare landscape. With 21,540 employees in the Southeast Texas WDA, the Health Care and Social Assistance sector remains a key driver of the region's economy. Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors are also showing substantial growth at 17.5%.

Healthcare careers showing notable growth				
Target Occupation Job Title	Annual Average Employment 2024	Annual Average Employment 2034	Number Change 2024-2034	Percent Growth 2024-2034
Physical Therapist Assistants	113	141	28	24.8%
Occupational Therapy Assistants	54	65	11	20.4%
Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	212	249	37	17.5%
Medical Assistants	806	882	76	9.4%
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	72	78	6	8.3%
Respiratory Therapists	118	126	8	6.8%

Source: Chmura Economics & Analytics Jobs EQ

- Emerging Industries:** Sectors such as digital manufacturing and automation are seeing growth potential, and Southeast Texas is actively working to attract employers in digital manufacturing through initiatives led by the Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center at Lamar University. This center focuses on training semiconductor technicians and promoting opportunities within the digital manufacturing sector. Collaborations with organizations like TAME (Texas Association of Manufacturers) enhance outreach efforts, utilizing podcasts and participation in events like Manufacturing Day to spread awareness of the workforce needs in this field. As these digital manufacturing employers begin to establish operations in the region, there is a clear opportunity to add semiconductor technician positions to the Targeted Occupations List. This strategic move will help ensure that the workforce is prepared to meet the skill demands of these emerging employers, contributing to the local economy and providing stable career pathways for residents. As industries across the nation and region embrace these technologies, the potential for job growth also rises, particularly in technical support, engineering, and maintenance roles associated with digital manufacturing systems. This trend not only enhances competitiveness but also ensures long-term economic resilience in a rapidly evolving global market.
- Information Technology:** Southeast Texas is also experiencing a growing demand for information technology career opportunities, particularly for Information Security Analysts (20.8% growth in the next decade). As industries in the region increasingly rely on digital

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

systems and automation, the need to protect sensitive data and secure critical infrastructure has become more urgent. Information Security Analysts play a vital role in safeguarding against cyber threats, ensuring the integrity of digital operations, and complying with regulatory requirements. This rise in demand reflects both the region's expanding tech landscape and the broader nationwide trend toward bolstering cybersecurity in an increasingly digital economy. Other information technology careers with substantial projected growth include Software Developers (17.9%), Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers (13.2%) and Web and Digital Interface Designers (8.2%).

In-Demand Occupations List Methodology

The In-Demand Occupations List for the Workforce Development Board is developed based on a thorough analysis of labor market data and projections to identify key occupations that have significant importance in the local, regional, and state economy. These occupations are selected using a combination of data-driven criteria and local insight to ensure relevance and accuracy.

Criteria for Selection

The occupations on this list are identified based on the following key factors:

- **Substantial Economic Impact:** The occupation must either have a notable current or potential impact on the local, regional, or state economy. This includes occupations that contribute to the stability or growth of supporting businesses or industries.
- **Employment Opportunities:** The occupation must provide jobs that lead to economic self-sufficiency and opportunities for career advancement.
- **Open Positions:** The occupation must have or be projected to have a significant number of open positions that can impact the local economy.

Data Reviewed in the Selection Process:

- **Total Supply of Jobs:** This measures the number of available positions in the labor market.
- **Growth and Total Demand:** Occupations are evaluated based on both historical growth and projected future demand.
- **Unemployment Rate:** Occupations are prioritized if their unemployment rates are below the state average.
- **Historical Growth:** Only occupations with positive historical growth are considered, ensuring that they show consistent or increasing demand.

Local Wisdom Adjustments:

In certain cases, occupations that may not fully meet the above qualifications are still included based on local wisdom. These occupations are added when they show potential for employment growth, contribute to the regional economy, or offer critical workforce needs in the area.

Tools and Resources Used:

To accurately assess the labor market and make informed decisions, we utilized Jobs EQ by Chmura Economics & Analytics. The specific tools within Jobs EQ include:

- **Occupation Snapshot:** Provides a comprehensive view of labor market trends and demand.
- **Occupation Wages:** Offers insights into wage trends and levels for each occupation.
- **Occupation Diversity:** Ensures a diverse range of occupations are considered, reflecting the needs of different sectors.

Note that the occupation unemployment rate data is developed by Chmura using 3 main underlying sources: 1) county-level Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) from the BLS, 2) ZIP Code level unemployment rate data from the Census's American Community Survey (ACS), and 3) occupation-level unemployment rate data from the Current Population Survey (CPS)

By combining data-driven insights and local expertise, we have created an In-Demand Occupations List that is both practical and forward-looking, positioning our region for economic growth and workforce development.

In-Demand Industries List Methodology

The In-Demand Industries List is developed to identify industries that significantly contribute to the local, regional, or state economy, offering substantial employment opportunities and pathways to economic self-sufficiency. This list is designed to guide workforce development initiatives toward industries with both current and future growth potential.

Criteria for Selection

The selection process for the In-Demand Industries List considers several data points and economic indicators to identify industries that meet the following criteria:

- **Substantial Job Openings:** The industry must currently have, or be projected to have, a substantial number of open positions that significantly impact the local or regional economy.
- **Economic Self-Sufficiency:** Industries selected must provide employment opportunities that lead to economic self-sufficiency and offer potential for career advancement.

Data Reviewed in the Selection Process:

- **Total Current Supply of Jobs:** Industries are analyzed based on the total number of jobs they provide in the region.
- **Growth and Total Demand:** Historical and projected job growth, along with overall demand, are key factors for determining whether an industry is in-demand.
- **Unemployment Rate:** Industries are prioritized if they exhibit lower unemployment rates compared to state averages.

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

- **Historical Growth:** Industries that show consistent positive growth over time are given preference, ensuring that they remain relevant for long-term workforce development.

Wage Criteria:

To ensure that industries provide economic self-sufficiency, annual wages for occupations within these industries must meet or exceed \$39,873 per year, or \$19.17 per hour, based on the MIT Living Wage Calculator for a single adult with no children in the Beaumont-Port Arthur Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

Tools and Resources Used:

To gather and analyze the necessary labor market data, we utilized Jobs EQ by Chmura Economics & Analytics. The specific tool used was:

- **Industry Snapshot:** This tool provided a detailed analysis of industry trends, employment figures, and growth projections.

In addition, the list was cross-referenced with **Attachment 2 of WD Letter 24-20 Change 1**, which includes NAICS (North American Industry Classification System) codes and is aligned with the Governor's Industry Clusters.

By integrating these data points and tools, we have crafted an In-Demand Industries List that reflects both the current and projected needs of the regional economy, ensuring that workforce development efforts target industries with substantial and sustainable impact.

Target Occupations List Methodology

The Target Occupations List (TOL) is a critical tool used by the Workforce Development Board to identify key occupations that drive economic growth and provide career pathways leading to self-sufficient wages. This list is developed through a detailed analysis of labor market data, industry trends, and input from local partners, ensuring it reflects the current and future workforce needs of the region.

Criteria for Selection

To ensure the inclusion of impactful occupations, the following criteria are reviewed when developing the TOL:

- **Substantial Job Openings:** Occupations must either have or be projected to have a significant number of job openings due to growth (not just turnover), making a notable impact on the local, regional, or state economy.
- **Self-Sufficiency Wages:** Selected occupations must meet the Board's self-sufficiency wage standards or be part of a career pathway that leads to an occupation with self-sufficient wages.

Training Component

Occupations included in the Target Occupations List typically require training, whether through formal education or on-the-job learning. Additionally, occupations that are part of a **career pathway** leading to higher-level positions with better wages are specifically identified on the list.

Review and Data Considerations:

The development of the Target Occupations List involves a comprehensive review of multiple data points to assess the viability and economic impact of each occupation:

- **Total Current Supply of Jobs:** Ensuring that there are a substantial number of jobs currently available in the occupation.
- **Growth and Total Demand:** The occupation must show a positive trajectory in both historical growth and future demand projections.
- **Emerging Jobs:** Consideration is given to new or evolving occupations that may become important in the near future.
- **Historical Growth:** A track record of growth supports the inclusion of occupations with sustained demand.
- **Annual Wages:** Occupations must provide a living wage for the region, based on the MIT Living Wage Calculator for a single adult in the Beaumont-Port Arthur MSA. This wage is reviewed and approved by the Board annually.
- **Unemployment Rate:** Occupations with lower unemployment rates than the state average are prioritized.
- **Education Level Required:** Typical education requirements, work experience, and on-the-job training for each occupation are considered.
 - Occupations requiring post-secondary training or recognized credentials are preferred.
 - Experience of five years or more, or occupations with no formal education requirements, may also be included if they require moderate or long-term on-the-job training (OJT) or apprenticeship.
- **Local Wisdom:** Local knowledge, input from Board members, and partner entities such as educational institutions, economic development agencies, and employers are used to adjust the list where appropriate.
 - Requests for adding or removing occupations must include supporting data, such as letters from employers and labor market statistics.
 - Local wisdom can also include insights from state and regional labor market projections.

Additional Requirements for Inclusion:

The following thresholds are used when determining if an occupation qualifies for the Target Occupations List:

- **Current Year Jobs:** The occupation must have at least 50 jobs in the region or demonstrate sufficient demand.

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

- **Industry Relevance:** The occupation should be important to one or more of the region’s in-demand industries, with at least 10 jobs in those industries.
- **Projected Growth:** The occupation must have projected positive job growth over the next five years.
- **Living Wage Requirement:** The mean annual wage for the occupation must meet or exceed the local living wage threshold for the Beaumont-Port Arthur MSA as determined by the Board, utilizing the MIT Living Wage Calculator.

Education and Training Criteria:

Occupations on the Target Occupations List typically require postsecondary training or recognized credentials. Specific education and training considerations include:

- **Work Experience Requirements:** Occupations with extensive experience requirements (five or more years) are generally excluded unless there is a strong local demand.
- **On-the-Job Training (OJT):** Occupations requiring moderate or long-term OJT or apprenticeship programs may still qualify if they meet wage and growth criteria.
- **Alternative Educational Pathways:** Occupations requiring a bachelor’s degree with no additional work experience or OJT may be included if alternative pathways to employment are available, such as certifications or associate degree programs.

The Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas Board develops the In-Demand Industries List, In-Demand Occupations List, and Target Occupations List through an annual review process based on economic indicators, workforce trends, and local input. The Board follows strict formulas where specified and exercises discretion in other areas, flagging items for further review if necessary. When identifying In-Demand Industries, the Board evaluates total current supply of jobs, growth and total demand, location quotient, and historical growth. In-Demand Occupations are determined by reviewing total current supply of jobs, growth and total demand, unemployment rate, and historical growth. The Target Occupations List is further refined by analyzing total current supply of jobs, growth and total demand, emerging jobs, historical growth, annual wages, unemployment rate, and typical education levels required. Additionally, the Board considers local wisdom, incorporating input from Board members and partner entities such as educational, economic development, career seekers, and employer partners, who may request additions or removals with supporting documentation. Target Occupations must also meet specific thresholds, including having at least 50 jobs in the region, being critical to an in-demand industry with at least 10 workers, and demonstrating projected positive growth over the next five years. They must provide wages that meet or exceed the living wage for the Beaumont-Port Arthur MSA, based on the MIT Living Wage Calculator, and require postsecondary training, with exclusions for occupations requiring five or more years of experience unless they include formal on-the-job training or apprenticeships. The Board strictly applies numerical criteria where defined, and for any data points not meeting a specific formula but still warranting consideration, the Board flags them for discussion with management and potentially the Target Occupations Sub-Committee before making final determinations. The Board’s Target Occupations

Sub-Committee, a sub-committee of the Planning, Evaluation, & Oversight Committee, consists of leaders in industry and education and meets quarterly to discuss occupations that should potentially be added to the Target Occupations List and to review the current list. All decisions are presented to the Planning, Evaluation, and Oversight Committee for review before being voted on by the Board for final adoption. All the aforementioned criteria can be found in Directive 23-03, Change 2, which is available upon request.

In-Demand Industries List

NAICS Code	Industry	Annual Average Employment 2024	Average Annual Employment 2034	Number Change 2024-2034	Percent Growth 2024-2034	Does Industry Relate to a Governor's Industry Cluster?
2362	Nonresidential Building Construction	5354	5142	-212	-4.0%	No
2371	Utility System Construction	4984	5000	16	0.3%	Yes
2382	Building Equipment Contractors	3467	3399	-68	-2.0%	No
2389	Other Specialty Trade Contractors	2049	2007	-42	-2.0%	No
3241	Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing	4716	4343	-373	-7.9%	Yes
3251	Basic Chemical Manufacturing	3306	3202	-104	-3.1%	Yes
4238	Machinery, Equipment, and Supplies Merchant Wholesalers	1831	1712	-119	-6.5%	No
4411	Automobile Dealers	1711	1681	-30	-1.8%	No
4441	Building Material and Supplies Dealers	1673	1631	-42	-2.5%	No
4921	Couriers and Express Delivery Service	718	191	73	10.2%	No
5242	Agencies, Brokerages, and Other Insurance Related Activities	1093	1112	19	1.7%	No
5311	Lessors of Real Estate	790	798	8	1.0%	No
5413	Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services	2969	2975	6	0.2%	Yes
5416	Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services	929	979	50	5.4%	Yes

5419	Other Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	896	980	84	9.4%	Yes
5511	Management of Companies and Enterprises	813	848	35	4.3%	No
6111	Elementary and Secondary Schools	11364	11186	-178	-1.6%	No
6211	Offices of Physicians	3511	3569	58	1.7%	No
NAICS Code	Industry	Annual Average Employment 2024	Average Annual Employment 2034	Number Change 2024-2034	Percent Growth 2024-2034	Does Industry Relate to a Governor's Industry Cluster?
6213	Offices of Other Health Practitioners	976	1114	138	14.1%	No
6214	Outpatient Care Centers	1074	1255	181	16.9%	No
6221	General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	3975	3908	-67	-1.7%	No
8113	Commercial and Industrial Machinery and Equipment (except Automotive and Electronic) Repair and Maintenance	1110	1166	56	5.0%	No
9221	Justice, Public Order, and Safety Activities	4538	4318	-220	-4.8%	No

In-Demand Occupations List

SOC Code	Occupation	Annual Average Employment 2024	Average Annual Employment 2034	Number Change 2024-2034	Percent Change 2024-2034	Annual Change in Employment (Growth)
11-3021	Computer and Information Systems Managers	288	311	23	8.0%	2
11-3031	Financial Managers	526	578	52	9.9%	5
11-9021	Construction Managers	1261	1274	13	1.0%	1
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	526	652	126	24.0%	11
11-9141	Property, Real Estate, and Community Association Managers	310	314	4	1.3%	0
11-9151	Social and Community Service Managers	117	127	10	8.5%	1
13-1081	Logisticians	200	219	19	9.5%	2
13-2051	Financial and Investment Analysts	171	174	3	1.8%	0

15-1211	Computer Systems Analysts	268	273	5	1.9%	0
15-1212	Information Security Analysts	77	93	16	20.8%	1
15-1252	Software Developers	519	612	93	17.9%	9
15-1253	Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers	68	77	9	13.2%	1
15-1255	Web and Digital Interface Designers	49	53	4	8.2%	0
SOC Code	Occupation	Annual Average Employment 2024	Average Annual Employment 2034	Number Change 2024-2034	Percent Change 2024-2034	Annual Change in Employment (Growth)
15-2031	Operations Research Analysts	72	84	12	16.7%	1
17-2051	Civil Engineers	564	569	5	0.9%	0
17-2112	Industrial Engineers	429	452	23	5.4%	2
17-2141	Mechanical Engineers	326	339	13	4.0%	1
17-3011	Architectural and Civil Drafters	172	168	-4	-2.3%	0
19-1042	Medical Scientists, Except Epidemiologists	55	57	2	3.6%	0
19-4092	Forensic Science Technicians	27	29	2	7.4%	0
19-5011	Occupational Health and Safety Specialists	301	326	25	8.3%	2
21-1018	Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	212	249	37	17.5%	3
21-1012	Child, Family, and School Social Workers	279	295	16	5.7%	2
25-1071	Health Specialties Teachers, Postsecondary	155	177	22	14.2%	2
25-2011	Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	531	539	8	1.5%	1
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	1871	1859	-12	-0.6%	-1
25-2022	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	858	853	-5	-0.6%	-1
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	1377	1369	-8	-0.6%	-1
25-2052	Special Education Teachers,	214	212	-2	-0.9%	0

