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# STRATEGIC PLAN



2025

2028

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# Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas

## Board Plan

### Program Years 2025 – 2028

#### **Part 1: Board Vision and Strategies**

##### **A. Vision and Goals**

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

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

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

##### **Board Response:**

Vision Statement: Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas (Board) is a responsive and effective Workforce Development Board overseeing a quality, competitive workforce system for a changing economy.

Mission: Provide solutions for quality workforce development.

##### Goals

1. Establish awareness of the value of Workforce Solutions throughout the Deep East Texas area.
2. Become a regional partner for economic development.
3. Promote quality and excellence that foster continual improvement.
4. Provide barrier-free access to workforce information, programs and services.
5. Leverage resources and increase effectiveness through partnerships and coalitions.

The Board works to provide a regional workforce that is educated, innovative, and highly skilled in areas that match the skill requirements of the region's employers. The Board wants to ensure sufficient services are provided to fully equip workers of all ages, regardless of barriers to employment.

The Board accomplishes this:

- through partnerships with economic development, other business groups, independent school districts, and local colleges to identify and find solutions to employer needs;
- by ensuring good fiscal stewardship in hiring qualified staff who are thoroughly trained;
- through continual monitoring of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and other program performance measures developed by The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC);
- by responding with assistance to negative events such as layoffs or disasters;
- through staff involvement in other agencies, community organizations, and schools to make people aware of available services and how to access them;
- by providing information, individualized services, employment plans, tools, and workshops to increase job seekers' knowledge of employer expectations and increase the chances of their success in the workplace; and
- by providing barrier-free access to workforce information, programs, and services.

## **B. Board Strategies**

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

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

### **Board Response:**

The Board's strategy to work with core partners, including Adult Education Literacy and Vocational Rehabilitation, to achieve its vision and goals is to ensure personal contact with other key stakeholders involved in workforce development to form effective partnerships. This is done through community involvement, joint projects, memoranda of understanding and other avenues. In this way, the Board can better understand what other organizations offer to avoid duplication of services and, more importantly, to expand the depth of services that can be offered to job seekers and employers by working together.

## **C. High-Performing Board**

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

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

### **Board Response:**

In an effort to continue performing at the highest levels, the Board monitors performance monthly. If a measure is at risk of not meeting, it is reviewed, and technical assistance is offered. As needed, corrective actions are implemented with the Board's workforce and child care contractors (subrecipients). Consistent communication and a working relationship are essential in developing best practices that lead to success in maintaining status as a high-performing Board. Subrecipient meetings are held monthly to review performance of all program and services. The review focuses on performance, financial management, special programs, coordination efforts, customer satisfaction, and technical assistance.

To ensure the Board and subrecipients are seeking to develop and adapt approaches to meet customer needs, professional development is encouraged.

## **Part 2. Economic and Workforce Analysis**

### **A. Regional Economic and Employment Needs Analysis**

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

Boards must include a regional analysis of the following:

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

### **B. Labor Force Analysis and Trends**

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

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

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

### **Board Response:**

#### *Regional Overview*

The Deep East Texas region is located approximately 120 miles north of Houston, Texas; 190 miles southeast of Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas; and 220 miles east of Austin, Texas. Located on 10,384 square miles of land, the population density is 36.45 residents per square mile compared to a statewide density of 95.92. The area is considered rural; there is no metropolitan statistical area within the region. Natural features reflect an overall percentage of surface water of 4.6% compared to 2.5% statewide. The land surface form topography for the region is a variation which can be described as irregular plains and plains with hills. In recent years, large fields of natural gas have been located. The region contains four (4) national forests, two (2) state forests, and a number of lakes and reservoirs including Lake Livingston, Sam Rayburn Reservoir, and Toledo Bend Reservoir. The area is heavily forested with mostly pine trees and is known as Texas Forest Country.

There is no major airport within the region, the closest is Houston Intercontinental. State Highway 59 (north/south) connects the region to Interstate Highway 69, which is in varying stages of development. State Highway 190 (east/west) connects the region to I-45 and further west to I-35 north of Austin. Rail access is available throughout the area.

The region contains 53 independent school districts (ISDs) and one (1) public charter school. Higher education includes Stephen F. Austin State University; Angelina College, which serves the majority of the area; and Panola College, which serves Shelby County. Satellite campuses exist throughout the area, and several counties are building or improving existing facilities to expand educational opportunities in their counties. Angelina College also houses an active Small Business Development Center, which helps entrepreneurs get from ideas to successful businesses. Stephen F. Austin State University has the Small Business Resource Hub as part of Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship and, as with the community colleges, is responsive to changing business needs.

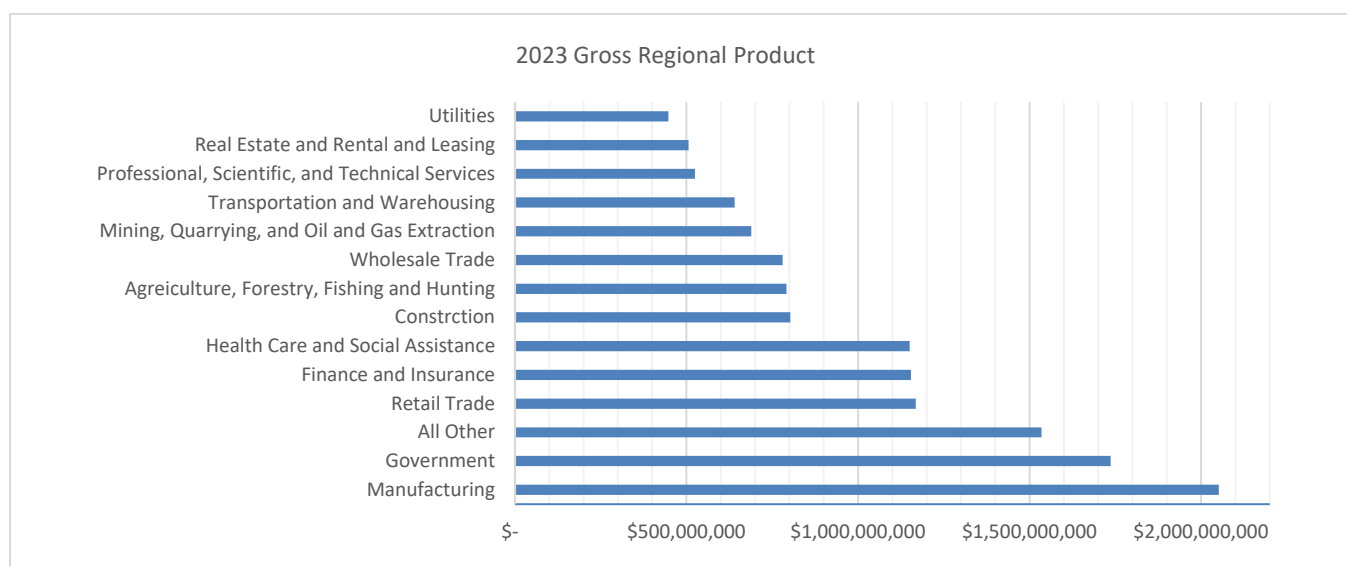
The region's estimated 2024 population is 349,102, a growth rate of 3.3% from 2020. The overall growth rate of Texas is 5.5%, indicating that the region is continuing to grow but at a slower rate than the rest of Texas. The region's labor force is 154,484, and since 2001, the region shows a 2.63% increase in the overall number of jobs. (Source: Texas Demographic Center, Population Estimates and Projections Program)



Compared to the State percentages, Deep East Texas has a slightly smaller number of persons under 18, but a higher percentage of persons 65 years and over, most of whom are not in the workforce. The Employment Participation rate is therefore lower for this area than for the State.

	Deep East	Texas
Persons under 5 years, percent	5.84%	6.30%
Persons under 18 years, percent	22.63%	24.80%
Persons 18 years through 64 years, percent	51.64%	55.20%
Persons 65 years and over, percent	19.89%	13.70%

The gross domestic product (GDP) for the Deep East Texas area has continued to show growth since 2022. The GDP for the region was \$14,092,026,000 in 2023, expanding 5.1%. This follows growth of 9.6% in 2022. (Source: JobsEQ, [www.chumraecon.com/jobseq](http://www.chumraecon.com/jobseq), Bureau of Economic Analysis, imputed by Chmura where necessary, updated through 2023.)



The region's median household income in 2023 was \$52,220 compared to Texas' \$76,292. The percentage of all families living below the poverty level in the region increased from 15.5% in 2020 to 19.1% in 2024. The percentage also increased statewide, 10.9% in Texas as of 2020 to 13.9% in 2024. (Source: JobsEQ, 2024)

Per capita personal income in 2024 was \$27,992 (Deep East Texas) compared to \$37,514 (Texas) and \$41,261 for the Nation. (Source: JobsEQ)

In June 2024, the Unemployment Rate for the Deep East Texas region was 5.47%, increasing from 4.47% five (5) years before. One year earlier, in June 2023, the unemployment rate in the Deep East Texas region was 5.0%. The region's rates continue to be higher than both Texas and the Nation.

Unemployment Rate			
	Deep East	Texas	USA
2019	4.47%	3.54%	3.67%
2020	8.10%	7.71%	8.11%
2021	6.93%	5.64%	5.36%
2022	5.03%	3.94%	3.65%
2023	4.84%	3.95%	3.64%
2024 (October)	4.94%	4.12%	3.93%

According to Local Area Unemployment Statistics, the UI Rate varied significantly by county for 2024.

Deep East County	Employment	Civilian Labor Force	Unemployment	UI Rate
Angelina	35,645	37,228	1,583	4.3%
Houston	7,864	8,227	363	4.4%
Jasper	12,163	12,929	766	5.9%
Nacogdoches	27,998	29,258	1,260	4.3%
Newton	4,824	5,161	337	6.5%
Polk	19,979	21,048	1,069	5.1%
Sabine	3,378	3,595	217	6.0%
San Augustine	2,983	3,148	165	5.2%
San Jacinto	11,164	11,790	626	5.3%
Shelby	9,167	9,637	470	4.9%
Trinity	4,943	5,207	264	5.1%
Tyler	6,073	6,466	393	6.1%

The percentage of all families living below the poverty level in 2024 increased since 2020 (15.5%) in the region to 19.1%. The percentage also increased statewide, 10.9% in Texas as of 2020 to 13.9% in 2024. (Source: Jobs EQ, 2024)

Social Demographics Breakdown						
	Deep East	Texas	USA	Deep East	Texas	USA
	Percent			Value		
Poverty Level (of all people)	19.10%	13.90%	12.50%	67,400	3,990,326	40,521,584
Households Receiving Food Stamps/SNAP	16.40%	11.50%	11.50%	22,912	1,209,485	14,486,880
Enrolled in Grade 12 (% of total population)	1.30%	1.50%	1.40%	5,031	433,670	4,476,703
Disconnected Youth	4.00%	3.00%	2.50%	844	50,502	430,795
Children in Single Parent Families (% of all children)	40.90%	34.10%	34.00%	31,711	2,400,195	23,568,955
Uninsured	18.00%	17.60%	8.70%	64,530	5,056,008	28,315,092
With a Disability, Age 18-64	17.10%	9.70%	10.50%	35,477	1,710,522	20,879,820
With a Disability, Age 18-64 Labor Force Participation Rate and Size	41.30%	49.80%	45.50%	14,663	851,439	9,492,098
Foreign Born	5.90%	17.10%	13.70%	22,096	4,987,855	45,281,071
Speak English Less Than Very Well (population 5 yrs and over)	4.70%	13.00%	8.20%	16,580	3,538,224	25,704,846

(Source: Jobs EQ, Economic Overview 2024)

The region's population has a higher percentage of high school graduates and those with some college experience compared to the State. Post high school degree attainment is, however, lower than the State percentages. (Source: Lightcast Q3 2024 Economy Overview Data Set)



Educational Attainment				
	Deep East		Texas	
	% of Population	Population	% of Population	Population
Less Than 9th Grade	6.50%	16,570	7.40%	1,477,060
9th Grade to 12th Grade	9.70%	24,857	7.20%	1,426,340
High School Diploma	36.60%	93,573	24.40%	4,851,928
Some College	23.70%	60,550	20.60%	4,091,696
Associate's Degree	6.90%	17,540	7.70%	1,528,470
Bachelor's Degree	10.70%	27,422	21.00%	4,176,560
Graduate Degree and Higher	6.00%	15,326	11.80%	2,350,655

Migration data reflects where people move to or from and the area. The following table analyzes past and current residents of Deep East Texas. The left column shows residents of other counties migrating to Deep East Texas. The right column shows residents migrating from Deep East Texas to other counties. As of 2021, 2,774 people have migrated from Harris County, Texas, to Deep East Texas. In the same year, 1,533 people left Deep East Texas migrating to Harris County, Texas. Only the top 10 counties are shown.

