

# Solutions

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE TEXAS WORKFORCE

## Gig 'em

TEXAS A&M INSPIRES NEXT  
GENERATION OF STEM  
STUDENTS

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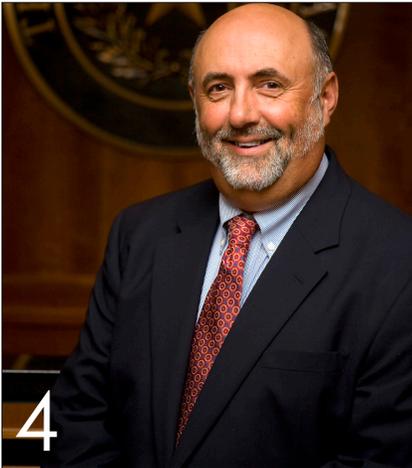
From 'Call of Duty' to Sense  
of Duty

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## WELCOME TO THE SUMMER EDITION OF SOLUTIONS!

At Texas Workforce Commission we are committed to fostering opportunities for lifelong learning, skills development, and career education. As the wildflowers bloom and we prepare for the heat of summer, students all across Texas are decorating and preparing their caps and gowns in celebration of a momentous achievement—their graduation day! After walking across their respective stages, these same students will transform into our future workforce, contributing their hard-earned skills and solidifying Texas' tradition of excellence in our labor market.

We continue to lead the way in leveraging the unique advantages of apprenticeship programs. These programs provide unique opportunities for young workers to earn while they learn and get their foot in the door in several in-demand professions. In March we celebrated Texas' first-ever Career and Technical Education (CTE) Signing Day, by hosting four students from Lamar Institute for Technology. You can read

more about CTE signing day later in this edition.

We have also, since our last publication, launched a website for young Texans to explore careers and understand the education and training needed to best position themselves for the future workforce. The “Jobs Y’all” program helps put high-need industries and occupations on the radar of young Texans. It encourages them to consider jobs in biotechnology, life sciences, and healthcare; advanced technologies and manufacturing; aerospace and defense; construction; energy; information and computer technology; petroleum refining and transportation and logistics.

More big news for local Boards and for communities. To ensure that all students have the resources to make career choices based on high-growth and high-demand occupations, TWC is rolling out a pilot program for Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists. Local Workforce Board grantees will place a workforce specialist in local ISDs as early

as middle school to ensure that students have adequate guidance in exploring potential careers paths.

For our adult learners, we are proud of the work of the Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) program continues to provide, helping under-skilled individuals increase their employment, improve skills, attain high school equivalency (HSE), and obtain recognized postsecondary credentials. AEL continues to provide no-cost training in-demand occupations to workers with high career ambitions. To date, the program has helped develop more than 660 career pathways programs, and more than 75 value-added employer partnerships have customized curriculum to meet employer needs and close the skills gap for more than 2,131 workers. We've developed robust system collaborations among TWC's workforce partners, which opened access and increased completion for lower-skilled college seekers, reducing the debt burden on students through no-cost AEL services.

Finally, to the class of 2019, I say congratulations! We are so excited about all the potential you carry with you as you enter your educational or career pathway. For everyone dreaming of their own tassel and mortarboard, the Texas Workforce Commission is working to help make your dreams become a reality. Contact us directly at [TexasWorkforce.org](http://TexasWorkforce.org) to find out about all the ways we can help serve you through our numerous education and job training programs.

Make no mistake, the future is bright, and our economy is strong thanks to the current and future workforce of Texas — we are Texas Strong!