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

	Kindergarten and Elementary Schools					
25-2057	Special Education Teachers, Middle School	97	96	-1	-1.0%	0
25-2058	Special Education Teachers, Secondary School	160	159	-1	-0.6%	0
25-3031	Substitute Teachers, Short-Term	682	705	23	3.4%	2
SOC Code	Occupation	Annual Average Employment 2024	Average Annual Employment 2034	Number Change 2024-2034	Percent Change 2024-2034	Annual Change in Employment (Growth)
27-3092	Court Reporters and Simultaneous Captioners	19	19	0	0.0%	0
29-1071	Physician Assistants	123	151	28	22.8%	3
29-1122	Occupational Therapists	124	134	10	8.1%	1
29-1123	Physical Therapists	235	262	27	11.5%	3
29-1126	Respiratory Therapists	118	126	8	6.8%	1
29-1127	Speech-Language Pathologists	196	226	30	15.3%	3
29-1129	Therapists, All Other	40	44	4	10.0%	0
29-1141	Registered Nurses	2701	2760	59	2.2%	6
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	252	354	102	40.5%	9
29-1292	Dental Hygienists	140	145	5	3.6%	0
29-2011	Medical and Clinical Laboratory Technologists	123	122	-1	-0.8%	0
29-2012	Medical and Clinical Laboratory Technicians	119	118	-1	-0.8%	0
29-2031	Cardiovascular Technologists and Technicians	48	47	-1	-2.1%	0
29-2032	Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	72	78	6	8.3%	1
29-2034	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	193	196	3	1.6%	0
29-2042	Emergency Medical Technicians	200	205	5	2.5%	0
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	542	553	11	2.0%	1
29-2053	Psychiatric Technicians	46	49	3	6.5%	0
29-2055	Surgical Technologists	97	98	1	1.0%	0
29-5056	Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	135	158	23	17.0%	2
29-2057	Ophthalmic Medical Technicians	82	89	7	8.5%	1

29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	849	874	25	2.9%	2
29-2099	Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other	169	175	6	3.6%	1
31-2011	Occupational Therapy Assistants	54	65	11	20.4%	1
31-2021	Physical Therapists Assistants	113	141	28	24.8%	3
31-9011	Massage Therapists	112	125	13	11.6%	1
SOC Code	Occupation	Annual Average Employment 2024	Average Annual Employment 2034	Number Change 2024-2034	Percent Change 2024-2034	Annual Change in Employment (Growth)
31-9091	Dental Assistants	326	336	10	3.1%	1
31-9092	Medical Assistants	806	882	76	9.4%	7
31-9097	Phlebotomists	106	109	3	2.8%	0
33-3012	Correctional Officers and Jailers	1222	1106	-116	-9.5%	-12
33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	930	923	-7	-0.8%	-1
39-1014	First-Line Supervisors of Entertainment and Recreation Workers, Except Gambling Services	91	95	4	4.4%	0
39-4031	Morticians, Undertakers, and Funeral Arrangers	27	28	1	3.7%	0
39-5092	Manicurists and Pedicurists	148	153	5	3.4%	1
39-5094	Skincare Specialists	81	85	4	4.9%	0
39-9031	Exercise Trainers and Group Fitness Instructors	268	299	31	11.6%	3
43-6013	Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	651	664	13	2.0%	1
47-2031	Carpenters	1098	1066	-32	-2.9%	-3
47-2051	Cement Masons and Concrete Finishers	344	315	-29	-8.4%	-3
47-2111	Electricians	1236	1264	28	2.3%	3
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	805	798	-7	-0.9%	-1
47-2171	Reinforcing Iron and Rebar Workers	58	57	-1	-1.7%	0
47-2221	Structural Iron and Rebar Workers	174	170	-4	-2.3%	0
49-2094	Electrical and Electronics Repairers, Commercial and Industrial Equipment	167	155	-12	-7.2%	-1
49-3031	Bus and Truck Mechanics and	336	323	-13	-3.9%	-1

	Diesel Engine Specialists					
49-3042	Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines	439	451	12	2.7%	1
49-3092	Recreational Vehicle Service Technicians	28	30	2	7.1%	0
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	455	463	8	1.8%	1
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	1079	1214	135	12.5%	13
49-9043	Maintenance Workers, Machinery	185	188	3	1.6%	0
49-9044	Millwrights	109	108	-1	-0.9%	0
49-9051	Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	182	175	-7	-3.8%	-1
49-9052	Telecommunications Line Installers and Repairers	114	119	5	4.4%	0
51-2041	Structural Metal Fabricators and Fitters	191	154	-37	-19.4%	-4
51-4041	Machinists	438	431	-7	-1.6%	-1
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	1286	1266	-20	-1.6%	-2
51-8091	Chemical Plant and System Operators	579	533	-46	-7.9%	-5
51-8093	Petroleum Pump System Operators, Refinery Operators, and Gaugers	814	734	-80	-9.8%	-8
51-9011	Chemical Equipment Operators and Tenders	952	844	-108	-11.3%	-12
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Drivers	2374	2361	-13	-0.5%	-2
53-3033	Light Truck Drivers	890	924	34	3.8%	3
53-3051	Bus Drivers, School	376	372	-4	-1.1%	0
53-5011	Sailors and Marine Oilers	67	65	-2	-3.0%	0
53-7021	Crane and Tower Operators	163	157	-6	-3.7%	-1
53-7072	Pump Operators, Except Wellhead Pumpers	70	70	0	0.0%	0

Target Occupations List

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

SOC Code	Occupation	Annual Average Employment 2024	Average Annual Employment 2034	Number Change 2024-2034	Percent Change 2024-2034	Annual Change in Employment (Growth)
11-3030	Financial Managers	526	578	52	9.9%	5
13-1081	Logisticians	200	219	19	9.5%	2
15-1211	Computer Systems Analysts	268	273	5	1.9%	0
15-1212	Information Security Analysts	77	93	16	20.8%	1
15-1252	Software Developers	519	612	93	17.9%	9
15-1253	Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers	68	77	9	13.2%	1
SOC Code	Occupation	Annual Average Employment 2024	Average Annual Employment 2034	Number Change 2024-2034	Percent Change 2024-2034	Annual Change in Employment (Growth)
15-1255	Web and Digital Interface Designers	49	53	4	8.2%	0
17-2051	Civil Engineers	564	569	5	0.9%	0
17-2112	Industrial Engineers	429	452	23	5.4%	2
17-2141	Mechanical Engineers	326	339	13	4.0%	1
17-3011	Architectural and Civil Drafters	172	168	-4	-2.3%	0
19-5011	Occupational Health and Safety Specialists	301	326	25	8.3%	2
21-1018	Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	212	249	37	17.5%	3
25-2011	Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	531	539	8	1.5%	1
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	1871	1859	-12	-0.6%	-1
25-2022	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	858	853	-5	-0.6%	-1
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	1377	1369	-8	-0.6%	-1
25-2052	Special Education Teachers, Kindergarten and Elementary Schools	214	212	-2	-0.9%	0
25-2057	Special Education Teachers, Middle School	97	96	-1	-1.0%	0
25-2058	Special Education Teachers, Secondary School	160	159	-1	-0.6%	0

27-3092	Court Reporters and Simultaneous Captioners	19	19	0	0.0%	0
29-1126	Respiratory Therapists	118	126	8	6.8%	1
29-1141	Registered Nurses	2701	2760	59	2.2%	6
29-2031	Cardiovascular Technologists and Technicians	48	47	-1	-2.1%	0
29-2032	Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	72	78	6	8.3%	1
29-2034	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	193	196	3	1.6%	0
SOC Code	Occupation	Annual Average Employment 2024	Average Annual Employment 2034	Number Change 2024-2034	Percent Change 2024-2034	Annual Change in Employment (Growth)
29-2042	Emergency Medical Technicians	200	205	5	2.5%	0
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	542	553	11	2.0%	1
29-2055	Surgical Technologists	97	98	1	1.0%	0
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	849	874	25	2.9%	2
29-2099	Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other	169	175	6	3.6%	1
31-2011	Occupational Therapy Assistants	54	65	11	20.4%	1
31-2021	Physical Therapists Assistants	113	141	28	24.8%	3
31-9091	Dental Assistants	326	336	10	3.1%	1
31-9092	Medical Assistants	806	882	76	9.4%	7
31-9097	Phlebotomists	106	109	3	2.8%	0
33-3012	Correctional Officers and Jailers	1222	1106	-116	-9.5%	-12
33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	930	923	-7	-0.8%	-1
43-6013	Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	651	664	13	2.0%	1
47-2031	Carpenters	1098	1066	-32	-2.9%	-3
47-2051	Cement Masons and Concrete Finishers	344	315	-29	-8.4%	-3
47-2111	Electricians	1236	1264	28	2.3%	3
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	805	798	-7	-0.9%	-1
47-2171	Reinforcing Iron and Rebar Workers	58	57	-1	-1.7%	0
47-2221	Structural Iron and Rebar Workers	174	170	-4	-2.3%	0
49-2094	Electrical and Electronics Repairers, Commercial and Industrial Equipment	167	155	-12	-7.2%	-1

49-3031	Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists	336	323	-13	-3.9%	-1
49-3042	Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines	439	451	12	2.7%	1
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	455	463	8	1.8%	1
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	1079	1214	135	12.5%	13
SOC Code	Occupation	Annual Average Employment 2024	Average Annual Employment 2034	Number Change 2024-2034	Percent Change 2024-2034	Annual Change in Employment (Growth)
49-9043	Maintenance Workers, Machinery	185	188	3	1.6%	0
49-9044	Millwrights	109	108	-1	-0.9%	0
49-9051	Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	182	175	-7	-3.8%	-1
49-9052	Telecommunications Line Installers and Repairers	114	119	5	4.4%	0
51-2041	Structural Metal Fabricators and Fitters	191	154	-37	-19.4%	-4
51-4041	Machinists	438	431	-7	-1.6%	-1
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	1286	1266	-20	-1.6%	-2
51-8091	Chemical Plant and System Operators	579	533	-46	-7.9%	-5
51-8093	Petroleum Pump System Operators, Refinery Operators, and Gaugers	814	734	-80	-9.8%	-8
51-9011	Chemical Equipment Operators and Tenders	952	844	-108	-11.3%	-12
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Drivers	2374	2361	-13	-0.5%	-2
53-3033	Light Truck Drivers	890	924	34	3.8%	3
53-3051	Bus Drivers, School	376	372	-4	-1.1%	0
53-5011	Sailors and Marine Oilers	67	65	-2	-3.0%	0
53-7021	Crane and Tower Operators	163	157	-6	-3.7%	-1
53-7072	Pump Operators, Except Wellhead Pumpers	70	70	0	0.0%	0

B. Labor Force Analysis and Trends

References: WIOA §108(b)(1)(C); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(3)

Boards must include an analysis of the regional workforce, including:

- current labor force employment and unemployment data;
- information on labor market trends; and
- the educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment.

BOARD RESPONSE:

1. Employment and Unemployment Trends

In August 2024, the civilian labor force in the workforce delivery area (WDA) was 169,090, a year-over-year increase of 5,276, indicating the region's labor market is expanding. Employment also grew to 158,235, a gain of 4,679 compared to August 2023. However, the region continues to face structural unemployment challenges, particularly in pockets of the workforce that are misaligned with the skill sets demanded by industries like petrochemical manufacturing, construction, and healthcare.

Historically, the Southeast Texas region has been impacted by fluctuations in the petrochemical industry, but the construction sector has shown strong growth. As of the first quarter of 2024, the construction industry employs 13.4% of the WDA workforce, with a year-over-year growth of 16.5%. Manufacturing follows closely with 13.5% of the workforce and 5.9% annual growth. The education and health services sector remains the largest, employing 22.1% of the workforce.

The unemployment rate in the three-county area of Hardin, Jefferson, and Orange has continued to follow a similar trend to state and national levels. As of August 2024, the unemployment rate in the Southeast Texas Workforce Development Area (WDA) is 6.4%, showing only a slight change from the 6.3% reported in August 2023. This is slightly above the state average of 4.4% and the national average of 4.4%, reflecting the ongoing challenges faced by the local labor market.

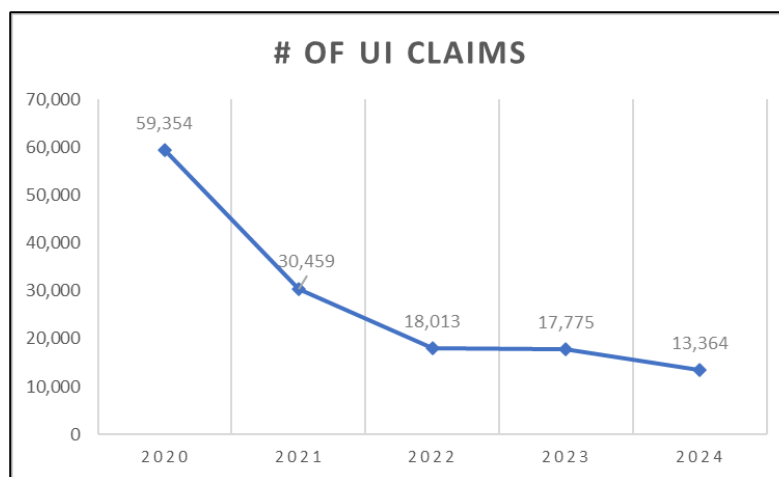
2. Unemployment Insurance Claims

Unemployment insurance (UI) claims in the WDA have steadily decreased each year since the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, the region experienced a surge with 59,354 claims due to widespread layoffs and business closures. However, as the economy began to recover, claims dropped to 30,459 in 2021, followed by 18,013 in 2022, and 17,775 in 2023. As of 2024, there have been 13,364 claims reported, with data for October through December still pending.

This sharp decline—from over **59,000 claims** in 2020 to **13,364 claims** in 2024—illustrates the region's recovery as industries such as petrochemicals, manufacturing, and energy-related sectors have reopened and expanded operations. Several factors have contributed to this decrease:

1. **Economic Recovery and Job Growth:** Following the initial COVID-19 lockdowns and disruptions, local industries began ramping up production and hiring, which led to the creation of new jobs. Notably, expansions in the LNG, hydrogen, and construction sectors have driven employment gains.
2. **Federal and State Support Programs Ending:** As federal and state COVID-related unemployment assistance programs ended, fewer individuals were eligible for extended unemployment benefits, naturally reducing the number of claims.
3. **Worker Adjustments:** Many individuals who were temporarily laid off during the pandemic have since returned to work or transitioned to new industries, reducing the number of unemployment claims.

The ongoing industrial expansions in Southeast Texas, particularly in high-demand sectors like petrochemicals and energy, are expected to continue lowering UI claims as more job opportunities are created. This trend signals a stronger, more resilient labor market that is less dependent on unemployment benefits, positioning the region for future growth.



Source: Texas Workforce Commission Weekly Claims by Count

3. Labor Market Trends

Average weekly wages in the Southeast Texas Workforce Development Area (WDA) have shown positive growth, reflecting improving economic conditions and wage gains across key industries. As of the first quarter of 2024, the average weekly wage in the WDA was \$1,323, marking an increase of \$38 compared to the same period in 2023. This quarterly wage growth indicates steady recovery and a gradual improvement in income levels for workers across various sectors.

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

However, despite these gains, wages in the Southeast Texas region still lag behind both state and national averages. The state of Texas reported an average weekly wage of \$1,540 for the same period, while the national average stood at \$1,527. This wage gap underscores the ongoing need for regional initiatives to improve wage competitiveness, especially in high-growth sectors such as construction, manufacturing, and healthcare.

The slight wage increase in Southeast Texas is largely driven by growth in high-demand industries such as construction, which saw a 16.5% increase in employment, and manufacturing, which reported a 5.9% increase over the last year. These sectors, combined with trade, transportation, and utilities, which employ nearly 20% of the workforce, offer substantial wage potential. However, wage disparities between these industries and others, such as leisure and hospitality (which typically offers lower wages), contribute to the overall average being below state and national figures.

As the region continues to recover from the pandemic and experiences industrial expansion, particularly in the petrochemical and energy sectors, wage growth is expected to continue. Yet, ongoing efforts are needed to ensure that workers in lower-wage industries have access to upskilling and training opportunities, enabling them to transition into higher-paying occupations.

The Board remains committed to addressing these wage disparities by working closely with employers and educational institutions to align training programs with high-wage, high-demand jobs. This focus on workforce development and targeted occupation growth aims to close the wage gap between the Southeast Texas WDA and the broader state and national averages, ultimately improving economic mobility for workers in the region.

4. Educational Skill Levels

The educational attainment levels in Jefferson, Orange, and Hardin counties offer insight into the workforce's preparedness for current and future labor market demands. While many residents possess at least a high school diploma, there are significant differences in post-secondary education compared to state averages. Understanding these disparities is crucial for workforce development efforts aimed at upskilling the local population to meet the needs of growing industries such as construction, healthcare, and manufacturing. The following analysis compares the educational attainment in these counties with statewide figures, highlighting areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

	Jefferson County	Orange County	Hardin County	Texas
No High School Diploma	15.4%	9.9%	9.7%	13.9%
High School Diploma	31.1%	34.7%	37.7%	24.1%
Some College, No Degree	23.8%	24.9%	23.3%	20.9%
Associate	10.1%	12.4%	9.1%	7.9%
Bachelor's	14.0%	13.1%	15.7%	21.7%
Postgraduate	5.6%	4.9%	4.5%	11.5%

Source: JobsEQ; American Community Survey 2018-2022

No High School Diploma

- Jefferson County (15.4%) has a higher percentage of individuals without a high school diploma compared to the Texas state average of 13.9%. This indicates that a significant portion of the population may face barriers to employment and higher-paying opportunities due to the lack of basic educational qualifications.
- Conversely, Orange County (9.9%) and Hardin County (9.7%) both report lower percentages than the state average, suggesting better educational outcomes in terms of achieving at least a high school diploma. These counties may be in a stronger position to capitalize on workforce training programs, although the small percentage of individuals without high school diplomas still represents a potential focus for adult education initiatives.

The higher rate in Jefferson County suggests that targeted adult education and high school equivalency programs could play a critical role in reducing unemployment and improving job prospects for residents in this area.