Migrating TO Deep East from Other Counties		Migrating FROM Deep East to Other Counties	
Harris County, TX	2,774	Harris County, TX	1,533
Montgomery County, TX	1,436	Montgomery County, TX	1,075
Orange County, TX	559	Walker County, TX	412
Hardin County, TX	452	Hardin County, TX	379
Jefferson County, TX	452	Jefferson County, TX	378
Walker County, TX	451	Liberty County, TX	368
Liberty County, TX	391	Dallas County, TX	293
Dallas County, TX	370	Orange County, TX	290
Tarrant County, TX	308	Smith County, TX	270
Galveston County, TX	287	Sumter County, FL	212

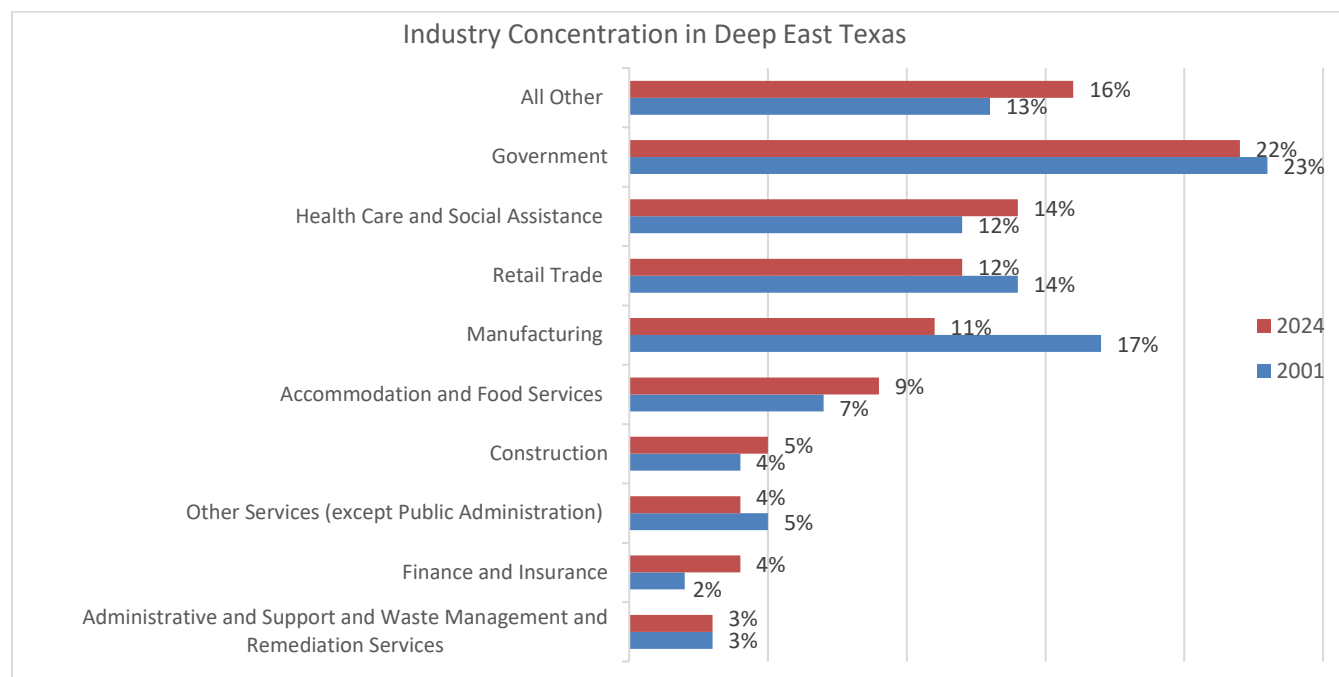
### Industry Analysis

Businesses are classified in several ways. One way is to look at the size by number of employees. The vast majority of employment in the region is in establishments with less than 10 employees. Establishments with less than 100 employees in rural areas are and will be the drivers of the regional economy. Over 97% of the employers in the region have less than 50 employees.

Business Size				
	Deep East		Texas	
	Percentage	Business Count	Percentage	Business Count
1 to 4 employees	39.60%	5,704	37.60%	452,753
5 to 9 employees	30.00%	4,315	28.90%	347,959
10 to 19 employees	19.00%	2,732	19.30%	232,032
20 to 49 employees	8.50%	1,225	10.20%	122,484
50 to 99 employees	2.10%	309	2.60%	31,549
100 to 249 employees	0.60%	89	1.00%	11,615
250 to 499 employees	0.20%	23	0.30%	3,347
500+ employees	0.00%	7	0.10%	1,675

\*Business Data by DatabaseUSA.com is third-party data provided by Lightcast to its customers as a convenience, and Lightcast does not endorse or warrant its accuracy or consistency with other published Lightcast data. In most cases, the Business Count will not match total companies with profiles on the summary tab.

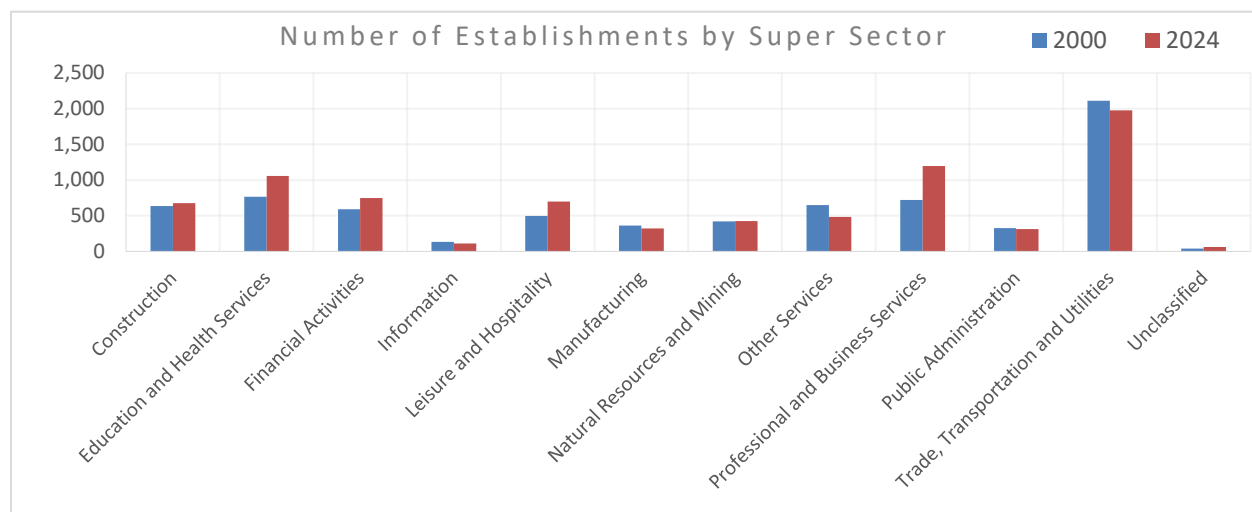
A look at the employment by industry super-sector shows the biggest change from 2001 is the decrease of Manufacturing employment by six percent (6%). Retail Trade and Government employment also declined but marginally. Finance and Insurance; Accommodation and Food Services; and Health Care and Social Assistance all increased slightly.



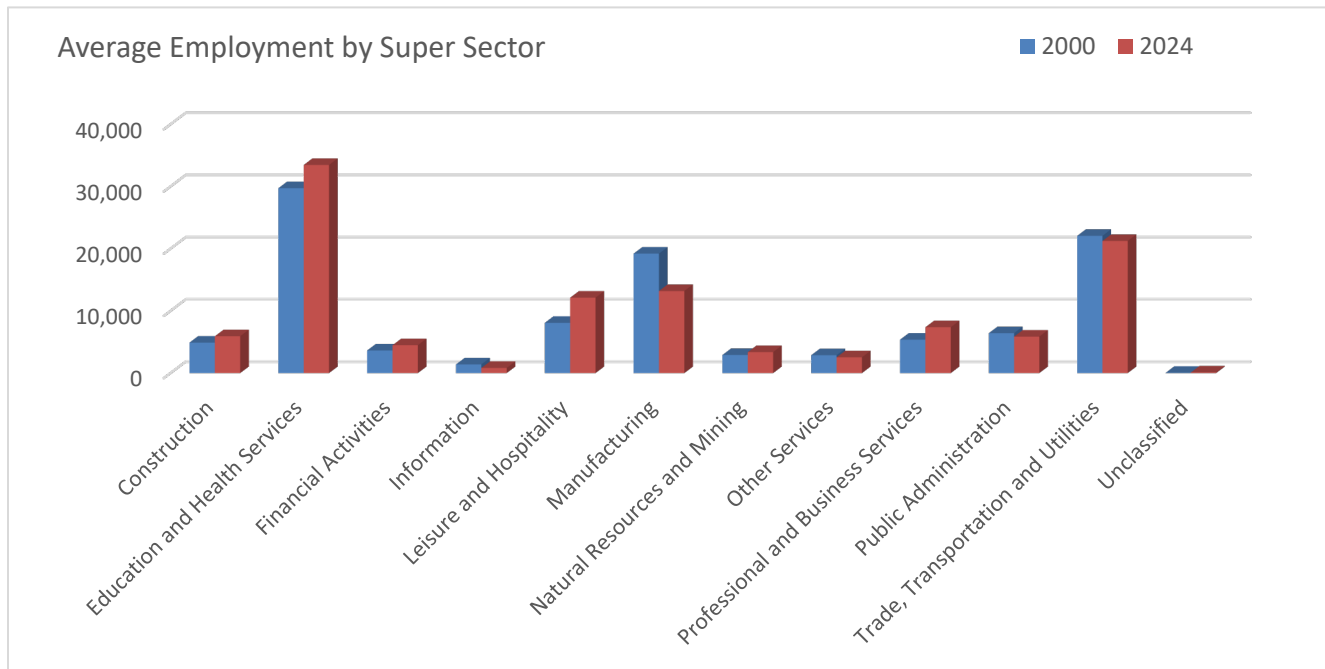
The North American Industry Coding System (NAICS) is used to classify similar industries. Very specific industry information is found using the 5-digit NAICS code; the 2-digit NAICS code is a very broad category called the sector level. Super Sectors are not given a NAICS number. For example:

Very specific	11231	Chicken egg production
	1123	Poultry and egg production
	112	Animal production
Sector level	11	Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting
Super Sector		Natural Resources and Mining Group

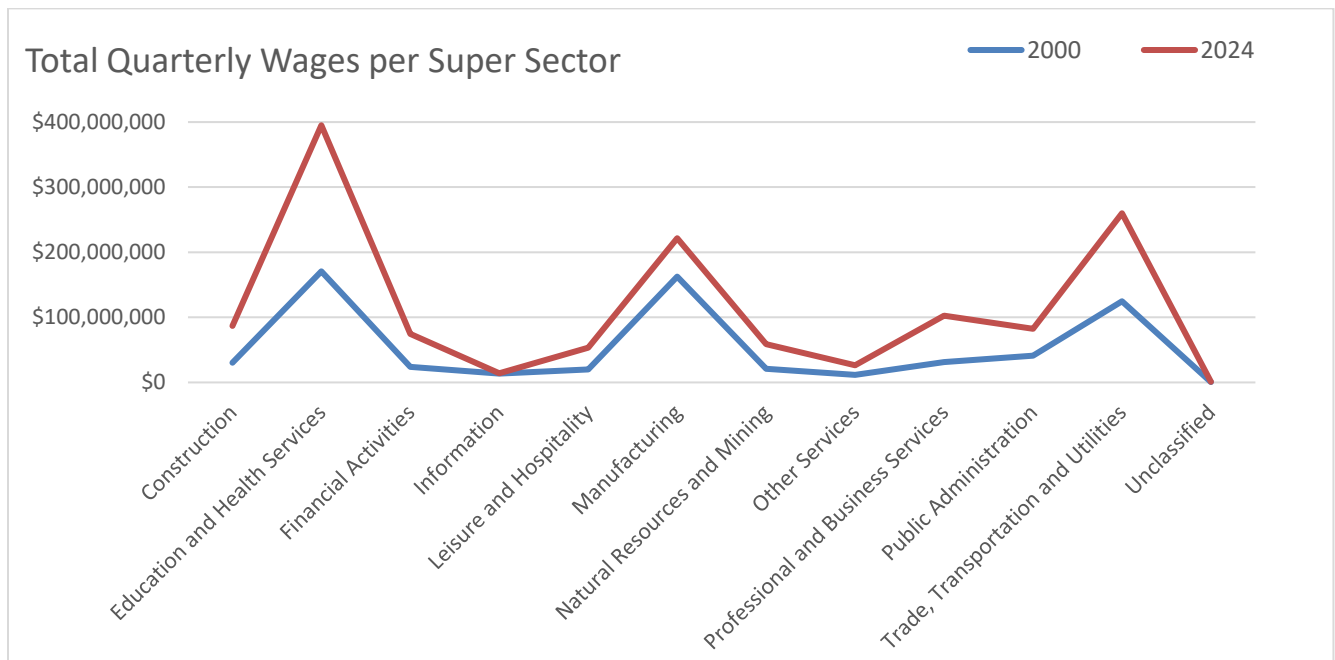
Beginning with Super Sector information, we can start to get a picture of the dominant industries and how they have changed in almost 25 years.



Education and Health Services; Professional and Business Services; and Trade, Transportation and Utilities show the largest number of establishments.



Average Employment shows the growth of some industries and the decline of others. Increased employment usually indicates the need for more goods/services. Decreased demand for employment can mean the industry is contracting or that technology is replacing workers.



Quarterly Wages show an increase in all but Information Industries.

The following table looks at 2-digit NAICS codes for employment changes per industry sector and the economic impact over a 5-year period.

