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WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

SOUTH TEXAS

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD PLAN PROGRAM YEARS 2021- 2023 -2024



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Workforce Solutions for South Texas Comprehensive Plan Program Years
2021-2024

WSST Chief Elected Officials

Chief Elected Officials	County or City Represented	Chief Elected Officials	County or City Represented
The Honorable Judge Juan Carlos Guerra	Jim Hogg County	The Honorable Judge Joseph Rathmell	Zapata County
The Honorable Mayor Dr. Victor D. Trevino	City of Laredo	The Honorable Judge Tano E. Tijerina	Webb County

WSST Board of Directors

WSST Board Member	Category Represented	WSST Board Member	Category Represented
Ms. Lupita R. Canales,	Private Sector	Dr. Alicia Carrillo	Literacy Council
Mr. Guillermo Castro	Private Sector	Mr. Hugo Chaparro	Private Sector
Mr. Jose Dodier Jr.	Private Sector	Mr. Juan Escamilla	Private Sector
Mr. Gene A. Lindgren	Economic Development	Mr. Jorge Gonzalez	Private Sector
Mr. Jose De Jesus Gonzalez	Private Sector	Ms. Mary Susan Foster	Adult Basic and Continuing Education
Mr. Elmo Daniel Lopez	Private Sector	Dr. Roger Miller	Private Sector
Mr. Allan Mills	Community Based Organization	Mr. Hector Noyola	Community Based Organization
Ms. Cordelia G. Perez	Organized Labor	Ms. Katherine Karshis	Public Employment Agency
Mr. Ademar David Garza	Private Sector	Ms. Janette Ramos	Vocational Rehabilitation
Ms. Angelica Sanchez	Education	Ms. Jessica Sifuentes	Public Assistance
Dr. Federico Solis Jr.	Education	Ms. Rosaura P. Tijerina	Private Sector
Dr. Francisca Cruz Torres	Private Sector	Dr. Miroslava B. Vargas	Private Sector
Ms. Lupita Zepeda	Private Sector		



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The Workforce Solutions for South Texas (WSST) Board is committed to implementing the Goals and Strategies that are detailed in the 2021 – 2023 - 2024 Strategic Plan.

WSST, to prepare this plan and to solicit input, implemented a survey/interview to local employer groups based on targeted industry sector by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) including the Transportation, Healthcare, Education, and Construction industries. The survey requested input from employers about the expectation of targeted occupations, hiring practices and career ladders. The input and consensus of the participating employers is reflected in the WSST Strategic Plan strategies.

The WSST Board ensured the public had the opportunity to review and provide comment on the 2021-2023 - 2024 Strategic Plan. WSST placed a public notice on January 22, 2023 in the Laredo Morning Times to advise the public of the availability of the WSST Strategic Plan and the opportunity to comment. The public comment period was set to begin on January 23, 2023 and end by Noon on February 23, 2023. A user-friendly downloadable copy of the Strategic Plan was made available on the WSST's web site.

The Chief Elected Officials met to review and approve the Plan on February 22, 2023. WSST Board approved the 2021-2023-2024 Strategic Plan at a meeting held on February 23, 2023.

The signatures below confirm the approval to submit the WSST 2021-2023-2024 Strategic Plan which was done in a legally posted open meeting.

The following signatures represent the WSST Executive Director and the current WSST Board Chairperson.

WSST Executive Director:

WSST Board Chairperson:

Rogelio Trevino
Typed Name

Lupita R. Canales
Typed Name

Executive Director
Title

WSST Board Chairperson
Title


Signature Date


Signature Date

Part 1: Board Vision and Strategies

A. Vision and Goals

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

Following, find a description of the Workforce Solutions for South Texas Board's strategic vision to support regional economic growth and economic self-wage including:

- goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment; and
- goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators described in WIOA §116(b)(2)(A).

WSST Board Response:

In planning for the updated development of the South Texas 2021 – 2023 - 2024 Strategic Plan, the WSST Board continues to shift from the after-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was unprecedented in its scale and created a workforce supply and demand shock as evidenced in the range of fluctuation in the labor force employed and unemployed rate/numbers when 2020 is compared to 2022. In 2020 the unemployment rate peaked at 13.3 in May compared to the latest data found in November 2022 which shows the South Texas region at a 4.0% unemployment rate.

To better articulate the current gaps between workforce supply and demand, WSST implemented an on-line survey interview process that resulted with more than 191 employers from different industry-sectors responding. To identify a strategic representative sample targeted industry sectors and the TWC Employer list were utilized.

Employer interview results indicate a convergence of factors that contribute to the staffing challenges they are facing when hiring qualified labor, twenty-three employers responded that longevity and retention of employment is a major concern, employees do not stay long on the job, have poor work ethic and lack skills. Other examples collectively cited by employers include lack of computer technology skills, a need for truck driving certifications, fork-lift certifications, and Microsoft office certifications, organization and critical soft skills. Transportation and Warehousing Industry employers are projecting expansions in the coming year and a bigger need for skilled workers.

To address the staffing challenges, WSST strategic planning requires that strong relationships be maintained with employers, and partner agencies in the community that result in collaborative, leveraged efforts that better prepare or transition staffing to the needed workforce occupational supply. Some of these partnerships comprise the broader youth workforce system serving the WSST workforce area which are coordinated to leverage collective funding for maximum benefit to the youth community.

The WSST Board requires all the workforce center locations to be equipped so the full range of services can be provided to all populations. To assist in reaching hard to serve populations, WSST coordinated and planned the opening of 12 Workforce Virtual Stations (WVS), funded by the Innovation Grant awarded by the Texas Workforce Commission. The job seekers will be connected via video with the staff at the Laredo center to receive the assistance they need in real time. Once fully functional, the WVS will allow WSST to transition to an enhanced delivery of workforce center services that better connects rural county job seekers with employers while maintaining an environment that has high protocols in safety for all involved.

WSST negotiates performance expectations with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) annually, to include Performance Accountability measures for core programs described in WIOA §116(b)(2)(A). Relevant performance expectations are included in contracts of service providers responsible for the delivery of WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs in the WSST workforce service area. Performance measures contracted to service providers may be higher than negotiated TWC measures to ensure expectations are exceeded and/or are incentivized to promote workforce system excellence.

The Board established the following Goals, Objectives and Strategies for preparing the workforce area job seekers with the necessary education and skills that employers require to obtain employment. In addition, for planning purposes, the WSST Board's Key Strategic objectives are aligned with the Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan FY 2021–FY 2024, as follows:

Focus on Employers

WSST Goal: Develop a dynamic and integrated workforce development system that meets the needs of job seekers and employers.

- Expand and improve business-driven workforce development system where employers and job seekers have access to a network of information and services.
- Strengthen and improve service delivery system throughout the workforce development area.
- Facilitate marketing strategies for employer input and develop new and innovative systems for educating South Texans.
- Ensure that local labor market information resources are available electronically.

Engage in Partnerships

WSST Goal: Develop initiatives to address workforce skills development that would enable clients to attain marketable skills in demand occupations, which will promote earnings gain and self-sufficiency.

- Push the Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship Training and seek employer involvement, encourage women to enter non-traditional professions.
- Work on the establishment of early high school “work study programs” to learn how to work while attending school.
- Work on establishing mandatory school to work adjustment training so expectation of workplace behavior can be aligned with curriculum.
- Establish more work experience opportunities for job seekers
- Establish more job shadowing opportunities for job seekers
- Continue to build on community partnerships to maximize and leverage local resources.
- Dropout prevention is a priority.
- Create partnerships with independent school districts and post-secondary institutions to develop programs for youth by providing post-secondary career path opportunities and training.

Align System Elements

WSST Goal: Ensure access to literacy, education, and workplace skills training.

- Set clear career pathways that show where targeted and in-demand occupations entry level career path may lead.
- Develop strong partnerships with literacy and education agencies through Memoranda of Understanding.
- Set priorities of service for specific targeted populations, including job seekers with basic skill

deficiencies and employment barriers.

- Provide training and technical assistance to education institutions on the changing needs of job seekers and employers.

B. Board Strategies

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

Provide a description of strategies to work with the entities carrying out the core programs and with the required partners to align resources available to the local workforce development area (workforce area) to achieve the vision and goals.

The WSST Board works collaboratively with their contracted service providers to establish clear policies and procedures that leverage service options available via all core programs. Coordinating program and service opportunities for which customers are eligible enables WSST to maximize the impact that the region's workforce resources have on individuals and communities.

The WSST Board has worked continuously to integrate core services and incorporate and align resources with required partners into a One-Stop Workforce Center system. Planning strategies included adding the required square footage and office requirements to the Workforce Center to better accommodate some of the required partners. WSST Goal and Strategies to work with core and required partners aligns with the TWIC Goal Improve and Integrate Programs:

WSST Goal: Increase the effectiveness of the One-Stop Service Delivery Network

- The One-Stop concept will be utilized to ensure that persons seeking services from the WSST Workforce Centers are readily available without duplication of effort.
- Continue improving the integration of workforce development core and required partner programs and leveraged services with local partners.
- Provide labor market information systems on the Internet through the Resource Rooms at the WSST Workforce Centers.

C. High-Performing Board

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

Describe the actions the Board will take toward becoming or remaining a high-performing Board, consistent with the factors developed by the Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC).

WSST has a history of working in collaboration with area community partners to maximize resources and opportunities. WSST will work to find any opportunity to align and integrate local programs and initiatives. WSST has a strategic vision and has worked for a number of years to build relationships and partnerships in the three WSST workforce county areas that include Jim Hogg, Webb and Zapata counties. The WSST Board Goals and Strategies are implemented in alignment with the TWIC Goals - Focus on Employers, Engage in Partnerships, Align System Elements, and Improve and Integrate Programs.

Part 2. Economic and Workforce Analysis

A. Regional Economic and Employment Needs Analysis (WIOA §108(b)(1)(A); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(1)) Boards must include a regional analysis of the following:

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- **The economic conditions, including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors, career pathways, and targeted occupations**
- **The employment needs of employers in existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors, career pathways, and targeted occupations**

TWC industry growth projections for the ten-year period 2020-2030 were utilized to ascertain which industries were projected to have the largest number in job growth and largest number of employees. TWC job growth projections found in Table 1 indicate the WSST workforce area in 2020 had 110,532 persons employed and looking forward to 2030 the workforce is projected to grow by 17,515 (13.67%) to 128,047 jobs by 2030.

The Health Care and Social Assistance Industry (NAICS 62) is projected to grow by 3,130 jobs, 18.98% of the overall WSST projected job growth. The industry by 2030 is projected to employ 19,619 persons to remain one of the largest industry employers in the WSST workforce area.

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and the Texas Primary Care Office (TPCO) determined that Zapata, Jim Hogg, and Webb County qualified for designation as a High Needs Geographic Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA). The TPCO designation identifies geographic areas with a need to increase the supply, and capacity of primary care, mental health, and dental health care occupations.¹

The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents approved \$71.2 million request to fund the construction of the Health Sciences Education and Research Center and an expansion of the Western Hemispheric Trade Center for the Texas A&M International site in Laredo. Texas A&M International University is aiming to help address Laredo's shortage of medical personnel among other benefits with the construction of the Health Sciences Education and Research Center. Approximately two-thirds of the money is for the construction of the new building. The project is part of \$328 million in construction projects across the state approved by the Board of Regents.

Transportation and Warehousing (NAICS 48-49) will continue to be a major industry employer in the workforce area, the industry is projected to increase by 17.52% or 2,759 jobs to 18,508 overall jobs by 2030, making the industry the 2nd largest industry sector in the workforce area. According to WorldCity analysis of the latest U.S. Census Bureau data, for the full year in 2020, Port Laredo ranked No. 4 for total trade among the nation's roughly 450 airports, seaports and border crossings. During the full year in 2019, Port Laredo ranked No. 2 for total trade among nations.²

The City of Laredo, in 2022 (through November) issued \$152,832,253 in Warehouse/Industrial construction permits which according to the Laredo Economic Development Corporation is a 60% increase when compared to 2021 when \$95,265,229 year total was spent on Warehousing expansions or new construction. The Laredo area has approximately 41+ million sq. ft. of logistical and distribution space, in 2021, according to the U.S. Census Bureau data analyzed by World City in Laredo:

- Approximately 5,070,357 trucks crossed the border in 2021 north and southbound
- Laredo is home to 251* freight forwarders, 656 trucking/transportation companies, and 120* U.S. Customs Brokers
- 1 Rail Bridge and 4 vehicle bridges: 2 for commercial, 3 for private vehicles
- Goods shipped through Laredo travel to more than 60 countries

According to the ustradenumbers.com analysis of the most recent data, trade at Port Laredo for the month of November 2022 increased 13.74 percent from the same month one year ago. Exports increased 14.77 percent in 2022 compared to the same month in the previous year while imports increased 13.08 percent in 2022 compared to the same month in the previous year.

By value, Port Laredo was responsible for 5.62 percent of U.S. trade through November 2022, ranking No. 3 among all ports and No. 1. among all border crossings. Last year Port Laredo posted total trade with the world of \$284.5 billion. The Port's deficit was \$50.26 billion. Exports totaled \$99.12 billion and imports came to \$149.38 billion.

Rail service should increase with the Kansas City Southern (KSA) investment in 2022 of \$100 million to build a second span of the International Railway Bridge across the Rio Grande. The 1,150-foot structure will be built 35 feet from the current bridge, KCS is providing the funding for the \$100 million project, with the construction projected for completion in 2024. ³

The Educational Service Industry (NAICS 61), the 3rd largest projected industry in the WSST workforce area is projected to grow 11.39% or 1,635 more jobs by 2030.

United Independent and Laredo Independent School Districts through bond projects approved by the voters have completed or in the process of completing additional school campuses and renovations to existing buildings to assist in their expansion. ⁴

The Government Industry sector (NAICS 999000) in the WSST area is projected to employ 11,091 workers by 2030, the industry is the 6th largest employer in the 3-county area.

Projection data provided by TWC, indicates all but one industry sector has some positive percentage of growth projected between the years 2020 – 2030. Finance and Insurance (NAICS 52) is projected to decrease 22.38% or 573 persons by 2030.

Table 1 - WSST Total Employment – All Industries (2-Digit NAICS)

Industry Code	Industry Title	Annual Average Employment 2020	Annual Average Employment 2030	Number Change 2020-2030	Percent Growth 2020-2030
62	Health care and social assistance	16,489	19,619	3,130	18.98
48-49	Transportation and warehousing	15,749	18,508	2,759	17.52
61	Educational services	14,356	15,991	1,635	11.39
44-45	Retail trade	11,794	12,515	721	6.11
72	Accommodation and food services	9,513	12,743	3,230	33.95
999000	Gov't, ex. PO, state/local ed/hosp	10,225	11,091	866	8.47
56	Administrative and support and waste management	6,442	8,235	1,793	27.83
000670	Self employed workers, all jobs	6,465	6,474	9	0.14
21	Mining	3,233	4,464	1,231	27.57
81	Other services (except public administration)	2,928	3,551	623	21.28
54	Professional, scientific, and technical services	2,479	2,971	492	19.85
42	Wholesale trade	2,899	3,368	469	16.18
52	Finance and insurance	2,560	1,987	-573	-22.38
23	Construction	1,994	2,253	259	12.99
53	Real estate and rental and leasing	1,129	1,321	192	17.01
71	Arts, entertainment, and recreation	676	1,074	398	58.88
51	Information	543	680	137	25.23
31-33	Manufacturing	837	946	109	13.02
22	Utilities	221	256	35	15.84
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, & Hunting	Not Available			
		110,532	128,047	17,515	13.67

Source: TWC Staffing Patterns

Per data from TWC's 2nd Quarter QCEW Report, in 2020, there were 5,906 establishments employing an average of 97,030 persons in the WSST 3-county area, the area increased to 6,066 establishments in 2021 employing 102,935 persons.

Total Wages shown in Table 2 shows an increase of total wages in the 2nd Quarter of 2022 to \$1,132,130,154; moreover, the 2nd Quarter in 2022 indicates an increase of the average weekly wage to \$813 when compared to \$763 in the 2nd quarter of 2020.

Table 2 WSST 3- County Number of Establishments and Total Wages

Year	Quarter of Year	Establishments	Average Employment	Average Weekly Wage	Total Wages
2020	01	5,913	109,355	732	1,040,973,971
2020	02	5,906	97,030	763	962,152,293
2021	01	5,997	100,463	744	971,986,882
2021	02	6,066	102,935	778	1,040,558,164
2022	01	6,168	106,171	799	1,102,569,404
2022	02	6,192	107,055	813	1,132,130,154

Source: TWC QCEW Report 2020, 2021, 2022 Quarter 1 and 2

Below, Table 3, shows the respective year 2nd Quarter number of establishments, average employment, total wages and average weekly wages broken down by county.

Jim Hogg County in 2020 had an estimated 131 establishments with a decrease of one to 130 establishments when compared to 2022. Although the number of establishments had a slight decrease, the total wages paid in 2022 at \$18,905,736 and average wage of \$905 have shown an increase when compared to 2020.

Webb County shows a steady increase in the number of establishments in the 2nd Quarter of 2020 at 5,597 when compared to 5,886 establishments in 2022. Average employment also had a steady increase from 92,698 in 2020 when compared to 102,737 employed in 2022. Total wages for Webb County in the 2nd quarter of 2020 was \$910,520,652 and increased to \$1,083,956,758 for the 2nd Quarter in 2022. The average weekly wage in the 2nd Quarter shows an increase in 2020 from \$756 when compared to \$812 in 2022.

Zapata County data indicates a slight decrease in the number of establishments from 178 in 2020 to 176 when compared to 2022. The average number of employment also decreased to 2,710 in 2022 when compared to 2,732 in the 2nd Quarter of 2020. The total wages also shows a decrease to \$29,267,660 in 2022 when compared to \$33,855,479 in 2020. Average Weekly Wages also decreased in 2022 to \$831 when compared to \$953 in 2020.

Table 3 Establishments and Wages by County

Year	Period	Area	Establishments	Average Employment	Average Weekly Wage	Total Wages
2020	02	Jim Hogg	131	1,601	854	17,776,162
2021	02	Jim Hogg	128	1,594	846	17,525,889
2022	02	Jim Hogg	130	1,607	905	18,905,736
2020	02	Webb	5,597	92,698	756	910,520,652
2021	02	Webb	5,761	98,726	771	989,407,173
2022	02	Webb	5,886	102,737	812	1,083,956,758
2020	02	Zapata	178	2,732	953	33,855,479
2021	02	Zapata	177	2,615	989	33,625,102
2022	02	Zapata	176	2,710	831	29,267,660

Source: TWC QCEW Report 2020, 2021, 2022 Quarter 2

Per TWC Labor Market projection data shown in Table 4, the WSST workforce area's 2020-2030 projected workforce growth occupational category of employees shows the Office & Administrative Support Occupations (43-0000) are WSST 2023 Board Plan Update

projected to employ the largest number of employees in 2030 at 19,801 an increase of jobs of 1,093 employees. The Office and Administrative Support Occupations have an average annual exit of 892 workers, the annual transfers are estimated at 1,196 with 2,197 annual openings.