**Pictured Above: Harlingen CISD Grant Presentation**

Dr. Mike Sandroussi, Mayor Boswell, Pat Hobbs, Agapito Perez Jr., Emily Clodfelter, Dr. Nolan Perez, Greg Powers, Gerry Fleuriet, Dr. Art Cavazos, Mario Lozoya, Ron Garza, German Rico, Chris Gonzalez

# IN MEMORY OF MR. LARRY TEMPLE

*Former Executive Director,  
Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)*

## By Staff

There are some people who are simply larger than life—they are etched in our memories, even after death. We here at TWC can relate to this great feeling of loss regarding a man who was our North, our South, our East and West; indeed, our very compass. We would be remiss to publish a new edition of SOLUTIONS without paying tribute to the man who gave TWC and the state of Texas so much service, so much love—and who was our good friend and colleague.

Larry Temple came to the TWC agency in 1997, serving first as Director of Welfare Reform for six years, and then serving as Executive Director for 14 years. Over the course of his state service, individuals inside and outside of Texas saw firsthand his integrity, humility and compassion always on display. TWC strengthened under his leadership, becoming one of the most comprehensive and integrated workforce development systems in the country.

Mr. Temple never deterred from his most important mission and purpose. He understood that putting Texans back to work is the most honorable of jobs and keeping Texas working is the greatest hope for our future. He continuously stated that the “best part of my job is knowing that I had a part in helping someone else get a job.”

Meanwhile, he was an extremely hard worker, had natural authenticity that comes with great wisdom and experience, was deeply compassionate to others in need, and shared with everyone he met his well-refined sense of humor and charismatic self.



Mr. Temple vigorously championed major transformative workforce goals. Over the past 20 years, he frequently testified before and advised Congress and many states, sharing best practices on reemployment and other leading policy and program ideas. Under his leadership, TWC also actively helped other state workforce agencies in times of crisis. For example, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the TWC Unemployment Insurance Division handled thousands of claims for the Louisiana Workforce Commission, at a time when Texas was dealing with its own catastrophic damage.

Mr. Temple was actively involved with the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA), the national organization representing all 50 state workforce agencies, serving at various times as both president and board member.

His work was recognized nationally and contributed to Texas being a model workforce for the nation. In December, he was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Hand Up Award by the American Institute for Full Employment (AIFE).

**We remember all the lives he touched and are forever in his debt.**

*“...He was my North, my South, my East and West,*

*My working week and my Sunday rest*

*My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;*

*I thought that love would last forever, I was wrong...”*

*--W. H. Auden, “Funeral Blues”*

# WACO PROJECT HELPS STUDENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES EXPLORE CAREER OPTIONS IN A LIVING, LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

By W. J. Scott



Zack, a 19-year-old Texan, is at a stage in life like most of his fellow high school peers; they are contemplating their future and career options. So, when Zack and his dad learned of the Work and College Opportunity (WACO) project, they welcomed the opportunity for Zack to participate in the five-week residential summer work and college training program held at Texas A&M University for young adults with disabilities aged 18-22.

The project, launched in 2014, has assisted more than 70 students in the span of five summers and is funded by federal and state vocational rehabilitation funds.

During their stay, WACO project participants learn to live independently on the campus while socially integrating into the larger Bryan/College Station community. Along with Texas A&M, WACO project partners include the Center on Disability and Development, Brazos Valley Center for Independent Living, and Texas Workforces Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWS-VRS). The WACO project serves customers from several Workforce Solutions areas including Brazos Valley, Capital Area, Central Texas, Deep East Texas, Heart of Texas, Gulf Coast, and Rural Capital.

“We first learned of the WACO project from [TWS-VRS Transition Counselor] Luis Castillo and later Zack’s visual instructor at our high school,” said Zack’s parents, Rick and Kris.

“WACO project is a work and college opportunity where customers can find a purpose, water it, nurture it and watch it grow into something meaningful,” said Castillo. “I knew it would be a great fit for Zack and his parents.”

The WACO project serves teens and young adults with disabilities to help them successfully transition into postsecondary education and employment. Participants attend classes specially designed to build confidence and audit other college classes based on their career interests.

“In my classes I learned how to act professionally, how to speak and what to wear,” said Zack. “I also had a class on self-determination, deciding on what I want to do next [for my career] and not giving up.”