NAICS Code	Industry	2018 Jobs	2023 Jobs	Change in Jobs	% Change	2023 Earnings Per Worker	2023 GRP
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	1,496	1,603	107	7%	\$107,895	\$688,793,374
22	Utilities	980	926	(54)	(5%)	\$118,435	\$447,326,544
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	3,226	3,140	(86)	(3%)	\$54,868	\$791,716,043
90	Government	26,781	25,546	(1,236)	(5%)	\$60,795	\$1,736,647,224
31	Manufacturing	12,178	13,278	1,100	9%	\$75,462	\$2,051,241,502
44	Retail Trade	14,580	14,963	383	3%	\$39,406	\$1,168,061,988
23	Construction	7,358	8,546	1,188	16%	\$61,530	\$803,065,723
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	7,324	6,634	(690)	(9%)	\$33,611	\$346,973,251
62	Health Care & Social Assistance	17,475	17,170	(305)	(2%)	\$57,317	\$1,150,753,804
72	Accommodation and Food Services	10,536	10,857	321	3%	\$21,698	\$422,879,289
52	Finance and Insurance	3,596	4,290	694	19%	\$100,513	\$1,153,932,125
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1,585	1,792	207	13%	\$60,542	\$506,039,195
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	5,659	5,540	(119)	(2%)	\$42,887	\$327,509,248
42	Wholesale Trade	3,325	3,197	(129)	(4%)	\$83,969	\$780,067,847
48	Transportation and Warehousing	3,175	3,093	(82)	(3%)	\$78,661	\$640,554,076
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,014	1,016	2	0%	\$29,529	\$46,680,422
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	3,112	3,994	882	28%	\$88,907	\$524,560,645
51	Information	815	891	76	9%	\$71,448	\$259,175,465
61	Educational Services	752	949	197	26%	\$34,762	\$40,427,744
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	595	528	(67)	(11%)	\$102,011	\$90,948,372

(Source: Lightcast Q3 2024 Economy Overview Data Set)

The following industry sectors from the list above are projecting the largest growth or have a substantial employment base with sustainable average wages.

NAICS Code	Industry	2018 Jobs	2023 Jobs	Change in Jobs	% Change	2023 Earnings Per Worker	2023 GRP
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	1,496	1,603	107	7%	\$107,895	\$688,793,374
31	Manufacturing	12,178	13,278	1,100	9%	\$75,462	\$2,051,241,502
23	Construction	7,358	8,546	1,188	16%	\$61,530	\$803,065,723
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	17,475	17,170	(305)	(2%)	\$57,317	\$1,150,753,804
52	Finance and Insurance	3,596	4,290	694	19%	\$100,513	\$1,153,932,125
42	Wholesale Trade	3,325	3,197	(129)	(4%)	\$83,969	\$780,067,847
48	Transportation and Warehousing	3,175	3,093	(82)	(3%)	\$78,661	\$640,554,076
54	Professional, Scientific, & Technical Svc.	3,112	3,994	882	28%	\$88,907	\$524,560,645
51	Information	815	891	76	9%	\$71,448	\$259,175,465

Breaking this information down into 3- and 4-digit NAICS codes reveals the area's list of In-Demand Industries.

NAICS Code	Industry Title	Estimated Employment (2022)	Projected Employment (2032)	Change In Employment	% Change	Annualized % Growth
2131	Support activities for mining	993	1,158	165	16.62	1.55
236	Construction of buildings	917	1,338	421	45.91	3.85
3116	Animal slaughtering and processing	2,644	2,446	-198	-7.49	-0.78
3211	Sawmills and wood preservation	1,662	1,428	-234	-14.08	-1.51
3212	Veneer, plywood, and engineered wood product manufacturing	1,658	986	-672	-40.53	-5.06
3219	Other wood product manufacturing	454	484	30	6.61	0.64
3231	Printing and related support activities	323	306	-17	-5.26	-0.54
4231	Motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts and supplies merchant wholesalers	212	217	5	2.36	0.23
4234	Professional and commercial equipment and supplies merchant wholesalers	76	98	22	28.95	2.57
4238	Machinery, equipment, and supplies merchant wholesalers	760	798	38	5	0.49
484	Truck transportation	1,364	1,475	111	8.14	0.79
517	Telecommunications	329	301	-28	-8.51	-0.89
5411	Legal services	560	572	12	2.14	0.21
5412	Accounting, tax preparation, bookkeeping, and payroll services	425	429	4	0.94	0.09
5413	Architectural, engineering, and related services	473	536	63	13.32	1.26
5415	Computer systems design and related services	493	650	157	31.85	2.8
5416	Management, scientific, and technical consulting services	413	525	112	27.12	2.43
5419	Other professional, scientific, and technical services	425	615	190	44.71	3.76
6211	Offices of physicians	2,287	2,859	572	25.01	2.26
6212	Offices of dentists	631	643	12	1.9	0.19
6213	Offices of other health practitioners	598	713	115	19.23	1.77
6216	Home health care services	2,902	2,928	26	0.9	0.09
6219	Other ambulatory health care services	406	538	132	32.51	2.86

(Source: LMI)

### *Labor Force Analysis and Trends*

Based on the 2023 annual labor market data compared to the previous year:

- The labor force has increased by 0.05%
- The number employed has grown by 0.2%
- The number of unemployed fell by 3.7%
- The unemployment rate was down to 4.8%

In 2024, persons ages 16 years and older were 77.3% of the area population, compared to 77.9% statewide. This is the population generally considered to participate in the labor market. The labor force participation rate for the area is 53.7%, compared to the State rate of 65.0%. (Source: Lightcast Q3 2024 Data Set)

Labor Force Breakdown (June 2024)		
	Deep East	Texas
Population	376,464	30,898,626
16+ Civilian Non-Institutionalized Population	291,380	23,745,698
Not in Labor Force (16+)	135,029	8,309,114
Labor Force	156,351	15,436,584
Employed	147,792	14,736,513
Unemployed	8,559	700,071
Under 16, Military, and Institutionalized Population	85,084	7,152,928
Labor Force Participation Rate	54%	65%

In 2024, of commuting to work of the civilian labor force 16 years and older (local/state), most drove a personal vehicle alone, and very few used public transportation (0.3%). The mean commuting time was 27 minutes for the region and 26.6 minutes for the State. There was a variation in time for the counties within the area: 22 minutes for Angelina County and 38 minutes for San Jacinto County. (Source: Jobs EQ)

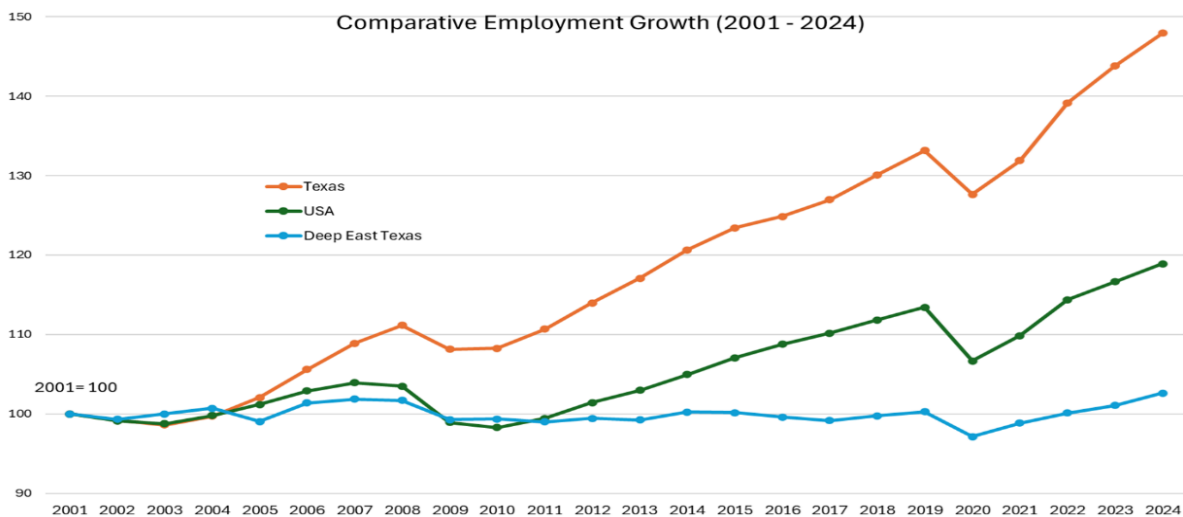
The average worker in the Deep East Texas region earned annual wages of \$49,351 as of 2024Q1. Average annual wages per worker increased 4.4% in the region over the preceding four (4) quarters. For comparison purposes, annual average wages were \$70,857 in the Nation as of 2024Q1.

According to the chart below, average annual wages have continued to increase in the Deep East Texas region, Texas, and the Nation from 2019 through 2024. (Source: Jobs EQ)

	Deep East	Texas	USA
<b>2019</b>	\$38,583	\$56,407	\$56,323
<b>2020</b>	\$39,893	\$58,200	\$58,241
<b>2021</b>	\$41,443	\$60,947	\$63,044
<b>2022</b>	\$44,184	\$65,054	\$66,865
<b>2023</b>	\$47,215	\$68,699	\$69,363
<b>2024</b>	\$48,614	\$70,739	\$71,327

(Source: Lightcast Q3 2024 Economic Overview Data Set)

The overall job growth for the region lags behind the State and Nation.



Source: Lightcast Q3 2024 Data Set. Emsi occupation employment data are based on final Emsi industry data and final Emsi staffing patterns. Wage estimates are based on Occupational Employment Statistics (QCEW and Non-QCEW Employees classes of worker) and the American Community Survey (Self-Employed and Extended Proprietors). Occupational wage estimates are also affected by county-level Emsi earnings by industry. This report uses state data from the following agencies: Texas Workforce Commission.



Worker demographics (Lightcast Q3 2024 Data Set) shows the following information:

Jobs by Worker Age				
	Deep East		Texas	
	Value	Percent	Value	Percent
Age 14-18	3,358	3%	377,492	3%
Age 19-21	5,873	5%	712,475	5%
Age 22-24	6,595	6%	867,291	6%
Age 25-34	23,828	21%	3,234,402	22%
Age 35-44	25,262	22%	3,257,507	23%
Age 45-54	23,239	20%	2,837,874	20%
Age 55-64	18,932	16%	2,157,270	15%
Age 65+	8,572	7%	959,322	7%
Jobs by Worker Race or Ethnicity				
	Deep East		Texas	
	Value	Percent	Value	Percent
White	65,029	39%	6,389,123	28%
Black or African American	18,484	11%	1,906,923	9%
	Value	Percent	Value	Percent
American Indian or Alaska Native	374	0%	42,151	0%
Asian	3,392	2%	893,303	4%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	93	0%	21,935	0%
Two or More Races	1,729	1%	234,806	1%
Hispanic or Latino	26,560	16%	4,915,392	22%
Total Diversity	50,631	30%	8,014,509	36%

### Labor Market

Generally, a labor market is made up of workers in a particular area, and those willing to travel to that area. Commuting patterns normally define the size of the labor market. This is now affected, to some extent, by the pandemic-influenced expansion of remote jobs. Because the extent of this expansion is unknown, the Board will continue to use commuting patterns to indicate the size of the labor market.

		How far Deep East Residents Travel for Work		How far from Home Deep East Workers Travel	
		Count	Share	Count	Share
Total Private Primary Jobs		102,033	100.0%	75,900	100.0%
Less than 10 miles		27,967	27.4%	27,898	36.8%
10 to 24 miles		16,325	16.0%	15,383	20.3%
25 to 50 miles		13,810	13.5%	9,953	13.1%
Greater than 50 miles		43,931	43.1%	22,666	29.9%

(Source: Onthemap.com 2022 data)

Demographics for the unemployed population in the area are taken from June 2024 Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) information.

Unemployment by Age				
	Deep East		Texas	
Age	Unemployment (June 2024)	% of Unemployed	Unemployment (June 2024)	% of Unemployed
< 22	164	1.92%	11,593	1.80%
22-24	348	4.07%	28,059	4.37%
25-34	1,979	23.12%	161,812	25.19%
35-44	2,104	24.58%	163,136	25.40%
45-54	1,878	21.94%	135,221	21.05%
55-59	864	10.09%	59,198	9.22%
60-64	718	8.39%	48,749	7.59%
65+	504	5.89%	34,547	5.38%
Total	8,559	100.00%	642,315	100.00%
Unemployment by Race				
	Deep East		Texas	
Race	Unemployment (June 2024)	% of Unemployed	Unemployment (June 2024)	% of Unemployed
American Indian or Alaskan Native	51	0.59%	5,362	0.83%
Asian	222	2.60%	37,039	5.77%
Black or African American	4,185	48.89%	283,754	44.18%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	89	1.03%	8,279	1.29%
White	4,013	46.88%	307,880	47.93%
Total	8,559	100.00%	642,315	100.00%
Unemployment by Ethnicity				
	Deep East		Texas	
Ethnicity	Unemployment (June 2024)	% of Unemployed	Unemployment (June 2024)	% of Unemployed
Hispanic or Latino	2,084	24.35%	213,587	33.25%
Not Hispanic or Latino	6,475	75.65%	428,728	66.75%
Total	8,559	100.00%	642,315	100.00%

(Source: Lightcast Q3 2024 Economy Overview Data Set)

The following is a list of job openings produced by an application called Lightcast, which shows positions that were advertised, either in newspapers or online, for jobs in this area for a 12-month period.