Transportation and Material Moving Occupations are projecting 23.71% increase in employment or 3,093 more jobs by 2030 to 16,140 employees.

The Legal Occupations (47-0000) are projected to have a slight decrease of 88 employees by 2030 to an estimated total of 460 jobs. The Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations held 844 jobs in 2020 and are also projected to decrease to 837 jobs in 2030.

Table 4 WSST Occupational Categories with Job Growth Projections

SOC Code	Occupation Title	Estimated Employment (2020)	Projected Employment (2030)	Change In Employment	Percentage Change	Annualized Percent Growth	Annual Exits	Annual Transfers	Annual Openings
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	18,708	19,801	1,093	5.84	0.57	892	1,196	2,197
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	13,047	16,140	3,093	23.71	2.15	635	1,111	2,055
41-0000	Sales and Related Occupations	11,109	11,907	798	7.18	0.7	676	952	1,708
31-0000	Healthcare Support Occupations	10,311	12,280	1,969	19.1	1.76	695	664	1,556
25-0000	Education, Training, and Library Occupations	8,996	10,182	1,186	13.18	1.25	360	424	903
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	8,830	11,613	2,783	31.52	2.78	815	1,045	2,138
11-0000	Management Occupations	6,142	6,971	829	13.5	1.27	202	340	625
33-0000	Protective Service Occupations	4,889	5,499	610	12.48	1.18	204	295	560
13-0000	Business and Financial Operations Occupations	4,573	5,181	608	13.3	1.26	125	273	459
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	3,975	4,752	777	19.55	1.8	111	136	325
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	3,629	4,302	673	18.55	1.72	121	257	445
37-0000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	2,746	3,175	429	15.62	1.46	173	212	428
47-0000	Construction and Extraction Occupations	2,681	3,220	539	20.1	1.85	82	227	363
51-0000	Production Occupations	1,997	2,402	405	20.28	1.86	84	161	285
39-0000	Personal Care and Service Occupations	1,981	2,600	619	31.25	2.76	155	186	403
21-0000	Community and Social Service Occupations	1,807	2,192	385	21.31	1.95	70	132	240
27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	903	1,034	131	14.51	1.36	37	62	112
45-0000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	844	837	-7	-0.83	-0.08	36	96	131
15-0000	Computer and Mathematical Occupations	719	807	88	12.24	1.16	15	38	62
23-0000	Legal Occupations	548	460	-88	-16.06	-1.74	14	19	24
19-0000	Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	458	527	69	15.07	1.41	11	30	48
17-0000	Architecture and Engineering Occupations	449	500	51	11.36	1.08	12	26	43
00-0000	Total, All Occupations	109,342	126,382	17,040	15.58	1.46	5,525	7,884	15,113

Source: TWC LMI Projections

Shown in Table 5, the Workforce Solutions for South Texas area in 2022, was estimated to have 300,555 persons living in the 3-county workforce area. The WSST 3-county area is projected to grow to 317,390 persons in 2030, a 5.30% increase or 16,835 additional persons. Zapata and Jim Hogg counties area projected to slightly decrease in population by the year 2030. Webb County is projected to show an increase of 17,274 additional persons for a total of 298,273 in the 3-county population by 2030.

Table 5 - WSST 3-County 2022 – 2030 Population Estimations

Year	Jim Hogg	Webb	Zapata	Total 3-County
2022	5,026	281,099	14,430	300,555
2030	4,760	298,373	14,257	317,390

Source: Texas Demographic Center Population Projections txsdc.utsa.edu

WSST determined a need for further analysis of the population data by age to give more insight into the available potential workforce pool residing in the 3-county area.

Looking at the Texas Demographic Center (TDC) data projections found in Table 6, the WSST 3-county combined 18–64 years of age population considered the primary workforce labor age is projected to increase from 180,354 estimated in 2022 to 187,848 in 2030 an increase of 7,494 population.

Drilling down and looking at the range of the data population found in Table 6 - (18-64 years of age) for each of the 3 counties indicates Jim Hogg County is projected to slightly decrease in this age population from 2,678 in 2022 to 2,541 in 2030.

Zapata County is projected to show a decrease in the overall 18-64 years range of age population to 7,776 in 2030 from 7,842 in 2022. However, TDC data is indicating that the 18-24 years of age population is estimated to slightly increase from 1,365 in 2022 to 1,408 in 2030.

Webb County is projected to show an overall increase of 7,697 in the 18-64 years of age population from 2022 (169,834) – 2030 (177,531). Although collectively Webb County is projected to increase in population in the 18-64 age group, the 18-24 years of age population is projected to decrease from 33,608 in 2022 to 31,560 in 2030.

Table 6 - Population by County by Age 18-24, 25-44, 45-64 Years and Growth Projection 2022-2030

Year	County	Total 2022 Age 18-24	Year	County	Total 2030 Age 18-24
2022	Jim Hogg	435	2030	Jim Hogg	449
2022	Webb	33,608	2030	Webb	31,560
2022	Zapata	1,365	2030	Zapata	1,408
2022	Total 3- County	35,408	2030	Total 3- County	33,417
Year	County	Total 2020 Age 25-44	Year	County	Total 2030 Age 25-44
2022	Jim Hogg	1,236	2030	Jim Hogg	1,136
2022	Webb	76,199	2030	Webb	82,560
2022	Zapata	3,596	2030	Zapata	3,448
2022	Total 3- County	81,031	2030	Total 3- County	87,144
Year	County	Total 2020 Age 45-64	Year	County	Total 2030 Age 45-64
2022	Jim Hogg	1,007	2030	Jim Hogg	956
2022	Webb	60,027	2030	Webb	63,411
2022	Zapata	2,881	2030	Zapata	2,920
		63,915			67,287

Source: Texas Demographic Center Population Projections txsdc.utsa.edu

WSST In-Demand Occupations

WSST selected 6 in-demand occupations based on TWC 2020-2030 projection of employment growth. The six occupations are estimated to have 16,218 jobs in 2020 and are projected to grow by 2,780 jobs to 18,998 jobs by 2030.

Four of the in-demand occupations require the job seeker to hold at a minimum a high school diploma. Two of the in-demand occupations do not require any formal education or credential.

Table 7 WSST Six In-Demand Occupations

SOC Code	Occupation Title	Estimated Employment (2020)	Projected Employment (2030)	Change In Employment	Percentage Change	Annualized Percent Growth	Annual Exits	Annual Transfers	Annual Openings	Education	Experience	Training
41-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	1,353	1,389	36	2.66	0.26	48	95	147	High school diploma or equivalent	Less than 5 years	None
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	8,435	9,991	1,556	18.45	1.71	590	522	1,268	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Short-term on-the-job training
53-7051	Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	1,177	1,508	331	28.12	2.51	40	103	176	No formal educational credential	None	Short-term on-the-job training
53-3033	Light Truck Drivers	1,126	1,413	287	25.49	2.3	52	86	167	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Short-term on-the-job training
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	2,676	2,957	281	10.5	1	158	233	419	No formal educational credential	None	Short-term on-the-job training
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	1,451	1,740	289	19.92	1.83	91	156	276	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Short-term on-the-job training
		16,218	18,998	2,780			979	1,195	2,453			

Source: TWC LMI

Table 8 shows the in-demand occupations aligned with the industries that hire the occupation. The industries include: Transportation, Trade and Utilities employing five of the in-demand occupations, Education and Health Services employs three of the occupations while Professional and Business Services employs two of the in-demand occupations. The in-demand occupations represent 15,270 estimated employment in 2020. Annual experienced salaries for the six in-demand occupations range from \$22,787 – \$48,850.

Table 8 WSST In-Demand Occupations aligned with WSST Targeted Industries Sectors

SOC Code	Occupation Title	NAICS Code	Industry Title	No. Of Employed	Entry Wage	Mean Wage	Experienced Wage
41-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	1021	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	1,190	\$ 25,328.00	\$ 41,010.00	\$ 48,850.00
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	1025	Education and Health Services	7,700	\$ 17,456.00	\$ 21,010.00	\$ 22,787.00
53-7051	Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	1021	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	870	\$ 22,364.00	\$ 28,565.00	\$ 31,665.00
53-7051	Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	1024	Professional and Business Services	320	\$ 19,848.00	\$ 25,362.00	\$ 28,119.00
53-3033	Light Truck Drivers	1021	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	720	\$ 23,713.00	\$ 37,089.00	\$ 43,777.00
53-3033	Light Truck Drivers	1025	Education and Health Services	30	\$ 21,101.00	\$ 27,712.00	\$ 31,018.00
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	1021	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	2,850	\$ 17,992.00	\$ 25,305.00	\$ 28,961.00
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	1021	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	1,490	\$ 21,296.00	\$ 28,008.00	\$ 31,365.00
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	1024	Professional and Business Services	90	\$ 23,642.00	\$ 27,700.00	\$ 29,729.00
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	1025	Education and Health Services	10	\$ 22,470.00	\$ 29,249.00	\$ 32,638.00
				15,270			

Source: TWC OEWS 2021

WSST Target Occupations

The WSST 20 targeted occupations found in Table 9 are categorized in the following Occupational Titles, noted with the associated title are the number of targeted occupations:

Management Occupations, Business and Financial Operations Occupations, Computer and Mathematical Occupations, Office and Administrative Support Occupations, Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations, Education and Training Occupations, Construction, Wholesale Trade, Maintenance and Repair Occupations.

Table 9 below, shows WSST’s 20 Targeted Occupations, which in 2020 was estimated at 19,510 positions or 17.84% of the total 109,342 estimated occupational positions in the WSST workforce area (see Table 5 above).

The WSST’s 20 targeted occupations listed in Table 9 are projected to grow by 4,745 new positions by 2030, which represents 27.84% of the total 17,040 projected growth by 2030 for employment in the WSST workforce area.

Table 9 WSST Target Occupations

SOC Code	Occupation Title	Employment 2020	Projected Employment 2030	Projected Annual Openings 2030	Annual Growth Rate
Management Occupations					
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	1,881	2,289	212	1.98%
Business & Financial Operations Occupations					
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	737	878	84	1.77%
Computer and Mathematical Occupations					
15-1151	Computer User Support Specialists	227	250	19	0.97%
Office & Administrative Support Occupations					
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	1,301	1,398	158	0.72%
43-5011	Cargo and Freight Agents	1,195	1,435	152	1.85%
43-5071	Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks	1,231	1316	129	0.67%
43-6013	Medical Secretaries	552	687	81	2.21%
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Occupations					
29-2042	Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics	209	314	27	4.15%
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	431	455	35	0.54%
29-1141	Registered Nurses	1,247	1,436	89	1.42%
31-9091	Dental Assistants	168	241	30	3.67%
31-9092	Medical Assistants	540	725	91	2.99%
Education, Training, & Library Occupations					
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Ed.	1,851	2,089	Not Available	
25-2022	Career/Technical Education	1,167	1,319		
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	1,359	1,536		
Construction/Wholesale Trade/Maintenance, and Repair Occupations					
47-2111	Electricians	241	286	31	1.73%
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	488	540	55	1.02%
49-3031	Bus & Truck Mechanics & Diesel Engine Specialists	670	817	82	2.00%
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics	160	184	18	1.41%
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	3,855	4,745	557	2.10%
		19,510	22,940	1,850	
Source: TWC LMI Projections					

As shown in Table 10, all twenty targeted occupations require, at minimum a high school diploma or equivalent. The most common level of educational attainment required for employment for eight of the targeted occupations require a post-secondary non-degree award or some college, no degree and one to five years of experience. The Industries that employ the targeted occupations show different mean, entry and experienced wages. All twenty of the targeted occupations have training identified on the Eligible Training Providers list, provided by Laredo College or Texas A&M International University.

Six of the targeted occupations require a bachelor's degree resulting in employment that pays an estimated Mean Wage range between \$57,050- \$75,553.00. Five of the targeted occupations require High School Diplomas or equivalent, the occupations pay the Medium Wage range of \$27,324-\$46,992.

Table 10 – Targeted Occupations Education and Wages

SOC Code	Occupation Title	Industry Title	Mean Wage	Entry Wage	Experienced Wage	Education	Training
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	\$ 43.01	\$ 18.78	\$ 55.12	Bachelor's degree	None
		Professional and Business Services	\$ 42.02	\$ 18.37	\$ 53.84		
		Financial Activities	\$ 36.00	\$ 14.85	\$ 46.58		
		Leisure and Hospitality	\$ 23.08	\$ 14.33	\$ 27.45		
		Construction	\$ 39.52	\$ 19.91	\$ 49.33		
		Education and Health Services	\$ 38.65	\$ 18.34	\$ 48.81		
		Other Services	\$ 32.18	\$ 14.52	\$ 41.01		
		Public Administration	\$ 55.04	\$ 33.72	\$ 65.70		
		Manufacturing	\$ 37.18	\$ 16.11	\$ 47.71		
		Information	\$ 34.14	\$ 15.29	\$ 43.56		
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	Professional and Business Services	\$ 29.77	\$ 16.66	\$ 36.33	Bachelor's degree	None
		Trade, Transportation and Utilities	\$ 30.24	\$ 18.42	\$ 36.16		
		Education and Health Services	\$ 28.89	\$ 21.27	\$ 32.70		
		Financial Activities	\$ 29.52	\$ 17.40	\$ 35.58		
		Public Administration	\$ 29.79	\$ 19.21	\$ 35.08		
		Construction	\$ 35.16	\$ 19.69	\$ 42.90		
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	Professional and Business Services	\$ 19.32	\$ 12.58	\$ 22.69	Some college, no degree	None
		Education and Health Services	\$ 21.06	\$ 16.04	\$ 23.57		
		Trade, Transportation and Utilities	\$ 19.59	\$ 12.91	\$ 22.93		
		Financial Activities	\$ 21.50	\$ 14.23	\$ 25.13		
		Public Administration	\$ 19.34	\$ 17.24	\$ 20.39		
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	Education and Health Services	N/A	N/A	N/A	Bachelor's degree	None
25-2022	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	Education and Health Services	N/A	N/A	N/A	Bachelor's degree	None
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	Education and Health Services	N/A	N/A	N/A	Bachelor's degree	None
29-1141	Registered Nurses	Education and Health Services	\$ 33.43	\$ 25.85	\$ 37.21	Bachelor's degree	None
		Professional and Business Services	\$ 34.17	\$ 30.83	\$ 35.85		
		Public Administration	\$ 38.64	\$ 27.07	\$ 44.43		
29-2042	Emergency Medical Technicians	Education and Health Services	\$ 13.76	\$ 10.42	\$ 15.42	Postsecondary nondegree	None
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	Education and Health Services	\$ 21.37	\$ 17.17	\$ 23.46	Postsecondary nondegree award	None
		Professional and Business Services	\$ 27.93	\$ 25.83	\$ 28.98		
		Public Administration	\$ 25.65	\$ 20.65	\$ 28.15		
31-1131	Nursing Assistants	Education and Health Services	\$ 12.57	\$ 10.35	\$ 13.68	Postsecondary nondegree award	None
31-9091	Dental Assistants	Education and Health Services	\$ 15.53	\$ 11.38	\$ 17.60	Postsecondary nondegree award	None
31-9092	Medical Assistants	Education and Health Services	\$ 13.04	\$ 9.96	\$ 14.57	Postsecondary nondegree award	None
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	\$ 16.41	\$ 11.27	\$ 18.98	Some college, no degree	Moderate-term on-the-job training
		Professional and Business Services	\$ 17.38	\$ 12.29	\$ 19.93		
		Education and Health Services	\$ 17.44	\$ 11.81	\$ 20.26		
		Financial Activities	\$ 15.56	\$ 9.06	\$ 18.81		
		Construction	\$ 18.29	\$ 12.62	\$ 21.13		
		Leisure and Hospitality	\$ 15.65	\$ 9.97	\$ 18.49		
		Other Services	\$ 17.19	\$ 9.98	\$ 20.79		
		Information	\$ 14.57	\$ 9.94	\$ 16.89		
		Public Administration	\$ 17.54	\$ 13.67	\$ 19.48		
		Manufacturing	\$ 17.64	\$ 12.56	\$ 20.18		
43-5011	Cargo and Freight Agents	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	\$ 15.84	\$ 10.51	\$ 18.51	High school diploma or equivalent	Short-term on-the-job training
		Professional and Business Services	\$ 16.48	\$ 13.13	\$ 18.15		
43-5071	Shipping, Receiving, and Inventory Clerks	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	\$ 13.39	\$ 10.22	\$ 14.97	High school diploma or equivalent	Short-term on-the-job training
		Professional and Business Services	\$ 13.18	\$ 9.99	\$ 14.77		
43-6013	Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	Education and Health Services	\$ 15.93	\$ 12.26	\$ 17.77	High school diploma or equivalent	Moderate-term on-the-job training
		Education and Health Services	\$ 13.91	\$ 10.08	\$ 15.82		
47-2111	Electricians	Construction	\$ 20.09	\$ 14.36	\$ 22.96	High school diploma or equivalent	Apprenticeship
		Professional and Business Services	\$ 19.19	\$ 14.69	\$ 21.44		
		Education and Health Services	\$ 22.62	\$ 17.77	\$ 25.04		
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	\$ 21.11	\$ 10.81	\$ 26.26	Postsecondary nondegree award	Short-term on-the-job training
		Other Services	\$ 16.74	\$ 9.40	\$ 20.41		
		Public Administration	\$ 22.73	\$ 16.19	\$ 26.00		
49-3031	Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	\$ 19.92	\$ 13.53	\$ 23.12	High school diploma or equivalent	Long-term on-the-job training
		Professional and Business Services	\$ 14.64	\$ 9.62	\$ 17.14		
		Manufacturing	\$ 19.87	\$ 16.32	\$ 21.65		
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics	Education and Health Services	\$ 18.10	\$ 14.34	\$ 19.98	Postsecondary nondegree award	Long-term on-the-job training
		Construction	\$ 20.14	\$ 13.80	\$ 23.32		
		Education and Health Services	\$ 21.36	\$ 16.99	\$ 23.54		
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	\$ 21.21	\$ 13.67	\$ 24.98	Postsecondary nondegree award	Short-term on-the-job training
		Professional and Business Services	\$ 17.50	\$ 13.42	\$ 19.54		
		Manufacturing	\$ 18.65	\$ 14.66	\$ 20.65		
		Construction	\$ 17.81	\$ 12.32	\$ 20.56		
		Public Administration	\$ 14.18	\$ 13.86	\$ 14.34		

Source: TWC LMI

Table 11(A) below, represents the 4-digit NAICS that are targeted by WSST, they include:

Trade, Transportation and Utilities

4885 Freight Transportation, 4931 Warehousing and Storage

Health Services

6211 Offices of Physicians

Elementary Schools

6111 Elementary and Secondary Schools

Construction

2382 Building Equipment Contractors

Table 11 A – Targeted Industries

NAICS Code (4-digit)	NAICS Industry Title (Name)	Annual Average Employment 2020	Annual Average Employment 2030	Number Change 2020 - 2030	Percent Growth 2020-2030	Additional Rationale, Local Wisdom, Comments
2382	Building Equipment Contractors	754	874	120	15.9%	Transportation Industry will be needing HVAC and Electricians for expansions
4885	Freight Transportation Arrangement	6,369	7,059	690	10.8%	Transportation will continue to be one of the largest industries in South Texas
4931	Warehousing and Storage	1,371	1,607	236	17.2%	Transportation will continue to be one of the largest industries in South Texas
6111	Elementary and Secondary Schools	11,995	13,371	1376	11.5%	Education will continue to be one of the largest employers in South Texas
6211	Offices of Physicians	1,492	1,994	502	33.6%	Healthcare will continue to be one of the largest industries in South Texas
		21981	24905	2924		

Source: TWC LMI

Table 11(B) below, the WSST targeted occupations aligned with the industries that employ the occupations. The Table shows each occupation with the number estimated to be employed by each respective industry.