WACO project participants attend classes during the morning. In the afternoon, they travel to their workplaces and receive work-based learning experiences as paid interns.

Zack’s work assignment was at Bryan/College Station Habitat for Humanity ReStore, a non-profit that resells building and home supplies, including furniture and appliances. It was Zack’s first job.

“Getting my first paycheck felt really good. It made me feel like I accomplished something,” said Zack. “I helped my co-workers maintain the store and restore the merchandise, making it presentable. I really enjoyed working at ReStore. I had a goal going in, to buy a new TV. I met that goal and had additional money to buy things that I needed or wanted.”

Each evening after work, students brush up on their independent living and social

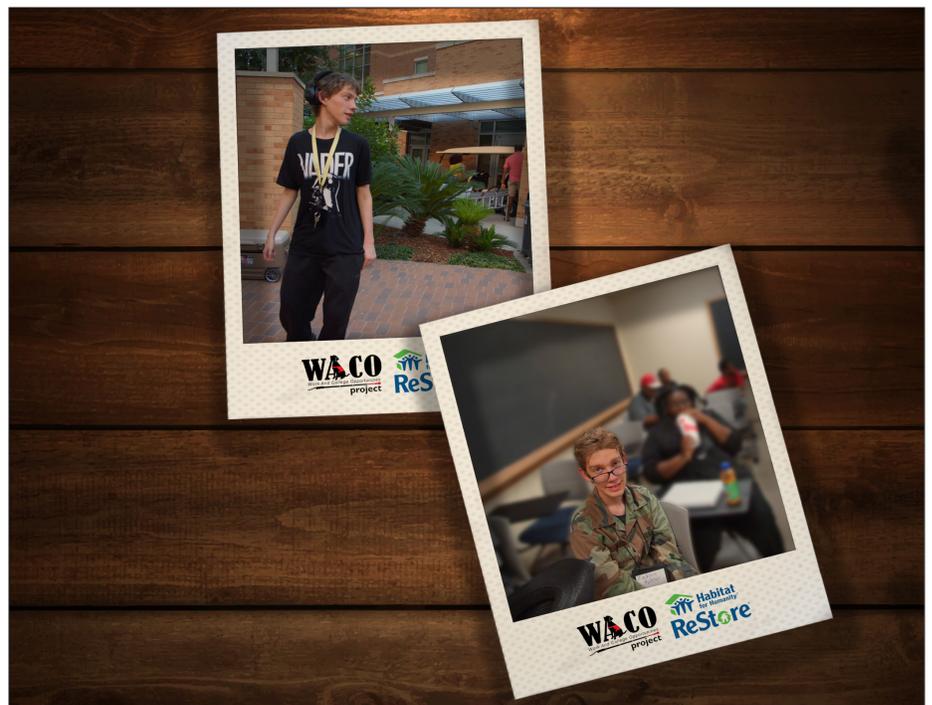
skills. Activities include preparing evening meals; learning to use public and other transportation options; participating in various recreational and social activities; completing homework assignments; and preparing for the next days’ schedule.

At the end of their five-week stay, students share their overall experience and learned experiences with their family and WACO project staff, who advise students on their performance and long-term goals.

“During his exit interview, WACO project staff noted Zack’s growth, independence and willingness to help others,” said Zack’s dad, Rick. “I saw the same and for us, as parents, we [Zack’s mom Kris and I] realized the need to learn to let go and understand that Zack will survive. The experience was great for everyone involved.”

What Zack liked the most about his experience with the WACO project was the helpfulness of staff. “Everyone was so friendly. If I had a problem I could go to one of the college staff members, [TWS-VRS Transition Counselor] Luis or another TWS-VRS counselor if I needed help right off the bat.”

After graduating high school, Zack plans to attend college. He’s still researching his choice of schools and major but after his experience with the WACO project, he’s confident and ready for the challenge.