High School Diploma

- A significant proportion of the population in all three counties holds only a high school diploma, with Hardin County (37.7%), Orange County (34.7%), and Jefferson County (31.1%) all exceed the state average of 24.1%. This over-representation points to a workforce that has achieved a basic level of education but may not have the advanced skills or training required by many growing industries.

The high percentage of individuals with only a high school diploma suggests a need for workforce training programs that target this group. Expanding access to vocational and technical training programs, particularly those aligned with high-demand industries, could provide these individuals with the skills needed to pursue higher-paying, skilled occupations.

Some College, No Degree

- The percentage of individuals with some college but no degree in Jefferson County (23.8%), Orange County (24.9%), and Hardin County (23.3%) exceeds the state average of 20.9%. While many residents have pursued higher education, the lack of degree completion highlights the need for programs designed to support individuals in completing their education or obtaining industry-recognized certifications.

This gap suggests potential barriers to degree completion, such as financial challenges, lack of academic support, or competing life demands. By addressing these challenges through scholarships, flexible class schedules, and completion-focused initiatives, these counties could improve educational outcomes and enhance the skill set of their workforce.

Associate Degree

- The proportion of individuals with an associate degree is slightly higher in **Jefferson** County (10.1%), Orange County (12.4%), and Hardin County (9.1%) than the state average of 7.9%. This reflects a relatively strong engagement with community colleges and technical education in the region, particularly in Orange County, where the percentage is notably higher.

The higher-than-average associate degree rates suggest that efforts to promote technical and vocational training are yielding positive results. Continuing to build on this foundation by expanding partnerships with local industries to create tailored educational programs could further boost the region's skilled workforce.

Bachelor's Degree

- The percentage of individuals holding a bachelor's degree is significantly lower in Jefferson County (14.0%), Orange County (13.1%), and Hardin County (9.1%) compared to the state average of 21.7%. This gap highlights a challenge in the region, as higher levels of educational attainment are often correlated with increased earning potential and access to specialized professions.

To address this disparity, regional education and workforce initiatives could focus on encouraging bachelor's degree completion, particularly in fields that align with the local economy's needs, such as engineering, healthcare, and business administration.

Graduate or Professional Degree

- The percentage of individuals with a graduate or professional degree in Jefferson County (5.6%), Orange County (4.9%), and Hardin County (4.5%) is well below the state average of 11.5%. This significant gap points to a potential shortage of highly educated professionals in the region, which could impact industries that require advanced degrees, such as healthcare, law, and engineering.

Addressing this gap may require not only increasing access to advanced degree programs but also retaining talent within the region. Creating incentives for individuals to pursue graduate education and encouraging them to remain in the area for employment could help fill high-skill roles and support the long-term economic growth of the region.

This analysis highlights both the strengths and challenges in educational attainment across Jefferson, Orange, and Hardin counties. While there is strong engagement with technical and associate degree programs, there are notable gaps in higher education completion, particularly at the bachelor's and graduate degree levels. Addressing these gaps through targeted educational and workforce initiatives will be critical to building a skilled workforce capable of meeting the region's evolving labor market demands.

5. Barriers to Employment

The WDA faces several socio-economic barriers that significantly impact employment opportunities and economic mobility for its residents. By comparing local statistics with statewide averages, we can better understand the unique challenges faced by the Southeast Texas community and identify areas that require targeted interventions.

Poverty Level

In Southeast Texas, 16.1% of the population lives below the poverty level, which is notably higher than the state average of 13.9%. This elevated poverty rate may contribute to limited access to essential resources, including education, job training, and reliable transportation. Individuals living in poverty are often forced to prioritize immediate financial needs over long-term career development, which can hinder their ability to secure stable, well-paying jobs.

Households Receiving Food Stamps/SNAP

The percentage of households receiving Food Stamps/SNAP in Southeast Texas is 15.2%, compared to the state average of 11.5%. This higher reliance on food assistance indicates economic instability, suggesting that many families struggle to meet their basic needs. The implications for workforce participation are significant; individuals facing food insecurity may find it challenging to pursue employment or training opportunities, as they often need to balance work and family responsibilities.

Disconnected Youth

With 4.9% of the youth population classified as disconnected (not engaged in school or the workforce), Southeast Texas exceeds the state average of 3.0%. This disconnect can stem from various factors, including economic instability, lack of access to supportive services, or insufficient career guidance. Disconnected youth represent a lost opportunity for workforce development, as they may require targeted interventions to re-engage them in education or training programs.

Children in Single-Parent Families

In Southeast Texas, 39.1% of children live in single-parent families, a figure that surpasses the Texas state average of 34.1%. This demographic reality underscores significant social and economic challenges faced by these households. Single-parent households often grapple with financial constraints, which can hinder their ability to provide essential resources for their children's education

and development. Additionally, the demands of working single parents can limit their time for involvement in their children's education, leading to potential gaps in academic support.

The challenges faced by single-parent families can adversely affect children's educational outcomes and future employment prospects, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantages. Research indicates that children from single-parent households are at a higher risk of experiencing lower academic performance, higher dropout rates, and limited access to extracurricular activities and enrichment programs.

Moreover, there is a continued need for accessible and affordable childcare options for both single-parent families and families with two working parents in Southeast Texas. The demand for quality childcare is critical to support the workforce, as it enables parents to pursue employment opportunities while ensuring their children receive the care and education they need during formative years. Addressing this need is essential for promoting economic stability and fostering better educational outcomes for all children in the region.

Investing in childcare solutions not only supports single-parent families but also strengthens the overall labor force by allowing more parents to participate in the workforce, thereby enhancing the economic vitality of Southeast Texas. Policymakers and community organizations must prioritize initiatives that provide comprehensive childcare services, as these programs are vital for the well-being of families and the future workforce.

Uninsured Population

The uninsured rate in Southeast Texas stands at 19.2%, compared to 17.6% statewide. A higher percentage of uninsured individuals can lead to reduced access to healthcare, which may impact a person's ability to work consistently or pursue further education. Health issues can create significant barriers to employment, particularly in industries requiring physical labor or specialized training.

Disability Status and Labor Force Participation

In Southeast Texas, 13.3% of individuals aged 18-64 report having a disability, higher than the Texas state average of 9.7%. Furthermore, the labor force participation rate for individuals with disabilities in Southeast Texas is 40.6%, significantly lower than the state rate of 49.8%. The challenges faced by disabled individuals in securing employment are compounded by factors such as lack of accessibility, inadequate job training, and limited employer accommodations, highlighting the need for targeted initiatives to improve employment opportunities for this demographic.

Language Barriers

In Southeast Texas, 6.6% of the population aged 5 and over speaks English less than very well, which is lower than the state average of 13.0%. While this may seem beneficial in terms of workforce diversity, limited English proficiency can create substantial barriers to employment. Individuals who struggle with language may find it challenging to access job training programs, understand workplace

communications, and engage with potential employers effectively. This can lead to underemployment or unemployment, further exacerbating socio-economic disparities in the region.

Conclusion

The analysis of barriers to employment in Southeast Texas reveals a complex interplay of socio-economic factors that can hinder workforce participation and economic advancement. Compared to state averages, Southeast Texas faces higher rates of poverty, food insecurity, disconnected youth, and disabilities, all of which pose significant challenges to the local workforce. Addressing these barriers through targeted educational programs, job training initiatives, and support services will be essential to improving employment outcomes and fostering economic growth in the region. By focusing on the unique needs of the Southeast Texas population, stakeholders can work to create a more inclusive and equitable workforce development strategy.

C. Workforce Development Analysis

References: WIOA §108(b)(1)(D); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(4)

Boards must include an analysis of:

- workforce development activities in the region, including education and training;
- the strengths and weaknesses of the Board’s workforce development activities;
- the effectiveness of the Board’s programs and services;
- the Board’s capacity to provide workforce development activities to address;
 - the identified education and skills needs of the workforce; and
 - the employment needs of employers.

BOARD RESPONSE:

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas is committed to fostering a robust and inclusive workforce through innovative programs and services designed to meet the needs of job seekers and employers alike. With a focus on enhancing skills, providing essential training, and facilitating connections between individuals and career opportunities, Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas plays a vital role in driving economic growth and improving the quality of life in the region. The following outlines the essential activities and services offered by Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas, focusing on workforce development initiatives, vocational rehabilitation services, and educational programs, along with an assessment of their effectiveness in tackling local workforce challenges.

General Workforce Development Activities

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas offers a comprehensive array of workforce development initiatives aimed at enhancing skills and connecting job seekers with employment opportunities. These initiatives include job training programs, apprenticeship opportunities, and partnerships with local industries.

General Services for Job Seekers and Employers:

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas offers essential services to both job seekers and employers. For job seekers, these services include:

- **Career Counseling:** Personalized support to help individuals identify their skills, interests, and suitable career paths.
- **Job Placement Services:** Assistance in finding job openings and connecting with potential employers.
- **Resume Workshops:** Guidance on creating effective resumes and cover letters to enhance job applications.
- **Interview Preparation:** Mock interviews and training on interview techniques to boost confidence and performance.

For employers, Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas offers services such as:

- **Talent Acquisition:** Assistance in finding qualified candidates for job openings through targeted outreach and recruitment efforts.
- **Training Program Development:** Collaboration with local businesses to design training programs that align with their specific workforce needs.
- **Labor Market Information:** Access to data and analytics on employment trends, wage rates, and industry demands to inform hiring and training strategies.

Weekly job fairs play a pivotal role in the Southeast Texas WDA’s workforce development efforts, offering no-cost opportunities for both employers and job seekers. These events not only facilitate direct connections between job seekers and employers but also serve as networking platforms, allowing participants to interact and build relationships within the community.

Port Arthur Fall Job Fair: On October 9, 2024, the Port Arthur Fall Job Fair had 70 employers and over 500 job seekers in attendance.

Hardin County Job Fair: On August 8, 2024, the Hardin County Job Fair attracted 20 employers and 88 job seekers.

Beaumont Fall Job Fair: On September 25, 2024, the Beaumont Fall Job Fair had 40 employers and 231 job seekers in attendance.

These job fairs provide vital resources for job seekers, including assistance with resume building and interview preparation, equipping them with the skills necessary to succeed in the job market. The

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

opportunity to engage directly with employers enhances job seekers' confidence and readiness for future employment opportunities.

Marketing and Outreach

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas employs various strategies to enhance its visibility and outreach to job seekers and employers alike.

Make Macy Do It: This segment offers insight into skilled trade professions, featuring local employers and providing a firsthand look at job opportunities in the skilled trades.

Podcast: In addition to Make Macy Do It, Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas hosts a podcast that covers various topics related to workforce development, including interviews with industry leaders, discussions on emerging job trends, and resources available to job seekers and employers. The podcast serves as an important platform for sharing valuable information, raising awareness about workforce initiatives, and fostering connections within the community. The podcast is available on Apple, Google, Spotify, and Stitcher, in addition to the Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas website.

Consistent advertisements for job fairs and career and VR services are placed on billboards throughout Southeast Texas and included in The Examiner.

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas will continue these efforts to engage the community and explore new strategies to enhance outreach and support for both job seekers and employers. By adapting to the evolving needs of the workforce and leveraging innovative communication methods, Workforce Solutions aims to create a more inclusive and effective employment landscape in the region.

Skills Development Fund Award

In 2024, Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas was awarded a Skills Development Fund grant amounting to \$192,356 from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). This funding will support a training program in collaboration with Entergy Texas, aimed at training 175 new and existing workers. Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas will partner with eight training providers to deliver training across six locations, addressing the urgent need for skilled workers amid unexpected retirements and significant restructuring within the company.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Activities

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas is dedicated to integrating Vocational Rehabilitation services into its workforce development initiatives. These programs assist individuals with disabilities in finding, retaining, or advancing their employment. These services include:

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

- **Assessment Services:** Evaluating the individual's abilities and challenges to develop a tailored rehabilitation plan.
- **Job Coaching:** Providing one-on-one support during the job search and onboarding process to ensure successful employment.
- **Training and Education:** Offering skills training and educational programs to enhance employability.
- **Supported Employment:** Assisting individuals with disabilities in securing and maintaining competitive employment with ongoing support.
- **Assistive Technology:** Providing access to tools and resources that aid individuals with disabilities in the workplace.

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas received a \$75,000 Board Service Award for Vocational Rehabilitation Integration at the 26th Annual Texas Workforce Commission in 2023. This award highlights the importance of teamwork between Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce Services in providing comprehensive support to customers.

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas plans to continue encouraging collaboration between Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce services, ensuring that individuals with disabilities receive the assistance they need to thrive in the workplace.

In support of this mission, the Board will also continue to host events such as the National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) activities. In 2023, the NDEAM event featured guest speaker Dr. Temple Grandin, an acclaimed author, professor, and autism advocate, who shared her inspiring story and strategies for success.

In 2024, the focus shifted to Mental Health Awareness with keynote speaker Dr. Susan Biali Haas, M.D., an expert in resilience and mental health.

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas will continue to feature engaging keynote speakers at the event, which aims to raise awareness about the importance of inclusive services for individuals with disabilities, fostering connections between employers and disabled citizens.

Childcare Services

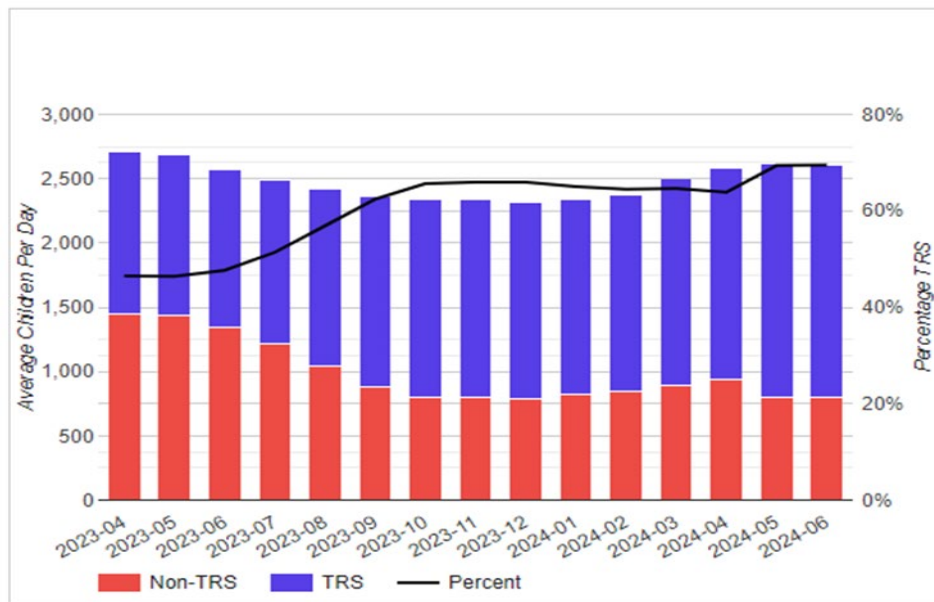
Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas provides low-cost or no-cost childcare options through the Childcare Contractor Services program. This program assists parents become self-sufficient by offering childcare at reduced rates, funded through federal, state, and local resources. The services are available to parents who are employed, seeking employment, or engaged in job training or educational programs.

These childcare services support not only the parents’ ability to work or train but also enhance children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development.

Regarding the overall demand for childcare in the region, recent reports indicate that there is a consistent need for childcare services that accommodate both single-parent and dual-income families.

According to the Texas Workforce Commission’s Southeast Texas Monthly Childcare by The Numbers Report, more than 2,600 children are served daily through Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas funding various childcare programs. This substantial number highlights the critical role that childcare plays in enabling parents to participate fully in the workforce, contributing to both individual family stability and the broader economic health of the community.

To address the growing need for childcare, the Board continues to designate funding toward Childcare Subsidy and Quality. In 2023, more than \$20 million was allocated to meet childcare needs, emphasizing commitment to support families and enhancing the quality of care available in the region.



Source: TWC Monthly Childcare By The Numbers Report

Education Activities

- Career Coach:** The Board's Career Coach visits schools to engage students in interactive activities that promote career awareness. These activities include Virtual Reality career exploration, Labor Market Jeopardy, and training on Labor Market Information (LMI) tools such as Texas Reality Check and Career Check. By providing hands-on experiences, the Career Coach helps students understand the skills and education needed for various careers.

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

- **Teacher Externship Program:** This program fosters partnerships between educators and industry leaders, such as the Southeast Texas Building and Construction Trades Council. It enhances educators' understanding of workforce needs and connects students with high-demand sectors, encouraging career exploration. The board invites middle school and high school teachers from all school districts in Jefferson, Orange, and Hardin counties to participate and has averaged 70 teacher externs and 16 host site partners each year. Region 5 Education Service Center is a key partner in the program.
- **Youth Career Expo:** The Youth Career Expo provides students with a platform to interact with local employers and explore various career paths. This event averages more than 3,000 students per year, showcasing a wide range of industries and helping students make informed decisions about their future careers.

Evaluation of Workforce Programs

Workforce programs are evaluated based on their effectiveness in addressing local skills gaps and meeting employer demands. Metrics such as participant completion rates, job placement rates, and feedback from industry partners are essential for assessing program success. For example, the Teacher Externship Program illustrates the importance of aligning educational curricula with the evolving needs of local industries, demonstrating a direct impact on student career readiness.

Strengths and Gaps

Strengths: The region benefits from strong employer partnerships that facilitate the development of relevant training programs and apprenticeship opportunities. Collaboration between educational institutions and industry leaders ensures that training aligns with current job market demands. Furthermore, the presence of established organizations like the Southeast Texas Building and Construction Trades Council enhances the region's capacity to deliver high-quality workforce training.