<b>Top 25 Job Postings January - December 2024</b>		
<b>SOC Code</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Unique Postings</b>
29-1141	Registered Nurses	1,063
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	464
31-1011	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	460
41-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	451
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	382
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	227
27-1026	Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers	208
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	188
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	174
29-1123	Physical Therapists	173
35-3021	Fast Food and Counter Workers	160
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	154
43-6014	Secretaries and Admin. Assistants, Except Legal, Medical & Executive	154
51-9199	Production Workers, All Other	152
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	148
41-3099	Sales Reps of Services, Except Advertising, Insurance, Financial, Travel	148
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	136
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	131
11-9051	Food Service Managers	128
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	121
41-2011	Cashiers	120
51-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	116
29-2099	Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other	112
29-2031	Cardiovascular Technologists and Technicians	111
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	109

### *Demand Occupations*

The Board develops two (2) specific occupational lists; the Demand Occupations List and the Target Occupations List. Demand Occupations will be discussed first.

To find the occupations with the In-demand Industry Sectors, TWC Staffing Patterns were used. This yielded an unduplicated list of 133 occupations, some of which were found in more than one (1) industry. From this list, any occupation with a positive growth rate and Projected Employment of 200 or more is considered a Demand Occupation.

SOC Code	Occupation Title	NAICS Code	Industry Title	Est. Employment (2022)	Projected Employment (2032)	Change in Employment
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	62	Health care and social assistance	3,462	3,860	398
29-1141	Registered Nurses	62	Health care and social assistance	1,654	1,751	97
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	23, 31-33, 48-49, 42	Construction, Manufacturing, Transportation and warehousing, Wholesale trade	1,566	1,658	92
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	62	Health care and social assistance	936	1,040	104
43-4171	Receptionists and Information Clerks	52, 54, 62	Finance and insurance, Professional, scientific, and technical services, Health care and social assistance	797	928	131
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	23, 31-33, 42, 48-49, 52, 54, 62	Construction, Manufacturing, Wholesale trade, Transportation and warehousing, Finance and insurance, Professional, scientific, and technical services, Health care and social assistance	888	865	-23
47-2061	Construction Laborers	21, 23	Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction, Construction	725	846	121
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	21, 23, 42, 48-49, 522, 5413	Mining, quarrying, oil/gas extraction, Construction, Wholesale trade, Transportation and warehousing, Credit intermediation and related activities, Architectural, engineering, and related services	574	654	80
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	23, 31-33, 42, 52, 62	Wholesale trade	604	631	27
31-9092	Medical Assistants	621	Ambulatory health care services	465	599	134
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	42, 52, 621, 42	Wholesale trade, Finance and insurance, Ambulatory health care services, Wholesale trade	534	548	14
39-9011	Childcare Workers	62	Health care and social assistance	410	476	66
47-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	21, 23	Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction, Construction	382	433	51
43-5052	Postal Service Mail Carriers	48-49	Transportation and warehousing	387	399	12
47-2111	Electricians	23, 31-33	Construction, Manufacturing	336	363	27
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	621	Ambulatory health care services	187	335	148
47-2073	Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	23	Construction	248	261	13
53-3033	Light Truck Drivers	48-49	Transportation and warehousing	215	261	46
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	31-33	Manufacturing	220	261	41
41-3021	Insurance Sales Agents	52	Finance and insurance	221	258	37
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	23	Construction	231	253	22
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	31-33, 42	Manufacturing, Wholesale trade	221	228	7
35-2012	Cooks, Institution and Cafeteria	62	Health care and social assistance	201	225	24
23-2011	Paralegals and Legal Assistants	541	Professional, scientific, and technical services	210	223	13
37-2012	Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	62	Health care and social assistance	189	212	23

A Demand Occupation list could be developed from a list of all occupations, even if those occupations were not in a Demand Industry Sector. Given the trend toward focusing on Target Industry Sectors, the aforementioned list is more relevant.

Skills needed by employers for each demand occupation are listed below.

<b>Demand Occupations</b>	<b>Skills Needed</b>
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	Reading Comprehension, Active Listening, Speaking, Critical Thinking, Writing, Judgment and Decision Making, Monitoring, Complex Problem Solving, Coordination, Mathematics
Childcare Workers	Monitoring, Service Orientation, Social Perceptiveness, Coordination, Active Listening, Speaking, Critical Thinking, Active Learning, Learning Strategies, Reading Comprehension
Construction Laborers	Speaking, Active Listening, Coordination, Operation and Control, Operations, Monitoring, Reading Comprehension, Complex Problem Solving, Critical Thinking, Monitoring, Social Perceptiveness
Cooks, Institution and Cafeteria	Speaking, Monitoring, Service Orientation, Operations Monitoring, Quality Control Analysis, Judgment and Decision Making, Time Management, Management of Personnel Resources, Complex Problem Solving, Coordination
Customer Service Representatives	Active Listening, Service Orientation, Speaking, Reading Comprehension, Critical Thinking, Complex Problem Solving, Time Management, Persuasion, Negotiation, Monitoring
Electricians	Troubleshooting, Repairing, Active Listening, Speaking, Critical Thinking, Active Learning, Quality Control Analysis, Judgment and Decision Making, Installation, Operations Monitoring
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	Coordination, Active Listening, Speaking, Critical Thinking, Management of Personnel Resources, Time Management, Reading Comprehension, Monitoring, Judgment and Decision Making, Social Perceptiveness
General and Operations Managers	Reading Comprehension, Active Listening, Judgment and Decision Making, Time Management, Management of Personnel Resources, Social Perceptiveness, Coordination, Critical Thinking, Monitoring, Speaking
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	Operations Monitoring, Troubleshooting, Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension, Repairing, Installation, Quality Control Analysis, Active Listening, Complex Problem Solving, Active Learning
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	Operations Monitoring, Operation and Control, Monitoring, Reading Comprehension, Speaking, Critical Thinking, Troubleshooting, Time Management, Judgment and Decision Making
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	Active Listening, Service Orientation, Social Perceptiveness, Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension, Monitoring, Writing, Speaking, Persuasion, Instructing
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	Operations Monitoring, Operation and Control, Equipment Maintenance, Troubleshooting, Repairing, Quality Control Analysis, Critical Thinking, Active Learning, Monitoring, Active Listening
Insurance Sales Agents	Active Listening, Speaking, Critical Thinking, Writing, Persuasion, Time Management, Service Orientation, Negotiation, Social Perceptiveness

Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	Service Orientation, Social Perceptiveness, Coordination, Active Listening, Speaking, Monitoring, Reading Comprehension, Critical Thinking, Judgment and Decision Making, Time Management
Light Truck Drivers	Comprehension, Active Listening, Speaking, Monitoring, Operation and Control, Time Management, Critical Thinking, Service Orientation, Social Perceptiveness, Writing
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	Service Orientation, Coordination, Time Management, Social Perceptiveness, Active Listening, Speaking, Critical Thinking, Monitoring, Reading Comprehension, Active Learning
Medical Assistants	Social Perceptiveness, Active Listening, Speaking, Reading Comprehension, Critical Thinking, Monitoring, Coordination, Service Orientation, Writing, Active Learning
Nurse Practitioners	Reading Comprehension, Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Complex Problem Solving, Active Learning, Writing, Speaking, Monitoring, Social Perceptiveness, Judgment and Decision Making
Office Clerks, General	Reading Comprehension, Active Listening, Speaking, Writing, Social Perceptiveness, Coordination, Critical Thinking, Service Orientation, Time Management, Monitoring
Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	Operation and Control, Equipment Maintenance, Operations Monitoring, Monitoring, Active Listening, Time Management, Troubleshooting, Repairing, Quality Control Analysis, Judgment and Decision Making
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	Writing, Reading Comprehension, Active Listening, Speaking, Critical Thinking, Active Learning, Monitoring, Social Perceptiveness, Service Orientation, Complex Problem Solving
Postal Service Mail Carriers	Active Listening, Speaking, Critical Thinking, Social Perceptiveness, Time Management, Coordination, Service Orientation, Reading Comprehension, Monitoring, Judgment and Decision Making
Receptionists and Information Clerks	Speaking, Active Listening, Service Orientation, Social Perceptiveness, Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension, Writing, Coordination, Monitoring, Time Management
Registered Nurses	Social Perceptiveness, Coordination, Service Orientation, Active Listening, Speaking, Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension, Judgment and Decision Making, Monitoring, Writing
Stockers and Order Fillers	Active Listening, Reading Comprehension, Service Orientation, Speaking, Monitoring, Social Perceptiveness, Coordination, Critical Thinking, Judgment and Decision Making, Time Management

Source: Texas Career Check

### *Target Occupations*

To develop the Target Occupations list, all detailed occupations from the Occupational Projections were considered, regardless of industry. This list is specifically geared toward training opportunities for WIOA participants; therefore, Target Industry Sectors were disregarded. Short-term training opportunities (two years or less) are the focus of this list. It is also considered a good list for the general population looking for short-term training opportunities.



Most occupations that required a bachelor's degree or higher were not included. General and Operational Management is included for shorter term occupations in mid-management, and other management and supervisory occupations were removed as these normally result from experience. Occupations that require no training, other than very short-term on-the-job training, were also eliminated. Other occupations were deleted because the training is the same training as another occupation.

### Target Occupations List

SOC	Target Occupation Job Title	Employment 2022	Employment 2032	Number Change	Percent Growth	Annual Growth	Entry Wage	Experienced Wage	Typical Education Needed for Entry into Occupation
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	3,312	3,714	402	12.14%	1.15%	18.37	60.15	Bachelor's degree
15-1211	Computer Systems Analysts	71	79	8	11.27	1.07	26.24	41.17	Bachelor's degree
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	320	344	24	7.50%	0.73%	14.65	26.24	Some college, no degree
15-1244	Network and Computer Systems Administrators	132	136	4	3.03	0.3	25.52	42.00	Bachelor's degree
17-3026	Industrial Engineering Technologists and Technicians	59	60	1	1.69%	0.17%	21.97	32.49	Associate's degree
17-3031	Surveying and Mapping Technicians	72	82	10	13.89%	1.31%	14.71	25.62	High school diploma or equivalent
23-2011	Paralegals and Legal Assistants	226	239	13	5.75%	0.56%	18.07	29.01	Associate's degree
25-9045	Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	1,568	1,641	73	4.66%	0.46%	N/A	N/A	Associate's degree
29-1126	Respiratory Therapists	115	127	12	10.43%	1.00%	24.47	36.37	Associate's degree
29-1141	Registered Nurses	1,887	1,997	110	5.83%	0.57%	29.67	42.73	Bachelor's degree
29-2010	Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	168	179	11	6.55%	0.64%	18.57	31.63	Associate's degree
29-2034	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	174	188	14	8.05%	0.78%	21.28	34.65	Associate's degree
29-2042	Emergency Medical Technicians (Paramedic)	151	178	27	17.88%	1.66%	13.26	17.49	Postsecondary nondegree award
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	315	337	22	6.98%	0.68%	15.87	20.86	High school diploma or equivalent
29-2055	Surgical Technologists	64	68	4	6.25%	0.61%	21.11	29.29	Postsecondary nondegree award
29-2056	Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	131	198	67	51.15%	4.22%	12.53	17.16	Associate's degree
31-1131	Nursing Assistants Incl Nurse Aid, PCT, & LPN & LVN	1,196	1,328	132	11.04%	1.05%	13.06	17.80	Postsecondary nondegree award
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	83	107	24	28.92%	2.57%	24.32	40.59	Associate's degree
31-9091	Dental Assistants	380	394	14	3.68%	0.36%	13.92	20.66	Postsecondary nondegree award
31-9092	Medical Assistants	586	734	148	25.26%	2.28%	13.88	18.72	Postsecondary nondegree award
31-9097	Phlebotomists	123	142	19	15.45%	1.45%	14.62	20.80	Postsecondary nondegree award
33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	739	754	15	2.03%	0.20%	21.82	32.48	High school diploma or equivalent
39-9011	Childcare Workers	668	730	62	9.28%	0.89%	9.61	12.66	High school diploma or equivalent
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	1,228	1,193	-35	-2.85%	-0.29%	14.17	23.53	Some college, no degree
43-6014	Secretaries & Administrative Assistants, Except Lega	1,618	1,503	-115	-7.11%	-0.73%	12.57	20.68	High school diploma or equivalent
45-4022	Logging Equipment Operators	726	686	-40	-5.51%	-0.57%	15.43	27.47	High school diploma or equivalent
47-2031	Carpenters	179	202	23	12.85%	1.22%	15.54	24.00	High school diploma or equivalent
47-2073	Operating Eng.&Other Const. Equipment Operators	290	302	12	4.14%	0.41%	17.42	27.77	High school diploma or equivalent
47-2111	Electricians	423	455	32	7.57%	0.73%	16.58	29.53	High school diploma or equivalent
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	202	208	6	2.97%	0.29%	15.47	24.93	High school diploma or equivalent
49-2022	Telecommunications Equipment Installers & Repairer	149	154	5	3.36%	0.33%	18.03	31.10	Postsecondary nondegree award
49-3021	Automotive Body and Related Repairers	129	130	1	0.78%	0.08%	14.75	27.79	High school diploma or equivalent
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	868	891	23	2.65%	0.26%	14.51	25.58	Postsecondary nondegree award
49-3031	Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Speciali	285	295	10	3.51%	0.35%	17.32	27.15	High school diploma or equivalent
49-3042	Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines	203	210	7	3.45%	0.34%	20.36	30.68	High school diploma or equivalent
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechan	301	326	25	8.31%	0.80%	17.02	26.42	Postsecondary nondegree award
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	406	482	76	18.72%	1.73%	18.71	31.91	High school diploma or equivalent
49-9051	Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	191	195	4	2.09%	0.21%	23.17	38.11	High school diploma or equivalent
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	1,463	1,539	76	5.19%	0.51%	13.55	24.77	High school diploma or equivalent
51-2028	Electrical, etc., Assemblers, Except Coil Winders, Tap	309	311	2	0.65%	0.06%	14.89	21.07	High school diploma or equivalent
51-4041	Machinists	163	170	7	4.29%	0.42%	17.32	26.66	High school diploma or equivalent
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	609	578	-31	-5.09%	-0.52%	16.33	26.20	High school diploma or equivalent
51-8031	Water and Wastewater Treatment Plant and System O	275	269	-6	-2.18%	-0.22%	15.54	22.97	High school diploma or equivalent
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	2,189	2,322	133	6.08%	0.59%	17.35	28.39	Postsecondary nondegree award

Source: Occupational Projections

Wage Source: Texas Wages and Employment Projections

### **C. Workforce Development Analysis**

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

Boards must include an analysis of workforce development activities in the region, including education and training; the strengths and weaknesses of the Board's workforce development activities; the effectiveness of the Board's programs and services; and the Board's capacity to provide workforce development activities to address the identified education and skills needs of the workforce and the employment needs of employers.