# ***Gig 'em Texas A & M inspires next generation of STEM students by hosting the 2019 Texas Science and Engineering Fair***

By Joe Shine

For the competitors, it all began as nothing more than an idea, a concept, a dream. Next came the challenging and arduous process of pushing the boundaries of science to turn those ideas into reality. No matter the reason they took that first step, the results were spectacular and on display at the 2019 Texas Science and Engineering Fair (TXSEF) hosted by Texas A&M University.

2019 marked the first year that Texas A&M University hosted the event and on March 30th students arrived in College Station to vie for top prizes in 22 project categories. These future engineers and scientists of Texas presented their work to judges and showcased their commitment to improving the world around them through innovation.

“Texas is a leader in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and thanks to the over 1,400 Texas middle

and high school students who competed in the 18th Annual Science Fair at Texas A&M University, the future looks bright,” said TWC Chair Ruth R. Hughs. “These students will enter into an increasingly competitive job market with the applied skills in STEM disciplines that are highly coveted by Texas employers. It is important that the state continues to support the next generation by offering them opportunities like the TXSEF where they are provided an amazing platform to demonstrate their tremendous talents.”

The projects on display at the event were a reminder of our scientific evolution. There were no erupting volcanoes or bubbling, smoking beakers from a chemistry set. This is the new, modern science fair where helmets control robotic hands, engines are rebuilt to be more efficient, and where you'll meet students who decided to act when they saw family members with disabilities struggling to do something as





simple as visit relatives.

Madison Burke and Anushka Aggarwai, first place winners in the Junior Division for Systems Software, saw the struggles their family members with disabilities were having with everyday travel and developed software to address this. Their program helps people with disabilities travel safer and more efficiently. Young students with a passion and talent for STEM saw a need and acted.

“This event was a tremendous celebration of innovation and we were proud to welcome these young students to Texas A&M University to showcase their creativity,” said Dr. M. Katherine Banks, Texas A&M Engineering vice chancellor and dean. “Participation at the state-level competition is a significant accomplishment and speaks volumes about the support these students have received from their teachers and schools.”

“The Texas Science and Engineering Fair offers a great opportunity for the youth of Texas to learn more about science and engineering, which can lead to future career choices in these areas,” said Truman Bell, chairman of the TXSEF Advisory Board and manager of community relations for ExxonMobil Corporation. “ExxonMobil is pleased to support this effort which will inspire the next generation of scientists and engineers.”

There is a shortage of students pursuing careers in STEM, and while this trend continues to be addressed, on a cold

and overcast day in College Station the future of Texas looked positively radiant. Texas, its labor force, and the labor force of the world, is going to have a highly intelligent and enthusiastic group of student-leaders entering the workforce with the ideas and passion to shape the future.



# Celebrating Texas' First-Ever CTE Signing Day

By Talan Tyminski

With high school graduation nearing, many students across Texas are considering their next move be it a traditional or non-traditional route that will involve future careers, job prospects, and potential earnings.

For a group of four students from Beaumont, Jaalah Baaheth, Seth Carl, Savanna Mitchell, and Nick Walker, the decision to continue with their education was met with much celebration and applause from the State Legislature in Austin as well as The Texas Workforce Commission, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Texas Education Agency and Lamar Institute of Technology. These students took part in the first-ever State of Texas Career and Technical Education (CTE) Signing Day.

The celebration kicked off with Texas State Representative James White reading resolution HR 241 on the House floor declaring March 8th Texas' CTE Signing Day. After the formal reading, the students joined TWC Commissioners Ruth Hughes, Julian Alvarez and representatives from Lamar Institute of Technology (LIT) for a scholarship signing ceremony and reception held at the Texas Workforce Commission building in Austin, Texas.

"There were so many more people there than I thought would be, and it showed that there were a lot more people behind us," said Jaalah Baaheth, a Biology student at Lamar Institute of Technology. "[Signing day is] going to push me to study harder because I now know people are depending on me. I know that I can do this because there are a whole bunch of people rooting for me."