Trade, Transportation and Utilities employ nine (9) of the targeted occupations

Education and Health Services employ eighteen (18) of the targeted occupations

Public Administration employs eight (8) of the targeted occupations

Professional and Business Services employ eleven (11) of the targeted occupations

Table 11 (B) WSST 20 Targeted Occupations with Associated NAICS

SOC Code	Occupation Title	NAICS Code	Industry Title	No. Of Employed
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	1021	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	1,020
		1024	Professional and Business Services	300
		1023	Financial Activities	210
		1026	Leisure and Hospitality	200
		1012	Construction	130
		1025	Education and Health Services	120
		1027	Other Services	120
		1028	Public Administration	90
		1013	Manufacturing	40
		1022	Information	30
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	1024	Professional and Business Services	290
		1021	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	140
		1025	Education and Health Services	50
		1023	Financial Activities	40
		1028	Public Administration	40
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	1012	Construction	20
		1024	Professional and Business Services	140
		1025	Education and Health Services	90
		1021	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	70
		1023	Financial Activities	20
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	1028	Public Administration	10
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	1025	Education and Health Services	1,670
25-2022	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	1025	Education and Health Services	830
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	1025	Education and Health Services	1,170
29-1141	Registered Nurses	1025	Education and Health Services	1,470
		1024	Professional and Business Services	130
		1028	Public Administration	30
29-2042	Emergency Medical Technicians	1025	Education and Health Services	110
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	1025	Education and Health Services	560
		1024	Professional and Business Services	20
		1028	Public Administration	20
31-1131	Nursing Assistants	1025	Education and Health Services	520
31-9091	Dental Assistants	1025	Education and Health Services	180
31-9092	Medical Assistants	1025	Education and Health Services	520
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	1021	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	570
		1024	Professional and Business Services	250
		1025	Education and Health Services	150
		1023	Financial Activities	100
		1012	Construction	40
		1026	Leisure and Hospitality	30
		1027	Other Services	30
		1022	Information	20
		1028	Public Administration	20
		1013	Manufacturing	10
43-5011	Cargo and Freight Agents	1021	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	960
		1024	Professional and Business Services	100
43-5071	Shipping, Receiving, and Inventory Clerks	1021	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	1,150
		1024	Professional and Business Services	140
		1025	Education and Health Services	20
43-6013	Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	1025	Education and Health Services	480
47-2111	Electricians	1012	Construction	160
		1024	Professional and Business Services	40
		1025	Education and Health Services	20
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	1021	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	210
		1027	Other Services	190
		1028	Public Administration	40
49-3031	Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists	1021	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	390
		1024	Professional and Business Services	20
		1013	Manufacturing	10
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and	1025	Education and Health Services	10
		1012	Construction	90
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1025	Education and Health Services	30
		1021	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	4,610
		1024	Professional and Business Services	200
		1013	Manufacturing	90
		1012	Construction	40
1028	Public Administration	20		

Source: TWC LMI

TWC projection data for self-employed workers shown in Table 12 indicates the area is estimated to increase in the number of self-employed workers by 227 new self-employed workers to 2,456 by 2030. Employers surveyed indicated they sub-contract with several different occupations as a general approach when additional help is needed.

Table 12 WSST Self-Employed Workers

SOC Code	Occupation Title	Estimated Employment (2020)	Projected Employment (2030)	Change In Employment	Percentage Change	Annualized Percent Growth	Education	Experience	Training
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	72	70	-2	-2.78	-0.28	Some college, no degree	None	Moderate-term on-the-job training
39-9011	Childcare Workers	145	131	-14	-9.66	-1.01	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Short-term on-the-job training
47-2061	Construction Laborers	117	123	6	5.13	0.5	No formal educational credential	None	Short-term on-the-job training
39-9031	Exercise Trainers and Group Fitness Instructors	58	77	19	32.76	2.87	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Short-term on-the-job training
37-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Housekeeping and Janitorial Workers	53	53	0	0	0	High school diploma or equivalent	Less than 5	None
53-1047	First-Line Supervisors of Transportation and Material Moving Workers, Except Aircraft Cargo Handling Super	77	71	-6	-7.79	-0.81	High school diploma or equivalent	Less than 5 years	None
11-9051	Food Service Managers	74	76	2	2.7	0.27	High school diploma or equivalent	Less than 5 years	None
39-5012	Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists	91	103	12	13.19	1.25	Postsecondary nondegree award	None	None
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	289	292	3	1.04	0.1	Postsecondary nondegree award	None	Short-term on-the-job training
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	232	325	93	40.09	3.43	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Short-term on-the-job training
31-1100	Home Health and Personal Care Aides; and Nursing Assistants, Orderlies, and Psychiatric Aides	239	334	95	39.75	3.4	Information not available	Information not available	Information not available
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	88	87	-1	-1.14	-0.11	No formal educational credential	None	Short-term on-the-job training
37-3011	Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	77	77	0	0	0	No formal educational credential	None	Short-term on-the-job training
23-1011	Lawyers	59	60	1	1.69	0.17	Doctoral or professional degree	None	None
53-3033	Light Truck Drivers	82	83	1	1.22	0.12	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Short-term on-the-job training
53-3058	Passenger Vehicle Drivers, Except Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity	72	114	42	58.33	4.7	Information not available	None	Short-term on-the-job training
11-9198	Personal Service Managers, All Other; Entertainment and Recreation Managers, Except Gambling; and Man	93	97	4	4.3	0.42	Bachelor's degree	Less than 5	None
13-1198	Project Management Specialists and Business Operations Specialists, All Other	104	98	-6	-5.77	-0.59	Bachelor's degree	None	None
41-9022	Real Estate Sales Agents	113	111	-2	-1.77	-0.18	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Moderate-term on-the-job training
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	94	74	-20	-21.28	-2.36	No formal educational credential	None	Short-term on-the-job training
		2,229	2,456	227					

Source: TWC LMI Projections

B. Knowledge and Skills Analysis

(WIOA §108(b)(1)(B); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(2))

In order to determine employer occupational expectation, WSST held on-line survey interviews to solicit current employer perspective on occupational skill demand. The result of the survey was used by the WSST Board to gage the training skills that need to be targeted for job seekers and unemployed persons and is reflected in the Plan. Employers were asked to validate the labor market information projections for industry occupations within their business, identify occupations that are evolving or emerging and to identify any gaps in occupational skills needed.

Looking at the targeted occupations to analyze specific knowledge and skill requirements provides further insight into the demand the projected targeted occupational growth will place on the WSST labor market. Table 13 details the collective frequency of occurrence of the top five Knowledge and Skills for the twenty WSST Target Occupations (KSAs were not available for the EMT). WSST extrapolated from O-NET, the top five knowledge base and top five skill areas for each of the targeted occupations. Analysis of the top five primary knowledge areas that are in common for the targeted occupations reveals there are 19 of the occupations require Customer and Personal Service and a command of the English Language. Twelve of the target occupations require Knowledge of Mathematics.

The analysis in Table 13 also shows that Skill requirements for 19 of the WSST Target Occupations will require Critical Thinking Skills, while 17 require individuals to have Reading Comprehension skills. Seventeen of the target occupations require Speaking Skills while 16 require individuals to have Active Listening skills.

The entry mean and experienced wage data for the targeted occupations found in Tables 14 – 18 indicates the entry and internal staffing progressions based on years of experience coupled with the knowledge and skills gained does provide an opportunity for career advancement to a higher wage.

Table 13 WSST Target Occupations Top Five KS Frequency of Occurrence

Knowledge	Frequency of Occurrence	Skills	Frequency of Occurrence
Customer and Personal Service	19	Critical Thinking	19
English Language	19	Reading Comprehension	17
Mathematics	12	Speaking	17
Computers and Electronics	12	Active Listening	16
Clerical	10	Monitoring	15
Source: O-NET - My Next Move			

HealthCare Practitioners & Technical Occupations

Forty-four NAICS 62 Health Care and Social Services Employers participated in the survey interviews, the employers were identified by NAICS codes found in the TWC Employer database.

The Health Care and Social Assistance Industry employers validated the need for Registered Nurses, Licensed Vocational Nurses, Dental Assistance, Medical Assistants, and Home Health Care Providers, Caregivers, Nursing Assistants.

Health Care and Social Industry employers expressed the need for job seekers to have certifications, computer skills or upgraded technology skills with the industry going to electronic systems/paperless and virtual tele-health. The majority of participating home health care employers indicated a challenge to pay a competitive wage and keeping employees long-term primarily as home health care aids and nursing assistants.

The Laredo Health Department has been designated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as a Bio-Safety Laboratory Level III (BSL III) requiring risk-based enhancements. Laredo one of the largest inland ports and customs district in the U.S. is a prime target for threats of current, emerging and new infectious health diseases that will impact the demand for Health Care occupations.⁵

There are six target occupations that are identified as Health Care Practitioners & Technical Occupations, the Table 14 shows the top collective Knowledge and Skills for the occupations. The top knowledge area is the English Language and Customer and Personal Service skills for five of the target occupations. All the occupations will require the employee to have Active Listening skills and service orientation. The occupations entry, mean, and experienced wages and education level are listed for each of the six occupations, experienced employee salaries in these occupations range from \$31,059 to \$77,746 for experienced workers. The knowledge, skills and education shown in Table 14, indicate the gap in Knowledge and Skills each occupation would have to fill to transition to another target occupation; i.e. LVN to Registered Nurse.

Table 14 HealthCare Practitioners & Technical Occupations (6 of 20 Target Occupations)

TARGET OCCUPATIONS	Medical Assistants	Medical Secretaries	Emergency Medical Technicians	Dental Assistants	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	Registered Nurses	Frequency of Occurrence
TOP 5 KNOWLEDGE AREAS - HEALTHCARE PRACTITIONERS & TECHNICAL OCCUPATIONS WSST 6 OF 20 TARGET OCCUPATIONS							
English Language	1	1		1	1	1	5
Customer and Personal Service	1	1		1	1	1	5
Medicine and Dentistry Techniques to Diagnose and Treat	1			1	1	1	4
Psychology Human Behavior				1	1	1	3
Computers and Electronics	1	1					2
Administrative and Mgmt of Business		1					1
Clerical	1	1					2
Education and Training					1		1
Experienced Annual Wage 2021	\$31,059	\$33,024	\$32,405	\$36,530	\$49,760	\$77,746	
Mean Annual Salary 2021	\$27,686	\$29,065	\$28,850	\$32,259	\$45,217	\$69,846	
Entry Annual Salary 2021	\$20,939	\$21,148	\$21,740	\$23,716	\$36,130	\$54,046	
Education	Postsecondary non-degree award	High School Diploma or Equivalent	Postsecondary non-degree award	Postsecondary non-degree award	Postsecondary non-degree award	Bachelor's Degree	
TOP 5 SKILL AREAS - HEALTHCARE PRACTITIONERS & TECHNICAL OCCUPATIONS WSST 6 OF 20 TARGET OCCUPATIONS							
Active Listening	1	1		1	1	1	5
Service Orientation		1		1	1	1	4
Speaking	1	1		1		1	4
Reading Comprehension	1	1		1	1		4
Coordination adjusting actions		1			1	1	3

Source: O-NET TOP 5 Knowledge and Skills - Data not available for EMT - Wages from TWC QEWS 2021

Office/Mgmt/Business/Computer/Transportation Warehouse Occupations

Ninety-Four Office/Mgmt/Business/Computer/ Transportation and Warehousing Employers participated in the survey, the employers were identified by NAICS codes. The Transportation and Warehousing employers validated the need for Shipping and Traffic Clerks, Cargo and Freight Agents, Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Bookkeepers, Accountants and CDL Drivers.

Transportation and Warehousing Employers expressed the need for job seekers to have computer skills, forklift operation skills, and knowledge of importing and exporting logistics especially to Mexico. Several employers expressed the need for comprehension skills and personal interaction training, a majority of the employers expressed the challenge of employment longevity of workers not wanting to work. Employers also expressed the challenge for trained skilled employees may be compounded because the Transportation Warehouse Industry continues to expand and grow.

There are six target occupations that are identified as Office Management Occupations, the Table 15 below shows the top five common Knowledge and Skills for the occupations. The top knowledge area for the six occupations in the Office Mgmt. category is the English Language and Customer and Personal Service skills. All the occupations will require the employee to have Active Listening, Speaking and Critical Thinking skills. The occupations entry, mean, and experienced wages and education level are listed for each of the six occupations, which indicates that experience for each of the six occupations will provide an estimated wage ranging from \$31,403 - \$107,511. Table 15 also indicates there are several of the target occupations that have the overall top five knowledge and skills in common.

Table 15 Office/Mgmt/Business/Computer Occupations (6 of 20 Target Occupations)

TARGET OCCUPATIONS	Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	Cargo and Freight Agents	Computer User Support Specialists	Accountants and Auditors	General and Operations Managers	Frequency of Occurrence
TOP 5 KNOWLEDGE AREAS - OFFICE/MGMT/BUSINESS/COMPUTER - WSST 6 OF 20 TARGET OCCUPATIONS							
English Language	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Customer and Personal Service		1	1	1	1	1	5
Mathematics to solve problems	1	1			1	1	4
Administrative and Mgmt of Business and Principles					1	1	2
Clerical Administrative Procedures	1	1					2
Computer and Electronics	1			1			2
Economics and Accounting		1			1		2
Experienced Annual Salary 2021	\$31,403	\$40,632	\$38,423	\$48,088	\$76,279	\$107,511	
Mean Annual Salary 2021	\$27,997	\$34,968	\$33,074	\$41,187	\$63,269	\$83,759	
Entry Annual Salary 2021	\$21,183	\$23,641	\$22,378	\$27,384	\$37,250	\$36,254	
Education	High School Diploma or Equivalent	Some College No Degree	High School Diploma or Equivalent	Some College No Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	
TOP 5 SKILL AREAS - OFFICE/MGMT/BUSINESS/COMPUTER - WSST 6 OF 20 TARGET OCCUPATIONS							
Active Listening	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Speaking	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Critical Thinking	1	1	1	1	1	1	5
Reading Comprehension	1	1		1	1	1	4
Monitoring	1		1			1	3

Source: O-NET TOP 5 Knowledge and Skills - Wages from TWC QEWS 2021

Construction/Wholesale Trade/Maintenance, and Repair

Twenty-seven Construction, Transportation Warehousing/Wholesale Trade Employers participated in the survey, the employers were identified by NAICS Codes. The Construction Industry employers validated the need for HVAC, and Electricians; however, the majority will be sub-contracting for the occupation. All employers indicated they only hire experienced job seekers with license, or certifications. The Transportation Warehouse Industry expressed a large need for licensed CDL Drivers. There are five target occupations that are identified as Construction/Transportation Warehousing/Wholesale Trade/Maintenance, and Repair. Table 16 below shows the top five common Knowledge and Skills for the occupations for the five occupations which are customer and personal service, English language, and mechanical machines, tools, repair.

Trouble shooting, repairing machines or systems, operation monitoring and critical thinking skills are the top required areas. The occupations entry, mean, and experienced wages and education level are listed for each of the five occupations, which indicates that experience for each of the five occupations will provide an estimated wage ranging from \$46,609 - \$50,334.

Table 16 Construction/Wholesale Trade/Maintenance, and Repair (5 of 20 Target Occupations)

TARGET OCCUPATIONS	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	Bus & Truck Mechanics & Diesel Engine Specialists	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	Electrician	Frequency of Occurrence
TOP 5 KNOWLEDGE AREAS - CONSTRUCTION/WHOLESALE TRADE/MAINTENANCE, AND REPAIR - WSST 5 OF 20 TARGET OCCUPATIONS						
Customer and Personal Service	1	1	1	1		4
English Language	1		1	1	1	4
Mechanical Machines, Tools, Repair	1	1		1	1	4
Transportation Principles and Methods			1	1		2
Building and Construction Materials, Methods		1			1	2
Computers and Electronics	1	1				2
Public Safety and Security			1	1		2
Experienced Annual Salary 2021	\$49,609	\$48,398	\$46,912	\$51,210	\$50,334	
Mean Annual Salary 2021	\$40,182	\$42,474	\$40,690	\$43,559	\$43,840	
Entry Annual Salary 2021	\$21,328	\$30,628	\$28,247	\$28,247	\$30,853	
Education	Postsecondary non-degree award	Postsecondary non-degree award	High School Diploma or Equivalent	Postsecondary non-degree award	High School Diploma and License	
TOP 5 SKILL AREAS - CONSTRUCTION/WHOLESALE TRADE/MAINTENANCE, AND REPAIR - WSST 5 OF 20 TARGET OCCUPATIONS						
Troubleshooting	1	1	1		1	4
Repairing Machines or Systems	1	1	1		1	4
Operation Monitoring	1	1	1	1		4
Critical Thinking			1	1	1	3
Operation and Control	1		1	1		3

Source: O-NET TOP 5 Knowledge and Skills - Wages from TWC OEWS 2021

Education, Training & Library Occupations

The participating Education employers validated the need for teachers, some rural education employers felt some teachers were retiring or moving to another town. With the transition to on-line learning, the education employers expressed the need for teachers to have computer literacy skills, which was a challenge for a lot of the teachers. Safety and health precautions will continue to evolve as the schools add more measures in mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

There are three target occupations that are identified as Educational Services Occupations, the Table 17 below shows the top five common Knowledge and Skills for the occupations. All the occupations require the same KS with the exception of the Elementary School Teacher in one of the knowledge and skills categories.

The occupations entry, mean, and experienced wages and education level are listed for each of the six occupations, which indicates the occupations do not range too far apart in salaries.