Weaknesses: While there are many strengths in the current workforce development initiatives, there are also opportunities to enhance support for underserved populations, particularly those experiencing barriers to employment. Challenges such as transportation accessibility, childcare availability, and economic constraints can limit participation in training and job opportunities. By focusing on expanding supportive services, Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas will continue to work to ensure greater access to workforce development activities for all individuals.

Effectiveness of Programs and Services

The effectiveness of Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas programs and services is evident in the ability to produce skilled workers who are well-prepared to meet the demands of local industries. Through targeted training, robust support services, and collaborative partnerships, Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas is making a significant impact on the region's workforce development landscape.

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

Conclusion

In conclusion, Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas continues to play a pivotal role in strengthening the local economy by providing a comprehensive range of workforce development initiatives. Through effective collaboration among stakeholders, including job seekers, employers, educational institutions, and vocational rehabilitation services, Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas is dedicated to enhancing the skills and employability of individuals in the region. As the workforce landscape evolves, ongoing evaluation and adaptation of programs will be essential to meet the diverse needs of the community and ensure a thriving economy for years to come.

Sources

- 2024 Community Needs Assessment. Southeast Texas Regional Planning Commission Community Services Division.
- Chmura Economics & Analytics. JobsEQ
- Dallas Federal Reserve. "Texas Employment Forecast." 2024. Retrieved from: Dallas Federal Reserve.
- EIA (U.S. Energy Information Administration). "Analysis & Projections." 2024. Retrieved from: EIA.
- Federal Reserve Economic Data (FRED), St. Louis Fed.
- Golden Triangle Polymers Company. "Project Facts and Impacts." 2024. Retrieved from: Golden Triangle Polymers.
- Industrial Info Resources. "Texas' 'Golden Triangle' Home to Billions in Projects Under Construction." November 16, 2023. Retrieved from: Industrial Info Resources.
- LNG Prime. "Construction Ramp Up on Golden Pass LNG Project." October 8, 2024. Retrieved from: LNG Prime.
- Linde. "Linde to Invest \$1.8 Billion to Supply Clean Hydrogen to OCI's World-Scale Blue Ammonia Project in the U.S. Gulf Coast." February 6, 2023.
- Redfin. "Jefferson County Housing Market." 2024.
- Texas Contractor. "2023 Texas Construction Industry Forecast." 2023.
- Texas LMI.com
- Texas Real Estate Research Center. "Housing Activity - Beaumont-Port Arthur." Texas A&M University
- Texas Real Estate Research Center. "Texas Housing Insight." Texas A&M University
- Texas Tribune. "Texas job growth likely to slow down in late 2023."
- Texas Workforce Commission. "Monthly Childcare By The Numbers Report."
- Texas Workforce Commission. "Texas Labor Market Growth Continues into 2024."
- Texas Workforce Commission. "Weekly Claims by County."
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
- U.S. Census Bureau. "American Community Survey."
- U.S. Department of the Treasury. "Unpacking the Boom in U.S. Construction of Manufacturing Facilities."

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

Part 3: Core Programs

A. Workforce Development System

References: (WIOA §108(b)(2); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(1))

Boards must include a description of the workforce development system in the workforce area that identifies:

- the programs that are included in the system; and
- how the Board will work with the entities that facilitate core programs and other workforce development programs to support alignment to provide services, including programs of study authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, that support the strategy identified in the State Plan under WIOA §102(b)(1)(E).

BOARD RESPONSE:

The Workforce Opportunity and Innovation Act (WIOA) authorizes key employment and training programs in the workforce development system to help workers acquire the tools and skills they need to be successful and to connect employers to the skilled workers they need. WIOA further aligns “core” programs to provide coordinated, comprehensive workforce services. The core programs that are to be provided either in-person or by virtual means at the Workforce Solutions Centers are:

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult, Youth and Dislocated Worker.
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)/CHOICES.
- CHOICES Non-Custodial Program (NCP)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment & Training (SNAP);
- Trade Adjustment Assistance Act (TAA).
- Rehabilitation Act: that provides services to individuals with disabilities.
- Wagner-Peyser Employment Services: these services are integrated in accordance with the Texas Model.
- Veteran’s Employment Services.

Under the direction of the Board, the Southeast Texas one-stop center has the following core services available:

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA); Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth
- Wagner-Peyser Employment Service (ES).
- Unemployment Insurance (UI) Benefits Information.
- Choices, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) employment and training program.

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T).
- Subsidized child care; and
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA.
- Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA)
- Texas Veterans Commission
- Texas Workforce Commission Rehabilitation Services
- National Dislocated Worker Grant
- Job Corp

Required programs that are not under the direct oversight of the Board, the Board has established a memorandum of understanding (MOUs) with:

- Adult Education and Literacy (WIOA, Title II).
- Apprenticeship programs.
- National and Community Services Act Program.
- Non-Certificate Postsecondary Career and Technology Training programs.
- Senior Community Service Employment Program; and,
- HHSC (jointly developed with TWC)
- HHSC Community Partnership Program
- Carl D Perkins, Career and Technical Education Programs
- Senior Community Services Employment Program

Other agencies and services the Board has and may establish additional cooperative relationships to strengthen the regional workforce system include:

- Vocational education.
- Community-based Organizations (CBOs).
- Faith-based Organizations (FBOs); and
- Other appropriate training and employment agencies and services.

In keeping with WIOA, a modified service delivery concept will be followed that continues to include Workforce Solutions Center staff working in functional teams to deliver quality services to workforce center customers. The service delivery concept consists of 4 functional teams including: Customer Solutions, Career Advisors, Contact Center, and Business Services. These Workforce Solutions Center Teams will continue to share the goal of providing quality services to individuals, employers, and the Southeast Texas community with high performance, accountability, and results. Descriptions for each of the teams are outlined below:

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

- Customer Solutions services are often provided in the resource room and career services area of the workforce center. Staff provide Basic Career Services and assist customers in completing and updating WorkInTexas registrations and providing quality job matches and referrals. Staff also conduct orientations for laid off workers and various job readiness workshops.
- Contact Center provides access to center services without entering a center. Staff providing regional services are usually working in our call center. The option for virtual services is very important to our commitment to customer satisfaction. Customers can get faster and more convenient help, leading to a more positive experience.
- Business Services focuses on recruiting employers and responding to their expectations and requirements regarding filling job vacancies, screening qualified applicants, and other services. As an employer-focused system, the Business Services team provides services to ensure the needs of the employers are met; thus, also meeting the needs of the job seekers.
- Career Advisors provides opportunities to develop customer skills through eligibility determination, formal assessments, counseling, occupational skills training referrals and scholarships. Customers served in training are usually WIOA eligible. Staff assist customers in reducing their dependency on public assistance through meaningful opportunities for employment. Customers are usually recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and/or Noncustodial Parents (NCP) of those customers receiving TANF or other parents paying child support.

The board has developed MOUs with educational institutions that support the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006. The goal is to establish collaboration and strengthen connection between education and workforce development, ensuring students and job seekers gain the skills needed for high-demand careers. The board and partners are committed to expanding access to work-based learning and aligning career and technology education programs with industry needs.

The Board has ongoing relationships with the local community colleges throughout the Southeast Texas region. We will continue to collaborate to ensure the needs of our customers, both students and employers, are met. Currently we utilize the community colleges as a primary referral source for both academic and technical training, jointly develop and hosts job fairs and career awareness events, assist with outreach and recruitment efforts for special populations. Through meetings, serving on advisory boards, and other methods, we will continue to align our service delivery with local colleges ensuring the benefit of our customers. We will continue to support through MOUs and the eligible training provider system, academic, career, and technical skills of secondary education customers and post-secondary education customers who elect to enroll in career and technical education programs.

The service delivery strategies will continue to provide services for Employers, Job Seekers, and Youth, but we will transition to a greater focus on more extensive services for our youth customers,

including more intensive case management and counseling as we begin to initiate career pathway activities.

B. Core Programs—Expand Access, Facilitate Development, and Improve Access

References: WIOA §108(b)(3); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(2)

Each Board must include a description of how the Board will work with entities carrying out core programs to:

- expand access to employment, training, education, and support services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment;
- facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs; and
- improve access to activities that lead to a recognized postsecondary credential (such as an industry-recognized certificate or certification) that is portable and stackable.

BOARD RESPONSE:

The challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic have afforded the Board opportunities to enhance service delivery system. Expanding access to our training services and incorporating alternative service delivery strategies to continue our quest to develop a skilled workforce are critical in meeting the demands of both employers and job seekers.

Expanded access to services – the Board ensures every program customer’s ability to access our services in person, via internet, or phone. Virtual platforms are used to assist with program orientations, eligibility, job fairs, and access to training programs. Ongoing relationships with current partners/programs as well as new relationships will assist with meeting the needs of our customers. These collaborative efforts include sharing costs for training, support services, and other provisions of services as deemed appropriate. Improve access to activities leading to credentials – during the orientations and one on one interviews, customers are provided opportunities to access training programs as well as access via chats, and online services. Outreach and recruitment for training occurs through partners, virtual and in person events, at one-on-one appointments and orientations. We will continue to develop and identify additional services to improve customer access for credentials.

The Board will continue work with core program entities by:

- Continue to partner with the local colleges, University, and training providers to improve certificates, certifications, and portable and stackable credentials.
- Continue to develop partnerships with employers and training providers to develop specific career pathways.

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

- Execution of Memorandums of Understanding with core program entities and other community partners to enhance the provision of employer and job seeker services.
- Leverage funds by co-enrolling individuals that are appropriate for both youth and adult programs and partnering agencies to support training and career pathways.
- Continue collaborating with Community/Partnering Agencies to provide supportive services to eligible individuals with barriers to employment. Barriers such as transportation, childcare, housing etc.
- Continue to promote and distribute daily job postings to our partner network to keep them abreast of new and relevant opportunities for each partner’s respective clients.
- The Workforce Solutions Center providers regularly provide exposure for youth to the various training programs and career pathways working with partner agencies like the AEL, Community in School, ISD’s etc. Postsecondary exposure is paired with work-based learning opportunities such as job shadowing, paid or unpaid work experience, workplace tours, and internships to help the youth determine their training interest. Supportive services such as transportation assistance to and from education, training, and employment activities for eligible individuals with barriers to employment are provided.

The Board established two (2) new American Welding Society certified testing centers in our WDA. Previously candidates had to travel nearly 100 miles to the nearest certified testing facility in Baytown, Texas.

Trucking is a high-demand industry in our Board area and offers competitive wages. Lamar State College Port Arthur (LSCPA) and Lovett Trucking are now the only Texas sites between the Louisiana state line and Houston where student drivers can receive classroom and on-the-road instruction, plus both the “knowledge” and “skills” testing needed to become state and federally licensed truck drivers. Previously, once students completed the training, they had to wait for available testing opportunities from the Texas Department of Safety, which was the only test site in our area.

Through a partnership with Lamar Institute of Technology (LIT), SETX Hispanic Women’s Network and the Workforce Board, a successful English and Spanish version Women’s Entrepreneurship Boot Camp was created for new or existing businesses. We will utilize this partnership for future projects.

We will continue our efforts with our post-secondary partners to improve access to activities, leading to recognized credentials.

The Southeast Texas workforce development board has identified Target Industries, aligned with the Governor’s industry clusters utility system construction, petroleum and coal products manufacturing, basic chemical manufacturing, resin, rubber, and artificial fibers manufacturing. To support the manpower demands of these industries, the Board has actively secured or renewed training providers

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

that provide industry-recognized instruction and credentials to support these industries. The Board also utilized input and surveys from Focus Groups for industries within the Governor’s industry clusters. Job seekers interested in occupation in the targeted industries are assessed by the workforce center staff and provided career pathway option. Virtual Job Fairs, some specific to identified industries, are offered each week through the workforce centers to engage job seekers and employers. The Board’s virtual Youth Career Expo in 2021 offered students the opportunity to experience careers in the industry clusters, find out about educational requirements and expected wages. Despite COVID-19, students could interact with employers, through chats, to gather more info on career and employment opportunities. Board staff also attend business and industry association meetings, volunteers for Advisory Committees and economic development groups to gauge industry employment needs.

Our Youth Career Expo is one of our most well-attended events that helps provide access to young adults. We returned to our in-person Youth career Expo in February 2022, but we have learned skills that allow us to be innovative when necessary.

During the strategic planning process, the Board has sought feedback from leadership across various industries related to Governor’s targeted Industry Cluster. We identify many of these clusters as common across Texas as well as in our local area. The Board is highlighting our work in Biotechnology and Life Sciences for this plan. As we have received feedback from industry leaders, we are seeing more and more the impact that Healthcare occupations are having on our economy. For Southeast Texas to continue to grow, we need the healthcare infrastructure in place to support this growth.

Part 4: One-Stop Service Delivery

A. One-Stop Service Delivery System

References: WIOA §108(b)(6); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(5)

Each Board must include a description of its workforce area’s one-stop delivery system, including explanations of the following:

- How the Board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers and how providers will meet the employment needs of local employers, workers, and job seekers
- How the Board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including remote areas, using technology and other means
- How entities within the one-stop delivery system, including Boards, contracted service providers, and one-stop partners, will comply with WIOA §188 (related to Non-Discrimination), if applicable, and with applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities,

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals who have disabilities.

- The roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners

BOARD RESPONSE:

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas is committed to providing quality service to our employers, businesses, and individuals needing employment assistance. To ensure the continuous improvement of contracted service providers and other eligible providers of services, we will continue to monitor and assess the services provided to determine areas of opportunity to improve our service delivery.

Board staff meet with college workforce directors to review specific training needs, as well as ensure the curriculum meets the skills needs and demands of area employers. Training providers are provided with the most current Target/Demand Occupations list. Training providers must meet the Target/Demand Occupations needed for the Board area as well as the minimum wage at placement set by current Board policy. The Board continues to enhance system-wide accountability and continuous improvement for the workforce system, including training providers. The Board also ensures that the minimal performance is met or exceeded to ensure participants are receiving quality training to enhance their skill level to obtain sustainable employment.

Additionally, representatives of two of our local 2-year colleges are members of the Workforce Board.

Board staff frequently communicates with training providers and contractor staff who enroll students into the training program. This communication leads to informal assessment and evaluation of the programs in terms of feedback from employers and/or students regarding the quality of the programs provided.

The Board will continue to engage in, and enhance, web-based social media applications to serve both employers and jobseekers. Below are some of the technological platforms used to provide virtual services. We will continue to explore as deemed appropriate and necessary.

- **Online WIOA registration and application** – customers will continue to use setworks.org as the initial application for WIOA services through our Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs
- **Electronic Signature tools** – we utilize DocuSign to allow document signatures for both our customers and employers via remote locations.
- **Video-conferencing software** – We are and will continue to use video-conferencing platforms to ensure our customers are provided services in an efficient and effective manner. In the event our customers are unable to receive services in this format, staff will make an

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas
Strategic Plan 2025-2028

appointment to provide services face to face while practicing social distancing. Video-conferencing platforms may include Zoom, GoToMeeting, Webex, facetime, google duo, google meets, etc. These platforms may be used for the following:

- One on One Interviews for WIOA intake and eligibility, service plan development, supervised job search, WIT registration, resume updates, monitoring of worksites, UI eligibility assessment, case management, customized labor market, worksite orientations for both employer and job seeker, and other services as deemed appropriate.
- Group services including WOA and SNAP EPS and other orientations, group workshops, center services review, assessments, and other group events as deemed appropriate.
- **Email, text, and other messaging platforms** – are used as a marketing tool and to transfer needed information to our customers. Staff will continue to use email to send customers flyers, information about services, and forms needed for various programs. Furthermore, we continue to connect with our customers via direct messaging, Facebook, Instagram, and/or Twitter. We will also use Engage by Cell as another means to share information with our customers about services, events, training opportunities, virtual job fairs, etc.
- **WorkInTexas (WIT)** for job seeker registration and employer job posting creating opportunities to connect job seekers to employers. WIT also will be used to update resumes and refer job seekers to jobs as well as uploading and retrieving documents used for employment and program eligibility. It will also be utilized to send messages to customers in regard to appointments, job fairs, and any other pertinent information that may happen within the Workforce.
- **Virtual Job Fairs** – we will continue to have virtual job fairs and hiring events to meet the employer needs. We will conduct these events regularly serving employers that may have a need for this service as in person job fairs may not suit their schedules. In most instances, we will use various virtual platforms for virtual job fairs.
- A Contact Center (Virtual One-Stop) which provides an alternative service delivery to promote opportunities for continuous engagement of center customers. Our interactive website features a “chat room” that allows staff to address and respond to customers and provide appropriate referrals or services in WorkInTexas.com.
- The use of Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn allows staff to easily interact with customers, employers, or partners to communicate throughout the Workforce Network.
- “Job Brief,” the Board’s monthly newsletter, which contains information on current events as well as local labor market information, is sent out electronically to our employers. Marketing websites such as “Vertical Response” and “Constant Contact” are used for outreach and registration to events for both job seekers and employers. These media outlets are also used to survey employers and job seekers on current issues, needs and local labor market intelligence.

Using the various types of available technology has allowed our workforce centers to provide services in a more efficient and effective manner, especially for job seekers living in rural communities. Workforce Solutions and its contractors will continue to explore new and innovative opportunities to use technology to provide services to employers and job seekers.