CTE Signing Day, meanwhile, was modeled after traditional athletic signing days to celebrate Career and Technical Education. Each of the students received \$3,000, a \$2,000 ExxonMobil scholarship and LIT President Dr. Lonnie L. Howard surprised the recipients with a personal \$1,000 Presidential scholarship, to attend Lamar Institute of Technology and pursue their chosen career track. Fittingly, the Lamar Institute of Technology (LIT) slogan boasts "Get a degree that works," and is precisely what these students will do. Apparently, 92.8% of students who attend Lamar Institute of Technology find a career after graduation and the school ranks number one in the state for the most significant salary for graduates among two-year colleges.

"There was nothing more exciting



than CTE signing day for our students, the parents, and our staff. That level of excitement is still there. The word is spreading," said Lamar Institute of Technology President Dr. Lonnie Howard. "I want to commend Rep. White, Commissioner Alvarez and all of TWC. It was a breathtaking moment for the students and me. It is something that I will not only remember for my professional career but a moment in time that I will remember for the rest of my life."

LIT focuses on Career and Technical Education programs that offer a sequence of courses that provide students with relevant technical skills and knowledge needed to prepare for further education and careers in high-demand and emerging industries.

"CTE often flies under the radar, but it's something that needs more attention," said Seth Carl, CTE signing day participant studying business. "[This scholarship] is definitely a head start and it will help me better prepare for a future career."

All the while, demand for highly skilled workers continues to grow across Texas even though the narrative taught to students in classrooms across the state places a higher value on traditional four-year degrees. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that between 2012 and 2022 there will be 50,557,900 jobs openings for CTE graduates in 16 different career clusters. CTE Signing Day aims to encourage students to take the less traditional route and consider their job prospects and future earnings.

"It's really easy to feel pressured to go to a four-year school," said Savanna Mitchell, Scholarship Recipient studying for her 30-hour OSHA certification which has a projected annual earnings of \$72,000. "My Mom and I talked about my options and how there were more opportunities for me

at a two-year school than there were at a traditional four-year. Other students should focus on their own personal requirements and desires when deciding what is best for them."

As Jaalah, Seth, Savanna and Nick gear up for high school graduation and their new career paths, the Texas Workforce Commission continues the celebration, working to expand CTE Signing Day across the state. By sparking enthusiasm for CTE programs and the students choosing to attend them, Texas can come one step closer to meeting industry demands for highly skilled workers. "I want to thank you for sharing this day and for being a wonderful example of what our workforce has to offer," said Commissioner Representing Labor Julian Alvarez. "Your hard work and dedication will be recognized by our leading Texas industries."

CTE Signing Day supports the goals of the Tri-Agency by recognizing the important role that Career and Technical Education curriculum provides in ensuring a skilled future workforce. For more information visit regarding CTE signing day: <https://twc.texas.gov/news/lamar-institute-technology-joins-twc-recognizing-students-texas-first-ever-cte-signing-day-ceremony>



# From ‘Call of Duty’ to Sense of Duty: How a Rio Grande Valley Student Used TWC-Funded Cybersecurity 8 Week Bootcamp to Launch Ethical Hacker Career

By Staff

When Jared Stephens attended his first bootcamp in Mission, Texas—it was not a typical bootcamp. For one, there were no hard boots or roaring drill sergeants. Instead, the experience catapulted him to a position on an international cyber team with a leading Fortune 500 company.

“I didn’t know I could get paid to be a hacker one day,” said Jared. As part of the summer boot program, Jared and his cohorts completed a series of CompTIA vendor-neutral skills certifications for technology professionals that are widely sought after by companies all over the United States and the world. All cohorts and participants received the CompTIA series of professional certifications, including A+, Network+, Security+, and Cybersecurity Analyst+ certifications at graduation which ensures they are more than a little marketable.