Table 17 Education, Training & Library Occupations (3 of 20 Target Occupations)

TARGET OCCUPATIONS	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Ed.	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	Frequency of Occurrence
TOP 5 KNOWLEDGE AREAS - EDUCATION, TRAINING & LIBRARY OCCUPATIONS - WSST 3 OF 20 TARGET OCCUPATIONS				
English Language	1	1	1	3
Computers and Electronics	1	1	1	3
Psychology, Human Behavior and Performance	1	1	1	3
Education and Training Methods for Curriculum Design	1	1	1	3
Customer and Personal Service		1	1	2
Experienced Annual Salary 2021	\$59,070	\$59,366	\$60,800	
Mean Annual Salary 2021	\$55,629	\$55,724	\$56,802	
Entry Annual Salary 2021	\$48,747	\$48,439	\$48,807	
Education	Bachelor's	Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	
TOP 5 SKILLS AREAS - EDUCATION, TRAINING & LIBRARY OCCUPATIONS - WSST 3 OF 20 TARGET OCCUPATIONS				
Active Listening	1	1	1	3
Speaking	1	1	1	3
Instructing - Teaching	1	1	1	3
Learning Strategies	1	1	1	3
Reading Comprehension		1	1	2

Source: O-NET TOP 5 Knowledge and Skills - Wages from TWC QEWS 2021

Six In-Demand Occupations Knowledge and Skills

There are six In-Demand occupations that are identified in Table 18 below that shows the top five common Knowledge and Skills for the occupations. All six of the occupations require the same customer and personal service knowledge with five needing knowledge of the English language. Five of the six occupations will require Active Listening and the skills to speak to convey information. The occupations entry, mean, and experienced wages and education level are listed for each of the six occupations, which indicates the occupations experience wage range from \$22,787 - \$48,850.

Table 18 In-Demand Knowledge, Skills and Wages

TARGET OCCUPATIONS	Home Health and Personal Care Aids	Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	Retail Salespersons	Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	Light Truck Drivers	Frequency of Occurrence
TOP 5 KNOWLEDGE AREAS - SEVEN WSST IN-DEMAND OCCUPATIONS							
Customer and Personal Service	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
English Language	1	1	1		1	1	5
Sales and Marketing			1		1		2
Administrative and Mgmt			1		1		3
Public Safety and Security		1					1
Medicine and Dentistry							
Experienced Annual Wage 2021	\$22,787	\$31,665	\$28,961	\$32,638	\$48,850	\$43,777	
Mean Annual Salary 2021	\$21,010	\$28,565	\$25,305	\$29,249	\$41,010	\$37,089	
Entry Annual Salary 2021	\$17,456	\$22,364	\$17,992	\$22,470	\$25,328	\$23,713	
Education		No Formal Educational Credential	No Formal Educational Credential	High School Diploma or Equivalent	High School Diploma or Equivalent	High School Diploma or Equivalent	
TOP 5 SKILL AREAS - SEVEN WSST IN-DEMAND OCCUPATIONS							
Active Listening	1		1	1	1	1	5
Speaking to convey information			1	1	1	1	4
Coordination Adjusting actions		1			1		2
Critical Thinking	1				1		2
Service Orientation Activity	1		1		1		3
Monitoring Assessing Performance	1					1	2
Social Perceptiveness	1						

Source: O-NET TOP 5 KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS - TWC OEWS 2021

C. Labor Force Analysis and Trends

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

When determining the labor force number for the 3- county area, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) defines the labor force as employed and unemployed or actively looking for a job for people over 16. To get a labor force number the BLS calculates the number of adults over 16 in the labor force divided by the adult population, and then multiplies by 100 to get the percentage. The labor pool number decreases when the data (BLS survey) shows the jobless aren't looking for work, have not looked for a job recently or may have decided to go to school, retire, or have family responsibilities.

The November 2022 average unemployment rate for the WSSST workforce service area shown in Table 19 below, is at 4% or 4,963 persons unemployed. The unemployment numbers indicate a fluctuation in the range of unemployment rates

from 2020 reaching a high of 13.3% in May, where the employment rate was at the highest in January 2021 at 8.3%. In 2022 the unemployment rate has ranged from a high of 5.7% in January to a low of 3.9% in September and October.

Table 19 Employment and Unemployment Rates

2020	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Annual
Unemployment Rate	4.1	3.8	5.9	12.4	13.3	12	11	9.1	8.8	7.8	8	7.9	8.6
Employment	119,450	120,255	115,695	100,112	103,472	106,776	108,685	111,255	111,468	112,271	112,403	112,532	111,198
Civilian Labor Force	124,532	125,057	122,917	114,307	119,297	121,300	122,133	122,364	122,189	121,795	122,189	122,188	121,689
Number of Unemployed	5,082	4,802	7,222	14,195	15,825	14,524	13,448	11,109	10,721	9,524	9,786	9,656	10,491
2021	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Annual
Unemployment Rate	8.3	8	7.4	6.8	6.6	7.5	6.7	6.1	5.7	5.5	5.2	4.9	6.6
Employment	111,425	112,463	112,556	113,519	113,649	113,858	115,171	115,805	116,103	116,598	117,614	117,743	114,709
Labor Force	121,509	122,211	121,585	121,806	121,674	123,144	123,424	123,366	123,141	123,378	124,026	123,830	122,758
Number of Unemployed	10,084	9,748	9,029	8,287	8,025	9,286	8,253	7,561	7,038	6,780	6,412	6,087	8,049
2022	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Annual
Unemployment Rate	5.7	5.5	4.5	4.4	4.4	4.9	4.7	4.3	3.9	3.9	4		
Employment	117,042	118,100	118,910	117,982	118,025	118,368	118,337	118,616	118,846	119,115	119,706		
Labor Force	124,064	125,010	124,530	123,348	123,515	124,506	124,138	123,958	123,704	123,957	124,669		
Number of Unemployed	7,022	6,910	5,620	5,366	5,490	6,138	5,801	5,342	4,858	4,842	4,963		

Source: Texas Workforce Commission Local Area Unemployment Statistics Report (LAUS)

Data from the 2022 U.S. Census found in Table 20, show that persons residing in the three counties of Webb (89.50%), Zapata (88.40%) and Jim Hogg (61.60%) speak a language other than English in substantially more households when compared to English speakers. Zapata County has the largest population living in poverty at 28.90% when compared to the other two counties.

Table 20 WSST Language Spoken in Home, Disability, Work Travel Time and Poverty

Census Indicator	Webb	Zapata	Jim Hogg
Population Estimates, July 1, 2022	267,945	13,908	4,801
Language Other than English spoken at home percentage 2017-2021	89.5%	88.4%	61.6%
Mean Travel Time to Work (minutes) 2017-2021	21.6	26.7	25
Persons with a Disability, under 65 years, 2017-2021	8.7%	12.5%	11.2%
Median Household Income 2017-2021	\$54,618	\$34,406	\$37,342
Number of Persons in Poverty	22.6%	28.9%	23.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

In Table 21, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the respective WSST 3-county area's persons age 25 and over high school graduate data shows that Webb County has 23.60% of the population 25 years and older completing a high school or equivalency, for Zapata's 25 years or over population there are 32.70% that graduated high school or equivalency, while Jim Hogg had 36.50% of the 25 years or over population holding high school diplomas or equivalency. The 3-counties all have higher high school graduate rates when compared to Texas at 24.60%. All twenty of the target occupations require at a minimum a high school diploma or equivalent.

In all three counties the percentage of persons 25 and older that have less than a 9th grade education or did not complete the 9th to 12th grade to receive a diploma is substantial higher when compared to Texas at 7.60%.

In Webb County 13.70% of the 25 years and over population hold bachelor or higher degrees, in Zapata the bachelor or higher degree rate is 10.50%, while in Jim Hogg the rate is 9.80% of the population age 25 or over that hold bachelor or higher degrees, all have lower Bachelor degree completion rates lower when compared to Texas at 21.2%.

Table 21 Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment in 2021	Webb		Zapata		Jim Hogg		Texas
	Population	%	Population	%	Population	%	%
Population 25 years and over	149,469	100%	7,879	100.0%	2,551	100%	100.0%
Less than 9th grade	25,192	16.90%	1,355	17.2%	342	13.4%	7.6%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	21,411	14.30%	1,147	14.6%	351	13.8%	7.0%
High school graduate (includes	35,298	23.60%	2,573	32.7%	930	36.5%	24.6%
Some college, no degree	27,203	18.20%	1,420	18.0%	513	20.1%	20.2%
Associate's degree	11,324	7.60%	445	5.6%	78	3.1%	7.5%
Bachelor's degree	20,534	13.70%	826	10.5%	249	9.8%	21.2%
Graduate or professional degree	8,507	5.70%	113	1.4%	88	3.4%	11.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

D. Workforce Development Analysis
(WIOA §108(b)(1)(D); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(4)

Employment Needs of Employers

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic caused business shutdowns and limits on operations, high unemployment numbers, fluctuation in the labor force numbers and a workforce transition to essential, virtual and digital remote home office workers.

Many essential businesses continued providing services to the community, and WSST assisted them to find workers by offering Virtual Job Fairs that provided user-friendly hiring tools to employers needing staff. WSST held bi-weekly Virtual Job Fairs during 2020 and 2021.

To better articulate the current gaps between workforce supply and demand, WSST implemented an on-line survey interview process that resulted with more than 191 employers from different industry-sectors responding. To identify a strategic representative sample targeted industry sectors and the TWC Employer list were utilized.

Employer interview results indicate a convergence of factors that contribute to the staffing challenges they are facing when hiring qualified labor, twenty-three employers responded that longevity of employment is a major concern, employees do not stay long on the job, have poor work ethic and lack skills. Other examples collectively cited by employers include lack of computer technology skills, a need for truck driving certifications, fork-lift certifications, and Microsoft office certifications, organization and critical soft skills. Transportation and Warehouse Industry employers interviewed are projecting expansion and growth in their respective establishment and will have a greater need for skilled workers.

To address the staffing challenges, WSST strategic planning requires that strong relationships be maintained with employers, and partner agencies in the community that result in collaborative, leveraged efforts that better prepare or transition staffing to the needed workforce occupational supply. Some of these partnerships comprise the broader youth

workforce system serving the WSST workforce area which are coordinated to leverage collective funding for maximum benefit to the youth community.

The WSST Board continues to work to ensure all the workforce center locations are equipped so the full range of services can be provided to all populations and employers. To assist in reaching hard to serve populations, WSST coordinated and planned the opening of 12 Workforce Virtual Stations (WVS), funded by the Innovation Grant awarded by the Texas Workforce Commission. Job seekers are connected via video with the staff at the Laredo center and receive the assistance they need in real time. The WVS are equipped with a study carrel, personal computer, camera, microphone, printer, scanner, headphone, telephone, and also include auxiliary aids and services for individuals with disabilities. Once fully functional, the WVS allows WSST to transition to an enhanced delivery of workforce center services that better connects rural county job seekers with employers while maintaining an environment that has high protocols in safety for all involved.

Workforce Activities – Training Services

Under the CARES Program, 65 CDL participants were assisted and trained to obtain their CDL driver license with any of the following driving schools: LHCT Training Center, Astudillo Elite Truck Driving School or Laredo College Professional Truck Driving School.

During the process, all 65 participants were contacted via telephone to register or update their Work In Texas application and complete their Resumes. Registration in WIT, resume development and interviewing technique service assistance were provided to all participants and communication was maintained on a weekly basis from the beginning to assist & monitor individual progress. Participants once obtaining their CDL driver license received job referrals to assist them with job search..

Each of our CDL Program Trainees were successful in completing initial classroom training, passed and received CDL Temporary Learner's Permits. As of September 30, 2021, 59 participants completed 2 weeks of "Behind the Wheel Training" and were successful in obtaining their CDL Certification/Driver License. 55 of the participants are gainfully employed with various companies.

Individuals with Barriers to Employment

All employers surveyed indicated a need for the applicant to have work experience when filling open positions. Independent School Districts and post-secondary training institutions will need to be kept engaged in helping to promote the opportunity for employment in the target and in-demand occupations. A strong work experience program will be needed to facilitate the job placement requirements to meet the employer's expectation.

The education and training to gain knowledge and command of the English language, communication, customer and personal service, active listening skills and the ability to speak and convey information skills is critical to obtaining employment. Data from the 2022 U.S. Census found in Table 20, show that persons residing in the three counties of Webb (89.50%), Zapata (88.40%) and Jim Hogg (61.60%) speak a language other than English in substantially more households when compared to English speakers. Zapata County has the largest population living in poverty at 28.90% when compared to the other two counties.

All twenty of the WSST Target Occupations require at a minimum a high school diploma or equivalency. In Table 21, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the respective WSST 3-county area's persons age 25 and over high school graduate data shows that Webb County has 23.60% of the population 25 years and older completing a high school or equivalency, for Zapata's 25 years or over population there are 32.70% that graduated high school or equivalency,

while Jim Hogg had 36.50% of the 25 years or over population holding high school diplomas or equivalency. The 3-counties all have higher high school graduate rates when compared to Texas at 24.60%.

Education Activities including Childhood Education and K – 12

WSST developed an incentive program for early childhood professionals who work for TRS providers in one or more of the following areas: rural areas, home-based providers, providers offering care during non-traditional hours and providers with lower teacher/child ratios. End of year one-time bonuses promoted staff retention and incentivized current and newly certified TRS providers. This promoted the continuity of quality care for the children and providing quality care by the same early childhood professional.

Incentives were distributed amongst the qualifying teachers based on the center's star level. And those who met one or more of the additional qualifiers, also received an additional incentive. Early childhood professionals received a one-time bonus of \$750.00 in addition a one-time enhancement of \$200.00 for those who fall under the additional qualifiers.

1 <https://www.lmtonline.com/news/article/TAMIU-s-71-2M-construction-plan-approved-17610895.php>

2. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KxZrKJEtY_i8Pqtq1YtSu7j8u0fvmTUI/view

3. <https://www.ttnews.com/articles/new-international-bridge-aims-help-laredo-remain-no-1-inland-port>

3 <https://www.ustradenumbers.com/port/port-laredo/>

3. <https://www.cityoflaredo.com/>

4. <https://foxnewsouthtexas.com/2020/01/31/laredo-school-districts-continue-with-construction-of-new-campuses/>

5. 15/28/2019 <https://dshs.texas.gov/tpco/HPSADesignation/>

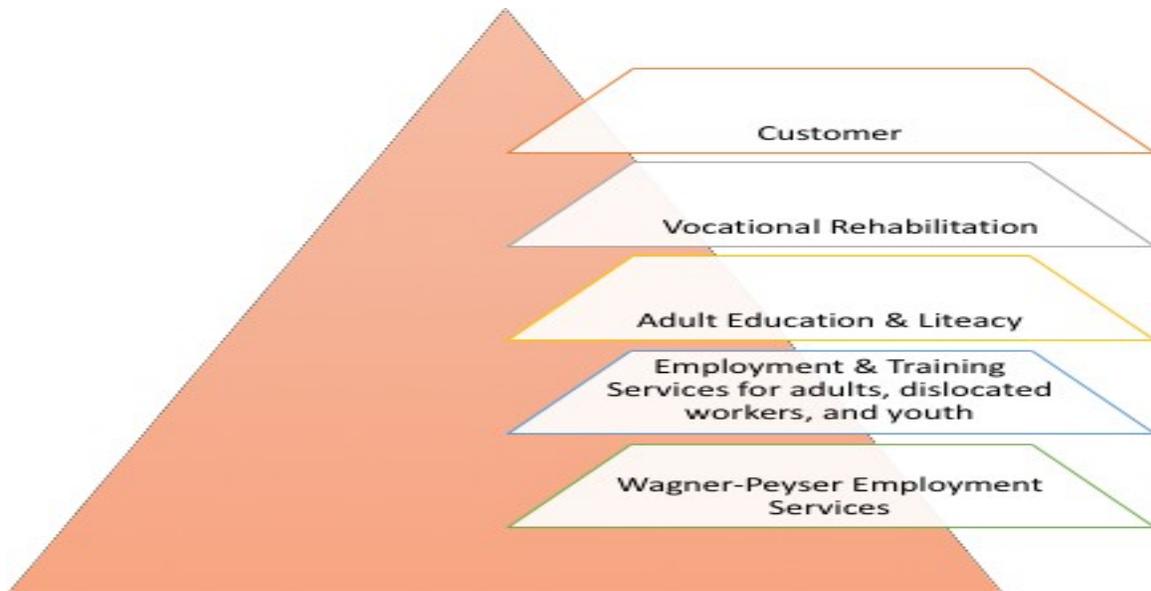
Part 3: Core Programs

A. Workforce Development System (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).

Workforce Development System Programs and Services: WIOA authorizes and brings together the following core programs of federal investment under the workforce development system to provide services to job seeker and employer customers:



Employment and training services for adults, dislocated workers, and youth are provided to the South Texas community by Workforce Solutions for South Texas (WSST) via subcontracted service providers. Core programs under direct oversight of the WSST and its Board of Directors include:

- Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
 - Adult
 - Dislocated Worker
 - Youth (Out-of-School and In-School)
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Non-Custodial Parent (TANF NCP)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Trade Adjustment Act (TAA)

WSST coordinates service delivery with entities carrying out core programs and other workforce programs, including.

- 1) Wagner-Peyser Employment Services: WSST operates the program in adherence to the Texas Model, whereby Texas Workforce Commission Employment Services staff fall under direct supervision of the service provider contracted by the Board to operate and manage the Workforce Centers.
- 2) Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Services: AEL services are provided to the WSST region by Laredo College (LC), under contract with the Texas Workforce Commission. WSST serves in an advisory role to LC and engages in regional planning with AEL partners to align resources and facilitate co-enrollment of customers.
- 3) Vocational Rehabilitation: WSST is engaged in joint planning activities with the Texas Workforce Solutions Division for Vocational Rehabilitation Services to identify opportunities for coordination of services and to develop joint service strategies that efficiently serve customers with disabilities leveraging partners' collective resources. The Paid-Work Experience (PWE) program is a fee-for-service contract between the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and the local Workforce Development Board to purchase and deliver services to pay wages and associated taxes and fees (wage services) for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) participants placed in PWE.

PWE placements are for VR participants who are students with disabilities and for whom PWE is an identified service in their individualized plan for employment (IPE). Students who have not applied and been determined eligible for VR services but who meet the definition of “Student with a Disability,” as established by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), may also participate in PWE.

- 4) Partners Operating Additional Workforce Programs: WSST also collaborates with partners operating workforce programs not considered core workforce programs but provide services complementary to core programs. These partners include:
- a. AARP
 - b. Border Region Behavioral Health Center
 - c. Communities in Schools
 - d. Head Start Serving South Texas
 - e. Laredo College
 - f. Laredo Job Corps Center
 - g. Ruthe B Cowl Rehabilitation Center
 - h. South Texas Food Bank
 - i. TVC - Homero Prado
 - j. TVLP - Gabriel Lopez
 - k. The Barber Education Academy
 - l. United ISD - CTE
 - m. Valley Association for Independent Living
 - n. VITA
 - o. Vocational Rehabilitation Program
 - p. Webb County Risk Management
 - q. Valley Association for Independent Living

WSST developed the Inter-Agency Referral Form to refer clients from one organization to another, not only in between the One-Stop Center, but outside of it. The referral form includes basic contact information of the customer/client, information from the staff member assisting, and the reason for the referral. Each organization has it’s own link associated with its own agency, and receives the referral directly to its inbox.