#### **Board Response:**

Workforce development activities are very diverse and include many agencies and organizations in the area that work to address employer needs for a skilled and ready workforce. While there will always be jobs for unskilled workers, data indicates that the majority of jobs will need training past high school to fill the demand for middle to high technical positions.

The Board has six (6) workforce centers in the Deep East Texas region. The workforce centers are strategically placed throughout the rural area so that Deep East residents are no more than 45 to 60 minutes from the nearest center. The workforce centers provide employer services to help recruit qualified staff, provide information resources, and host job fairs. Information resources include labor market information, referrals to training resources, and referrals to other services offered by partner agencies. Job seekers are given tools that make their job search productive. These tools include the job matching system, WorkInTexas.com, as well as other job sites. "How to" workshops demonstrate how to complete resumes, conduct internet job searches, teach soft skills, and perform well in interviews. Virtual and online services are available, as well. Additionally, various employment and training programs are offered through the workforce centers, specialized services are available for eligible Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth through WIOA, TANF Choices, SNAP E&T, Vocational Rehabilitation and other workforce programs. The concluding focus of all these programs is employment. Various services to reach that goal are specific to each program, most include supervised job search, individual employment planning, work experience, supportive services, and required workshops. Other participant support services include the provision of subsidized child care, transportation assistance, and individualized help to remove barriers to employment.

The Deep East workforce area contains 53 Independent School Districts (ISDs) and one (1) public charter school. Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs have expanded greatly over the past 10 years and provide skills needed for in-demand jobs to ensure that students are either college ready or have employment skills upon graduation. The Board works with ISDs as they seek grants and develop programs of study that align with demand industries and occupations in the region. The Board received a grant from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to develop a plan to convene stakeholders (employers, education and others) and to implement effective communication between stakeholders to help develop the region's high demand careers. These efforts are on-going. The Board's Workforce Readiness Outreach Program deploys Career Coaches to participating school districts to provide career exploration services to inform and guide middle and high school students towards high-growth, high-demand occupations. The Board also has a Student HireAbility Navigator, who goes out to the schools to provide students with information about Vocation Rehabilitation and ways to overcome disabilities and barriers to expand their vision of employment possibilities.

Adult Education is a critical part of workforce development in that they are able to address the needs of those with low basic skills, limited English speakers, and those without a high school diploma. Bringing the skills of this population up to a standard level for vocational training is critical to their being able to

learn the higher skills needed by local employers.

Higher education institutions in the region include Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU); Angelina College (AC), which serves the majority of the area; and Panola College, which serves Shelby County. The Texas State University System has formed partnerships to expand access to training within the region including rural training centers in Jasper and Polk counties that have a limited offering of classes. Local community colleges are a primary source for post high-school education and vocational/technical training to meet employer needs. These colleges have business advisory groups who accept the Board's labor market analysis that creates the demand and target occupations lists to meet the needs of local industry.

SFASU provides bachelor's and master's degrees for managers, engineers, and other highly skilled occupations and professions. SFASU attracts students from all over Texas, and as with the community colleges, is responsive to changing business needs. SFASU has a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education and Research Center, whose mission is to facilitate the increase of research capacity within the STEM disciplines and to consolidate SFASU's support for STEM education, particularly by coordinating STEM efforts in grades Kindergarten (K) - twelve (12) and higher education, including teacher development. The SFASU Center for Applied Research and Rural Innovation collaborates with education, industry, and community to leverage, promote and advocate activities that result in a direct impact on economic development.

There are some non-profit organizations that provide limited training. Legacy Institute for Financial Empowerment (LIFE) offers Department of Labor (DOL) Registered Apprenticeship Programs in information technology and carpentry training. LIFE is exploring the possibility of launching a drone program, as well. Goodwill Industries of Central East Texas offers a work experience program designed to assist individuals with disabilities in finding employment. Additionally, they provide forklift training to enhance job readiness and skills.

To encourage entrepreneurial activity, AC houses an active Small Business Development Center, and SFASU has the Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship in the Rusche College of Business. These organizations provide help with services including loan proposals, marketing, retailing, advertising, budgeting, business planning and personnel management.

The Board's ability to provide workforce development activities has its strengths and weaknesses. Characteristics of the area, proximity to large metropolitan areas, and characteristics of the population all affect this.

The entire area is considered rural, with most counties lacking any public transportation. Some rural counties have very limited employment opportunities, lack adequate child care, and lack broadband and cell service. These circumstances make participation in workforce programs difficult for those residents and leave limited workforce activity options to offer some of the population.

At the same time, the rural nature of the area can serve as an asset, offering unique opportunities and advantages. The lower population numbers allow individuals in business, agencies, and organizations to establish a good, on-going working relationship. This facilitates collaborations, information sharing, referrals, and promotion of workforce activities.

The Board has worked with other organizations and obtained grants to develop work-based learning, such as apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, and internship opportunities that previously were not available. On-the-job training and Incumbent Worker training are also available options through the WIOA program for adults and dislocated workers.

Deep East Texas is relatively close to several metropolitan areas: Houston/Galveston; Beaumont/Port Arthur/Orange; and Tyler. This proximity offers workers greater access to job opportunities within a commutable distance from home. However, it can also pose challenges for businesses in the region, as they may struggle to compete with the higher wages available in these larger urban areas. As a result, this can impact the ability to make successful job placements within the region.

Population characteristics that affect the provision of services include:

- a higher percentage of workers 45 and older,
- a higher percentage of the population having a high school diploma and some college,
- the area workforce has not completed higher education at the statewide level,
- the percentage of families living in poverty being high compared to state,
- children in single parent households are much higher in the Deep East region,
- few in the population area are foreign born,
- the area population being much older than the state population, and
- the area having a high percentage of those who claim a disability but are not in the workforce.

This indicates the workforce in the Deep East region is older and less educated, the rate of individuals with disabilities and barriers to employment is higher than other areas, and the area is dealing with a high poverty rate.

The effectiveness of the Board's programs and services can be viewed by several metrics. The Board generally meets or exceeds the vast majority of performance standards set by the State.

The Board is addressing the needs of businesses by offering basic job (soft) skills training and other training to job seekers. Career Coaches, HireAbility Navigators, Regional Convener, and the WIOA program have helped to increase the number of youths in the workforce.

Labor market analysis has helped high schools, colleges, and other training organizations to offer training for in-demand and target occupations. Informing job seekers of labor market information can help them to seek and find well-paying, suitable work in the area.

Additionally, the Board collaborates with economic development organizations to expand opportunities to all customers and to bring in other assets to the region. The Board works with the region's Council of Government, who is working on grants to ensure the entire area has broadband access.

### **Part 3: Core Programs**

#### **A. Workforce Development System**

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

Boards must describe how the local workforce development system will work with the entities carrying out core and required partner programs to support alignment to aid in the provision of services that support the strategies identified in TWC's WIOA Combined State Plan.

#### **Board Response:**

The Board has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with all core and other required partners. The MOUs describe services offered by each entity, defines roles and responsibilities of each entity, list contact information, and establish coordination efforts and how that will be carried out.

Core programs are defined by WIOA as:

- Adult and Dislocated Worker employment and training activities
- Youth workforce investment activities
- Adult Education and Literacy activities
- Employment Services
- Vocational Rehabilitation services

All core programs are co-located within the Board's one-stop system except the Adult Education and Literacy Program.

Other required programs are the following:

- Native American programs
- Job Corps programs
- National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) program
- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker programs
- Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) employment and training activities
- Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)
- Career and Technical Education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, as amended

MOUs are also developed with other required partners that are in the area. The region includes the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas in Polk County. A Job Corps representative is co-located in one of the workforce centers. The Board received NDWG grant contracts in 2024, allowing subrecipient staff to contract with area organizations that are eligible and require help. There are no Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker programs in the region. Services for those receiving UI are available through the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program. The Board works with the region's HUD agency to identify opportunities for coordination of services. The contractor for SCSEP is co-located in one of the workforce centers. The Board works with local community colleges (Carl D. Perkins Act) to refer students, help place graduates and provide labor market information with focus on occupational/technical training for in-demand occupations.

The Board also coordinates with organizations that provide services to Veterans, including the Texas Veterans Commission. The Deep East one-stop center in Angelina County offers integrated service delivery by housing staff from Texas Veterans Commission, Job Corps, Vocational Rehabilitation, and

Child Care Services. This co-location of services allows for warm hand-offs and real-time referrals, which improves access for customers while avoiding duplication of services.

The Board has an MOU in place with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and Windham School District outlining the referral process to assist individuals transitioning from incarceration back into the workforce. The Windham School District coordinates with subrecipient staff to schedule appointments with its clients. The Board works with these entities to address the unique barriers this population faces including individualized assessment and career planning, job readiness and soft skills training, work-based learning opportunities and supportive services. Subrecipient staff also support individuals with challenging backgrounds by educating local employers about the benefits of fidelity bonding and by referring these customers to the Breaking Background Barriers workshop, which is regularly offered at our workforce centers.

The Board works with multiple entities that facilitate core programs and other workforce development programs to support alignment of services in the State Plan by: (1) engaging industry leaders to identify skill gaps and develop responsive training programs; (2) collaborating with education and industry partners to increase access to on-the-job training opportunities such as work-based learning and apprenticeship programs; and (3) prioritizing services for veterans, individuals with disabilities, out-of-school youth, and other underserved populations.

Other methods utilized by the Board to work with entities carrying out core and required partner programs are:

- Use of data and performance metrics – utilize shared data systems and performance metrics to track outcomes across partner programs (employment rates, credential attainment, etc.), evaluate the effectiveness of partnerships and strategies, and adjust service delivery models to ensure continuous improvement and compliance with WIOA guidelines.
- Staff training – ongoing professional development and cross-training to ensure staff from different programs understand each other's services and can provide holistic support to customers.

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

### **Board Response:**

The Board will expand access to employment, training, education, and support services for eligible individuals, and eligible individuals with barriers to employment. Currently, all workforce center customers are provided with an overview of information, services, and programs offered; and told how



to access the comprehensive array of services. Expanding access means connecting with organizations and populations that may be underserved, enhancing our social media.

The Board continues to focus on creating and growing partnerships with businesses, organizations, and economic development entities. By leveraging the networks of businesses and organizations, this helps spread the word about available resources, especially for individuals facing barriers to employment. These relationships have also served to organize community events and job fairs, which increases visibility of and access to workforce services.

One classification of an underserved population is those individuals who reside in the more rural counties that do not have a workforce center. The Board partners with libraries and other entities in these counties by sending staff to there at least monthly to provide in-person access to services. This is one of the many ways the Board works to make services more accessible and convenient. Through these efforts, it is hoped that it will increase the number of people accessing services.

Youth are outreached at their schools by subrecipient staff, career counselors, and the Board's Career Coach and Student HireAbility Navigator. Providing career presentations and information expands access to workforce services.

The Board provides online tools that provide information about workforce services. These online tools are provided to improve access to workforce services, and to direct interested individuals how to access those services. Several staff are going through training to improve their marketing skills in an effort to increase engagement by presenting information in a way that stands out and resonates with the target audience.

Core Services are the Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs, Youth Program, Adult Education and Literacy Programs, Wagner-Peyser Employment Services, and Vocational Rehabilitation services.

Career pathways can start in high school CTE programs and progress after graduation when workers become aware of additional training and earning potential of higher skill levels. The workforce centers provide information on various career pathways and steps to pursue on-going skills development.