“In fact, I didn’t know there were jobs such as ethical hacker and penetration tester in cybersecurity. I now know the certification the bootcamp offered makes a difference to the international clients we work with.”

In an industry that is growing exponentially, in retrospect, if Stephens is testimony to anything it’s that cybersecurity bootcamps can potentially solve the problem of a severe shortage of core technology workers in cybersecurity IT and advance your career.

Today, employers across Texas and the United States are seeking thousands of core technology workers in cybersecurity to fill current and future staffing needs. In 2016, tech

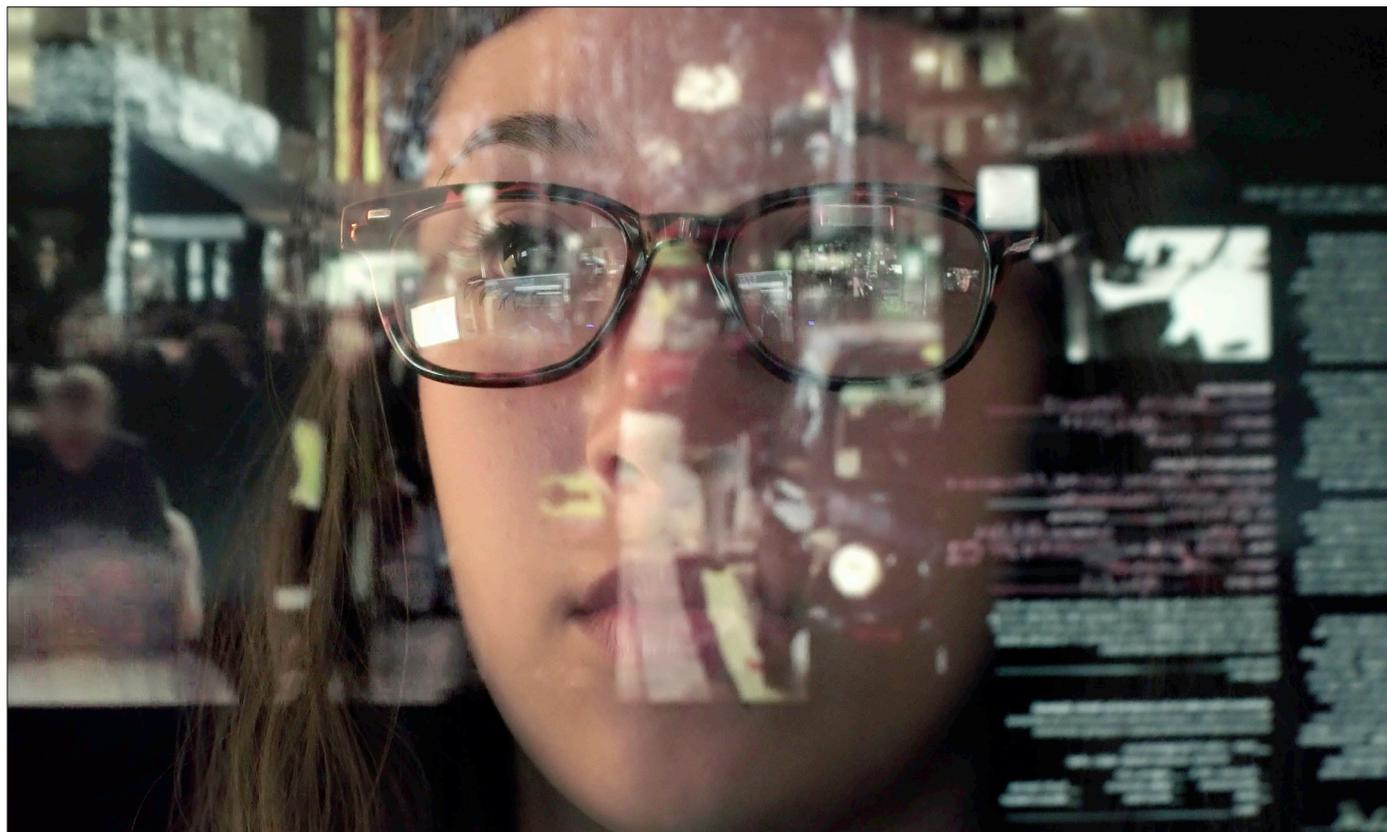
industry employment in Texas grew by more than 11,000 jobs, according to CompTIA’s Cyberstates 2017 report. Even with this new hiring, employers posted job openings for more than 42,600 tech occupations in Q4 2016.