Career and Technical Education: WSST actively partners with Career and Technology Education (CATE) programs in the region to promote (1) dual credit opportunities, (2) articulation of credit between training providers, and (3) alignment of Career Pathways across agencies. These efforts are proven to increase completion rates, graduation rates, and overall educational attainment of the region’s workforce, addressing significant labor force constraints in the South Texas region. The WSST service area is characterized by low educational attainment rates, and higher than average dropout, illiteracy, and limited English proficiency rates.

To support CATE programs, as well as additional educational programs associated with House Bill 5, WSST:

- Provides labor market information support to improve alignment with secondary and post- secondary programs along defined Career Pathways.
- Serves on education program advisory boards and committees to provide insights concerning current employer skill needs.
- Encourages programs to apply for the Eligible Training Provider System (ETPS) that provide articulation and Prior Learning Assessment credit opportunities.
- Offers relevant work experience/internship opportunities for eligible workforce program participants.

- Provides job referral and job development service support for partner programs.

The Board will work with entities carrying out core programs to:

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

B. Core Programs—Expand Access, Facilitate Development, and Improve Access
(WIOA §108(b)(3); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(2))

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

- expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive 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 leading to a recognized postsecondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable).

Expand Access: A key priority of WSST is to improve access to the core programs and other workforce programs directly within its' oversight to residents throughout the service area, regardless of place of residence. The area, however, is challenged by an expansive 3-county geography characterized by a large population center in the City of Laredo, surrounded by many small municipalities, and unincorporated communities. Residents in these smaller communities require both basic and intensive workforce services, but brick and mortar Workforce Centers are not a feasible solution due to the dispersed nature of the population. The region is also home to several population groups with barriers to access that are not geographic, including high incidence of (1) English Second Language (ESL) and (2) disabled customers with unique accommodation and transportation needs.

To address these system access challenges, WSST engages the following strategies:

- Targeted marketing and outreach: To improve awareness of services available through the workforce system, WSST Board staff coordinate with service providers to engage local online, print, and television media outlets to highlight events and services, and to provide informational presentations at partner agencies, conferences, and forums.
- Social Media: WSST engages the community via targeted social media campaigns using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube. These platforms allow the WSST to engage customers in a non- traditional setting and work beyond physical locations and hours of operation. Messaging services are utilized to communicate directly with customers, providing technical assistance and information regarding additional services.
- South Texas Workforce Board Website: The website was redesigned. The new interactive site, that now offers a chat service, also allows visitors to download application forms, have updated information in regard to hiring events/job fairs, press releases, and direct access to activities happening at the center.
- Partnerships: WSST works in close coordination with partners serving populations that traditionally have difficulty accessing the workforce system, including Texas Workforce Commission Department

Vocational Rehabilitation, Texas Veterans Commission, and parole/probation offices. Examples of partner activities designed to expand access include:

- Laredo Disability Alliance Job Fair: For the past three years, WSST has leveraged resources with regional partners to provide a job fair targeting individual with disabilities. Partners work collaboratively to outreach employers that actively outreach and accommodate individuals with disabilities. Job fair partners include the Border Region MHMR, City of Laredo, Goodwill Industries, Laredo Independent School District, Laredo Vocational Development Services, Let's Go Professional Staffing, Texas A&M International University, TWC-VRS Division for Blind Services, United Independent School District, U Can Work 2, and VAIL.
- Parole and probation office visits: WSST provide regularly scheduled services (via the mobile unit or onsite offices and meeting rooms) to regional parole/probation offices to assist customers engaged with the criminal justice system. This service delivery strategy enables WSST to provide services to customers with restrictions that do not allow them to visit Workforce Centers during normal hours of operation, and to reduce participation barriers for customers with a historically low engagement rate with the workforce system. Parole/probation partners view WSST as a reliable and value-adding partner and encourage and/or require customers of their systems to engage WSST programs and services as part of their individual service plans.
- ◆ Workforce Virtual Station (WVS): Twelve WVS will be equipped with a resource lab and essential office suite, with direct contact with staff at the Laredo Center. The WVS will have access to Wi-Fi, in agreement with locations who have signed an MOU with WSST. The WVS will serve communities in the region, including small communities, Hebbronville and Zapata. Examples of partner locations we will serve are the Joe A. Guerra Laredo Public Library, Barbara Fasken Branch Library, Lamar Bruni Vergara Inner City Branch Library, Sophie Christen McKendrick, Francisco Ochoa, and Fernando A. Salinas Branch Library, Laredo ISD (Main Office), Rio Bravo Community Center. Pending Peñitas, LC Main and LC South, Webb County Youth Village, El Cenizo Community Center and Hebbronville, Fred M Anita Bruni Community Center, Webb County Veterans office.
- Second Chance: In a Partnership with the Federal Courthouse, WSST conducts private hiring event at the courthouse, offers workshops with the job seekers, provide mock interview, update resume, and provide haircuts and have clothing donation. Also, the Business Service Representatives continue to ask every employer if they a second chance employer, if so they are added to an excel sheet of second chance.

Career Pathways and Co-enrollment: WSST leverages multiple strategies (1) to ensure Career Pathway driven programming and (2) to promote co-enrollment opportunities with core and other related workforce programs, including:

1. Adhering to a structured Career Pathways framework in the investment of workforce training and education resources (tied to annual target/demand industry and occupation analysis);
2. Implementing clear co-enrollment policies and practices in core programs directly managed by WSST;
3. Engaging in joint planning with community partners to implement common Career Pathway strategies and coordinate information sharing; and
4. Coordinating with partners operating complementary workforce programs to leverage opportunities for articulation and co-enrollment.

Career Pathways Framework: Each year WSST conducts an intensive labor market study that includes analysis of the latest TWC industry/occupational projections, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, local wisdom, and core program performance, efficacy, and efficiency. The study results in determination of targets for the investment of local workforce resources, including target/demand industries and occupations. WSST utilizes a Career Pathways Framework in analysis and publication of results to ensure customers are provided with the opportunity to engage services that lead to employment in appropriate stages of their chosen Career Pathway, and that long-term career planning focuses on related occupational goals and outcomes.

Co-enrollment Policies and Practices: The WSST Board works collaboratively with their contracted service providers to establish clear policies and procedures that leverage service options available via all core programs. This includes co-enrollment of SNAP and TANF customers into WIOA funded programs, as appropriate, to provide customers access to additional service and training opportunities. Coordinating program and service opportunities for which customers are eligible enables WSST to maximize the impact that the region's workforce resources have on individuals and communities.

Joint Planning with Community Partners and Coordinating Complementary Workforce Programs: WSST has a history of joint planning with community partners. WSST Board staff regularly engage community partners to develop strategies that align service delivery activities and requirements. WSST will continue to work with partners to develop a common language for discussing Career Pathways, and to design programs and activities that support one another. Joint planning initiatives will target secondary and post-secondary providers, as well as community workforce agencies. Target partners include Laredo College (traditional post-secondary, Adult Education and Learning, and continuing education), regional Independent School Districts (ISD), and community-based literacy programs.

Coordinating Complementary Workforce Programs: WSST works to codify relationships strengthened via joint planning initiatives, where possible. These structured partnerships are characterized by defined referral and coordination procedures that provide customers with seamless service transitions between partner agencies. Emphasis is placed on targeting customers that meet respective agency eligibility requirements and capitalizing on co-enrollment opportunities to provide a broader range of services and to better maximize community leverage resources.

Improve Access to Activities Leading to a Recognized Post-Secondary Credential: During strategic planning, WSST prioritizes strategies and services that articulate into post-secondary credentials. In addition, WSST Board staff actively participate in various advisory groups to ensure the system is informed by the most current industry/employer trends and remains relevant to employer customers.

Part 4: One-Stop Service Delivery

- A. One-Stop Service Delivery System
(WIOA §108(b)(6); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(5))
Boards must include a description of the one-stop delivery system in the workforce area, 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 to remote areas, through the use of technology and other means

- How entities within the one-stop delivery system, including the one-stop operators and the 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, 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
- A description of how the Board incorporates, coordinates, and integrates the design and management of the delivery of child care services with the delivery of other workforce employment, training, and educational services (40 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §809.12)

Continuous Improvement of Eligible Training Providers: During the WSST's annual analysis of target and demand occupations and industries, Board staff evaluate appropriateness of programs available to ITA customers in the Eligible Training Providers (ETP). A key consideration in this process is not just alignment with the target occupations, but also the effectiveness of the programs in meeting the needs of training customers and employers. Data considered includes:

- Completion rates and training related placement rates for workforce customers
- Overall completion rates
- TWC published performance metrics
- Local wisdom regarding training program alignment with employer needs

For providers under direct contract with WSST, contractual performance standards and service levels are negotiated annually. Contracts also include language prioritizing Board Goals and Objectives. Board staff and contracted provider staff to discuss contractual performance progress and remedies for deficiency.

Facilitating Access: WSST operates a large Workforce Center in the City of Laredo (Webb County) and satellite Workforce Centers in Zapata (Zapata County). The residents from Hebbronville (Jim Hogg County) are served through the Laredo Center. A representative is still present in Hebbronville. Centers are strategically located throughout the service area to provide high levels of accessibility to all residents. The WSST service area, however, includes a significant rural population spread across a large geography, presenting challenges in providing consistent access.

To address accessibility challenges and provide non-traditional entry points for customers into the system, WSST has in place the following strategies:

1. Social media: WSST operates targeted social media campaigns via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn to engage customers in a virtual environment. Via these platforms WSST informs customers about events such as job fairs, career days, etc., job openings, hot jobs, program information, and training opportunities. Customers can also engage Workforce Center staff via messaging to receive technical assistance and career advising information.
2. Partner Locations/Workforce Virtual Station: WSST partners with area municipalities, libraries, community centers, etc. as collocation or temporary service locations to provide workshops, career advising, job search, and referral assistance to customers in communities without immediate access to Workforce Centers.

Compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and WIOA §188: WSST is committed to adhering to TWC's three core principles in accessibility by:

1. Ensuring that all customers can effectively use workforce products and services;
2. Creating a workspace accessible for individuals with disabilities; and
3. Complying with all federal and state legal requirements.

To ensure (1) all customers can effectively access the workforce system and (2) compliance with ADA and WIOA §188, WSST Board staff conduct annual facility audits that include evaluation of facility layout, signage, and accessibility equipment. In addition, WSST Board staff engage vocational rehabilitation partners to audit Workforce Centers (1) to provide recommendations on how to better accommodate customers and (2) to train staff regarding best practices in serving customers with disabilities.

Additional compliance initiatives undertaken by WSST annually include:

- WSST staff are provided annual training on the basics of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act. TWC training "Disabilities: Access for All — Serving Customers with Disabilities in Texas Workforce Solutions Offices" and/or comparable partner training is required to be completed by all staff.
- WSST Board staff provide continuous training and technical assistance to Workforce Center staff to assist them in understanding and evaluating the needs and employment requirements of unemployed person with disabilities.
- WSST staff works with various community organizations to strengthen the referral and coordination of needed services.
- WSST continuously evaluates and upgrades assistive software, and ensures Workforce Centers are adequately equipped with assistive technology including (but not limited to):
 - Computers - Screen magnification software
 - Screen reading software
 - "Expert Mouse" trackballs
 - Large Print Keyboard
 - Telephones
 - Telephone handset amplifier
 - Video Relay Services
 - Printed Material
 - Large print

To verify the efficacy of WSST strategies to enhance accessibility, the WSST Board's EO Officer and contracted independent monitors perform periodic evaluations to ensure that special populations are provided with equitable access to services. WSST requires all service provider work sites to meet all standards for accessibility of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). WSST Board procurement policy, procedures, and instruments also address special populations and appropriate provisions are included in all resultant contracts.

Roles and Resources of One-Stop Partners and Cooperative Agreements or Contracts:

Table 22 below provides an overview of One-Stop Partners and their role in service delivery. WSST has a Memorandum of Understanding or Contract Agreement with the Table 22 partners.

Table 22: Roles of One-Stop Partners

Partner	Role
WSST (SERCO currently contracted service provider)	Manage and operate Workforce Centers and core programs: WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth; TANF; TANF NCP; SNAP
WSST SERCO currently contracted service provider)	Child Care Services
Texas Veterans Commission	Services to Veterans
TWC State Staff (coordinated management and supervision with WSST)	Wagner Peyser Employment Services
Laredo College	Adult Education contract with TWC / Administrative and fiscal agent
TWC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (located in workforce centers)	Employment Services to individuals with Disabilities
AARP	Training and referral network serving low income individuals 55 years of age and older
Motivation Education and Training (MET)	Employment and Training program for individuals who are ranchers, farm workers and Migrant seasonal workers
Texas Veterans Leadership Program	Resource and referral network connecting returning veterans
WSST (United, Laredo, Zapata and Jim Hogg Independent School Districts, and LC Economic Development Center contracted service providers)	Manage and operate special programs to promote the targeted occupations and career opportunities for employment, and employer expectation that contribute to employer connection.
VITA	<p>The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program offers free tax help to people who generally make \$54,000 or less, persons with disabilities, the elderly and limited English-speaking taxpayers who need assistance in preparing their own tax returns. IRS-certified volunteers provide free basic income tax return preparation with electronic filing to qualified individuals. These volunteers receive annual trainings to ensure that they become certified and are up-to-date with tax law.</p> <p>Assistance is provided at Workforce Solutions for South Texas (WFST), located at 1406 Jacaman Rd, Suite A, volunteers provide free tax preparation services to the general public on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5:00 PM to 8:30 PM. The site is a “drop-off” site where the taxpayer will leave copies of all required documents with the Site Coordinator so the tax preparer can work on the tax return. The tax preparer will then pick up their completed tax return</p>

the following day (Tuesday or Thursday).
All tax preparation services are provided at ZERO cost to the tax payer. WSST will provide free W2, 1099-G, ITIN application assistance and e-filing services at no cost.
VITA services at the Workforce Solutions site will be provided starting January 24, 2023 and ending on April 13, 2023 from 5:00 PM to 8:30 PM

B. Cooperative Agreements

(WIOA §108(b)(14); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(13))

Boards must provide copies of executed cooperative agreements that explain how all local service providers, including additional providers, will carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the local one-stop delivery system. This includes cooperative agreements (as defined in WIOA §107(d)(11)) between the Board or other local entities described in §101(a)(11)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 USC 721(a)(11)(B)) and the local office of a designated state agency or designated state unit that administers programs that are carried out under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act (29 USC 720 et seq.) (other than §112 or part C of that title (29 USC 732, 741) and are subject to §121(f)) in accordance with §101(a)(11) of the Rehabilitation Act (29 USC 721(a)(11)) with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals who have disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts.

- Include copies of executed cooperative agreements.

WSST will provide MOUs upon request. In addition to the partners listed in Table 22, WSST has established MOUs with the following local service providers that complement the core programs in the workforce centers.

These partners include:

- a) AARP
- b) Border Region Behavioral Health Center
- c) Communities in Schools
- d) Head Start Serving South Texas
- e) Laredo College
- f) Laredo Job Corps Center
- g) Ruthe B Cowl Rehabilitation Center
- h) South Texas Food Bank
- i) TVC - Homero Prado
- j) TVLP - Gabriel Lopez
- k) The Barber Education Academy
- l) United ISD - CTE
- m) Valley Association for Independent Living
- n) VITA
- o) Vocational Rehabilitation Program
- p) Webb County Risk Management
- q) Valley Association for Independent Living

Employer Engagement, Economic Development, and Unemployment Insurance Program Coordination
(WIOA §108(b)(4); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(3))

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

- Facilitate engagement of employers in the workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in target occupations and in-demand industry sectors
- Support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the workforce area
- Better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development
- Strengthen links between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs

Facilitate engagement of employers: The WSST Business Services Team is responsible for providing an immediate connection with the business community. This connection allows the local workforce system to stay responsive to the needs of employers and to effectively communicate the capabilities and limitations of the workforce system directly to regional employers.

Emphasis is placed on engagement with targeted industry sectors and employers identified during the annual strategic planning process. This deliberate approach ensures (1) employers are engaged as both contributors and beneficiaries (customers) in the administration of workforce programs and (2) service opportunities are maximized for customers in Career Pathways and target occupations targeted by WSST, including On-the-Job Training, Work Experience, Subsidized Employment, Apprenticeship, etc. Emphasis is also placed on engaging small employers across industries. WSST is committed to supporting small businesses by strengthening their human resource and labor exchange capabilities to support regional job growth and economic development.

Meeting the needs of businesses: The WSST Board staff work closely with the (service provider managed) Business Services Team and the local Workforce Project Director identify area business needs and develop responsive solutions. Board staff meets with local operations weekly to discuss opportunities and strategies for better system alignment. WSST Board staff's high degree of engagement with the South Texas business community and economic development partners ensures strategies are appropriate, relevant and timely.

Current/projected initiatives in which WSST is engaged to better align to employer needs include:

- ✓ Targeted training to assist in transitioning the unemployed, incumbent and job seeker to fill current job openings based on survey input obtained from employers
- ✓ Policy updates to incorporate new elements and opportunities provided by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and CARES Act funds;
- ✓ Analysis of performance of Eligible Training Providers (ETP) to ensure sufficient training opportunities are available to customers and match that trainings mirror labor market demands;
- ✓ Initiatives to increase On-the-Job Training utilization:
 - Business Services Representatives work closely with targeted industries and program staff to assess the needs for targeted occupation outreach,
 - Contractor OJT/Customized Training program provides participants with knowledge or skills essential to obtaining and retaining employment - application process gather adequate information prior to contracting for OJT or Customized Training,
 - A clear outline of funding, contracting requirements, application process, employer

suitability, and program specific guidelines are disseminated to all the Workforce Center staff to ensure service flow is seamless;

- ✓ Collaboration with TWC Office of Employer Initiatives, Laredo College, Laredo Development Foundation to promote Skills Development Grant utilization by area employers.
- ✓ Initiatives to increase opportunities for the 3-county area by applying for competitive grants; and
- ✓ Outreach to create opportunities for Apprenticeship and education initiative.

Coordination with economic development: WSST maintains strong partnerships with regional economic development entities throughout the three-county region, and provides critical support through:

- Participation in site location visits to engage and educate prospective employers regarding workforce programs and services available. WSST also provides information about the composition of the regional workforce.
- Customized labor market information and analysis to support economic development initiatives, competitive funding applications, economic impact analysis, employer inquiries, etc.
- Monthly publication of unemployment report and press releases associated with the monthly Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) and Current Employment Statistics (CES) releases from TWC.