Co-enrollment of participants in the core programs continues to be an avenue to provide sufficient funding to address the needs of many. Individuals in any of the core programs may be co-enrolled in other core programs, depending on eligibility. For example, a Vocational Rehabilitation customer could be enrolled in an Adult Education and Literacy program. Most often, Adults, Dislocated Workers, or Youth have already received Wagner-Peyser services.

Improving access to activities that lead to a recognized postsecondary credential that is portable and stackable generally is a matter of outreach and education.

Occasionally, improving access involves working with training providers and other organizations that offer training or apprenticeships. By keeping them informed of industry needs, they can work to enhance their training options. This may also include helping them find available grants to get the equipment needed for basic or stackable skills. Industry recognized credentials can also be obtained through apprenticeships and other specialized training programs.

## **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 Boards, contracted service providers, and one-stop partners, will comply with WIOA §188 (related to Non-Discrimination), if applicable, and with applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals who have disabilities
- The roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners

#### **Board Response:**

##### *The One-Stop Delivery System*

Core Services are the Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs, Youth Program, Adult Education and Literacy Programs, Wagner-Peyser Employment Services, and Vocational Rehabilitation.

The one-stop service delivery system in the Deep East region consists of a full-service workforce center in Angelina County, and five (5) affiliate centers in Houston, Jasper, Nacogdoches, Polk, and Shelby counties. The Board also has computer kiosks in two (2) locations; Newton County Public Library and LIFE, to give customers more options for access to services. The workforce center in Angelina County serves as the hub for the region, with Texas Veterans Commission, Job Corps, Child Care Services (CCS), and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) staff co-located in the center. VR staff are also housed in the workforce centers in Nacogdoches and Polk counties. The co-location allows for ease of referrals between partners and greater accessibility for customers.

There are six (6) workforce centers strategically located within the Deep East region to ensure service delivery to the Board's generally rural population. Each workforce center operates under the supervision of a site manager or supervisor. The Board will continue to set up temporary special centers to address unusual situations (i.e. transition centers for large layoffs or service centers for hurricane evacuees.) Workforce centers in Angelina, Jasper, Nacogdoches, and Polk counties are open Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., while centers in Houston and Shelby counties maintain the same hours except for closure between 12:00 and 1:00 p.m. Centers remain open beyond the regular schedule for special events such as large job fairs or for special appointments. Each center has a fully equipped resource room. Centers in Angelina, Jasper, Nacogdoches, Polk, and Shelby counties have employer resource rooms and rooms for workshops or special events.

Access to services in remote areas is accomplished through virtual methods using technology, including phone, text, fax, and internet communication. However, additional efforts are necessary in the workforce area due to barriers such as the lack of internet/cell service and transportation. The rural services staff regularly travel to the six (6) counties without a workforce center to provide in-person assistance,

information, and services, as well as access to technology, such as computer laptops and internet capability. Staff work with local community partners, such as agencies, community centers, libraries, and chambers of commerce to accomplish these pop-up workforce centers in shared spaces.

Business Services Units (BSU) are designated to provide business services and are comprised of Employment Services staff and subrecipient staff. The BSU team makes outside employer contacts, conducts job development, provides Rapid Response services, develops and manages subsidized employment contracts, develops work experience or work activity agreements, handles employer phone calls, job fairs, employer requested applicant screening, and scheduling of facility space for employer use. BSU staff attend events hosted by chambers of commerce and other community organizations to make employer connections.

Job Seeker services may be viewed as either basic or participatory. Basic services consist of self-service or those requiring minimal staff assistance. Basic services consist of job matching services and job search tools offered in resource rooms in each center, an orientation to services for individuals new to the system and to UI claimants, providing individual Rapid Response services to potential Trade-affected workers, ensuring that participant applications are correct and complete for better job matching, making referrals to job postings, assisting with job fairs, providing job search assistance, conducting a basic assessment of the job seekers' work readiness, making referrals to community services, and referring individuals pursuing training to career and training services.

Participatory services consist of employee-enhanced interactions such as eligibility determination, training services referrals, skills assessments, individualized employment planning, career exploration services, supportive services, training assistance, and informational services. In participatory services, customers are assigned to a career counselor, who focuses on one (1) or more employment and training programs. Services consist of staff-assisted job search, labor market and training information, job clubs, job development, referrals to community services, testing and assessment to help identify career goals and barriers to employment, workshops, career counseling, employment planning, funding for training, work experience and subsidized employment, and supportive services.

CCS determines eligibility for subsidized child care for low-income and other special populations. An online waitlist application is completed initially. When the wait list is able to be worked, applicants are required to then complete a full application. CCS applicants are interviewed by phone and are given an orientation to services. Applicants are informed of the parent choice policy, which gives the parent the option of choosing from registered family homes, group homes, child care centers, or self-arranged care from an eligible source. Forms and agreements that must be signed, as well as other informational material, are sent electronically. CCS determines eligibility and the parent's share-of-cost based on information received. Families who need child care assistance that the Board is unable to provide are referred to various resources in the community. These resources include Head Start programs, Boys and Girls Clubs, pre-k programs, and child care providers that charge based on a sliding scale.

The local population is generally familiar with the availability of child care assistance. Outreach efforts include posters that are displayed in the workforce centers, local child care providers, and other agencies, brochures explaining subsidized child care services, and social media posts. Subrecipient staff also share information with customers regarding how to access child care services.

CCS provides outreach to area child care providers to ensure that registered and licensed facilities are notified of contracting options. The Board works with child care providers to attain quality standards under the Texas Rising Star Program. Through this program, child care providers are recognized either as entry-level designation providers or certified provider. Certified providers are awarded two-, three- or

four-star ratings, which allows providers to be eligible for graduated reimbursement rates based on their star-level status.

The Board ensures continuous improvement of eligible providers by utilizing the State's approved Eligible Training Provider System (ETPS). Training providers submit applications that are reviewed at the local and State levels to determine eligibility of a certified program to receive WIOA funds. Subrecipient staff use the ETPS when enrolling participants and issuing an Individual Training Account (ITA) for payment of services. The provider must be listed on the ETPS prior to issuance of an ITA.

Providers are meeting the needs of local employers, workers, and job seekers by providing targeted skills training that helps workers advance in their careers and helps job seekers find employment while ensuring they are ready to meet employer expectations. The Board and providers continue to meet with employers through various outreach and employer groups to learn if training meets business needs. If the training needs to be updated, this is discussed with the provider. The provider also maintains a good knowledge base of ongoing industry trends to stay abreast of current needs.

The Board utilizes several electronic systems to serve customers. The Board's website has features that provide customers with access to information, registration for virtual workshops, guidance on how to apply for child care services, and links to resources. The website is linked to job postings, eligible training partners, and resources for employers and job seekers. The Board utilizes text by cell to notify job seekers of career events and workshops that may potentially increase their success in finding a career. Social media is used to post job openings, give notice of upcoming workshops, job fairs, and hiring events, and share success stories.

The Board emails a monthly "Workforce Development News" report to stakeholders with news about labor market information, events, and workforce-related topics relevant to the Deep East region.

The Board's Career Coach utilizes virtual reality headsets to engage students in area schools in the career exploration and career decision-making process. Students are exposed to high demand occupations through these headsets and during classroom presentations, workshops, and Jobs Y'all events.

The Board coordinates with Adult Education throughout the region. Angelina College serves 11 of the 12 Deep East counties, and Region V Education Service Center serves the remaining county, Jasper County. Computers are available at the workforce centers for customers to be assessed for basic Reading, Math, and Language needs. If customers need additional assistance prior to being entered into training or career services, AEL providers offer services to enhance the basic needs of those customers.

The Board and its subrecipients comply with WIOA §188 (related to Non-Discrimination) 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 Board uses many resources for serving individuals with barriers to employment. In all six (6) workforce centers, staff are cross trained in providing basic services to universal customers. Subrecipient staff are cross trained to refer job seekers to appropriate enhanced services. Customers with disabilities are also referred to VR, which is co-located in the workforce centers in Angelina, Nacogdoches, and Polk counties.

All Deep East workforce centers are equipped with assistive devices and services to ensure customers with disabilities have equal access to programs, services, and resources including, but not limited to:

- Accessible workstations
- Height adjustable desks and chairs
- Screen magnifier software
- Screen reader software
- Large print and reverse color keyboards
- Large monitors
- Trackball mouse
- Headphones
- Large button telephones
- Speech amplification systems
- Video relay services
- Braille signage

For customers with hearing impairments, a sign language interpreter may be used to facilitate communication with individual staff or allow job search workshops to be conducted, enabling those individuals to receive the same information and guidance. The Board has also procured translation/interpretation devices that have the capability for staff to connect with a certified sign language interpreter in real time via video call.

For individuals who are limited English proficient, the Board's subrecipients use the following strategies:

- Utilize bilingual staff for Spanish-speaking customers
- Utilize devices/services the Board procured for real-time interpretation and translation
- Utilize the following Babel notices on all vital documents in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese, "This document contains vital information about requirements, rights, determinations, and/or responsibilities for accessing workforce system services. Language services, including the interpretation and translation of this document, are available free of charge upon request."

It is the Board's policy to provide equitable service and ensure the accessibility of facilities and services for individuals with disabilities. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Providing reasonable accommodations/modifications
- Prohibiting denial of customer access to services or benefits on the basis of a disability or the need for reasonable accommodations
- Providing services to individuals with disabilities in integrated settings, to the extent possible
- Admittance of service animals
- Use of mobility devices

The Board Equal Opportunity (EO) Officer reviews programmatic and physical accessibility to ensure services and facilities are accessible to individuals. The Board's website follows the Federal 508 accessibility requirements and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA standards and is available in English and Spanish versions.

The roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners vary by partner. Each partner is responsible for reporting changes in their programs and activities that may affect referrals to the partner. Partners outside of the Board's responsibility pay for the space they occupy, either by cash or in-kind payment.

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

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

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

- Facilitate engagement of employers, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations, in workforce development programs;
- Support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the workforce area;
- Coordinate workforce investment activities with regional economic development activities that are carried out in the local workforce area;
- Promote entrepreneurial-skills training and microenterprise services; and
- Strengthen the linkage between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs.

Note: This may include the implementation of initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways initiatives, the use of effective business intermediaries, and other business services and strategies that are designed to meet the needs of regional employers. These initiatives must support the strategy described above.

### **Board Response:**

The Board actively encourages participation in the workforce development system by meeting with employers in in-demand industry sectors and other business sectors directly at their business sites, and through various chamber and economic development events. Workforce centers are available to employers for job postings, hiring events, interviewing, and applicant screening. Staff provides labor market information, including demographic data, industry details, in-demand and target occupations, wage data, commuting data, and employment trends. Career fairs, tours, internships, and externships are organized through collaboration with industry-led organizations. The Board shares information about in-demand and target occupations, about Commissioner Representing Employers assistance, and grant opportunities for training, including the Skills Development Fund.

The Board of Directors is made up of over fifty percent (50%) private sector businesses covering the 12-county region. These members participate in the development of programs and ideas to best meet local employers' needs. Reviews of programs and activities by Board members ensure employer needs are understood and met when developing programs and services.

The Board regularly surveys employers to best determine their employee staffing and training needs. The Board then works with the employers on ways to attract qualified employees and train their current employees. Incumbent worker funds are used when available to assist employers in the development of additional skills needed to grow their businesses. The Board is encouraging the development of more Incumbent Worker and On-the-Job trainings as training options for job seekers. The Board has received apprenticeship grants in recent years and is planning to pursue these and other job-based trainings.



Board staff attend local economic development meetings in several counties. The insights gained from these meetings are used to develop systems, strategies, and training programs that foster continued community growth. A regional economic development entity, the Texas Forest Country Partnership (TFCP), works with smaller economic development entities in several of the region's counties. TFCP has been successful in attracting and retaining businesses in the region. The Board has partnered with TFCP on several area projects. Often, the Board contributes by providing labor market information and offering job postings, interview assistance, and job fair services to support local businesses.

The Board currently has a Career Coach and a Student HireAbility Navigator who work within middle school and high schools to teach and encourage youth to research careers and overcome barriers to entering the workforce. Subrecipient staff promote skills testing and career exploration for career services. Collaboration between workforce and educational institutions to promote youth career exploration in high-demand occupations will help create a pipeline of skilled workers aligned with the region's employer needs.

Individuals who are interested in starting or growing their own business are referred to the Small Business Development Center at Angelina College. This partner promotes entrepreneurial skills training and micro-enterprise services. SFASU offers entrepreneurial training and assistance for business development.

Subrecipient staff help individuals receiving Unemployment Insurance to ensure their prompt re-entry into the workforce. These individuals are provided with an orientation to services, assistance in registering with WorkInTexas.com, job referrals, access to the resource room, and virtual services for job search and workshops, as well as the opportunity to consider retraining or upskilling during this transitional period.

### **C. Coordination of Wagner-Peyser Services**

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

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

#### **Board Response:**

Access to Wagner-Peyser employment services is available through the workforce center system. Wagner-Peyser Employment Services (ES) Merit staff are integrated in the workforce center system locally and perform similar job functions to their workforce counterparts, reducing service duplication. To maximize coordination, ES services are overseen by TWC and not the Board, and ES Merit staff are the only staff allowed to provide ES services.