How did 24-year-old Jared Stephens find himself in the lucrative field of a cybersecurity IT related career? The answer lies partially in a cybersecurity bootcamp connected to the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).

In Summer 2017, Jared attended a cyber bootcamp connected to a High Demand Job Training (HDJT) state grant provided by the Mission Economic Development Corporation (Mission EDC) in partnership with Workforce Solutions, the local workforce development board (WFS), CompTIA and TWC.

Jared’s real interest and passion for cybersecurity and coding, started with the video game ‘Call of Duty.’ It was through ‘Call of Duty’ that Jared first witnessed unethical behavior, adversaries and computer hacking. He wondered what else one could do with signed code?

As cybersecurity threats grow both in numbers and in risks they pose to organizations, the plan is to help build capacity in South Texas so that future cybersecurity certification boot camps such as this one may continue. All we can say is we’re impressed with Jared Stephens and with these grants that support organizations like Mission EDC and CompTIA—where do we sign up?



# Texas Talent Connection Grant

## Applications open May 1, 2019

The new site is now the state's central hub for monthly labor market data including the unemployment rate, as well as wage, employment, and salary data. The former website, TRACER2.com was retired on Feb.19. Eligible partnerships for Texas Talent Connection grants for

workforce training and services may include various combinations of local workforce boards, employers or employer organizations, institutions of higher education, faith-based organizations, local school districts, and not-for-profit community-based organizations. The

Texas Talent Connection grant program is funded by Wagner-Peyser 7(b) federal funds, which are allocated to each State Office of the Governor on July 1 of each year for grants to fund workforce training and job placement services.

### Important Dates

The application period for the Texas Talent Connection Grant (II) will open on May 1, 2019.



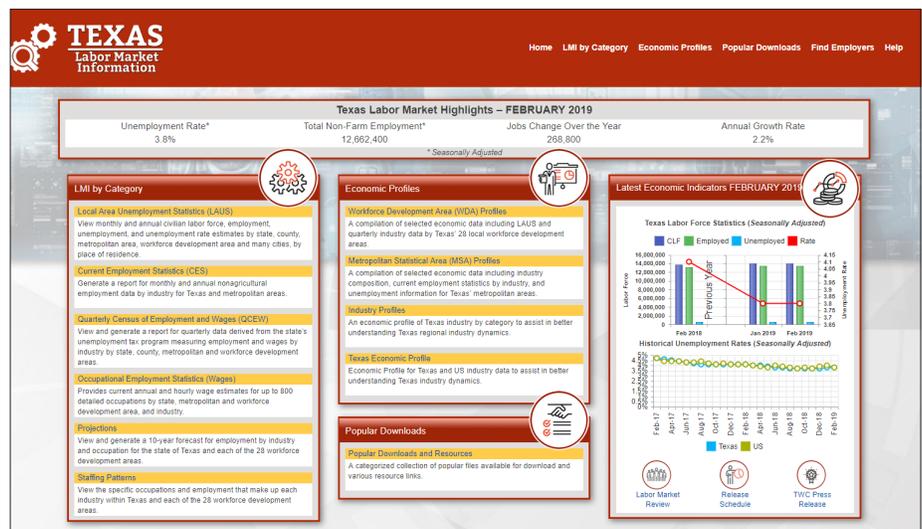
## TEXASLMI.COM REPLACES TRACER2 AS THE CENTRAL HUB FOR USER-FRIENDLY LABOR MARKET DATA

February marked the launch of a new labor market tool, TexasLMI.com. The new site features a user-friendly dashboard with intuitive navigation that will make accessing the agency's statistics easier. It is also accessible for people with disabilities.