The Board also offers on-line orientations for Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) and program pre-applications.

As required, the Board ensures that all facilities and the administrative offices are all American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant. There is special adaptive equipment available in each workforce center to accommodate individuals with disabilities. Examples of such equipment include adaptive monitors, phones, lower counter access for computer stations, etc. Testing supplies also include “large print” copy for those who are visually challenged. The Board also contracts with an agency which provides translation services as needed.

Additionally, the Vocational Rehabilitation Services staff members have a presence in the one-stop centers. The Workforce Center collaborates with Vocational Rehabilitation in regard to staff development training to enhance customer engagement. All Southeast Texas facilities undergo an annual assessment to ensure ADA compliance and accessibility.

The Board expects that all One-Stop Partners will comply with Section 121 (b) (1) (A) through Resource Sharing Agreements with the Board relating to the operation of the One Stop system and participate in the operation of the One-Stop system consistent with the terms of the MOU, the requirements of WIOA and the requirements of Federal laws authorizing the programs or activities.

Adult Education & Literacy:

Provide assistance in establishing eligibility for programs for training and education programs provided under WIOA.

- Conducts diagnostic testing. Facilitate GED and Adult Basic
- Education (AB) classes in the Workforce Solutions Centers.
- Provide a half-time College and Career Transitions
- Counselor to assist with workshops for Workforce Solutions Customers

Cornerstone Solutions, Inc.:

- Make their respective services available to the Universal (Job Corps) Population through dissemination of literature, information, and client referral.
- Provide statistical information on respective participants who have completed referral forms.
- Attend Center meetings and cross training with center staff.

Senior Community Service Employment Program:

- Provide information to SCSEP participants and non-eligible applicants relating to employment services available at SER Jefferson County, as well as the One Stop Centers.
- Share assessment results, placement information and Employment Plans when applicable, to avoid duplications of services.
- Provide SCSEP participants with the opportunity to acquire work skills necessary to become employable.
- Coordinate necessary supportive services that will assist SCSEP participants in work/training related activities and accept employment through One-Stop Centers.
- Identify the One-Stop Centers' core services and refer eligible participants, as needed.
- Provide brochures and other written information.

Unemployment Insurance (UI) Benefits Information:

Workforce Solutions Center provides Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants with:

- access to space and telecommunications equipment necessary to participate in UI hearings.
- computers, telephones, and printed materials about claim filing and UI rights and responsibilities.
- assistance with filing claims; and
- assistance in establishing eligibility for programs of financial aid assistance for training and education programs not provided under WIOA.

Veterans Services:

- Veteran staff are located at each of the One-Stops to provide services to veterans.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services:

VR Counselors are assigned and coordinate with the Workforce Solutions Center staff by:

- Providing information about eligibility for VR programs for people with disabilities
- Providing assessments for referrals
- Delivering Vocational Rehabilitation services to eligible people
- Providing information concerning VR programs and services to the One Stop Center in accessible formats

B. Employer Engagement, Economic Development, and Unemployment Insurance Program Coordination

References: WIOA §108(b)(4); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(3); WIOA §108(b)(5); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(4)

Boards must include a description of the strategies and services that will be used in the workforce area to:

- facilitate the engagement of employers, including small employers and employers in in-

demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations, in workforce development programs;

- support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the workforce area;
- coordinate workforce investment activities with regional economic development activities that are carried out in the local workforce area;
- promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services; and
- strengthen the linkage between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs.

BOARD RESPONSE:

Our employers are the strength of our workforce system. As we meet their needs and demands, it allows us to fulfill the needs of our job seeking community here in Southeast Texas. Quality comprehensive services to our business community are paramount toward our success. Both the Board and contractor staff work collectively in meeting the needs of our employer/business community in Southeast Texas.

Employer engagement in the WDA is facilitated by the Business Services Representative who works diligently to educate business customers by providing information on financial incentives, cost savings and other advantages of using Workforce Center programs and services. The Business Services Representative reaches out to newly registered businesses and *orients them* to the workforce solutions programs, resources, and services for businesses within our service area. Also, through contact lists developed from participation at job fairs, business development events, regional cold canvassing, economic development activities, human resource associations, and local area chambers of commerce. face- to - face meetings are set up to identify the needs of the business. Based on the needs identified in these meetings, a plan is developed utilizing WIT services and other Workforce Center programs. These services may include recruitment, apprenticeships, on-the-job Training (OJT), work experience (WEX), and customized training provision for in-demand jobs or high growth industry sectors within the WDA.

The Business Services Team is responsible, at a minimum, for outreaching all Southeast Texas employers, WorkInTexas.com job posting maintenance and developing all work activity and OJT contracts. The Business Services Team also works closely with the Career Advisors to develop appropriate worksites for paid/unpaid work experience and OJT opportunities as needed.

To assist the public, the Business Services Representative also works closely with the Customer Solutions Representatives to ensure all staff members are fully aware of any job fair opportunities, special application procedures, assessment requirements, screening criteria or other specific requirements for an employer.

The Business Services Team strives to increase the number of employers choosing Workforce

Solutions Southeast Texas to recruit employees and provide more employment opportunities for our customers. At the Board level, the Business Solutions Representative continues to survey existing employers to identify gaps in training for specific job skills for high growth and demand industries, and to enhance the current job skills of incumbent and unemployed workers. This information is used to work with education institutions and other training providers to identify short-term training, customized training, and OJT training opportunities to address the skills needed to ensure workforce skills training is aligned and consistent with employer needs. In addition to our Business Services Team, there is also an Outreach Specialist that goes out into the business community, training providers, schools, community outreach programs to market Center services to give an increased and heightened awareness of services being offered through Workforce to better serve our partners and communities.

The Business Services Representatives also provides customized labor market information as requested by employers and economic development corporations. Additionally, the Business Solutions Teams attend monthly meetings, such as the Golden Triangle Business Roundtable (GTBR), Chamber, Regional Economic Development Initiatives (REDI) and Economic Development (ED) meeting, to network and create/maintain relationships with local employers and businesses.

The board staff, as well as members of the Board, serve on many committees of the Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development Corporations to address workforce issues. Additionally, in the past the Board has co-managed a High Demand Job Training grant with a local EDC and plans to continue to seek similar opportunities.

To strengthen linkages between the workforce system and the unemployment insurance program the Board, through its Workforce Centers Contractor will:

- Continue to conduct Re-employment Service and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) orientations and provide referrals to an array of educational and training services for UI claimants to WIOA and other partner agencies.
- Provides assistance to UI claimant customers with filing their UI claims by phone and online,
- Assistance to employers in the Board area for managing reductions in force in coordination with rapid response activities and with strategies for the aversion of layoffs and the delivery of employment and training activities.
- Provides One-stop workforce services for Unemployed Insurance (UI) claimants; and
- Offer testing for employers.

C. Coordination of Wagner-Peyser Services

References: WIOA §108(b)(12); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(11)

Boards must include a description of the strategies that are used to maximize coordination, improve service delivery, and avoid the duplication of Wagner-Peyser Act services and other services that are provided through the one-stop delivery system.

BOARD RESPONSE:

Wagner-Peyser programs include services such as job search, job referrals, and job placement

assistance for job seekers. Additionally, re-employment services are available for unemployment insurance claimants, as well as recruitment services to employers with job openings.

We provided a Seamless service approach where all employers, job seekers and others utilizing our services are not aware team members may work for different agencies. Services are delivered in one of three modes including self-service, facilitated self-help services and staff assisted service delivery approaches.

Basic Career Services will be initiated by the **Customer Solutions Team** (as customer enter the center), or the **Contact Center Team** (for those customers contacting us via phone, email, or chat). They are responsible for welcoming Workforce Solutions center customers, initiating service delivery through individualized and customized assistance, which includes assisting customers with the WorkInTexas (WIT) registration / update process.

Currently staff assist customers with WIT registration, job referrals, screening, and referral to program services as needed and appropriate. Furthermore, staff ensures the best quality match for customers by updating work history, ensuring appropriate keywords are associated with each applicant and providing services to improve employment retention.

To improve service delivery and avoid duplication of services, the Workforce center developed a formal intake process to identify a career seeker's needs, skills, and barriers. This initial intake meeting with the participant is a critical component in connecting them to career services and support that best fit their needs and job goals. Referrals to core partner programs to provide support for identified needs are made, as appropriate, during the intake process.

Once the initial intake interview is completed, Career Center staff develop a basic services strategy that engages the universal career seeker in basic services, as appropriate, including orientation to all services available in the one-stop delivery system, WIT registration, skills assessments, job search and placement assistance, referrals to workshops, labor market information, reemployment benefits claim assistance, and referrals to community partners for supportive services. Individualized career services such as comprehensive and specialized assessments and diagnostic testing, development of an individual employment plan, group and/or individual counseling and mentoring, career planning, and training are also available. If staff identify that a career seeker will benefit from individualized career services, they will work with a career specialist to develop a service strategy addressing the needs and barriers of the individual. If additional services are needed outside the scope of the Workforce center, an individual is referred to one of the core partners programs to provide specialized services.

Reemployment services which include orientation, assessment, and labor market information are provided to Priority Reemployment Planning Program (PREP) participants. Although PREP participants are selected and are mandated to receive these minimum services, they are often engaged in additional services and activities. As a best practice, all participants attending a scheduled PREP orientation meet one on one with a Workforce Specialist to discuss additional Workforce Center Services and determine if additional training is needed for them to secure self-sufficient employment.

D. Integrated, Technology-Enabled Intake and Case Management

References: WIOA §108(b)(21); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(20)

Boards must include a description of how one-stop centers are implementing and transitioning to WorkinTexas.com for the programs that are carried out under WIOA and by one-stop partners.

BOARD RESPONSE:

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas continues to use an integrated approach in serving our customers. In order to ensure all appropriate parties are aware and have access to our customers, we utilize a web-based system for application, program eligibility, and file certification. This allows customers to apply for services at any time. Also, any information regarding the customer throughout the intake process is documented and accessible in WIT.

Eligibility will be conducted for all WIOA programs. Furthermore, additional referrals and services will be provided and documented in WIT. To ensure we continue to serve customers in the most efficient and effective means, the Board uses the following technology:

- The board initiated an electronic Eligibility Documentation and Filing system. The system allows and enables secure document storage and activities records storage.
- **Online WIOA registration and application** – customers will continue to use setworks.org as the initial application for WIOA services through our Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs
- **Electronic Signature tools** – we are using DocuSign to allow document signatures for both our customers and employers via remote locations.
- **Video-conferencing software** – We are and will continue to use video-conferencing platforms to ensure our customers are provided services in an efficient and effective manner. In the event, our customers are unable to receive services in this format, staff will make an appointment to provide services face to face while practicing social distancing. Video-conferencing platforms may include Zoom, go to meetings, WebEx, facetime, google duo, google meets, etc. These platforms may be used for the following:
- **One on One Interviews** for WIOA intake and eligibility, service plan development, supervised job search, WIT registration, resume updates, monitoring of worksites, UI eligibility assessment, case management, customized labor market, worksite orientations for both employer and job seeker, and other services as deemed appropriate.
- **Virtual Orientation and Workshops**--In working with our Workforce Center, we have created several Virtual Orientations and Workshops, and we continue to create and make available to our customers easy and convenient ways of accessing services.
- **Email, text, and other messaging platforms** – are used as a marketing tool and to transfer needed information to our customers. Staff will continue to use email to send customers flyers, information about services, and forms needed for various programs. Furthermore, we continue to connect with our customers via direct messaging, Facebook, Instagram, and/or twitter. We will also use Engage by Cell as another means to share information with our customers about services, events, training opportunities, virtual job fairs, etc.

- **Virtual Job Fairs/Hiring Events** – we will continue to have virtual job fairs and hiring events to meet the employer needs. We will conduct these events regularly as needed to serve our employers that have such a need for an alternative job fair. We will use the Brazen platform for virtual job fairs.

Our goal is to ensure staff goes the “extra mile” to serve our customers. We remain focused and willing to serve and assist all southeast Texans in the safest and most effective means possible. Our goal is to continue exploring avenues to improve service delivery, focusing on the areas identified below.

Enhance Call Center Virtual Services

Our call center continues to focus on serving Southeast Texans by phone, internet, or any of the virtual formats available. We have provided virtual services using our call center since 2008. This format provided foundation for us to integrate additional functions in our service delivery to accommodate our customers during peak demands. While the staff has gone above and beyond during the increased demand for services, we have identified some opportunities to improve our service delivery and customer response including but not limited to:

- Expanded chat system – utilizing additional chat lines allowing staff to ensure enough time is given to respond to questions and concerns.
- Increased Training – We will continue to explore methods to improve our service delivery. We will use current responses to identify best practices and opportunities for improvement utilizing our chat system. Also, we will stay abreast of information available in the communities to ensure we are providing the most up to date and accurate information to our customers.
- Rotation of staff from call center to workforce center to ensure all are abreast of services throughout our service delivery system to ensure a seamless delivery model.
- Encourage customers to complete customer satisfaction surveys after receiving services via chat, phone, or email. Use the data to improve service delivery.
- Ensure appropriate referrals for customers to access additional services.
- The Board will continue to use the following Texas Workforce Commission Systems:
- *WorkInTexas.com (WIT)*: An integrated intake, eligibility, case management, and reporting system for employment and training services. Includes interfaces with WorkInTexas.com, the UI benefits system, and the Health and Human Services information system.
- *WorkInTexas.com*: for job seekers registration and employers job posting creating opportunities to connect job seekers to employers. WIT also will be used to update resumes and refer job seekers to jobs as well as uploading and retrieving documents used for employment and program eligibility.

Also, the Child Care Workflow System:

- *Workflow2*: A Virtual Paperless Database system that manages documents and increases productivity. Scanned documents are organized for easy viewing and allow team access to important information 24/7. Improves Accountability with automatic, personalized notifications when new tasks are assigned, or deadlines are approaching. Customized applications match a unique process with no IT assistance required. Brings data to life and

allows sharing instantly. Build reports with a few clicks. Instant customizable reports. Minimizes paperwork, ability to assign and re-assign work, universal view that allows all staff to look up information.

In addition, we initiated an electronic Eligibility Documentation and Filing system. The system allows and enables secure document storage and activities records storage.

The next phase is to improve virtual options for employers with special chat and phone options. We will also work toward a more centralized approach for WIOA intake and case management. Additionally, there will be on-going improvements to our website – setworks.org.

E. Third Party Partnership in SNAP Employment and Training Programs

Reference: [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training Third-Party Partnership Guide](#)

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission has directed TWC to expand the use of SNAP E&T Third Party Partnerships (TPP) throughout the state, with a goal of implementing TPP in all workforce areas by Federal Fiscal Year 2029. Boards must provide an assurance that they are planning for the expansion of TPP and must describe any planned or completed steps toward implementation.

BOARD RESPONSE:

At this time, there is no complete plan or complete steps for the TTP Expansion, but we will assure the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) the following:

The Southeast Texas Workforce Board has a longstanding relationship with the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) in the administration of the SNAP employment and training (E&T) programs.

The Board and HHSC will work in partnership to explore the expansion of the SNAP third-party partnership program. This will include strategic partnering with providers, such as local community-based organizations, workforce solutions contractors, and community colleges aiming to leverage their expertise in delivering tailored services to eligible SNAP E&T customers.

When developing third-party partnerships, the Board will consider how their expanded SNAP E&T programs will align with our workforce development priorities, such as increasing postsecondary education attainment, growing a skilled workforce and meeting labor market demand.

At this time, there is no complete plan for the TTP Expansion, but we will assure the following:

- Approval of a Third-Party Partnership must be approved by the Board and HHSC prior to their execution.
 - All job skills training and work-based learning program must demonstrate that the

- program (s) being offered is (are) related to employment in demand within our local WDA and have approval from the Board.
- Providing suitable services (e.g., are skill-based, leads to industry-recognized certificates or credentials aligning with SNAP E&T activity components.
- Program activities will not supplant existing nutrition educational programs but will enhance and supplement them.
- Program activities are reasonable and necessary to accomplish SNAP objectives and goals.
- The Board will assure all program activities are conducted in compliance with all applicable Federal laws, rules, and regulations including Civil Rights and the OMB Circulars governing cost issues.

The Board and third-party partners will work together to verify that all participants are eligible for services received and that SNAP E&T funds are both spent on allowable costs and eligible for reimbursement.

The Board will adhere to TWC procedures and will develop the appropriate Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or contract in place and implement proper fiscal controls and monitoring to ensure that all federal and State SNAP E&T guidelines are followed.

Part 5: Workforce Investment Activities

A. Rapid Response Activity Coordination

References: WIOA §108(b)(8); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(7)

Each Board must include a description of how the Board will coordinate workforce investment activities that are carried out in the workforce area with the statewide rapid response activities described in WIOA §134(a)(2)(A).

BOARD RESPONSE:

The Board coordinates Rapid Response activities with the Texas Workforce Commission’s (TWC) UI Field Response representatives. For lay-offs or closures of less than 50 workers, the Board’s Rapid Response coordinator works with the contractor’s Business Services Unit Representatives. Board staff establishes contact with the employer(s) and/or representatives of affected workers to assess employer and employee early intervention needs within 48 hours of layoff, a WARN notice, a public announcement of a layoff, or notification that a Trade petition has been filed. These early intervention services are customized and provided, at no cost to the employer, to enable affected workers to transition to new employment as quickly as possible.