#### **D. 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.

##### **Board Response:**

The one-stop centers are transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system using DocuSign and Adobe. The centers use TWC's automated systems for intake and case management for programs. Program orientations no longer have to be presented in person to individuals or groups as they can be easily viewed electronically. Case management activities can be done virtually as needed to meet the needs of the customer. The Board is currently using SAFE document storage to facilitate the transition to a complete paperless case management system for child care.

#### **E. Third Party Partnership in SNAP Employment and Training Programs**

(Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training Third-Party Partnership Guide)

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

##### **Board Response:**

The Board currently does not have a third-party partnership in place and provides all services to SNAP E&T participants. There are no agencies in this workforce area that provide same or similar services required by the SNAP E&T program. Plans are to implement at least one (1) partnership with a local entity to provide Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training by Fiscal Year 2029 or sooner if an appropriate agency can be found to provide services.

## **Part 5: Workforce Investment Activities**

### **A. 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 that are carried out in the workforce area with statewide rapid response activities described in WIOA §134(a)(2)(A).

#### **Board Response:**

When providing Rapid Response services, a coordinated approach is taken between the Board's Rapid Response Coordinator and subrecipient staff to provide services to businesses with layoffs of 50 or more workers. Services include the dissemination of information regarding UI, the full range of workforce services, mass UI filing by the employer or how to file for UI to workers, and Trade Petitions. If necessary, a special service location for workforce services will be developed to serve workers if the layoff would overwhelm the local workforce center. Other activities include coordinating with local officials to discuss local options for assisting both the company and the dislocated workers.

### **B. 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.

#### **Board Response:**

The Board collaborates with area ISDs, community colleges, and other youth-focused organizations to offer a range of services for youth. Staff conduct outreach at area schools to inform students of available services and provide career preparation and soft skills training sessions. Social media is utilized to keep youth updated on workforce services and to promote events such as Youth Fairs. Career and resource fairs also serve to educate youth about services designed to enhance their success both in the workforce and in life. Moreover, labor market data, including information on in-demand and target occupations, guides students toward industries and careers where they are most likely to secure and maintain employment. WIOA-eligible youth also have access to assessments, work experience, help with training, and supportive services.

The Board also partners with other organizations to support career exploration activities in regional high demand occupations, such as Manufacturing Day where local businesses from the manufacturing industry showcase their operations and career opportunities to hundreds of young people, fostering interest in the industry. This event provides a platform for hands-on experiences and valuable insights, inspiring the next generation of skilled workers from our local school districts.

- Dynamic Futures – Dynamic Futures is provided to students by the workforce subrecipient to teach soft skills and job readiness preparation.
- VR Paid Work Experience – The Board partners with VR to place eligible 504 students in work-based learning activities that are designed to help individuals gain soft and hard skills for work,

learn about and experience actual work in possible fields of interest, and provide individuals with the opportunity to have hands-on exposure to jobs. Paid Work Experience is a strategy for providing work-based learning opportunities to individuals with disabilities, and particularly to students with disabilities.

- Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL) – The SEAL program is for students to gain work readiness and paid work experience through the summer months. The Inter-Agency cooperative between VR and the Board assists between 50 to 75 youth in this work-related activity annually.

### **C. 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 workforce investment activities with relevant secondary and post-secondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services.

#### **Board Response:**

Many workforce investment activities are completed in coordination with secondary and postsecondary education programs. The goal of these education programs is to ensure students are adequately trained to compete in the labor force.

Coordination with secondary schools allows staff to:

- Use career fairs to provide initial career path information to students beginning at the middle school level and continuing throughout their education;
- Implement a Workforce Readiness Outreach Program in which Career Coaches provide career services to grades 6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>,
- Conduct the Teacher Externship project, which provides educators with professional development through partnerships with local employers.

The Board partners with post-secondary providers who are on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) for training of WIOA participants.

Both WIOA activities and higher education programs share the goal of supplying businesses with qualified workers. To support this objective, WIOA staff evaluate participants to ensure they are prepared and adequately equipped for training. If a participant is not ready, they may be referred to an AEL provider to enhance their basic skill levels. The assessment includes a skills test that helps identify the types of occupations a participant might prefer. Additionally, subrecipient staff provide information on in-demand and target occupations to aid in decision-making. This coordinated approach ensures that services are not duplicated.

The Board received a planning grant from TEA for a Regional Convener. This coordination effort convenes stakeholders to identify and improve pathways to high demand occupations. The project's leadership team consists of team members representing secondary and post-secondary education, education service centers, economic development corporations, and employers, and it envisions maximizing the involvement of regional stakeholders in the development of employer-focused education programs to enhance employment opportunities for all residents. The Board conducted a survey of current and planned CTE programs at ISDs.

#### **D. Child Care and Early Learning**

(40 TAC §809.12 Board Plan for Child Care Services)

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

Efforts include:

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

#### **Board Response:**

The Board works strategically with employers, economic development corporations, and other industry leaders to promote early learning as a key tool for workforce development and economic growth. Additionally, it coordinates workforce training and services to incorporate reliable and secure child care for low-income families, aiming to decrease their reliance on public assistance.

The Board supports improved school readiness through higher-quality child care, specifically through the Texas Rising Star (TRS) program. TRS staff coach and mentor contracted child care providers to offer higher quality of child care. The Board implements the TRS program by purchasing school readiness curriculum and other school supplies (i.e. toys and activities that promote social development).

The Board strengthens and supports the needs of the child care industry by assisting with business development, as well as supporting professional growth and career pathways for early education in the Deep East region. The Board contributes to professional growth through its use of Child Care Quality funding by supporting Child Development Associate programs, hosting an annual TRS Banquet, and attending conferences.

#### **E. 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.

#### **Board Response:**

Support services may include assistance with transportation, child care, housing, job search, relocation assistance, and other assistance for participants to overcome barriers to employment and to complete program activities. All supportive services are based on need. Subrecipient staff provides a needs assessment form to be completed by the participant as part of the participant's assessment to determine the need for support services. The needs assessment compares income to expenses. Transportation assistance may include either bus passes, gas cards, mileage reimbursement (personal vehicles only), or

ride services depending on individual situation, circumstances, and transportation resources available in local areas. This cost-effective method allows for adequate financial tracking and accountability and is based on individual need and available options.

The Brazos Transit District is a general public transportation provider that serves several of the region's counties. The Brazos Transit District receives funding through the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), and it operates Fixed Routes, ADA Paratransit Service, and Demand and Response services. These services are available in the cities of Lufkin (Angelina County) and Nacogdoches (Nacogdoches County) and in Houston, Polk, San Jacinto, and Trinity counties. The Texas Veterans Commission provides transportation to veterans, as needed. As for the remaining counties, transportation is limited to medical needs only or by taxi services.

#### **F. Coordination of Adult Education and Literacy (AEL)**

(WIOA §108(b)(13); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(12)); WD Letter 18-23, Change 2, Adult Education and Literacy Grant Application Review – Update

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

#### **Board Response:**

AEL providers are critical partners for the Board in providing services to customers that require remediation, English as a Second Language (ESL), and High School Equivalency preparation services. The coordination of efforts between the Board and AEL activities increases the skills of the customers and helps provide employers with a highly skilled workforce. A Memorandum of Understanding with Angelina College and Region V Education Service Center guide the provision of these services to customers.

In workforce programs, when an interview or assessment indicates the need for additional literacy or English proficiency services, staff refer to the two (2) AEL providers in the area. AEL services are included in a customer's Individual Employment Plan, as necessary. Workforce staff administers the Spanish version of the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) to evaluate non-English proficient TANF customers.

The Board uses the following application review process to review applications submitted under Title II.

- TWC releases a Request for Applications and receives proposals from respondents.
- TWC notifies Board Executive Director.
- Executive Director appoints a minimum of three (3) Board staff to review the proposals.
- Appointed staff complete Conflict of Interest attestation.
- Appointed staff receive proposals from TWC and review the proposals based on evaluation criteria provided by TWC.
- Appointed staff provide feedback and recommendation using the AEL Provider Grant Review and Comment Form and submit completed review to TWC.

## **Part 6: Adult and Dislocated Workers**

### **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 and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the workforce area.

#### **Board Response:**

Adult and dislocated worker services are individual or assisted job search, assessment, career exploration, individual employment planning, supportive services, work experience, basic skills training, referral to specialized services such as Adult Education and ESL, prevocational training, and occupational/technical training. The Trade Assistance Act program for eligible workers is also available.

The availability of training activities for adults and dislocated workers includes WIOA funded and non-WIOA funded partner-training services. Training is chosen from the Eligible Training Provider network and can be classroom or internet based. Training is generally limited to two (2) years. Training can be provided for one (1) or more courses or classes that, upon successful completion, lead to a certificate, an associate's degree, a teacher certification (for participants who hold a baccalaureate degree or higher), a competency or skill recognized by employers, or a training regimen that provides individuals with additional skills or competencies generally recognized by employers.

Entrepreneurial skills training equips individuals with the foundational knowledge needed to launch and manage a small business. This training is designed to develop the core competencies essential for successful entrepreneurship.

Services for adults and dislocated workers in the region are comprehensive and provided at the levels that participants desire.

### **B. Service Priority**

(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 20CFR §680.600, along with veterans and foster youth, according to the priority order outlined in the WIOA Guidelines for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth. Boards must also include a list of any Board-established priority groups, if any.

#### **Board Response:**

Adult career and training services are provided to all eligible individuals who could benefit from these services and who have the ability to successfully complete training.



The Board's service priority for adults for career and training services is as follows:

- Eligible veterans and eligible spouses—as defined in WD Letter 01-21, Change 1, issued on March 18, 2024, and entitled, “Applying Priority of Service and Identifying and Documenting Veterans and Transitioning Service Members,” who are also recipients of public assistance, low-income, or basic skills deficient.
- Foster youth and former foster youth—as defined in WD Letter 43-11, Change 2, issued on February 19, 2020, and entitled, “Priority of Service for Eligible Foster Youth”—who are also recipients of public assistance, low income, or basic skills deficient.
- All other individuals who are recipients of public assistance, low-income, or basic skills deficient.
- All other eligible veterans and eligible spouses.
- All other foster youth and former foster youth.
- All other individuals.

## **Part 7: Fiscal Agent, Grants, and Contracts**

### **A. Fiscal Agent**

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

Boards must identify the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds described in WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III), as determined by the CEOs or the governor under WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i).

#### **Board Response:**

The Board is the Fiscal Agent. The Board is responsible for the disbursement of grant funds for the 12-county Deep East region as determined by the Chief Elected Officials. The area Inter-Local Agreement and the Partnership Agreement identify the Board as the grant recipient.

### **B. Subgrants 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 subgrants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities.

#### **Board Response:**

The Board uses a competitive procurement process to select subrecipients for WIOA activities by following the applicable requirements set forth in the TWC Financial Manual for Grants and Contracts.

The Board releases a Request for Proposal (RFP) for operation and management of the workforce centers and for child care operations. The RFP contains the requirements and restrictions concerning the contracting and operation of the programs as well as the scoring criteria and timeline for the procurement. The RFP details the submission requirements, narrative, and budget instructions. The Board maintains a "Bidders List" of interested parties. A notice of solicitation is posted on the Board's website and the Texas Registry and is sent to entities on the Bidders List. A bidders conference may be held, although participation is not mandatory. Questions are submitted and answered through the bidders conference or via email. The question/answer document will be distributed to all bidders conference attendees and posted publicly on the Board's website. Proposals are due at an assigned date and time. Late proposals are not accepted.

Proposals received in a timely manner are submitted to an evaluation team for assessment using a standardized scoring instrument based on the RFP scoring criteria and instructions. Proposals that score 70 or above are considered "responsive." The evaluation team submits their completed evaluations to the designated Board staff that details the evaluation scores as well as the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal. An action item is prepared for the Board which recommends a bidder based on a best value analysis. The Board reviews the evaluation report and selects a bidder for contract negotiations. If negotiations are successful, a contract is signed.

Bidders are notified of the action taken by the Board. Bidders must follow the appropriate appeals process pursuant to the Board's Procurement Policy and Procedures if they wish to appeal the Board's decision.

## **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), that will be used to measure the performance of the workforce area and for measuring the performance of the local fiscal agent (where appropriate), eligible providers under WIOA Title I subtitle B, and the one-stop delivery system in the workforce area.

#### **Board Response:**

The Board negotiates local performance measures with TWC every two (2) years using a statistical model based on the Board's best available assumptions of the case mix and economy. The negotiated targets will be applied to performance being reported in Board Contract Years 2025 (BCY 2025) and 2026 (BCY 2026).

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
- Measurable Skills Gains - Adult
- Dislocated Worker Employed Q2 Post Exit
- Dislocated Worker Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit
- Dislocated Worker Employed Q4 Post Exit
- Dislocated Worker Credential Rate
- Measurable Skills Gains – Dislocated Worker
- Youth Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit
- Youth Employed/Enrolled Q4 Post Exit
- Youth Median Earnings Q2 Post-Exit
- Youth Credential Rate
- Measurable Skills Gains – Youth

Career and Training WIOA Based Measures:

- Active Job Seeker New Employment Connection Rate
- Maintaining Employment Connection Rate
- Credential Rate – All Career & Training (C&T) Participants
- Noncustodial Parent (NCP) Entered Employment Rate
- NCP Employment Retention Rate

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

- Claimant Reemployment within 10 weeks
- Employers Receiving Texas Talent Assistance
- Successful Texas Talent Assistance Rate (STTAR)
- Choices Full Engagement Rate

- Average Number of Children Served Per Day
- Child Care Initial Job Search Success Rate
- RESEA Outreach and Scheduling Rate
- RESEA Initial Appointment Rate
- RESEA Failure to Report Rate

Initial and annual evaluations of Eligible Training Providers are done following TWC requirements. Training providers are required to submit performance data to TWC to remain eligible and to be listed on the State's ETPL. Any program that does not meet the State's performance criteria will be withdrawn from the statewide list and will not be eligible for WIOA enrollments.