In addition, WSST staff are members of and collaborate with numerous regional economic development agencies and serve on numerous economic development committees, panels, and boards. These direct connections and input opportunities ensure the workforce system is highly coordinated with South Texas economic development. A sampling of committees, panels, and boards that WSST participate in, but not limited to, include:

- ✓ Laredo Economic Development Corporation¹
- ✓ Zapata Chamber of Commerce²
- ✓ The P-16 Council for Educational Excellence
- ✓ Laredo Chamber of Commerce³
- ✓ Tri-County Economic Development Committee

Strengthening connection with unemployment insurance program: WSST maintains close connections to the unemployment insurance program by (1) providing up to date and informative collateral material in Workforce Centers about the unemployment insurance program, including customer responsibilities and benefits, and (2) training local Workforce Center staff annually on the basic tenets of the unemployment insurance program, as well as limitations on the advice/direction they are free to provide regarding the program.

Workforce Center staff also proactively outreach unemployment insurance claimants early in their benefit cycle via targeted mailings and phone calls to raise awareness of services and programs available. This initial engagement is followed by targeted outreach at key intervals (i.e. 4 weeks, 8 weeks, 16 weeks, and 20 weeks) to minimize the incidence of customers becoming Long-Term unemployed. Each of these engagements is treated as an opportunity to recruit claimants to engage in assessment, and potential workforce program participation. Claimants that have difficulty re- engaging in the local labor market frequently have barriers that can effectively be addressed by WIOA program participation or through other targeted service strategies.

D. Coordination of Wagner-Peyser Services

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

A description of plans, assurances, and strategies for maximizing coordination, improving service delivery, and avoiding duplication of Wagner-Peyser Act services and other services provided through the one-stop delivery system.

¹ <https://www.laredoedc.org>

² <https://www.zapatachamber.com>

³ <http://laredochamber.com/main/>
<https://www.kgns.tv/content/news/tricounty-414521983.html>

WSST is committed to offering workforce services to the community that (1) seamlessly coordinate Wagner-Peyser funded employment services with other programs and services offered via the Workforce Centers and (2) remove redundancies in service delivery and avoid duplication of services to customers.

To achieve these objectives, WSST executes the following strategies:

- WSST operates under the Texas Model, whereby Wagner-Peyser funded employment services staff are co-managed by the service provider(s) responsible for management and operation of area Workforce Centers.
- TWC Wagner-Peyser staff are included in all management and staff meetings at the Workforce Centers.
- Staff trainings include, as appropriate, TWC Wagner-Peyser staff.
- Workforce Center staff receive annual training to ensure all staff have information on how to best provide customers with available services and guidance on possible employment and training along Career Pathways. Topics include referrals to Workforce Center programs as well as occupational and basic skills training programs offered in the community and community resources.
- Training topics are reinforced through the Monthly Workforce Program Meetings: Self Sufficiency (TANF, SNAP E&T, NCP), WIOA, Business Services Unit and Career Center Staff Meetings.
- Workforce Center staff participate in NAWDP's recommended vendor training programs including, Youth Worker Certification, Youth Program Certification, Job Developing for individuals with disabilities, Retention, and Leadership Development for management

E. Integrated, Technology-Enabled Intake and Case Management

(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 an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under WIOA and by one-stop partners.

WSST utilizes TWC provided information systems and technology in implementing integrated technology-enabled service delivery strategies, including intake and case management systems for programs carried out under WIOA and by one-stop partners. Systems provided by TWC and implemented by WSST are detailed in Table 23 below.

Table 23: WSST Information Systems

System	Description	Customers Impacted
WorkInTexas.com	WorkInTexas.com is a comprehensive online job search resource and matching system developed and maintained by the Texas Workforce Commission. It provides recruiting assistance to Texas employers of all types and sizes, and job search assistance to any individual seeking work in Texas.	Job seekers (includes all virtual only customers), employers
The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST)	TWIST is an integrated intake, eligibility, case management, and reporting system used for all programs provided through the Workforce Centers. TWIST is a centralized location for demographic data, service information, service plans, counselor notes, and reporting. TWC programs TWIST to interface with additional relevant State of Texas systems including with UI benefits system, Health and Human Services information system, UI tax records, and WorkInTexas.com	Job seekers (focus on those accessing physical locations), eligible program customers, employers

Part 5: Workforce Investment Activities

A. Economic Development and Entrepreneurial/Microenterprise Activities
(WIOA §108(b)(5); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(4))

Boards must include an explanation of how the Board will coordinate local workforce investment activities with regional economic development activities that are carried out in the workforce area and how the Board will promote entrepreneurial-skills training and microenterprise services.

WSST staff are actively engaged with regional economic development agencies providing (1) support for site location visits, (2) custom labor market information, (3) monthly unemployment and job growth analyses, and (4) serving in an advisory capacity on committees, panels, and boards (refer to response 4.c Operational Elements for additional details). These engagements inform strategic and service delivery planning with the Workforce Center service provider. WSST leverages these interactions to ensure workforce system service delivery design and resource investments align with economic development priorities and initiatives.

Entrepreneurial Skills Training and Microenterprise Services: WSST views supporting entrepreneurship, small businesses development, and microenterprises services as a service delivery priority for the workforce system. Economic trends and characteristics of the WSST region lend themselves to this being an emerging economic development driver. Globalization, ready availability of broadband services, shifts in business models to leveraging outsourced/on-demand talent, and movement away from location-based retail have all created an environment in which people can provide goods and services from anywhere in the world, creating an opportunity for innovation and entrepreneurship by South Texans. The growing diversity of the nation and emergence new cultural characteristics, the prevalence of bilingual communication, and

positioning of Laredo as a key land port for the US provide the region with unique assets on which to capitalize.

To ensure customers have access to entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services, the WSST Board has developed a referral network with key partners, including:

- The Texas A&M International University Small Business Development Center (TAMIU- SBDC) works with existing and startup businesses providing assistance during every phase of the business life cycle. SBDC staff of counselors, trainers, and researchers provide comprehensive, confidential business counseling services that are at no cost to the client. The TAMIU SBDC also operates a Small Business Management Certificate Program that helps participants build essential business skills and knowledge on how to run a successful business.⁴
- The Laredo Development Foundation operates a Loan Assistance Center which is affiliated with SBA's Small Business Development Center program and a 504 Certified Development Corporation.
- LiftFund is a nonprofit organization that helps small business owners with limited access to capital. WSST provides referrals for entrepreneurs interested in starting their own business.⁵
- The City of Laredo offers qualified companies a one-time cash award payment through the Project Development Grant, paid after the negotiated performance criteria has been achieved – i.e. number of employees hired above the Laredo MSA Average Wage (annual).
- Azteca Economic Development and Preservation Corporation (Azteca) helps low-income individuals and families by developing job opportunities and bringing capital to new businesses created by low-income individuals in greater Laredo. Azteca assists individuals in preparing all items necessary to start a business. The agency provides small business development and technical assistance for micro entrepreneurs including one-on-on sessions.
- Metrix Learning.

B. Rapid Response Activity Coordination
(WIOA §108(b)(8); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(7))

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

The WSST Board's contracted Operator/Manager of Workforce Centers is responsible for coordinating Rapid Response activities, as needed, between the employer, affected workers, Workforce Center Business Services Team, TWC, and other state agencies and additional partners as needed.

Upon receipt of a WARN Notice or otherwise receiving notice of a Mass Layoff, Workforce Center OP/Mgr. Business Services Team contacts the employer to:

⁴ <http://sbdc.tamtu.edu/>

⁵ <http://laredo.liffund.com>

- ✓ Assess the circumstances of the layoff, to include timing of events and profile of affected workers, and
- ✓ Discuss layoff aversion strategies in consultation with regional economic development partners to ensure all retention strategies are leveraged.

If the layoff cannot be averted, the Workforce Center OP/Mgr. Business Services Team develops a service strategy for the employer and affected workers. The service strategy includes:

- ✓ Profiling affected worker education and experience levels, as well as career advising and support service needs;
- ✓ Identifying companies within the region that are hiring, with the potential to bring on affected workers;
- ✓ Providing an orientation to the programs and services available via local Workforce Centers, to include WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs;
- ✓ Registering affected workers in WorkInTexas.com and providing referrals to matching job postings;
- ✓ Engaging employer and worker representatives, to provide information and access to unemployment compensation benefits and Workforce Center services (including information on the Trade Adjustment Act program), crisis counseling, financial planning assistance and debt management, interview techniques, resume and application preparation, stress and change management and referral to other partner agencies, as needed, and
- ✓ Facilitating targeted workshops to assist in stress management, change management, job search, resume writing, aptitude/interest assessments, etc.; and
- ✓ Program enrollment and training/re-training as necessary.

C. Youth Activities and Services

(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.

WSST offers a full range of workforce investment activities to youth, including the 14 required WIOA elements, via a full-service Workforce Center in the City of Laredo (Webb County) as well as one satellite Workforce Centers in Zapata (Zapata County).

The two locations are located strategically and provide access to 90% of the region’s residents within a 10-mile radius.

Table 24 Youth Service Locations

Service Location	Address	County
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Laredo Workforce Center	1406 Jacaman Rd. Suite A Laredo, TX 78041 956-794-6500 / 956-726-1475 fax Business Hours: M-F 8:00AM-5:00PM	Webb
Hebbronville Satellite	Virtual Services 361-231-7071 / 361-231-7071 fax Business Hours: M-F 8:00AM-5:00PM	Jim Hogg
Zapata Satellite	605 US Hwy 83, Suite B Zapata, TX 78076 956-765-1804 / 956-765-4843 fax Business Hours: M-F 8:00AM-5:00PM	Zapata

Partner Youth Workforce Services: WSST maintains strong relationships with partner agencies in the community that provide employment and training services to in-school and out-of-school youth. These partnerships comprise the broader youth workforce system serving the South Texas community, and are coordinated to leverage collective funding for maximum benefit to the community. Key partnerships leveraged to expand service offerings to youth are included in Table 25 below.

Table 25: Key Youth Workforce System Partners

Partner	Service Description	Service Community
Laredo College	Post-secondary education and training, and Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) services.	WSST region
Bethany House	Offers a food pantry which provides assistance to the low income and needy. Other services include clothing, case management, and general advice and support.	WSST region
Communities in Schools of Laredo	Helps at-risk students improve in academics, attendance and/or behavior, encouraging more students to stay in school, graduate and prepare for post-secondary life.	WSST region (collocated in area schools)

Youth with Disabilities: WSST works diligently to establish partnerships (1) that provide service options to youth with disabilities and (2) that support these customers with sufficient accommodations for employment, training, and other program activities. The Texas Workforce Solutions Division for Vocational Rehabilitation is the core partner that assists in serving youth with disabilities. Additional agencies supplement combined services specific to youth with disabilities, including:

- ✓ Border Region Behavioral Health Center (counseling services)
- ✓ El Metro (paratransit)
- ✓ VAIL (independent living)
- ✓ Ruth B Cowl Rehabilitation Center (therapy and counseling services)
- ✓ U Can Work 2 (vocational counseling and job placement services)
- ✓ Let's Go Professional Staffing (vocational counseling and job placement services)

- ✓ City of Laredo Blue Ribbon Committee for People with Disabilities (Advocates for individuals with disabilities by promoting awareness, education and securing resources for their physiological, psychological and social well-being; provides guidance to the City of Laredo officials regarding issues affecting people with disabilities.)

WSST will continue to work diligently to strengthen the network of partners and service framework to encourage engage in youth workforce services by individuals with disabilities.

D. Coordination with Secondary and Postsecondary Education Programs
(WIOA §108(b)(10); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(9))

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

WSST is committed to aligning workforce system elements, consistent with the Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan Goal 3 by “improving transitions, aligning programs, and ensuring portability and transferability” to improve “access and the ability of all students to complete programs of study, earn credentials, transition to further education, and gain critical employability skills.” WSST engages area secondary and postsecondary education institutions and programs using three key strategies to achieve these outcomes:

- Knowledge Sharing/Leveraging Initiatives: Educational institutions in the South Texas region are active in multiple initiatives, associations, and alliances with aligned goals including (1) aligning programs and improved articulation, (2) increasing stackable/portable credentialing opportunities, (3) proliferating dual credit opportunities, and (4) enhancing service delivery efficiency and outcomes. WSST uses its role as a convener of the workforce system to promote knowledge sharing across institutions that fully leverages the broader community’s engagement in these initiatives.

Initiatives in which regional stakeholders are engaged include:

- Educate Texas: Originally launched in 2004 as the Texas High School Project (THSP), Educate Texas is a public-private alliance that includes the Texas Education Agency, Office of the Governor, Texas Legislature, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, Communities Foundation of Texas, National Instruments, Greater Texas Foundation, and Meadows Foundation. Region One Education Service Center, which includes the South Texas Workforce area, is a member of The Educate Texas Project, part of the Rio Grande Collective Impact Initiative to improve college readiness, access, and success across the Valley. Achieving excellence in the teaching and learning of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) is at the heart of the Educate Texas Project’s efforts.

A component of Educate Texas, the Region One Education Service Center houses one of seven funded Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (T-STEM) Centers. T-STEM Centers partner with universities, local education agencies, businesses, and non-profit organizations to provide high quality STEM professional development and instructional materials to STEM Academies as well as all Texas schools to transform teaching and learning methods, improve achievement in STEM education, and ensure all students are college-ready, career-ready, and life-ready.⁶

- North American Advanced Manufacturing Research and Education Initiative: Several regional education partners are members of the North American Advanced Manufacturing Research and

Education Initiative (NAAMREI) Consortium, which provides overall guidance to the Rio South Texas project and consists of three regional alliances from the Rio South Texas Region including Webb, Zapata and Jim Hogg:

- North American Technology & Innovation Alliance;
 - Rio South Texas Manufacturing Alliance; and
 - Region One Education Service Center (ESC) Texas Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (T-STEM) Alliance.
 - The consortium also includes forty-seven private and public partners including economic and workforce agencies, manufacturing association and the education sector.⁷
- South Texas Environmental Education and Research Center (STEER): An educational program of the Department of Family Practice at the Health Science Center sponsors an elective course in Laredo about environmental health issues along the U.S.-Mexico border. STEER provides transforming insight to professionals by providing a compelling, community-based, educational experience that allows them to make the connection between the environment, public health and medicine.⁸
 - Excelencia in Education: Works with communities to identify, test and prove the educational tactics, strategies and policies that support greater success for all students. Excelencia in Education links educational research, policy and practice that support Latino academic achievement. WSST has worked with educational partners on strategies to accelerate Latino student success in higher education.⁹
 - United Way of Laredo: WSST partners participate with United Way of Laredo in assessing community needs and administer programs to address defined needs. United Way of Laredo, in addition to community assessment and planning, raises funds and

⁶ <http://www.edtx.org>

⁷ <http://naamrei.org>

⁸ <http://laredo.uthscsa.edu/medicine/steer.asp>

⁹ <http://www.edexcelencia.org>

allocates resources, fosters volunteerism, and encourages collaborative efforts to resolve community problems.¹⁰

- Joint Planning: WSST engages in joint service delivery planning with partners including AEL/ESL providers, secondary and post-secondary institutions to ensure mutually beneficial program design. This collaborative practice helps to reduce waste and duplication of services, minimize the participation burden for customers by eliminating redundancy, and create more seamless transitions between programs for referrals and mutual customers.
- Collaboration and Collective Impact: WSST leverages partnerships and collective impact strategies (1) to enhance the impact the agency's workforce resources have on communities and customers and (2) to implement more comprehensive service strategies by leveraging multiple funding streams to fill service gaps. Examples of collaborative efforts WSST has engaged in, include:
 - Laredo Disability Alliance Job Fair: WSST partners with regional agencies that provide employment and other services to individuals with disabilities to host a job fair. Employers targeted for participation have demonstrated ability to provide appropriate accommodations for employees with disabilities, and numerous support agencies are present to provide related assistance. Job fair partners include Border Region MHMR, City of Laredo, Goodwill Industries, Laredo ISD, Laredo Vocation Development Services, Let's Go Professional Staffing, Texas A&M International University, United Independent School District, U Can Work 2, and VAIL.¹¹
 - Mid Rio Grande Border Area Health Education Center (AHEC): AHEC offers Continuing Education Programs and a series of educational programs for health care workers and promotes community-based training by identifying clinical training sites for the trainees. Post-Secondary Education Activities include programs to broaden college student horizon and motivate them to pursue a four-year or higher educational degree. AHEC offers youth programs such as Health Occupations Planning Exposition (HOPE), a college prep incentive training to prepare and offer health care exploration and academic awareness. The AHEC continues to work in collaboration with its partners:
 - to increase the opportunities for entry into health careers
 - improve health status, and impact the quality of life of the region's residents
 - increasing the number of well-trained health care workers servicing Webb, Zapata and Jim Hogg Counties

AHEC is part of the University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio System, which has a Regional Campus located in Laredo, Texas. WSST works with AHEC to expand the number of training and education opportunities provided to the area's residents.¹²

¹⁰ <http://www.unitedwaylaredo.org/>

¹¹ <http://www.southtexasworkforce.org>

¹² <http://uthscsa.edu/cstp/areas/MidRGV.aspx>

By engaging secondary- and post-secondary education programs and activities via the coordinated and collaborative strategies described above, WSST is better able to (1) integrate unique services available via partners into the broader workforce system, (2) avoid duplication of services and wasted resources, and (3) eliminate redundancies in service delivery for customers.

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

WSST strategically pushes the goal to improve quality initiatives that provide tools and strategies to increase the opportunities for the early learning childcare programs to better prepare children to enter school.

WSST sets an annual goal to increase the number and level of TRS Providers in the workforce area. WSST employs innovative training tactics, all of them linked to the guidelines for the Texas Rising Star Program.

To assist the providers in attaining a higher Star level, WSST provides more than the required clock hours of professional development training. WSST provides training in Caregiver-Child Interactions, linking objective and outcomes to curriculum and how to take child learning outdoors. Providers are continually mentored, encouraged, assisted and guided through the TRS certification process.

The focus of WSST childcare partnerships is specific to ensuring that providers are knowledgeable about the importance of their commitment to quality and why the process of becoming TRS certified is important to the center, and the child's preparation for school.

- Coordinate with employers, economic development, and other industry leaders to increase the awareness and importance of early learning as a workforce and economic development tool

WSST has a history of joint planning with economic development and other community partners. WSST Board staff regularly engages with community partners to develop strategies that align service delivery activities and requirements. WSST will continue to work with partners to develop a common language for discussing the importance of early learning and school readiness and to design programs and activities that support one another. Joint planning initiatives will target secondary and post-secondary providers, economic development, employers and other industry leaders to increase awareness and importance of early learning and school readiness and the shared responsibility of preparing the entire local workforce pipeline.