On-site contact with the employer includes development of a coordinated response to the dislocation event, and emergency assistance adapted to the particular closing, layoff, or disaster. In the event the employer or business does not file a WARN, the board’s Rapid Response Coordinator makes initial contact with state unemployment insurance (UI) officials to inform them of the layoff and to arrange for a UI staff person to serve as the local contact and designee for on-site meetings to discuss UI

benefits. The board staff then notifies the workforce center operator of the layoff incident and coordinates participation of the Business Services Unit for scheduled rapid response event. Board staff organizes and manages rapid response events to ensure required services and activities are conducted in accordance with the requirements of Rapid Response. The Board has developed virtual Rapid Response Orientation sessions, which are presented to workers and employers through various on-line meeting platforms. Information previously provided in printed form is now provided to the dislocated workers via links and other on-line resources.

The Board's Rapid Response Coordinator works with the employer/business to identify special needs requirements and providing accommodations as necessary in language interpretation, written material, hearing-impaired services and/or services for people with disabilities.

Upon notification of a potential Rapid Response event or other closure/mass layoff, the Rapid Response Coordinator meets with the employer to:

- Assess their needs and inform them of their options and offer business services, and employment/training services to address risk factors.
- Discuss and pursue strategies that help the employer avert layoffs, while maintaining capacity to return workers to productive employment as soon as possible.
- Identify strategies to assist affected workers in becoming reemployed on or before the affected worker's last day of work through targeted transition activities that quickly engage dislocated workers in employment or training services.
- Proactively match affected workers skill and experience profiles with hiring requirements of companies actively hiring in the community.

Re-employment services are customized to meet the needs of the employer and affected workers, and include, but not limited to:

- Rapid Response Orientation (the Informational meeting/registration).
- Workshops on Resume Techniques & Resume Writing, Interviewing, Financial Planning (money management / entrepreneurial opportunities) and Stress Management (crisis counseling).
- Referrals for Emergency Crisis Counseling (based on need and agreed upon by all parties).
- Job Skills Analysis (the employee needs survey/abbreviated assessment).
- Job Search (labor market information).
- Initial WIOA Dislocated Worker and Adult Orientation (based on worker profile and funding availability), and referrals to employment and training opportunities.
- Referral to Workforce Centers for additional services including workshops, resource room (phone, computer, fax, etc.), hiring events, etc.

Through Zoom and other virtual platforms—we facilitate virtual appointments with customers. This is also used to conduct online group orientations, workshops etc.

B. Youth Activities and Services

References: WIOA §108(b)(9); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(8)

Boards must include a description and assessment of the type and availability of workforce investment activities for youth in the workforce area, including activities for youth with disabilities. This description must include an identification of successful models of such activities.

BOARD RESPONSE:

The Board's Workforce Solutions Contractor activities are designed to facilitate connections between youth to the job market and employers, access to information and services, and any other activity designed to achieve the purposes of the youth program. Options available to youth customers include:

- Financial Literacy
- Tutoring.
- Alternative secondary school offerings.
- Summer employment.
- Paid and unpaid work experiences, including internships and job shadowing.
- Occupational skills training.
- Leadership development.
- Supportive Services.
- Adult mentoring for a duration of at least twelve (12) months.
- Follow-up services.
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling; and
- Entrepreneurial Skills Training
- Labor market information

The Workforce Solutions Center staff outreach agencies and businesses to secure work-based learning sites that align with career pathways. The purpose of all internships and work experiences is to provide youth exposure to jobs identified in their career pathways and the opportunity to learn both essential soft skills and disciplined work habits that will be beneficial to them. The youth program will continue to utilize up to date information explaining different techniques and programs that are effective when working with the youth population.

In addition, the youth program will utilize the youth tool kit accessible through DOL/Workforce One and the Youth National Forum as a resource to assist in identifying new and innovative ways to motivate youth as well as youth with disabilities.

The Workforce Solutions Center youth staff have developed community contacts through MOUs and utilize community resources that offer additional assistance for youth. The youth staff also outreach through strategically placed flyers (laundry mats, apartment complexes, ISD's etc.) and social media throughout the WDA.

Youth are able to take advantage of an array of different activities designed to prepare them for the

world of work. The youth program will continue to provide youth interested in postsecondary training and/or employment information about all available opportunities including apprenticeship programs. By providing referrals of appropriate candidates to industries that align with their intended career pathways, the youth program will expend program funds and ensure the success of work-based learning.

Opportunities are available for individuals at all skill levels and levels of experience, including those with disabilities. These opportunities include but are not limited to, labor market information, customer choice related to education and training, careers and service delivery options, work readiness workshops, skills-development, workshops, and job placement services. Education and training services include occupational skills training, paid and unpaid work experience, on-the-job training, and employed worker programs. We have found that one of the main components of the youth program is work experience, which allows youth, many of whom have never been exposed to employment, the opportunity to get practical hands-on work experience while gaining valuable skills.

The Board offers two programs that is specifically for individual youth with disabilities.

- Vocational Rehabilitation Paid Work Experience – the Board partners with TWC VR to place eligible 504 students in work-based learning activities that are designed to help individuals gain soft and hard skills for work, learn about, and experience actual work in possible fields of interest, and provide individuals with the opportunity to have hands-on exposure to jobs. Paid Work Experience (WEX) is a strategy for providing work-based learning opportunities to individuals with disabilities, and particularly for students with disabilities.
- the Board partners with TWC VR to place eligible 504 students in the Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL) for students to gain work readiness and paid work experience through the summer months.

Additionally, the Workforce Board

- hosts an annual Youth Career Expo, which exposes local high school students to the different career opportunities in our area. Since the start of the Youth Expo 13,166 students from 33 different schools and 30 districts attended the Expo. Students had the opportunity to visit over 500 interactive and visually exciting booths at which they had a chance to talk to professionals representing Southeast Texas' diverse workforce.
- enroll youth from the ISD's Dual Credit Programs to assist with financial assistance for dual credit courses if the occupation is on the Target/Demand list and meets the Board's two-year requirements.

Assessments are important in determining the appropriate services for youth. Youth customers will complete basic skills assessments using the CASAS. Staff will also complete an interest assessment using ONET or other interest and abilities assessment as deemed appropriate. Also, the youth will receive an assessment of work history, educational levels, financial and support service needs, as well as other employment barriers to ensure all needs are met. This information along with career exploration, the Board's targeted/demand occupation list, and talking with employers or partners that work in the field of interest will be used to assist the youth in determining their career paths and developing their service plan.

The Board's Youth Committee continues to research effective service delivery activities to enhance current programs and/or develop new innovative models to deliver services with a high degree of impact. The intent is to create a renewed interest in the youth program with the ability to demonstrate significant increases in positive outcomes.

C. Coordination with Secondary and Postsecondary Education Programs

References: WIOA §108(b)(10); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(9)

Boards must include a description of how the Board will coordinate workforce investment activities with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid the duplication of services.

BOARD RESPONSE:

To enhance and coordinate activities with secondary education the Board will utilize a variety of strategies such as career fairs to provide initial career path information to students beginning at the middle school level and continuing throughout their education. The Board will use partnerships with ISDs to provide educators with professional development through Teacher Externship programs. The Board is conducting a crosswalk survey of current and planned CTE programs at ISDs to assist in the development of the Targeted Occupation List. The Board will collaborate with the colleges and ISDs in submitting applications for funding for the Job Education for Texans (JET) grant and Dual Credit Technology application.

The Board has implemented a Workforce Readiness Outreach Program, which has proven effective since its launch in 2020. The program deploys Career Coaches into participating school districts to provide career services to students at public middle and high schools, grades 6th – 12th, to direct students towards High-Growth, High-Demand Occupations. Students receive in-depth education and direction on career choices as well as access to the current labor market and career data.

The Board screens applicants for training services to determine if other funds are available and to what extent. Before implementing any new programs, several schools are surveyed to determine the availability of existing programs to ensure that duplicate services are not offered. Applicants for training services must apply for the Pell Grant and other scholarships if available for the desired coursework.

At the post-secondary level, the Board works closely with the three Local two-year colleges to align their programs with the targeted occupations list, as well as keeping the post secondary's workforce divisions up to date on labor market information, and how to access other relevant information on the TWC website.

The Board intends to coordinate sector strategies by convening with industry, educational providers,

and other stakeholders. This assures that in-demand, industry recognized credentials are available to meet the needs of industry while promoting career pathways for jobseekers in growing/emerging industries in the Southeast Texas area. The Board's membership includes representation from education.

Other strategies to coordinate and enhance training services include the following:

- Career fairs targeting high school students.
- Representation from educational providers on the Board and committees.
- Coordination between training institutions, adult education programs, workforce contractors, and center case managers for customer referrals and.
- Coordination of services and support services between programs, partners, and community organizations to ensure non-duplication while maximizing training assistance.

D. Child Care and Early Learning

References: 40 TAC §809.12

Boards must include a description of how the Board is strategically managing child care and early learning within the workforce system to enhance school readiness and strengthen and support the child care industry.

Efforts include:

- coordinating with employers, economic development programs, and other industry leaders to increase the awareness and importance of early learning as a workforce and economic development tool;
- supporting improved school readiness through higher-quality child care, including through the Texas Rising Star program and partnership opportunities; and
- supporting the needs of the child care industry, such as by providing assistance with business development or shared services, or by providing opportunities to support professional growth and career pathways for early education.

BOARD RESPONSE:

In a collaborative effort the board, World of Color Child Care Center (WOC) and Beaumont ISD (BISD) have formed a Pre-K partnership BISD provided World of Color one Licensed Pre-K teacher, Professional Development, and numerous educational materials. The partnership positively impacted 19-20 children's transition to kinder readiness by 25%. Out of the 19-20 children 30% continued to kindergarten and 20% of the children remained in the Pre-K Class due to age requirements. There was a substantial increase in Rapid Vocabulary, Phonological Awareness, Math, and Early Writing Skills within the classroom. As a result of the increase and need BISD is currently working on expanding childcare services in BISD. BISD plans to increase the number of seats within their BISD partnership program and expand BISD Pre-K partnership by approximately 5 additional classes within TRS sites. Additionally, BISD is looking to establish an educational pathway between the

BISD Early Childhood Department Certified TRS Pre-K Programs, Department of Innovation, Lamar University Office of School, and Community Partnerships.

The board and BISD plan to implement an additional Pre-K partnership with Creative Learning Child Care Center to increase access to families within the WDA and particularly in underserved areas. The board has provided BISD with LENA Grow—it is an innovative, research-based professional development program for infant, toddler, and pre-k teachers. Measuring the most predictive elements of child outcomes, LENA Grow supports stakeholders at every level, helping teachers gain the skills to measurably improve classroom quality by boosting interactions and helping leadership make more informed planning and policy decisions.

The program couples LENA’s talk pedometer” technology with weekly coaching sessions. Teachers gain data insights that go far beyond typical feedback, leading to quality improvement without additional burden on teacher schedules. Child Care will have ten (10) classrooms participating in this program. We believe that teachers need to obtain their Child Care Development Associate (CDA) in order to move towards the career path outlined by the Early Learning Texas Council. Lamar Institute of Technology (LIT) and the Board have partnered to provide training and support services (mentoring, additional professional development, curriculum) to enhance and the skills needed to further their career. In addition to LIT, we will be utilizing Child Care Learning Institute (CLI) Engage for CDA certifications.

A total of 10 TRS classrooms participated in the LENA Grow program. There was a total of 4 programs and 100 Infant and toddler children who enrolled in the program. Benchmark data reflected language engagement of children was 17.7%. The language engagement increased by 49.3% for a final engagement of 67%.

The Boards Child Care Contractor will utilize T.E.A.C.H. scholarships through the TWC grant with Texas Association for the Education of Young Children (TAEYC) to pay for t CDA certification and a portion of their education to work towards child care provider staff degree. TXAEYC offers CDA Assessment scholarships to individuals who need assistance paying for the credential assessment and offer a \$200 Retention Stipend if employed at the same center after 6 months. This is layered on top of our partnership with Lamar Institute of Technology to provide the CDA Coursework. During Fall 2021 and Spring 2022, 20 students successfully were received the CDA Assessment Scholarship.

The Boards child care contractor provides mentoring services to child care provider, supporting their efforts to achieve TRS certification and enhance the quality of care in the region. Through the mentorship childcare providers have achieved early TRS designation and will continue to receive mentoring and assistance through child care quality funding to increase the number of TRS centers within the region. As of September 2024, there are 75 total TRS providers which includes: 27 (4-star), 37 (3-star), and 11 (2-star).

By fostering a sustainable talent pipeline through existing and future pre-K partnerships the young children will receive a strong educational foundation while creating career opportunities for early childhood professionals. Together, we are investing in the future of our workforce and children.

E. Transportation and Other Support Services

References: WIOA §108(b)(11); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(10)

Each Board must include a description of how the Board will provide transportation, including public transportation, and other appropriate support services in the workforce area in coordination with WIOA Title I workforce investment activities.

BOARD RESPONSE:

Supportive services are designed to assist with transportation barriers that might impede a customer's ability to participate in workforce activities. Supportive services are provided to eligible customers to participate in training activities. Supports include but are not limited to gas cards, uniforms, books, and uniforms/tools necessary for employment.

Workforce Solutions Contractors are trained to identify and define the problem and develop a customized plan so that customers can access the assistance they need. This plan is then integrated into the Customer's Individual Employment Plan (IEP).

To maximize resources and avoid duplication of services, the Board has developed successful partnerships with a wide range of agencies and community-based organizations through "Sharing Solutions" to link customers to supportive services such as clothing closets, substance abuse treatment, crisis intervention, domestic violence, health, temporary housing, and emergency food. Staff development activities include presentations from professionals knowledgeable in these areas. Workforce Solutions Contractors use the information obtained from the staff development activities to assist with the identification of potential abusers as well as to make referrals to available services for those in need.

The Board has an on-going MOU with the Southeast Texas Regional Planning Commission.

Transportation Planning Division. The purpose of this agreement is to coordinate resources and referrals services to individuals facing serious barriers to employment, including transportation necessary for employment, job training, and other related services.

The Beaumont and Port Arthur Centers are conveniently located and accessible via public transportation.

The Board's current Supportive Service Policy clearly outlines the supportive services and amounts allowable in each workforce program.

F. Coordination of Adult Education and Literacy

References: WIOA §108(b)(13); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(12); WD 18-23, Change 2

Boards must include a description of how the Board will coordinate WIOA Title I workforce

investment activities with AEL activities under WIOA Title II. Boards must also include the process used to review the local applications submitted under Title II, as consistent with WIOA §§107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA §232.

BOARD RESPONSE:

The Adult Education Agency is one of the most critical partnerships for the Board.

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas has maintained strong collaboration with its literacy partners—Region 5 Education Service Center and the Greater Orange Area Literacy Service. Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas currently operates under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with regional Adult Education service providers to make Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) college and career prep, English as Second Language (ESL), and High School Equivalency preparation services available to Workforce Solutions Center customers.

We are sensitive to the needs of our English language learners' customers. Forms and instructions are available in both English and Spanish and our website has a translation button. Signs are posted in Workforce Centers in both English and Spanish, assisting customers that may require assistance due to limited English proficiency, and free interpreter services are offered if needed.

To effectively meet the needs of the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) customers, the Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas Board requires all contractors; 1) employ and maintain bilingual staff, 2) materials are provided in both English and Spanish, 3), maintain a sufficient referral base (to include training and education providers) to ensure all LEP customers of any primary language are not excluded from participating in or benefiting from Workforce Solutions Center Services. AEL also administered the CASAS, BEST Plus, BEST Literacy and TABE Class E assessments. For ESL customers.

In the Specialized programs, when assessment indicates the need for additional literacy or English proficiency, the Workforce Solutions Workforce Specialist will include adult education services into the plan for service delivery. The AEL staff conducts on-site diagnostic testing, facilitates High School Equivalency GED, ESL, and ABE classes in the Workforce Solutions Centers. AEL provides a College and Career Navigator and a Workforce Integration, Student Success, and Follow-up Specialist to assist Workforce Solutions customers. The AEL staff administers the SUPERA, the Spanish version of the TABE, to evaluate the non-English reading TANF customers.

The AEL program also coordinates services with the Board and local employers to provide a supplemental Opportunity Youth program (Jobs for America's Graduates) for out-of-school youth, ages 16-24.

The Board and its contractors continuously pursue innovative initiatives, practices, and partnerships including alternate LEP network/literacy providers, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, etc. as means for providing comprehensive quality services to LEP customers.

The Board also coordinates with other entities, including Region 5 ESC, to provide college and career preparation to assist customers to successfully enroll in and complete college, or to earn industry credentials in local technical programs. The AEL program provides remediation for students/

customers who are enrolled in college training programs, to help them successfully pass industry recognized certification exams. Customers participate in postsecondary education and training through concurrent or co-enrollment in Workforce Training programs, including through co-enrollment in IET programs.

The AEL program and the Board integrate services to offer Workforce Readiness Digital Literacy classes to customers throughout the WDA, integrating Educational Technology to support instruction and workforce preparation activities. They also conduct a weekly Work Readiness Academy that provides soft skills, work ethics, and technical assistance for Workforce customers being placed on an internship.

ESC 5's AEL program and the Board integrate services with the local Higher Education institutions and local districts' Career and Technology Departments to focus instruction on targeted occupations and to align needs and services.