The Board conducts an annual review of the contracted one-stop delivery system subrecipient, assessing performance, monitoring, fiscal accountability, customer/employer surveys, and compliance with contract elements. Board staff then submit the results to the Board, who reviews the findings to determine whether to extend the contract or release an RFP for a new one-stop workforce subrecipient.

The Board's performance as fiscal agent is evaluated during the annual audit and TWC monitoring. Board members and Chief Elected Officials receive both the annual audit and the TWC monitoring report.

## **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 the Board will use contracts for training services, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of ITAs under that chapter, and how the Board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs, regardless of how the training services are provided.

#### **Board Response:**

ITAs are training vouchers issued to eligible Adult, Dislocated Worker, Out-of-School Youth, and In-School Youth participants for training for one (1) or more courses or classes that, upon successful completion, leads to a certificate, an associate's degree, teacher certification (for participants who hold a baccalaureate degree or higher), a competency or skill recognized by employers, or a training regimen that provides individuals with additional skills or competencies generally recognized by employers.

Customers interested in training will be determined eligible for the program and assessed to enhance the objective of obtaining a successful outcome. The Board currently utilizes the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) assessment to assess reading, math, and language basic skills, and the WorkInTexas registration which evaluates career exploration interests to ensure the desired training is suitable for each customer. Those who meet all qualifications are given vouchers for training, fees, books, and supplies for each semester of study.

Participants and Case Managers review assessment results together to make informed decisions about career paths and training. They collaboratively develop an Individual Employment Plan (IEP), which outlines goals and timelines for the participant's progress. The Case Manager also reviews the Target Occupations list and ETPL with the participant to help guide their career and training choices. Ultimately, the participant makes the final decision, with consideration of local policies, assessment results, and the information provided by the Case Manager.

### **B. ITA Limitations**

(20 CFR §663.420); WD Letter 14-19, Change 2

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

#### **Board Response:**

ITAs are limited to \$12,000. An ITA may not exceed the Eligible Training Provider total training cost at the time of student enrollment, and no ITA may be written if the training cost exceeds the \$12,000 limit.

The ITA balance will indicate the full cost of training. Authorization to charge expenses to the ITA are in the form of a voucher and will indicate the expenses for the period for which the voucher is issued (tuition and mandatory fees for training services, books, other fees, and/or other required training materials and equipment, or other related expenses, including room and board that are charged by the training provider.)

Exceptions to policy may be made on a case-by-case basis with the approval of Board staff based on submission of sufficient justification. The subrecipient submits a written request to the Board for approval or denial of the exceptions.

## **Part 10: Apprenticeship**

### **A. Registered Apprenticeship Programs**

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

#### **Board Response:**

The Board continues to promote apprenticeships with its regional partners and businesses. As part of the Tri-Agency's recommendation to create stackable program opportunities, the Board continues to collaborate with secondary and post-secondary partners to expand their services to include pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs. The Board communicates with educational institutions and training providers to establish apprenticeship programs and registrations with the ETPS when funding opportunities are available through WIOA.

The Board has partnered with LIFE to offer information technology and carpentry registered apprenticeship programs. DOL Registered Apprenticeship Programs are offered through LIFE and Lockheed Martin-Lufkin in the Deep East region are included in the ETPS. The Board continues to work with manufacturing, trades, and health care employers to register their apprenticeship programs with the DOL and the ETPS.

### **B. Apprenticeship Texas**

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

#### **Board Response:**

The Board continues to promote apprenticeships with its regional partners and businesses. In our efforts to increase the availability of apprenticeships in the region, the Board has held meetings with local community colleges, economic development organizations, ISDs, and businesses to discuss expanding both pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships in the areas of Information Technology, Utilities, Manufacturing, Health Care, and Child Care. The Board ensures that occupations on the Target Occupations List are among occupations relevant to apprenticeships. The Board has partnered with a local ISD, community college, and employer to provide pre-apprenticeship electro-mechanical engineering in secondary education leading to post-secondary credentials that are critical in obtaining employment. The Board was recognized with an award for expanding apprenticeships in the region and deployed those award funds to raise awareness of Registered Apprenticeship Programs and pre-apprenticeships. As a result, the Board funded two (2) pre-apprenticeship programs in local high schools in 2024 leading to electricians and electronic assemblers. The Board will continue to support the growth of customized training through apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships.

## **Part 11: Public Comment**

(WIOA §108(d), 20 CFR §679.550(b) and §679.560(b) and (e))

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

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

### **Board Response:**

*All comments from the public, whether positive or negative, will be included in this section following the end of the Public Comment process.*

This Plan was made available on the website, [www.dnetwork.org](http://www.dnetwork.org), for public comment(s) from February 18, 2025, through March 14, 2025.

No public comments were received.



## **Appendix: Texas Workforce Investment Council Requirements**

### **Local Board Plan Requirements**

#### **Requirement for Workforce Systemwide Alignment**

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

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

#### **Demonstrating Local Alignment with Texas’ Workforce System Strategic Plan**

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

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

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

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

For each goal:

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

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(Texas Government Code Sec. 2308.304, Local Plan)

## Directions for Demonstrating Alignment with the Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan

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

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

## System Goals and Objectives

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

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

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

Response should address the following:

- the institution and/or expansion of upskilling and reskilling programs to meet employers' needs for middle-skill workers,
- the identification and delivery of programs, including with adult education and literacy providers, that support attainment of short-term credentials, industry-based certifications, and licenses,
- populations that require supportive services to improve program completion, certification or attainment of short-term credentials, and employment, and
- data used to track reskilling and upskilling program enrollments and outcomes, including program completions, attainment of short-term credentials and industry-based certifications or licenses, and employment directly related to the credential, license, or certification.

### Board response and corresponding plan page number(s):

Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas assesses the needs of employers through meetings, interviews, other employer focused organizations, and surveys. The resulting information and feedback are shared with education partners, including Stephen F. Austin State University, Angelina College, Panola College and regional ISDs.

The Target Occupations list is developed with both short- and long-term attainment of credentials, certifications, and licenses in mind so that WIOA-eligible customers can complete either short- or long-term training. Most of the region's targeted occupations are focused on middle skills occupations. The Target Occupations list is shared with area colleges and training providers, on the Board's website, given out at job fairs, and distributed within the workforce centers. The Board shares relevant information and opportunities for employers in an electronic newsletter that is distributed monthly with the release of the unemployment statistics.

Training as well as funding to promote training are available through multiple avenues. The Board collaborates with Angelina College to promote initiatives such as the Skills Development Fund and Skills for Small Business. Additionally, the Regional Convener informs local ISDs of grant opportunities to

develop or expand their CTE programs. Staff also provide information on apprenticeships, on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, and available grants.

Populations that may need support services to complete training are WIOA Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth, and Choices participants. Supportive services may include assistance with transportation, child care, housing, job search, relocation assistance, and other assistance for participants to overcome barriers to employment and to complete program activities. All supportive services are based on need.

Data to track enrollments and outcomes is entered into WorkInTexas. Subrecipient staff keep track of this information as it directly relates to the performance measures implemented by TWC. Other grant specific efforts, such as Apprenticeship Texas, make use of recipient reporting to compile numbers for their efforts.

Corresponding plan page number(s): 4, 21-23, 28-29, 31-32, 35-38, 41-44

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

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

Response should address the following:

- work-based learning opportunities with system stakeholders as a pre-employment strategy for youth and adults, including those requiring supportive services and resources,
- the expansion of the employer network participating in and sponsoring work-based learning opportunities, including registered and industry-recognized apprenticeship programs, and
- partnerships that address regular engagement with employers and system stakeholders, including collaboration with a Regional Convener for the Tri-Agency Texas Regional Pathways Network and input on the quality of existing apprenticeship programs and development of new programs.

### **Board response and corresponding plan page number(s):**

Work-based learning opportunities, particularly VR Paid Work Experience, have been successful as a pre-employment strategy for youth and adults with limited work history. These opportunities reinforce prevocational training, such as soft skills development, that participants may need. To expand access to work-based learning opportunities, the Business Services Unit promotes these services during employer outreach efforts, while the Board's Regional Convener highlights them at various Convener events.

The Board promotes apprenticeships to increase awareness and implementation of work-based opportunities. The Board continues to strengthen community partnerships with economic development corporations, chambers of commerce, non-profit organizations, and education institutions. These partnerships help identify training opportunities and the needs for our workforce.

Corresponding plan page number(s): 22-23, 26, 31, 35, 45

## **3. Partners Goal – Alignment to Support Career Pathways**

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

- support the identification of credentials of value, and
- streamline and clarify existing career pathways and models to increase alignment between

secondary and postsecondary technical programs.

Response should address the following:

- system stakeholders' input to assess the alignment and articulation of secondary and postsecondary technical programs supporting career pathways; and
- collaboration with secondary and post-secondary institutions to engage employers to identify credentials of value that respond to local labor market needs, including postsecondary technical sub-baccalaureate credit and non-credit credentials, industry-based certifications, apprenticeship certificates, and licenses; and
- processes to continuously improve career pathways.

**Board response and corresponding plan page number(s):**

Credentials of value are identified in both the in-demand and target occupations lists. These lists are developed from current data and local information.

The Board's Career Coach and Student HireAbility Navigator visit middle and high schools throughout the region to share career pathway information. Feedback from these interactions helps refine and improve the effectiveness of career pathway communication.

The Board has worked with a variety of ISDs as they develop their CTE programs. The Board's Regional Convener connects secondary and post-secondary institutions with employers to share grant opportunities and gather feedback on training outcomes. The Tri-Agency Regional Convener grant has allowed staff to develop a list of all current CTE programs of study, and to share in-demand and target occupations with the ISDs. These CTE programs enable students to graduate high school with a certificate or associate's degree, enhancing their career readiness.

Corresponding plan page number(s): 4, 17-22, 25-26, 31-32, 35-36, 45

#### **4. Policy and Planning Goal – Relevant Data Sets**

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

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

Response should address the following:

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

**Board response and corresponding plan page number(s):**

An ISD within the Deep East region is currently in the planning stages of opening an onsite child care facility for their employee and student child care needs. Other employers have investigated the feasibility of opening an onsite child care center for their employees but have foregone doing so because of the

associated risks. Identification of data sets to increase on- or near-site facilities and TRS certifications, to get a deeper insight into successful outcomes from employment and training services, and to streamline and improve timeliness and completeness of data matching and sharing, especially with certification attainment could be explored in future Regional Convener meetings.

Corresponding plan page number(s): 28-29, 36, 45

## Strategic Opportunities

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

### **Strategic Opportunity 1 – Employer Engagement**

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

Response should address the following:

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

### **Board response and corresponding plan page number(s):**

To maintain strong relationships with area employers and prevent duplication of outreach efforts, the Board coordinates closely with stakeholders. This is achieved by participating in annual or semi-annual college training program meetings with employers, as well as attending economic development meetings, chamber of commerce meetings, council of governments meetings, and other stakeholder gatherings. These engagements help the Board stay informed about employer needs, address concerns, and align efforts with other organizations to streamline employer interactions and requests.

Corresponding plan page number(s): 4, 21, 31-32, 35-36

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

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

Response should address the following:

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

**Board response and corresponding plan page number(s):**

Improving outcomes for Texans facing barriers requires a comprehensive approach, including understanding individual goals, identifying challenges, making referrals to specialized organizations, educating individuals on career opportunities, providing supportive services, and offering mentorship to adjust plans, track progress, and celebrate achievements. The Board's one-stop system is designed with this model in mind.

The SEAL program, VR Paid Work Experience program, the Board's Student HireAbility Navigator, and the partnership with VR are all significant contributors to the success of working with youth and individuals with disabilities.

Corresponding plan page number(s): 3, 21, 25-30, 32, 34-39

**Strategic Opportunity 3 – Use of Data to Support Investment Decisions**

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

Response should address the following:

- evidence-based practices and data to strategically implement and fund initiatives; and
- programs that have successfully demonstrated previous program participant credential attainment and employment.

**Board response and corresponding plan page number(s):**

The Board utilizes data to identify in-demand industries and occupations, develop the target occupations list, and strategically direct training investments. Data also guides outreach efforts, highlights areas for improvement, supports grant applications for specific initiatives, informs the allocation of flexible funding, and fosters collaboration.

A successful example of data-driven decision-making is the Board's collaboration with LIFE. This organization offers Department of Labor DOL Registered Apprenticeship Programs in information technology and carpentry training, and it has successfully trained the projected number of apprentices, all of whom remained employed. The supporting data reinforced the value of this initiative, leading to continued project collaborations.

Corresponding plan page number(s): 6-20, 22, 45