- Support improved school readiness through higher-quality child care, including Texas Rising Star, and through partnership opportunities such as prekindergarten partnerships

WSST applies a multi-dimensional approach to quality initiatives that also targets relationship- based training for both the teacher and the parent resulting in a shared approach to teaching by using the same strategies and tactics in the classroom and the home. WSST continues to use

strategies from evidenced-based programs such as “FLIP-IT Transforming Challenging Behavior Training and Literacy Program” to create a consistent environment that increases the child’s social- emotional skills, regulates behavior and prepares the child to be successful in kindergarten.

WSST’s strategic approach to introduce the teacher, parent and the child to quality initiatives that provide early intervention to prepare the child to enter kindergarten has shown a significant positive impact on school readiness.

Child care programs that provide Child Care Services (CCS) will be required to participate in the Texas Workforce Commission Texas Rising Star certification program via an Early Level Designation. Child Care Providers that have a current CCS agreement with Workforce Solutions for South Texas as of October 3, 2022 were provided information regarding entry level designation by the TRS Staff.

As per WD Letter 23-22, Board must provide all Entry Level–designated CCS providers located within the Board’s workforce area with mentoring services, per the Texas Rising Star Guidelines.

Boards must ensure compliance with the following deadlines and timeline for current CCS providers.

Entry Level Designation Timeline—Current CCS Providers	
Deadline	Action
October 31, 2022	Boards must determine whether the provider is meeting Entry Level designation requirements
March 31, 2023	Provider must meet Entry Level designation requirements
March 31, 2024	If the provider does not meet Texas Rising Star certification requirements, no new family referrals may be made
September 1, 2024	If the provider has not met Texas Rising Star certification requirements, notify enrolled families of potential loss of the provider’s CCS eligibility
September 30, 2024	The provider must achieve Texas Rising Star certification to continue to serve as a CCS provider

Boards must comply with the following deadlines and timeline for new CCS providers designated as Entry Level.

Entry Level Designation Timeline—New CCS Providers

Deadline	Action
CCS Agreement Start Date	The provider meets Entry Level designation.
12 Months	Boards must screen providers for initial Texas Rising Star certification.
18 Months	If the provider is not meeting Texas Rising Star certification, no new family referrals may be made.
23 Months	If the provider has not met Texas Rising Star certification requirements, notify enrolled families of potential loss of the provider’s CCS eligibility.
24 Months	The provider must achieve Texas Rising Star certification to continue to serve as a CCS provider.

Support the needs of the child care industry, which could include assistance with business development or shared services, as well as opportunities to support professional growth and career pathways for early education.

Child Care will continue to be an essential service in WSST the lack of child-care is a significant barrier to employment.

INCENTIVES FOR TEACHERS

WSST developed an incentive program for early childhood professionals who work for TRS providers in one or more of the following areas: rural areas, home-based providers, providers offering care during non-traditional hours and providers with lower teacher/child ratios. End of year one-time bonuses promoted staff retention and incentivized current and newly certified TRS providers. This promoted the continuity of care for the children and providing quality care by the same early childhood professional.

Incentives were distributed amongst the qualifying teachers based on the center's star level. And those who met one or more of the additional qualifiers, also received an additional incentive. Early childhood professionals received a one-time bonus of \$750.00 in addition a one-time enhancement of \$200.00 for those who fall under the additional qualifiers.

**F. Transportation and Other Support Services
(WIOA §108(b)(11); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(10))**

Boards 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.

WSST assists eligible workforce program customers in removing barriers to program participation, training, and employment through the provision of support services. An overview of categories of support services, including transportation, is provided in Table 26 below.

Table 26 WSST Supportive Services

Category	Support Service
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Bus fare/pass ✓ Mileage reimbursement ✓ Gas cards ✓ Vehicle maintenance ✓ Insurance payments
Caregiving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Childcare ✓ Dependent care
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Eye exams ✓ Physical exams and inoculations
Work related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Work related clothing ✓ Tools and equipment ✓ Health/safety certifications
Interview related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interview clothing
Emergency assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Utilities ✓ Mortgage/rent ✓ Needs related
Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Relocation assistance ✓ Identification Document

Public Transportation: Public transportation in the City of Laredo is provided by El Metro. Bus service is provided to more than 15,000 riders daily to/from 1,300 bus stops, seven days a week. El Metro also provides El Lift Paratransit Service a shared, origin to destination public transportation to people with disabilities that are unable to use El Metro’s fixed route buses. Paratransit services are a shared-ride service operated with modern, accessible vehicles. Riders who are unable to access vans using steps may use wheel-chair lifts.

Webb County Community Action Agency provides fixed route bus transportation, as well as elderly and disabled rider transportation to residents of Webb county, both within the City of Laredo and surrounding rural communities.

Public transportation for Jim Hogg County is provided by Rural Economic Assistance League, Inc., while Zapata County is provided service by the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council.¹³

WSST provides bus fare/passes for the services described above to eligible program participants determined to need assistance. The selected public transportation service is determined by residence and destination.

F. Coordination of Adult Education and Literacy (AEL)
(WIOA §108(b)(13); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(12))

¹³ ftp://ftp.dot.state.tx.us/pub/txdot-info/ptn/rural_map.pdf

Boards must include a description of how the Board will coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with AEL activities under WIOA Title II. This description must include how the Board will carry out the review of local applications submitted under Title II consistent with WIOA §§107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA §232.

WSST engages in joint service delivery planning with WIOA Title I Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) grant recipient Laredo College (LC). WSST and LC are members of an AEL advisory committee that meets monthly.

The goals of the advisory committee and joint planning activities include:

- Positioning Title I and Title II funding and programs as complementary to one another and developing efficient (1) referral processes between LC, WSST, and affiliated service providers and (2) co-enrollment and joint case management strategies.
- Reducing/eliminating redundancies in service delivery, to include assessment, referrals, and service planning.
- Utilizing common Career Pathways in career and education advising between partners, creating continuity in overall community service planning.
- Effectively leveraging funding under the purview of partner agencies, including non-WIOA funding and programs.

WSST will continue to engage in advisory committee and additional joint planning efforts to further coordinate and integrate WIOA Title I and Title II programs/services to enhance the impact of these resources on the South Texas Community.

Review of Local Applications: As a stakeholder in area AEL programming, WSST will participate as needed in the review of applications and proposals associated with AEL services, to include procurement responses to TWC. As a reviewer, WSST will ensure adult education and literacy activities under Title II for the area are consistent with local planning. In addition, WSST Board staff will advise applicants to enhance alignment of resources with additional AEL and workforce services, offering technical assistance/training, as well as sharing relevant information as needed to assist applicants.

Part 6: Adult, Dislocated Workers, and Youth Services

A. Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training (WIOA §108(b)(7); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(6))

Boards must include a description and assessment of the type and availability of adult, dislocated worker and youth employment and training activities in the workforce area. Boards must also include the list of assessment instruments (tools) used for adult, dislocated worker, and youth.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

- A description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities
- Assessment instruments (tools) used for Adult, Dislocated Workers, and Youth.

The WSST Board maintains a large full-service Workforce Center in the City of Laredo (Webb County) as well as one satellite Workforce Centers in Zapata (Zapata County). The two Workforce Centers are located strategically, and provide access to more than 90% of the region's residents within a 20-mile radius.

All Workforce Centers are equipped to provide the full range of WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker program services to customers.

Table 27 Adult and Dislocated Worker Service Locations

Service Location	Address	County
Laredo Workforce Center	1406 Jacaman Rd. Suite A Laredo, TX 78041 956-794-6500 / 956-726-1475 fax Business Hours: M-F 8:00AM-5:00PM	Webb
Hebbronville Satellite	Virtual Services 361-231-7071 / 361-231-7071 fax Business Hours: M-F 8:00AM-5:00PM	Jim Hogg
Zapata Satellite	605 US Hwy 83, Suite B Zapata, TX 78076 956-765-1804 / 956-765-1799 fax Business Hours: M-F 8:00AM-5:00PM	Zapata

In addition to WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, the WSST Board also operates, at times, special initiatives (competitively funded or through special allocations) to expand the services available to Adult and Dislocated Worker customers.

WSST maintains strong partnerships with peer agencies in the community that provide employment and training services to adult and dislocated worker populations. These partnerships comprise the broader workforce system serving the community and are coordinated to leverage collective funding for maximum benefit to the community.

B. Priority to Recipients of Public Assistance and Low-Income Individuals
(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, consistent with WIOA §134(c)(3)(E) and §680.600 of the Final Regulations, as well as 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.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

The Board policy to ensure priority for adult individualized career services and training services will be given to the following:

- Recipients of public assistance
- Other low-income individuals
- Individuals who are basic skills deficient
 - Veterans
 - Foster youth
- List of Board priority groups (if any)

WSST Service Priority for Individualized Career Services and Training Services Policy, dated May 25, 2017 is compliant with WIOA §134(c)(3)(E) and with §680.600 of the Final Regulations, as well as the TWC Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act: Guidelines for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth requirement that, “individualized career services and training services must be given on a priority basis, regardless of funding levels; to: public assistance recipients; other low- income adults; and Individuals who are basic skills deficient. Refer to page 62 for Copy of Policy.

Part 7: Fiscal Agent, Grants, and Contracts

A. Fiscal Agent

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

Boards must include identification of 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).

Workforce Solutions for South Texas (South Texas Workforce Development Board) is the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds described in WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III), as determined by the chief elected official or the governor under WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i). The Board works with area partners and stakeholders to provide for consistent delivery of associated services throughout the 3-county workforce service area.

B. Sub-Grants and Contracts

(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 sub-grants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities.

Sub-grants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities are awarded by the WSST Board competitively per policies and procedures detailed in the South Texas Workforce Development Board Procurement Manual. The Manual, and included policies and procedures, are compliant with applicable administrative requirements as outlined in the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Financial Manual for Grants and Contracts (FMGC). An overview of steps required in executing WSST procurements are outlined in Table 28 below.

Table 28 Workforce Solutions for South Texas Procurement Steps

Step	Description
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1	Advise WSST Board of Procurement
2	Planning – Establish Timeline, Statement of Work, Criteria and Weights for RFP Drafts
3	RFP ready for issue
4	Public Notice in Newspaper, on Board website, and e-mailed to bidder’s list
5	Pre-Proposal Conference – sign-in sheet, document questions
6	Release Questions/Answers – e-mail to pre-proposal attendees, and put on website
7	Courtesy Letter of Intent submitted
8	RFQ for Independent Evaluators, selection and contract, conflict of interest form submitted, and RFP, Q/A and evaluation tool provided
9	Proposals submitted – date and time stamped – checked for responsiveness
10	Send proposals over night to selected Independent Evaluators
11	Evaluation forms submitted and points are aggregated and averaged – evaluator conference call – evaluation phase one completed – Evaluators submit original signed copies and invoice – Evaluators provided Fed-ex number to return proposals
12	Evaluation Phase Two – Questions established based on result of Phase One – same questions and same time asked of each proposer that meets the minimum average score. Conflict of Interest Forms from Board Evaluators submitted. Board committee has 10 points in this phase. Points turned in by each evaluator is aggregated, averaged and added to Phase One average score with top score recommended to Board
13	Recommendation is made to WSST Board for Action.
14	Finalize the Procurement File with all required documentation clearly labeled
15	Pre-award
16	Transition and contract negotiations begin
17	Contract signed by Executive Director and Board President

Part 8: Performance

A. Board Performance Targets

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

Boards must include a description of the local levels of performance negotiated with TWC and the CEOs consistent with WIOA §116(c), to be used to measure the performance of the local area and to be used by the Board 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 local area.

WSST Board staff are responsible for negotiating performance expectations with TWC annually, including Performance Accountability measures for all core programs. Negotiated performance expectations are included in contracts of relevant contracted service providers. The following performance measures were set in accordance with WIOA § 116(c):

- Adult Employed Q2 Post Exit
- Adult Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit
- Adult Employed Q4 Post Exit
- Adult Credential Rate
- Dislocated Worker Employed Q2 Post Exit
- Dislocated Worker Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit
- Dislocated Worker Employed Q4 Post Exit
- Dislocated Worker Credential Rate
-

- Youth Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit
- Youth Employed/Enrolled Q4 Post Exit
- Youth Credential Rate

In addition to TWC negotiated performance standards, WSST reserves the right to include local performance measures and service level expectations for contracted service providers. Local measures are intended to ensure that the priorities of the Board, partners, and stakeholders are reflected and emphasized in operation and management of the local workforce system.

Part 9: Training and Services

A. Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) (WIOA §108(b)(19); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(18))

Boards must include a description of how training services outlined in WIOA §134 will be provided through the use of ITAs, including, if contracts for training services will be used, 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 to be provided.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of the following:

- How training services will be provided with the use of ITAs
- How contracts for training services will be coordinated (if contracts are to be used)
- How the Board will ensure informed customer choice

B. ITA Limitations (20 CFR §663.420)

Boards may impose limits on the duration and amount of ITAs. If the state or Board chooses to do so, the limitations must be described in the Local Plan, but must not be implemented in a manner that undermines WIOA's requirement that training services are to be 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.

Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) provided to WIOA eligible customers (funded through WIOA Title I) to participate in approved trainings on the TWC Eligible Training Provider System (ETPS). ITA funds can be used for costs associated with tuition, including testing, books, fees, and other training related expenses.

WSST Board Policy 004-2003, Change 3 outlines the process by which eligible customers are provided with ITAs, and includes:

- ✓ Development of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) that determines the customer (1) is unable to obtain suitable employment without training, (2) is in need of training, (3) has the skills and qualifications to successfully participate, and (4) all testing levels (interest and aptitude) are adequate to ensure success in chosen career field.
- ✓ Customer is informed that selection of training is driven by 'customer choice' and Case Manager will provide advice and consultation to the customer throughout the process.
- ✓ Customer is provided list of target occupations and Eligible Training Providers (ETP) available for training. (Provisions may be made for customer to attend a training outside of local target occupations if relocation is a possibility.)

- ✓ Customer is provided relevant labor market information and ETP performance and cost information.
- ✓ Customer researches ETPs and selects a program, in consultation with Case Manager, to attend. Customers are expected to thoroughly research enrollment, performance outcomes, costs, and prerequisites. Customers are encouraged to visit schools or campuses to fully evaluate environment and transportation needs. Customers are also encouraged to visit relevant employer sites to familiarize themselves with occupational requirements.
- ✓ Customer is required to demonstrate they possess adequate resources to sustain themselves and/or their family during training.
- ✓ Customers are required to apply for additional funding including the Free Application for Federal Student Aide (FAFSA).

WSST does not anticipate utilizing contracts for training services to supplement or replace use of ITAs.

Part 10: Apprenticeship

A. Registered Apprenticeship Programs

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

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of how the Board will encourage Registered Apprenticeship programs to do the following:

- Register with the Eligible Training Provider System in order to receive WIOA funding

B. ApprenticeshipTexas

Boards must include a description of the Board's strategy and commitment to support ApprenticeshipTexas efforts across the state, as applicable.

According to the Department of Labor, there are no Registered Apprenticeships currently operating in the WSST region.¹⁴ The region job market, however, has characteristics that indicate suitability for Registered Apprenticeship programs including:

- Jobs for which it is difficult to find workers with the right skills
- Positions with high turnover
- Occupations where a highly-skilled workforce is retiring soon
- Challenges helping workers keep pace with industry and technology advances
- Difficulty in attracting new and diverse talent pools

WSST, under the guidance of the Board Employer Initiatives Contract Manager, is working to develop apprenticeship options in the South Texas workforce service area through implementation

¹⁴ https://oa.doleta.gov/new_search.cfm

of ApprenticeshipUSA strategies outlined in Advancing Apprenticeship as a Workforce Strategy: An Assessment and Planning Tool for the Public Workforce System.¹⁵

The ApprenticeshipUSA model includes the following five steps:

- Step 1: Explore Apprenticeship as a workforce solution
- Step 2: Build Apprenticeship partnerships
- Step 3: Design a high-quality Apprenticeship program
- Step 4: Identify roles and responsibilities
- Step 5: Evaluate performance outcomes

WSST is currently (1) outreaching and engaging area employers in discussions regarding opportunities to establish registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs and (2) convening businesses, education and training institutions, and other community organizations to identify champions and create shared visions for programs. As part of this engagement and outreach phase, WSST is encouraging development of Registered Apprenticeship programs by raising awareness about the many benefits, including:

- Registered Apprenticeship program eligibility in the ETP: Under WIOA, all Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors are automatically eligible to be placed on the ETPS making them eligible to receive federal workforce funding as pre-approved training providers.
- Credentialing and Tax Credits: Registered Apprenticeships result in nationally recognized credentials for apprentices and potential state tax credits for businesses.¹⁶

As apprenticeship work proceeds in South Texas, WSST will facilitate design and implementation of programs, and participate in evaluation of performance and program modification.

WSST recognizes the value of establishing Registered Apprenticeships in the area for the mutual benefit of trainees and businesses. In addition to initiatives and activities outlined in response #24 of Operational Elements, the Board commits to support TWC's ApprenticeshipTexas effort to realign agency services and promote expansion and implementation of Registered Apprenticeships by:

1. Supporting the classroom training portion through WIOA funding/ITAs.
2. Supporting the OJT component through WIOA funding.
3. Providing supportive services for eligible customers.
4. Working to develop complementary pre-apprenticeship programs.
5. Coordinating with Youth Build and Job Corps to promote and extend apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities.
6. Educating community education partners Texas Education Code, Chapter 133 funding available to educational institutions to support the costs of related classroom instruction in

¹⁵ <https://www.dol.gov/apprenticeship/docs/RA-Planning-Tool.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.dol.gov/apprenticeship/docs/WIOA-RA-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

registered apprenticeship training programs (local education agencies act as fiscal agents for registered apprenticeship training programs).

The WSST Board Employer Initiatives Contract Manager will engage resources and expertise from TWC, the US Department of Labor, and other appropriate regional sources as needed to promote establishment and proliferation of Registered Apprenticeships in the region.

Part 11: Public Comment

Boards must include a description of the process used by the Board, consistent with WIOA §108(d), 20 CFR §679.550(b) and §679.560(b) and (e), to:

- make copies of the proposed local plan available to the public through electronic and other means, such as public hearings and local news media;
- include an opportunity for comment by members of the public, including representatives of business, labor organizations, and education;
- provide 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, prior to its submission to TWC; and
- submit any comments that express disagreement with the plan to TWC along with the plan.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

- A description of the public comment period process
- Any comments that represent disagreement with plan?

Yes

XNo

The WSST Board ensures the public had the opportunity to provide comment on the 2021-2024 Strategic Plan. WSST placed a public notice in the Laredo Morning Times to advise the public of the availability of the WSST Plan and opportunity to comment. The public comment period was set to begin on January 23 and end on February 23, 2023. A user-friendly downloadable copy of the Strategic Plan was made available on the WSST's web site.