Regarding applications for AEL services, the Board used the following process for the previous application review and will use the same process for the next application review, pending any required changes from TWC.

- TWC releases the Request for Application and receives proposals from respondents
- TWC notifies Executive Director
- Executive Director appoints a minimum of three Board staff to review the proposals
- Board staff appointed complete Conflict of Interest Form
- Board staff appointed receive proposals from TWC and reviews based on the evaluation form provided by TWC. Provides feedback and recommendations using the AEL Provider Grant Review and Comment Form and returns completed review back to TWC.

Part 6: Adult and Dislocated Workers

A. Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training

References: WIOA §108(b)(7); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(6)

Boards must include a description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the workforce area.

BOARD RESPONSE:

The WIOA intake process has been streamlined by providing an on-line Pre-Application. This has expedited the process and enabled customers to quickly move to the next step for services. The Workforce Solutions Contractor offers a program orientation that thoroughly discusses the Center's services. There are three (3) types of career services: basic career services, individualized career services, and follow-up services. Career services provide the Workforce Solutions Center

Contractor with flexibility to target services to the needs of the customer. Customers will receive career and training services as appropriate to their assessed needs. Activities include:

- Comprehensive and specialized assessments of skill levels and service needs including The California Adult Education Accountability and Assessment (CASAS), OPAC, Typing Test and Kenexa: Prove It.
- Development of an individual employment plan/individual service plan to achieve employment goals by identifying appropriate objectives and appropriate services and information about eligible training providers and career paths.
- Individual career and on-going counseling/case management provided prior to enrollment and throughout the training experience by a WIOA Career Advisor
- Employability, employment preparation and job retention workshops to prepare and retain individuals in unsubsidized employment include Interviewing Techniques, Microsoft PowerPoint, Creating an Effective Resume, Using WIT, Using Social Media in Your Job Search, Mock Interviewing, Effective Networking Skills, and Soft Skills.
- Paid and unpaid work experience that are linked to interest/careers.
 - Occupational skills training, including training for nontraditional employment.
 - On-the-job training
 - Adult education and literacy activities.
- Supportive services whenever necessary in order to enable an eligible customer to participate in WIOA activities and the customer is unable to obtain supportive services through other programs providing such service. Supports may include transportation, tuition, books and training supplies, employment uniforms & tools required but not purchased by the employer; and
- Follow-up Services for customers who are placed in unsubsidized employment, for up to 12 months after the first day of employment.

The Board's Business Services Representatives and Contractor worked together to acquire an employer skill assessment tools to use as part of the assessment process. The Prove-It assessment will verify that an individual has the essential skills of the individuals' existing skills, interests and values to the targeted industries and occupations. The assessment will also identify whether an individual who is exploring new career options in the targeted occupations is suitable for the working conditions, environment or job demands of the targeted occupation.

The types of training available include occupational skills training, programs that combine workplace training with related instruction, skills upgrading and retraining, entrepreneurial training, job readiness training, and adult education and literacy activities provided in combination with occupational skills training. Specific occupations are targeted annually within targeted industry clusters. The Targeted Occupations list is compiled and made available to training providers seeking to provide training services through the Eligible Training Provider System (ETPS). Occupational and Vocational training services are also available to youth.

An on-going assessment of adult and dislocated worker employment and training programs is conducted by means of local monitoring and training vendor/provider outcome evaluations. Local

performance accountability measures will determine the value and contribution of each vendor/provider towards the specific measures including placement, credential, wages, and retention. Additional training programs are currently being evaluated through the state’s new Eligible Training Provider Policy approval process. Customer and staff surveys/comments provide valuable input concerning gaps in the provision of training services and resolution is readily implemented.

B. Service Priority

References: 20 CFR §679.560(b)(21)

Boards must include the Board policy to ensure that priority for adult individualized career services and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient, as consistent with WIOA §134(c)(3)(E) and 20CFR §680.600, along with veterans and foster youth, according to the priority order outlined in the WIOA Guidelines for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth. Boards must also include a list of any Board-established priority groups, if any.

BOARD RESPONSE:

The Priority of Service Policy Directive outlines the requirements for WIOA individualized career and training services and ensures priority of service is provided to the customers and that adequate protocols are in place to ensure compliance.

The following priority of service policy for WIOA individualized career and training services:

Priority for individualized career services and training services must be provided in the following order:

1. Eligible veterans and eligible spouses as defined in WD Letter 01-21 (January 22, 2021) who are also recipients of public assistance, low- income, or basic skills deficient.
2. Foster youth and former foster youth—as defined in WD Letter 43-11, Change 2, issued on February 19, 2020, and entitled, “Priority of Service for Eligible Foster Youth”—who are also recipients of public assistance, low income, or basic skills deficient.
3. All other individuals who are recipients of public assistance, low-income, or basic skills deficient.
4. All other eligible veterans and eligible spouses.
5. All other foster youth and former foster youth.
6. All other individuals.

Part 7: Fiscal Agent, Grants, and Contracts

A. Fiscal Agent

References: WIOA §108(b)(15); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(14)

Boards must identify the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds described in WIOA

§107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III), as determined by the CEOs or the governor under WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i).

BOARD RESPONSE:

The Southeast Texas Workforce Development Board, dba Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas, is responsible for the disbursement of grant funds for the three (3)-county regions.

A. Subgrants and Contracts

References: WIOA §108(b)(16); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(15)

Boards must include a description of the competitive process that will be used to award the subgrants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities.

BOARD RESPONSE:

The Southeast Texas Workforce Development Board competitively bids and selects a contractor in compliance with the federal law under Section 107 of WIOA. The Board prepares and issues a Request for Proposal (RFP) and/or Request for Bids to solicit providers of services. Once proposals are received, independent evaluators are also procured to evaluate the proposals/bid provide information to the respective Committee(s) of the Board. The Committee will review the evaluations of independent evaluators and make a recommendation to the full Board for funding.

Part 8: Performance

A. Board Performance Targets

References: WIOA §108(b)(17); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(16)

Boards must include a description of the local levels of performance that were negotiated with TWC and the CEOs, consistent with WIOA §116(c), that will be used to measure the performance of the workforce area and for measuring the performance of the local fiscal agent (where appropriate), eligible providers under WIOA Title I subtitle B, and the one-stop delivery system in the workforce area.

BOARD RESPONSE:

As the Board, we constantly strive to meet or exceed the standards and indicators through training, policy development, and the addition or creation of new and innovative programs that will benefit our customers and region. The following are the established contract measures between the Board and TWC for the one stop delivery system:

The following performance measures were set in accordance with WIOA § 116(c):

	Program Year 2024 TWC Proposed Targets	Program Year 2025 Targets
Title I- B Adults WIOA Performance Measures:		

Employed Q2 Post Exit	76.80%	76.80%
Employed Q4 Post Exit	74.40%	74.40%
Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit	\$7,000	\$7,000
Credential Attainment Rate	77.70%	77.70%
Measurable Skills Gains	69.70%	69.70%

	Program Year 2024 TWC Proposed Targets	Program Year 2025 Targets
Title I- B Dislocated Workers Performance Measures:		
Employed Q2 Post Exit	77.80%	77.80%
Employed Q4 Post Exit	78.30%	78.30%
Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit	\$9,500	\$9,500
Credential Attainment Rate	79.50%	79.50%
Measurable Skills Gains	75.00%	75.00%

	Program Year 2024 TWC Proposed Targets	Program Year 2025 TWC Targets
Title I- B Youth Performance Measures:		
Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit	73.40%	73.40%
Employed/Enrolled Q4 Post Exit	75.60%	75.60%
Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit	\$3,900	\$3,900
Credential Attainment Rate	63.80%	63.80%
Measurable Skills Gains	64.30%	64.30%

Legislative Budget Board (LBB) Measures		
EOY 2024		Program Year 2025
Employed/Enrolled (Q2 Post Exit) C & T Participants Except Other	77.00%	71.00%
NCP Entered Employment Rate	N/A	65.00%
NCP Employment	N/A	50.00%

Retention Rate		
Average # of Children Served Per Day- Combined	2,471	2,836

In addition to the WIOA measures, and the LBB, TWC has established the following performance measures:

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Measures		
	EOY 2024	Program Year 2025
Active Job Seeker New Employment Connection Rate	N/A	61.14%
Initial Job Search Child Care Success Rate	N/A	62.59%
Maintaining Employment Connection	N/A	39.92%
Successful Texas Talent Assistance	N/A	57.88%
# of Employers receiving Texas Talent Assistance	1,418	1,976
RESEA Outreach & Scheduling Rate	N/A	100% Weekly
RESEA Initial Appointment Rate	39.00%	77.00% Quarterly
RESEA Failure to Report Rate	N/A	23.00% Quarterly

Rate		
Choices Full Engagement Rate	50.00%	50.00%
Claimants' Reemployment within 10 Weeks	60.00%	60.00%

The performance measures for WIOA are negotiated with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). The performance of the Board as fiscal agent is reviewed during the annual audit and the TWC monitoring. The Board members and chief elected officials receive the annual audit and TWC monitoring report.

An initial and annual evaluation of eligible training providers (ETPs) has been carried out following TWC requirements. Training providers are required to submit performance data to TWC to remain eligible and to be listed on the State Eligible Training Provider List. Any program that does not meet

the state's performance criteria will be withdrawn from the statewide list and not eligible for WIOA enrollments.

The Board conducts an annual review of the contracted subrecipients (workforce and childcare) in areas of performance, monitoring, fiscal accountability, customer/employer surveys and response to elements listed in the contract. The Board staff submits the results to the Board for review and approval of extending the contract or release of a Request for Proposal to solicit proposals for subrecipients.

Part 9: Training and Services

A. Individual Training Accounts

References: WIOA §108(b)(19); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(18)

Boards must include a description of how the training services outlined in WIOA §134 will be provided through the use of individual training accounts (ITAs), including if the Board will use contracts for training services, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of ITAs under that chapter, and how the Board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs, regardless of how the training services are provided.

BOARD RESPONSE:

Individual Training Accounts (ITA) are training vouchers issued to eligible Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth participants for training that provides participants with additional skills or competencies that leads to employment. ITAs are established on behalf of the WIOA participant to purchase a program of training services from eligible providers selected in consultation with the case manager. Additionally, the cost of training, time commitment of the participant, fees and books, tuition, and other associated costs should be considered when conducting a cost benefit analysis for the ITA.

Individual Training Accounts are:

- used by participants for training services.
- WIOA funded; and
- established on behalf of a WIOA adult, dislocated worker, out-of-school youth, or in-school youth participant eligible for training services.

Workforce Solutions Center contractors must coordinate funding for ITAs with funding from other federal, state, and/or local sources, or private job training programs to assist the individual in obtaining training services, in accordance with the WIOA Guidelines.

The contractor must ensure that WIOA funds are not used to pay training costs:

- for any portion or term of training for which the participant has signed a loan as part of financial aid; or
- that were paid by the participant (or another source) before WIOA program registration.

With a few exceptions (listed under Training Contracts below), Board and Workforce Solutions staff must be aware that WIOA requires that training provided to eligible adults and dislocated workers be paid for using ITAs.

WIOA funding for training is limited to participants who:

- are unable to obtain grant assistance from other sources to pay training costs; or
- require assistance beyond that available under grant assistance from other sources to pay training costs and related support services.

Eligibility for Training Services

Training services may be made available to employed and unemployed adults and dislocated workers and out-of-school youth who:

Contractor determines, after a determination of need is made using an employment plan:

- are unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to or higher than wages from previous employment through career services.
- need training services to obtain or retain employment leading to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to or higher than wages from previous employment; and
- have the skills and qualifications to participate successfully in training services.

Have selected a program of training services that is directly linked to:

- occupations that are on the Board's targeted occupations list or are on the targeted occupations list for another workforce area to which an *eligible participant* is willing to commute or relocate.
- contractor determined early pathway occupations and stackable credentials that lead toward a Board target occupation; or
- occupations that have been determined on a case-by-case basis to have a high potential for sustained demand and growth in the workforce area, based on sufficient and verifiable documentation, in accordance with the Board's procedures and TWC rule §841.34(b); and
- are unable to obtain grant assistance from other sources to pay the costs of such training and related support services, including such sources as state-funded training funds, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), and federal Pell Grants or require WIOA assistance in addition to other sources of grant assistance, including federal Pell Grants.

Participants who are employable with current skills are not eligible for training funds, unless they are making less than *the Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas Board's current Self-Sufficient* wage. For the purpose of this policy, employable with current skills is defined as possessing either a degree or certificate with current skills in a Targeted Occupation that is less than five years old/or more than four years old of current work experience in a Targeted Occupation.

WIOA Funding may be provided for college level instruction only if ALL of the following conditions have been met:

- The customer has been accepted into a certificate, license, diploma, or degree program, and the course of study is occupation specific.
- The customers must demonstrate that they have the financial resources to attend long-term training.

No funds shall be provided for general academic programs, (i.e., General Studies, Bachelor of Business Administration, Bachelor of Arts, Graduate degrees, etc.)

Any customer who has dropped out of a WIOA funded training program without the prior approval of his/her case manager, will not receive additional ITA funding. The case manager's prior approval must be documented in the customer's Individual Service Plan/Case notes before receiving additional ITA funding.

Maximum Funding for Training

ITAs will not exceed \$5,000 per participant per program year (July 1 – June 30).

An ITA established for an eligible participant to receive training services shall expire two (2) years from the date of the account's establishment. Therefore, participants must attend classes on a full-time basis, or as determined by the training provider's catalog/policy to receive their associate degree, Licensing and or Certificate of Certification. The Workforce Solutions Board, on a case-by-case basis, may approve exceptions to this time/duration limitation. Requests for an exception must be in writing and must include evidence that training services were not met due to no-fault of the participant. Copies of approval must be maintained in the participant's file.

The Customers must first be considered eligible and appropriate for training. If the Training program selected is greater than \$5,000, the student must indicate how the remaining costs of training will be funded.

Boards/Workforce Center Contractor must ensure that training contracts: —except contracts for OJT, customized training, and incumbent worker training—are linked to one of the following:

- Occupations that are on the Board's Target Occupations List or are on the Target Occupations List for another workforce area to which an eligible participant is willing to commute or relocate; or
- Occupations that have been determined on a case-by-case basis to have a high potential for sustained demand and growth in the workforce area, based on sufficient and verifiable documentation, in accordance with the Board's procedures and §841.34(b).
- do not limit consumer choice.

Consumer Choice Requirements

The Board emphasizes that all training services will be provided in a manner that maximizes customer choice. Workforce Solutions Center contractors must ensure that staff provides customers with:

- an online link to a list of locally and statewide Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL), including a description of approved programs, which may provide instruction in the occupational areas that he/she has chosen to pursue.
- performance and cost information relating to the approved training programs offered by ETPs; and
- information on available local work-based training providers, on-the-job training (OJT), customized training, paid or unpaid work experience opportunities, internships, registered apprenticeships, or incumbent worker training that meets the performance standards (for example, entered employment and retention) for that occupation.

Links to Target Occupations

Boards must ensure that training services funded through ITAs, with the exception of registered apprenticeship programs, are directly linked to:

- occupations that are on the Board's Target Occupations List or are on the Target Occupations List for another local workforce development area (workforce area) to which an eligible participant is willing to commute or relocate; or
- occupations that have been determined on a case-by-case basis to have a high potential for sustained demand and growth in the workforce area, based on sufficient and verifiable documentation, in accordance with the Board's procedures and TWC rule §841.34(b).

B. ITA Limitations

References: 20 CFR §663.420; WD Letter 14-19, Change 2

Boards may impose limits on the duration and amount of ITAs, of which such limitations must be described in the Board Plan. If the state or Board chooses to impose limitations, such limitations must not be implemented in a manner that undermines the WIOA requirement that training services are provided in a manner that maximizes customer choice in the selection of an Eligible Training Provider. Exceptions to ITA limitations may be provided for individual cases and must be described in Board policies.

BOARD RESPONSE:

The duration of an ITA is determined by a participant's course of study. Realistic and attainable training plans must be considered. Generally, training is either short-term or long-term. Short-term training programs or prevocational services are limited to 6 months or less. However, the contractor must be mindful of the participant's career pathway and the training and services necessary to meet the participant's goal. Long-term training is training whose length does not exceed two (2) years. Four-year degree programs may be funded when the customer can document that he or she is in the

last two years of the program (e.g., remaining hours are equal to or less than 50 percent of the total credit hours required for the degree) and is in an in-demand occupation. And the participant must provide a transcript and a signed plan-of-study from the institution documenting, they can complete the degree requirements in the two (2) year time limit. ITAs will not exceed \$5,000 per participant per program year (July 1 – June 30). An ITA established for an eligible participant to receive training services shall expire two (2) years from the date of the account’s establishment.

There may be instances where a participant is unable to complete the training program within the timeframe outlined in the ITA, and the ITA may be extended. The request for an exception must be in writing and must include evidence that training services were not met due to no fault of the participant. Copies of approval must be maintained in the participant’s file.

Part 10: Apprenticeship

A. Registered Apprenticeship Programs

Each Board must include a description of how the Board will encourage Registered Apprenticeship programs within its workforce area to register with the Eligible Training Provider System to receive WIOA funding.

BOARD RESPONSE:

The Board will encourage Registered Apprenticeship Programs to register with the TWC Eligible Training Provider System (ETPS).