The site brings the state's economic data into the twenty-first century with mobile compatibility, which allows Texans to access the information on-the-go. The new site offers improved navigation and intuitive workflow.

Using www.TexasLMI.com, boards can capitalize on the site's easy-to-use dashboard to monitor staffing trends, annual growth rate and latest economic indicators for the state. TexasLMI.com is now the state's central hub for monthly labor market data including the unemployment rate, as well as wage, employment, and salary data.

The TWC's Labor Market and Career Information (LMCI) Department is a



statewide and national leader in making career information and labor market data available online to the public. In 2017 and 2018, LMCI's Texas Career Check (www.texascareercheck.com), Texas Reality Check (www.texasrealitycheck.com), and Texas Labor Analysis (www.texaslaboranalysis.com) have all won awards from the Texas Center for Digital Government. The former website, TRACER2.com was retired on Feb.19.

# STAR AWARDS HONOR EMPLOYEE ACHIEVEMENT

TWC sponsors the Star Awards, which recognize and reward employees and volunteers for outstanding contributions and/or service. Chair Ruth Hughes and Commissioners Julian Alvarez and Robert Thomas recently honored the following Star award recipient:

## Star Awards Matthew Tichenor

Matthew Tichenor performed above and beyond all expectations as a Systems Analyst in TWC's Operational Insight Division when he singlehandedly provided innovative, worldclass data analytics solutions for internal TWC customers to detect and prevent unemployment insurance (UI) fraud, saving the UI Trust Fund millions of dollars. Matthew's impressive accomplishments are now nationally known throughout the UI Integrity community, creating a positive image for TWC.



Photo: Ed Serna, Former Commissioner Robert Thomas, Chair Ruth Hughes, Matthew Tichenor, Commissioner Julian Alvarez

## Star Awards Office of General Counsel



Photo: Front Row: Mariela Esser-Jaime, Commissioner Julian Alvarez, Connie Montalvo Garza, Sarah Hernandez, Chair Hughes, Toan Trinh, Stephen Elliott, Nelson Kerr III, Les Trobman, Susanna Holt Cutrone  
Back Row: Jonathan Coneby, "Chris" Alejo-Waits, Nicholas Lealos, Brian Zhang, Ed Schultz, Jeff Thiele, Art Gonzalez, Jim Driggers, Hugh Wilder, Ed Serna

This cross-divisional team is responsible for creating and implementing complex electronic solutions to business needs of the Office of General Counsel (OGC). The OGC legal services portal is a comprehensive electronic platform which allows all TWC customers to request and receive legal assistance in a highly efficient and transparent manner. The resulting products have a significant effect on the ability of the office to provide enhanced services to our internal clientele and the broader public. The transformative projects illustrate the power of using cutting edge technology, and collaboration among various agency disciplines for the betterment of the Texas economy and its citizens.



Photo: Les Trobman, Susanna Holt Cutrone, Mariela Esser-Jaime, Nelson Kerr III, Heather Hall, Jeff Peden

# TEXAS WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS



**Texas Workforce Commission**

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www.texasworkforce.org

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www.workforcesolutionsalamo.org

**Borderplex**

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www.borderplexjobs.com

**Brazos Valley**

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www.bvjobs.org

**Cameron County**

956-548-6700  
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www.wfscapitalarea.com

**Central Texas**

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www.workforcelink.com

**Coastal Bend**

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**Concho Valley**

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www.cvworkforce.org

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**East Texas**

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www.easttexasworkforce.org

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# TEXAS WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

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