In addition, prior to the public comment period, WSST held a survey interview with local employers and other workforce partners from the 3-county area to solicit input for the WSST Plan, attendees were advised about the public comment period for the plan.

No public comments were received during the Public Comment period. The Chief Elected Officials met virtually and in person to review and approve the Plan on February 22, 2023. WSST Board approved the 2021-2023-2024 Strategic Plan at a meeting held on February 23, 2023.

Proof of Posting in Newspaper



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Public Notice Strategic Plan 2021-2024 Update

Workforce Solutions for South Texas (WSST) Board hereby announces that the Strategic Plan addressing fiscal years 2021-2024 will be available for public comment from January 23, 2023 – February 23, 2023. Interested parties may view and download a copy of the proposed plan at www.southtexasworkforce.org (click on the About Us Tab and select Strategic Plan) The WSST Board is responsible for the planning, oversight and implementation of federally funded workforce development programs in Jim Hogg, Webb and Zapata Counties.

Comments regarding the plan may be submitted in writing to the address listed below, or sent via e-mail to: rogelio.trevino@southtexasworkforce.org no later than 12:00 PM CST on February 23, 2023.

Workforce Solutions for South Texas
500 E. Mann Rd. Suite B5
Laredo, Texas 78041

Workforce Solutions for South Texas is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available, upon request, to individuals with disabilities. Relay Texas: (800)735-2989 (TDD) or (800)735-2988(Voice) or 711
L-29

Texas Workforce Investment Council Requirements Local Workforce Development Board 2023 Plan Modifications

The Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC) is charged under Texas Government Code §2308.101(5), 2308.302(a), and 2308.304(a)(b)(4), and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) (Public Law 113–128) with recommending the plans of Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) to the governor for consideration and approval. TWIC reviews each Board plan to ensure that local goals and objectives are consistent with the statewide goals and objectives in the system plan, [The Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan FY 2016–FY 2023](#).

Additionally, state law charges TWIC with reporting annually to the governor and to the Texas legislature on the implementation of the system strategic plan and monitoring the operation of the state’s workforce system to assess the degree to which the system is effective in achieving state and local goals and objectives. Therefore, TWIC also reviews Board plans and plan modifications to determine each Board’s progress in implementing strategies that align with the strategic plan for the Texas workforce system. Following endorsement by TWIC at a regularly scheduled quarterly meeting, the Board plans are sent to the governor for consideration and approval. Each Board’s responses to the following planning elements are reviewed by TWIC for alignment and are the basis for recommending approval.

Demonstrating Alignment with Texas’ Workforce System Strategic Plan

The four sections below list and describe the four system goals from The Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan FY 2016–FY 2023 that identify critical, high-priority system issues for the state. Boards inform the development of strategic goals and objectives and are essential to the implementation of the workforce system plan. Board plan responses apprise TWIC of innovative practices and how key strategies in the system plan translate into local action to move the system forward. Examples of select Board responses will be presented to TWIC under each goal. All 28 Boards will be represented in the briefing for the approval of the plans.

For each goal:

- briefly describe how the Board is working to fulfill the intent of the goal as specified in the description; and
- include the corresponding page number(s) within your plan that further details the identified strategy or initiative.

System Goal 1 and Rationale

Focus on Employers

Effective engagement with employers informs many system strategies and functions that address the changing needs of industry as well as state and regional economies. Education and training are a primary system function that may require multiple state and local entities to work with similar employers to design instruction or adjust career and technical education program and delivery options. Coordination and partnerships with employers are essential to gain insight and implement initiatives while ensuring that industrial productivity continues.

System Goal 1—Local Board Response

Please describe how your local Board has improved employer engagement and efforts to collaborate with any other entities that require input, participation, and/or partnership with employers.

Specifically, describe how you coordinate efforts to gain more comprehensive insight on employer needs while reducing the demand on the employers who would otherwise be responding to multiple requests. Identify the primary outcomes and, where relevant, list key entities involved and type of information requests for each entity.

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s):

Board Strategies:

- Expand and improve business-driven workforce development system where employers and job seekers have access to a network of information and services.
- Strengthen and improve service delivery system throughout the workforce development area.
- Facilitate marketing strategies for employer input and develop new and innovative systems for educating South Texans.
- Ensure that local labor market information resources are available electronically.

Page 5: To better articulate the current gaps between workforce supply and demand, WSST implemented an on-line survey interview process that resulted with more than 191 employers from different industry-sectors responding. To identify a strategic representative sample targeted industry sectors and the TWC Employer list were utilized.

Page 18: In order to determine employer occupational expectation, WSST held on-line survey interviews to solicit current employer perspective on occupational skill demand. The result of the survey was used by the WSST Board to gage the training skills that need to be targeted for job seekers and unemployed persons and is reflected in the Plan. Employers were asked to validate the labor market information projections for industry occupations within their business, identify occupations that are evolving or emerging and to identify any gaps in occupational skills needed.

Page 32: Career Pathways Framework: Each year WSST conducts an intensive labor market study that includes analysis of the latest TWC industry/occupational projections, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, local wisdom, and core program performance, efficacy, and efficiency. The study results in determination of targets for the investment of local workforce resources, including target/demand industries and occupations. WSST utilizes a Career Pathways Framework in analysis and publication of results to ensure customers are provided with the opportunity to engage services that lead to employment in appropriate stages of their chosen Career Pathway, and that long-term career planning focuses on related occupational goals and outcomes.

System Goal 2 and Rationale

Engage in Partnerships

Workforce system partners leverage local and regional partnerships to enhance system alignment and improve outcomes and reporting. Partnerships rely on a culture of collaboration and trust, deep working relationships,

and communication to provide a solid foundation on which to coordinate planning, integrate processes, and develop the collective technical capacity to share needs, data, and information.

System Goal 2—Local Board Response

Please describe your primary (top) partnerships, how you use them to address key strategies in your plan, and the significant outcomes and progress related to the partnerships. In addition, specifically describe partnerships that foster innovation and improved participant engagement and outcomes in workforce development.

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s):

Board Strategies:

- Push the Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship Training and seek employer involvement, encourage women to enter non-traditional professions.
- Work on the establishment of early high school “work study programs” to learn how to work while attending school.
- Work on establishing mandatory school to work adjustment training so expectation of workplace behavior can be aligned with curriculum.
- Establish more work experience opportunities for job seekers
- Establish more job shadowing opportunities for job seekers
- Continue to build on community partnerships to maximize and leverage local resources.
- Dropout prevention is a priority.
- Create partnerships with independent school districts and post-secondary institutions to develop programs for youth by providing post-secondary career path opportunities and training.

Board Initiative (pp. 5-7 and pp.25-27):

The South Texas area received Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and Skills Development funding and have worked in local partnerships to plan for the need to transition the unemployed to current employment in demand.

To maximize the CARE Act funding, community partnerships were established with the City of Laredo, and Laredo College, and local employers. Collaborative marketing strategies were implemented that were aimed at identifying and helping individuals directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic to rejoin the workforce.

Some of the CARE Act funds received by the City of Laredo allowed over 500 individuals that had been laid-off, furloughed or underemployed due to the pandemic to obtain or upgrade knowledge and skills intended to create pathways to regain employment.

WSST received Skills Development funds and assisted 17 employers with COVID-19 training on protocol for their essential workers. In addition, 65 individuals obtained CDL/Truck Driving training with 55 placed to date. The WSST training efforts were coordinated and leveraged with the other appropriated CARES Act training funding.

System Goal 3 and Rationale

Align System Elements

Aligning workforce programs and services ensures transparent processes and efficient “no wrong door” access that can improve transitions and help all participants complete programs of study, earn credentials of value, and gain critical employability skills. Primarily, seamless alignment supports greater portability and transferability for Texans in or preparing to enter the labor market.

System Goal 3—Local Board Response

Please describe alignment efforts and the status, outcomes, and plan for continuous improvement of system alignment in your region. In the description, include barriers, considerations, and proposed actions to overcome the barriers.

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s):

Board Strategies:

- Set clear career pathways that show where targeted and in-demand occupations entry level career path may lead.
- Develop strong partnerships with literacy and education agencies through Memoranda of Understanding.
- Set priorities of service for specific targeted populations, including job seekers with basic skill deficiencies and employment barriers.
- Provide training and technical assistance to education institutions on the changing needs of job seekers and employers.

Page 32: WSST works to codify relationships strengthened via joint planning initiatives, where possible. These structured partnerships are characterized by defined referral and coordination procedures that provide customers with seamless service transitions between partner agencies. Emphasis is placed on targeting customers that meet respective agency eligibility requirements and capitalizing on co-enrollment opportunities to provide a broader range of services and to better maximize community leverage resources. During strategic planning, WSST prioritizes strategies and services that articulate into post-secondary credentials. In addition, WSST Board staff actively participates in various advisory groups to ensure the system is informed by the most current industry/employer trends and remains relevant to employer customers.

Board Initiative (pg. 26-28):

Under the CARES Program, 65 CDL participants were assisted and trained to obtain their CDL driver license with any of the following driving schools: LHCT Training Center, Astudillo Elite Truck Driving School or Laredo College Professional Truck Driving School.

During the process, all 65 participants were contacted via telephone to register or update their Work In Texas application and complete their Resumes. Registration in WIT, resume development and interviewing technique service assistance were provided to all participants and communication was maintained on a weekly basis from the beginning to assist & monitor individual progress. Participants once obtaining their CDL driver license received job referrals to assist them with job search.

Each of our CDL Program Trainees was successful in completing initial classroom training, passed and received CDL Temporary Learner's Permits. As of September 30, 2021, 59 participants completed 2 weeks of "Behind the Wheel Training" and were successful in obtaining their CDL Certification/Driver License. 55 of the participants are gainfully employed with various companies.

(pp.. 5 – 7 and pp.. 25-27): WSST developed an incentive program for early childhood professionals who work for TRS providers in one or more of the following areas: rural areas, home-based providers, providers offering care during non-traditional hours and providers with lower teacher/child ratios. End of year one-time bonuses promoted staff retention and incentivized current and newly certified TRS providers. This promoted the continuity of quality care for the children and providing quality care by the same early childhood professional.

Incentives were distributed amongst the qualifying teachers based on the center's star level. And those who met one or more of the additional qualifiers also received an additional incentive. Early childhood professionals received a one-time bonus of \$750.00 in addition a one-time enhancement of \$200.00 for those who fall under the additional qualifiers.

System Goal 4 and Rationale

Improve and Integrate Programs

Coordination and integration of system processes focused on high-priority programmatic needs support service delivery; increase participant access, learning, and transitions through education and training; and improve decision-making at the system, partner, and participant levels.

System Goal 4—Local Board Response

Please describe local efforts to integrate processes and share resources across programs in your region. Identify efficiencies realized and improved participant outcomes as a result. Describe how this work can be leveraged to create new, relevant opportunities that serve the needs of all stakeholders.

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s):

Board Strategies:

- The One-Stop concept will be utilized to ensure that persons seeking services from the WSST Workforce Centers are readily available without duplication of effort.
- Continue improving the integration of workforce development core and required partner programs and leveraged services with local partners.
- Provide labor market information systems on the Internet through the Resource Rooms at the WSST Workforce Centers.
- Workforce Virtual Station (WVS): Twelve WVS will be equipped with a resource lab and essential office suite, with direct contact with staff at the Laredo Center. Board Initiative (page 5-7 and 25-27):

The WSST Board has worked continuously to integrate core services and incorporate and align resources with

required partners into a One-Stop Workforce Center system. WSST to incorporate a better flow of resources and information, worked with core partners to plan strategies and requirements to procure for adequate workforce center square footage to better accommodate some of the required partners. Collaboration and leveraging of resources for the co- location of core staff in the workforce center has resulted in a workforce system that is integrated and inclusive.

The WSST Board continues to work to ensure all the workforce center locations are equipped so the full range of services can be provided to all populations and employers. To assist in reaching hard to serve populations, WSST coordinated and planned the opening of 12 Workforce Virtual Stations (WVS), funded by the Innovation Grant awarded by the Texas Workforce Commission. Job seekers are connected via video with the staff at the Laredo center and receive the assistance they need in real time. The WVS is equipped with a study carrel, personal computer, camera, microphone, printer, scanner, headphone, telephone, and also includes auxiliary aids and services for individuals with disabilities. Once fully functional, the WVS allows WSST to transition to an enhanced delivery of workforce center services that better connects rural county job seekers with employers while maintaining an environment that has high protocols in safety for all involved.

WSST has collaborated and coordinated locations for the twelve Workforce Virtual Stations, each of the WVS will have access to Wi-Fi, in agreement with partner locations who have signed an MOU with WSST including the Joe A. Guerra Laredo Public Library, Barbara Fasken Branch Library, Lamar Bruni Vergara Inner City Branch Library, Sophie Christen McKendrick, Francisco Ochoa, and Fernando A. Salinas Branch Library, Laredo ISD (Main Office), and Rio Bravo Community Center. WSST will continue to work in partnership to establish other locations for the WVS.

Strategic Opportunities to Drive Local Implementation

Before TWIC began the process to develop the new system strategic plan, Board directors were invited to provide input on issues and opportunities for consideration in system planning.

Please consider the responses you provided (above) to local board area implementation of the four primary goals in the current system plan and identify how the new system strategic plan can help future implementation of your regional goals and strategies related to the following:

Increase engagement of target populations, including Opportunity Youth, Texans with disabilities, foster youth, and sex-trafficking victims.

Describe Board strategies that support engagement of sometimes underserved populations.

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s):

Page 31: For the past three years, WSST has leveraged resources with regional partners to provide a job fair

targeting individual with disabilities. Partners work collaboratively to outreach employers that actively outreach and accommodate individuals with disabilities. Job fair partners include the Border Region MHMR, City of Laredo, Goodwill Industries, Laredo Independent School District, Laredo Vocational Development Services, Let's Go Professional Staffing, Texas A&M International University, TWC-VRS Division for Blind Services, United Independent School District, U Can Work 2, and VAIL.

Page 43 – 44: WSST works diligently to establish partnerships (1) that provide service options to youth with disabilities and (2) that support these customers with sufficient accommodations for employment, training, and other program activities. The Texas Workforce Solutions Division for Vocational Rehabilitation is the core partner that assists in serving youth with disabilities. Additional agencies supplement combined services specific to youth with disabilities, including:

- ✓ Border Region Behavioral Health Center (counseling services)
- ✓ El Metro (paratransit)
- ✓ VAIL (independent living)
- ✓ Ruth B Cowl Rehabilitation Center (therapy and counseling services)
- ✓ U Can Work 2 (vocational counseling and job placement services)
- ✓ Let's Go Professional Staffing (vocational counseling and job placement services)
- ✓ City of Laredo Blue Ribbon Committee for People with Disabilities (Advocates for individuals with disabilities by promoting awareness, education and securing resources for their physiological, psychological and social well-being; provides guidance to the City of Laredo officials regarding issues affecting people with disabilities.)

WSST will continue to work diligently to strengthen the network of partners and service framework to encourage engage in youth workforce services by individuals with disabilities.

Improve efficiency and outcomes through data-driven decision-making and investments.

Describe Board strategies that support data-driven decision-making and investments.

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s):

Board Plan: pages 7-27, 32 - The WSST Board and staff engaged and participated in the development of the plan. Board and contractor staff understands how to utilize the different TWC Labor Market data sets to determine the targeted direction and implementation of strategic investments in skill development and training for example. The targeted occupations and industries that have the largest growth projections were identified utilizing the different available data sets and represented in the Tables found on pages 7-27 of the Plan. Employers were identified by NAICS codes found in the TWC Employer list and were contacted and surveyed strategically by industry sectors to maximize the opportunity for feed-back on the development of the Board Plan and strategic direction. Strategically surveying and interviewing employers for the development of this plan resulted in some consistency of skills needed in the Health Care, Transportation, and Education Industries, the top three industries that have the highest projected growth. WSST will continue to develop strategies that address the workforce region investments in occupational skill development that meets

employer expectations and leads to job placement in a career path.

Board Initiative (pp.. 5 – 7 and pp.. 25-27): WSST developed an incentive program for early childhood professionals who work for TRS providers in one or more of the following areas: rural areas, home-based providers, providers offering care during non-traditional hours and providers with lower teacher/child ratios. End of year one-time bonuses promoted staff retention and incentivized current and newly certified TRS providers. This promoted the continuity of quality care for the children and providing quality care by the same early childhood professional. Incentives were distributed amongst the qualifying teachers based on the center's star level. And those who met one or more of the additional qualifiers also received an additional incentive. Early childhood professionals received a one-time bonus of \$750.00 in addition a one-time enhancement of \$200.00 for those who fall under the additional qualifiers.



DIRECTIVE

DATE: May 25, 2017

TO: Andrea De La Garza, Project Director
Workforce Center Contractor

FROM: Mr. Rogelio Trevino, Executive Director
Workforce Solutions for South Texas

Keyword: WIOA ID/No: 001-2017

SUBJECT: Service Priority for Individualized Career Services and Training Services

PURPOSE:

To ensure that individualized career services and training services are provided on a priority basis to the population groups stipulated in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) guidelines.

REFERENCE:

Texas Workforce Commission Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Guidelines for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth, revised September 26, 2016.

TWC WD Letter 25-15, Applying Priority of Service and Identifying and Documenting Eligible Veterans and Transitioning Service Members, issued October 26, 2015.

TWC WD Letter 43-11, Priority of Service for Eligible Foster Youth, issued November 3, 2011.

ACTION REQUIRED:

Workforce Center Project Director must ensure that appropriate staff is provided with a copy of this policy to ensure implementation and compliance with the requirements set forth in this directive and its policy. Contractor shall amend existing operating procedures and documents, where applicable, to ensure this information is conveyed accordingly. Any procedures hereby requested along with back up documentation to include signatures as to who is being provided with this information must be submitted to the Board Office, attention: Bertha Millan, Workforce Supervisor, before close of business Friday June 2, 2017.

EFFECTIVE DATE:

Immediately

DIRECT INQUIRES:

Contract Management Department, (956)722-3973

*Service Priority for Individualized Career Services and Training Services
Effective Date: May 25, 2017*

Workforce Solutions for South Texas

POLICY:

Under WIOA priority access to services applies automatically to public assistance recipients, other low-income adults, and individuals who are basic skills deficient, regardless of funding levels.

REFERENCE:

Texas Workforce Commission Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Guidelines for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth, revised September 26, 2016.

TWC WD Letter 25-15, Applying Priority of Service and Identifying and Documenting Eligible Veterans and Transitioning Service Members, issued October 26, 2015.

TWC WD Letter 43-11, Priority of Service for Eligible Foster Youth, issued November 3, 2011.

POLICY DESCRIPTION:

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 25-15, who are also recipients of public assistance, low-income, or basic skill deficient.
2. Foster youth and former foster youth, as defined in WD Letter 43-11, 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 skill deficient.
4. All other eligible veterans and eligible spouses.
5. All other foster youth and former foster youth.
6. All other individuals, including local Board priority groups.