The Board currently has a working relationship with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 479 and the Plumber Local 68 and Sabine Area Labor Council, all of which are registered apprenticeship programs in the Southeast Texas region. We will continue to encourage these local unions to register as eligible training providers in order to receive WIOA funding.

The Board applied for a second Apprenticeship Texas Expansion Pipefitters Local 211-Zone 195 Nederland Grant. We will serve 130 new apprentices through this joint effort the following way:

- Employing newly registered apprentices through their contractors
- Expanding our Apprenticeship program into the industrial and commercial construction and maintenance field in the listed specialties:
 - Pipefitting Fabrication
 - HVAC Services
 - Welding
 - Instrumentation

B. Apprenticeship Texas

Each Board must include a description of the Board’s strategy and commitment to support Apprenticeship Texas efforts across the state, as applicable.

BOARD RESPONSE:

The Board will continue to promote registered apprenticeships and pre apprenticeships programs, providing technical assistance to employers and facilitate regional partnerships around demand-driven registered apprenticeship programs across the Southeast Texas region.

Additionally, there are union representatives on our Board that work with union-based apprenticeship programs.

Job Seekers are encouraged to utilize apprenticeship programs as a career pathway to high demand, high wage occupations that are needed in our local workforce area.

We will continue to support, develop, and expand pre-apprenticeship opportunities for youth and other low skilled individuals which will provide them with short-term classroom and employability skills training in preparation for a career pathway in a Registered Apprenticeship program.

Part 11: Public Comment

References: WIOA §108(d); 20 CFR §679.550(b) and §679.560(b) and (e)

Boards must provide a description of the public comment process, including:

- making copies of the proposed local plan available to the public through electronic and other means, such as public hearings and local news media; an opportunity for comment by members of the public, including representatives of business, labor organizations, and education;
- providing at least a 15-day, but no more than a 30-day period for comment on the plan before its submission to TWC, beginning on the date that the proposed plan is made available, before its submission to TWC.

BOARD RESPONSE:

In accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Section 108(d), the Southeast Texas Workforce Development Board will make copies of the proposed local plan available to the public through electronic and other means no later than the end of the 15-day period beginning on the date the proposed plan is made available; and include with submission of the local plan any comments that represent disagreement with the plan.

The Board posted a notice on February 26, 2025, that the plan was available for comment on the Board website www.setworks.org. It will be available for review and public comment until 5 p.m. Friday, March 14, 2025.

Appendix: Texas Workforce Investment Council Requirements

Local Board Plan Requirements

for Alignment to the Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan

Requirement for Workforce Systemwide Alignment

State law requires local workforce development boards (local board) to adopt a plan that “sets broad goals and objectives for all workforce development programs in the local area consistent with statewide goals, objectives, and performance standards,”¹ as outlined in the workforce system strategic plan, [*Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031*](#).

The Texas Workforce Investment Council (Council) reviews each board plan to ensure that local goals and objectives are consistent with the workforce system strategic plan. Under state law and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the Council is charged with recommending the local board plans to the Governor for consideration and approval.

Demonstrating Local Alignment with Texas’ Workforce System Strategic Plan

The local board planning process highlights the importance and interdependence of the constituents and partners of the Texas workforce system. Local boards oversee the delivery of workforce programs and services and are essential in both the development and implementation of system goals and objectives in the system strategic plan. The planning requirements help local boards inform the Council of innovative practices and articulate how local plans translate the workforce system strategic plan into local action that moves the system forward.

Local board responses apprise the Council—and, with the Council’s recommendation, the Governor—of system alignment, including program implementation, strategic initiatives, and innovative practices. All 28 boards will be represented in the briefing for the approval of the local plans and subsequent Council recommendation to the Governor for consideration for approval in the spring of 2025. Board responses may be included in the Council briefing materials verbatim.

Board response covers the three strategic opportunities and four system goals in *Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031* that focus system partners on the Council’s mission to produce an agile and resilient workforce. Building on a foundation of continuous innovation and increased collaboration, the system plan calls for accelerated engagement around three strategic opportunities: engagement of employers, improving outcomes for Texans with barriers, and use of data to support investment decisions. Each of these envisions a desirable future state for Texas and lays out essential actions to be implemented that support system goals and stronger outcomes across the Texas workforce system.

The system goals drive accelerated action by system partners in service to Texas employers, learners, partners, and those with policy and planning responsibilities, as follows:

- Employers System Goal: Accelerate the delivery of relevant education and training programs to meet the demand of employers.
- Learners System Goal: Accelerate the expansion of and access to work-based skill and knowledge acquisition to respond to the needs of learners.
- Partners System Goal: Accelerate the development and use of models to support and build system partners' capacity, responsiveness, continuous improvement, and decision-making.
- Policy and Planning Goal: Accelerate the availability of relevant workforce, education, and other data sets and the use of applied analytics to evaluate program outcomes to respond to the needs of policy makers and planners.

(Texas Government Code Sec. 2308.304, Local Plan.).

Directions for Demonstrating Alignment with the Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan

Local board plan responses must demonstrate alignment with the workforce system plan and, therefore, require both summary information and citations to the strategies and initiatives that advance progress towards the workforce system goals in [Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031](#). Please refer to the workforce system plan for definitions of specific terms.

1. Provide a summary describing how the processes, activities, or initiatives in the local board plan align with the specific system goal and objective and each strategic opportunity. Response guidelines are provided.
2. Accurately cite the referenced information in the local board plan by providing the corresponding page number(s) in the plan.

System Goals and Objectives

1. Employers Goal – Delivery of Relevant Education and Training Programs

Describe local board activities, initiatives, or processes that accelerate the delivery of relevant education and training programs to meet employers' needs, specifically by increasing:

- upskilling and reskilling programs that address employers' needs for middle skill workers,
- adult learners transitioning to employment through integrated education and training programs, and
- attainment of short-term credentials in programs aligned with high-demand occupations.

BOARD RESPONSE:

The Board has identified long-term strategies associated with meeting the statewide goal of “Accelerate the delivery of relevant education and training programs to meet the demand of

employers” as described in the statewide plan *Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031*. As described on Page 6 of the local Board Plan, the Board’s goal states “Enhance alignment and collaboration opportunities among secondary career and technical education programs, post-secondary education, and industry partners to provide Southeast Texas with a supply of quality future workers that are skilled to meet the needs of the regions’ employers.”

The three system objectives listed in the statewide plan are:

1. Increase upskilling and reskilling programs.
2. Increase Adult Education transition to employment.
3. Increase short-term credentials in high-demand occupations.

Strategies, activities, and initiatives for achieving this goal, as stated in the local Board Plan, and aligning with the three system objectives include:

- Increase upskilling and reskilling programs, apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, internships, PROWD, and work-based learning through partnership and collaboration with local employers and education institutions and finding funding through TWC grants and other sources.
- Utilizing the Partners for Reentry Opportunities (PROWD) program to upskill incarcerated individuals to give them a boost to finding a job after release .
- The Career Coach will continue to engage with local high-school students and provide career-exploration opportunities to give a head start on their career.
- Collaborating with local Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs to aid and develop skills and programs that are necessary to teach.

The board plans to continue utilizing the Skills Development Fund (SDF) to reskill and upskill workers, ensuring they remain competitive in the job market. The SDF supports short-term training programs that lead to industry-based certifications, equipping individuals with specialized skills employer’s demand. By partnering with local business and educational partners to measure success rates. Existing and new workers participating will attain higher wages and possible promotion (page 37 of local plan).

WSSET collaborates with Adult Education and Literacy, to promote career pathways, and credential attainment. The AEL provider for the Southeast Texas region conducts diagnostic testing and assists the workforce in conducting orientations and ESL classes (page 50 of local plan).

WSSET in joint service delivery planning with education and business partners leverage resources and funds to increase retention and completion rates by addressing service gaps.

WSSET relies on accurate, relevant data to track enrollment and outcomes. The Board will use both local and TWC’s WorkInTexas Case Management System (WITCMS) to track enrollment and outcomes.

2. Learners Goal – Expansion of Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship

Describe local board activities, initiatives, or processes that are expanding work-based experiences, including apprenticeship, to accelerate skills and knowledge acquisition that improves system outcomes for learners.

BOARD RESPONSE:

The Board has identified long-term strategies associated with meeting the statewide goal of “Accelerate the expansion of access to work-based skill and knowledge acquisition to respond to the needs of learners” as described in the statewide plan *Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031*.

The two system objectives listed in the statewide plan are:

1. Increase work-based learning.
2. Increase apprenticeship.

Strategies, activities, and initiatives for achieving this goal, as stated on Pages 10 and 11 of the local Board Plan, and aligning with the two system objectives described in the statewide plan, include:

The Board provides work-based learning opportunities, through partnerships with employers and community-based organizations. These include:

- WBL pre-apprenticeships partnership with S&B Industrial Engineers for high school students in the fields of welding, pipefitter, and plumbing. Workforce staff coordinate with partners to secure WBL host sites to align with career interest of the customer (Page 60 of local plan).
- WSSET in partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation Services expanded WBL for students with disabilities through the paid work experience program and Summer Earn and Learn programs.
- WSSET received the Board Service Award from TWC and used the funding to expand electrical apprenticeship and explore possibilities of expanding into healthcare and maritime occupations.
- WSSET plans to partner with education and industry to apply for Jobs and Education for Texans, High Demand and Texas Industry Grants. The board will utilize a round-table approach of bringing stakeholders together to identify needs and strategies of developing quality training programs.
(page 6 Goal #2 of local plan)

3. Partners Goal – Alignment to Support Career Pathways

Describe local board activities, initiatives, or processes to build the board’s capacity, responsiveness, continuous improvement, and decision-making to:

- support the identification of credentials of value, and
- streamline and clarify existing career pathways and models to increase alignment between secondary and postsecondary technical programs.

BOARD RESPONSE:

The Board has identified long-term strategies associated with meeting the statewide goal of “Accelerate development and use of models to support and build system partners’ capacity, responsiveness, continuous improvement, and decision making” as described in the statewide plan *Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031*.

The two system objectives listed in the statewide plan are:

1. Identify credentials of value.
2. Clarify and connect pathways.

Strategies, activities, and initiatives for achieving this goal, as stated on Pages 8 and 10 of the local Board Plan, and aligning with the two system objectives described in the statewide plan, include:

- Periodically meet with system stakeholders and partners to discuss and evaluate changes in various industries and to determine what is needed from workers.
- Continue to establish and expand the Targeted Occupations List (TOL) Committee to receive local wisdom regarding industry changes and progressions and to update the TOL annually.
- Continue to share information and build partnerships with local coalitions, economic development corporations, chambers of commerce, etc.
- Leverage TWC resources, such as various grant opportunities, to collaborate with local partners and fund new training and education opportunities for workers.

Furthermore, the Board will continue to facilitate the development and awareness of career pathways through the Workforce Education Career Coach. Currently Southeast Texas does not have a Tri-Agency Regional Convener lead organization. Once the lead organization is established the Board will partner to implement high-quality career and education pathways into targeted industries.

4. Policy and Planning Goal – Relevant Data Sets

Describe local board activities, initiatives, or processes that support the availability and coordination of relevant workforce, education, and employment data to evaluate program outcomes to respond to the needs of policy makers and planners to:

- expand high-quality childcare availability,
- identify and quantify quality outcomes, including industry-based certification data, and
- enhance wage records.

Response should address the following:

- engagement with childcare providers and employers to establish on-site or near-site, high quality childcare facilities and expand Texas Rising Star certifications,
- collaboration with employers to identify enhanced employment and earnings data to gain deeper insight into program outcomes, and
- how the board and its system partners identify, evaluate, and implement ways to streamline and improve timeliness and completeness of data matching and sharing, specifically with industry-based certification attainment, to evaluate program effectiveness and outcomes.

BOARD RESPONSE:

To address the growing need for accessible high-quality child care, the board is actively engaging with child care providers and employers to establish on-site or near-site child care facilities. The initiative aims to support working families, enhance workforce participation, and improve early childhood education outcomes. To ensure a comprehensive and informed approach the board includes child care representatives and has established a child care sub-committee. The Texas Rising Star mentors collaborate with existing child care centers to expand capacity and improve quality of services. TRS mentors provide technical assistance to assist child care centers in obtaining TRS status or increase star levels.

To identify and quantify outcomes the board collaborates with employers to identify certifications, licenses, and credentials aligned with high demand industries. Board staff use this information along with labor market information to identify target occupations, with a high probability of successful employment outcomes and self-sufficient wages. The Board monitors data analysis to identify and enhance the delivery of service to customers. Sources used by the board include TWC’s Tableau Reports, WorkInTexas, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, and surveys of business customers to determine effectiveness of services.

As part of the Boards contracted performance measures, staff track credential attainment, employment placement rates, and median earnings post-training to measure the success of workforce programs. Through these efforts the board aims to create sustainable, high quality child care and employment opportunities for the customers of Southeast Texas. (pages 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 30, 38, 40 of the local plan).

Strategic Opportunities

Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031 envisions a collaborative workforce system capable of accelerating the delivery of workforce programs, services, and initiatives to meet the needs of a thriving economy. The strategic opportunities focus system partners on three critical success factors that will lead to broad achievement of the system plan goals and objectives. Review each strategic opportunity and provide the information requested.

Strategic Opportunity 1 – Employer Engagement

Describe how the local board coordinates with its stakeholders to gain insight into the needs of employers and minimize “asks” that burden employers.

Response should address the following:

- coordination efforts that gain more insight from employers, including participation in the Tri- Agency Texas Regional Pathways Network, if applicable, and
- reducing the number of regional system partners individually making requests of employers.

BOARD RESPONSE:

The board is committed to developing an employer-driven workforce by fostering strong partnerships with businesses and minimizing administrative burdens. The board through strategic coordination with stakeholders such as industry roundtables, focus group, education advisory committees, and surveys help to reduce redundancy. The board also uses the expertise of its members to identify industry needs. The board is made up of employers that represent the demand occupations and through their guidance redundancies are reduced for employers. The board staff strategically attend annual workforce summits, business leader forums, to gain valuable information that assists in developing a business model that is responsive, efficient, in meeting the needs of the employers. By data sharing with stakeholders and sharing information the burdensome redundancy to employers is minimized. (pages 10, 13, 46, 52,53 of local plan).

Strategic Opportunity 2 – Improving Outcomes for Texans with Barriers to Employment

Describe how the local board engages Texans with diverse needs — including those with disabilities, foster youth, sex-trafficking victims, incarcerated juveniles and adults, and opportunity youth — by designing programs that address their needs, maximize outcomes, and improve career opportunities.

Response should address the following:

- models, initiatives, programs, or processes that effectively engage these populations; and
- promising practices in supportive services models and outcomes that consistently demonstrate success.

BOARD RESPONSE:

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas has developed strategies to engage populations with diverse needs that include but not limited to individuals with disabilities (adults/youth), incarcerated individuals, opportunity now, and foster youth.

Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD): Southeast Texas is one of seven boards to receive this grant from TWC. The funds support the delivery of pre- and post-release to participants incarcerated in the federal prison system. Training and supportive reentry services are provided to individuals in welding. Individuals completing the course earn a certificate/credential and employment skill that can be used to gain employment upon release.

Individuals with Disabilities: The board has received the TWC Board Service Award for the past two years. This award reflects the board’s ongoing commitment to creating inclusive workforce opportunities. Through collaborative efforts with Vocational Rehabilitation the board has implemented paid-work-experience and Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL). By fostering partnerships with local businesses, the board has used the PWE funds to place youth and adults in employment.

Opportunity Now: The board coordinates with educational institutions through the Workforce Education Career Coach and Student HireAbility Navigator to provide career coaching services to ensure youth have the resources needed for success.

Foster Youth: The board partners with several organizations to provide services to foster youth in career planning, child care services and supportive services. Foster Youth are a priority group in the WIOA and Child Care programs.

The board and contractor staff complete sensitivity, diversity and inclusion training annually to assist in delivering and providing services that are accessible to all populations in the workforce development system. (pages 34, 50, 61, 62 69 of local plan).

Strategic Opportunity 3 – Use of Data to Support Investment Decisions

Describe how the local board uses data and evidence to identify and target strategic investments to improve system performance.

Response should address the following:

- evidence-based practices and data to strategically implement and fund initiatives; and

- programs that have successfully demonstrated previous program participant credential attainment and employment.

BOARD RESPONSE:

Use of data to Support Investment Decisions – Section 1 Part C

The board conducts ongoing data analysis to drive continuous improvement. Reports generated through WorkInTexas, LAUS, Jobs EQ, and other sources to make evidence-based informed decisions. A comprehensive review of wage data, labor trend reports and key performance indicators to support initiatives and design strategies to improve the workforce system. The board develops an in-demand industry, in-demand occupation, and targeted occupation list which are derived from extensive labor market analysis, local expertise, and collaborations with other key stakeholders. The board prioritizes initiatives that provide customers with the skills and credentials needed to succeed in these high-demand occupations and industries.

The board funds programs that have a proven record of success, as evidenced in pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, and education institutions.

Collaborative research and sharing across the region is done by posting LMI, Employer, Job Seeker, and Child Care services on the boards website at www.southeasttexas.org. Customers accessing the website can find information pertaining to training, job opportunities, and employer services. Strong partnerships are the foundation of an effective workforce development, driving economic growth and expanding opportunities for job seekers and employers. The board implements these strategies to continue as a high-performing board in the Southeast Texas workforce delivery area and state of Texas.

