WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

COMBINED STATE PLAN

TEXAS

PROGRAM YEARS 2024–2027

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Governor of each State must submit a Unified or Combined State Plan to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor that outlines a four-year strategy for the State's workforce development system. The workforce development system is a national network of Federal, State, regional, and local agencies and organizations that provide a range of employment, education, training, and related services and supports to help all job-seekers secure good jobs while providing businesses with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. States must have approved Unified or Combined State Plans in place to receive funding for core programs. WIOA reforms planning requirements, previously governed by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), to foster better alignment of Federal investments in job training, to integrate service delivery across programs and improve efficiency in service delivery, and to ensure that the workforce system is job-driven and matches employers with skilled individuals. One of WIOA's principal areas of reform is to require States to plan across core programs and include this planning process in the Unified or Combined State Plans. This reform promotes a shared understanding of the workforce needs within each State and fosters development of more comprehensive and integrated approaches, such as career pathways and sector strategies, for addressing the needs of businesses and workers. Successful implementation of many of these approaches called for within WIOA requires robust relationships across programs. WIOA requires States and local areas to enhance coordination and partnerships with local entities and supportive service agencies for strengthened service delivery, including through Unified or Combined State Plans.

OPTIONS FOR SUBMITTING A STATE PLAN

A State has two options for submitting a State Plan— a Unified State Plan or a Combined State Plan. At a minimum, a State must submit a Unified State Plan that meets the requirements described in this document and outlines a four-year strategy for the core programs. The six core programs are—

- the Adult program (Title I of WIOA),

- the Dislocated Worker program (Title I),

- the Youth program (Title I),

- the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program (Title II), and

- the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program (authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III),

- the Vocational Rehabilitation program (authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV).

Alternatively, a State may submit a Combined State Plan that meets the requirements described in this document and outlines a four-year strategy for WIOA's core programs plus one or more of the Combined State Plan partner programs. When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program. If included, Combined State Plan partner programs are subject to the "common planning elements" (Sections II-IV of this

document) where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program where such planning requirements exist separately for the program. The Combined State Plan partner programs are—

- Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)

- Employment and Training programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)))

- Work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o))

- Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers programs (Activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.))

- Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et. seq.)

- Unemployment Insurance programs (programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law)

- Senior Community Service Employment program (programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.))

- Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development

- Community Services Block Grant (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.)) [1]

[1] States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) under a Combined State Plan would submit all other required elements of a complete CSBG State Plan directly to the Federal agency that administers the program. Similarly, States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development that are included would submit all other required elements of a complete State Plan for those programs directly to the Federal agency that administers the program.

HOW STATE PLAN REQUIREMENTS ARE ORGANIZED

The major content areas of the Unified or Combined State Plan include strategic and operational planning elements. WIOA separates the strategic and operational elements to facilitate cross-program strategic planning.

- The **Strategic Planning Elements** section includes analyses of the State's economic conditions, workforce characteristics, and workforce development activities. These analyses drive the required vision and goals for the State's workforce development

system and alignment strategies for workforce development programs to support economic growth.

- The **Operational Planning Elements** section identifies the State's efforts to support the State's strategic vision and goals as identified in the Strategic Planning Elements section. This section ensures that the State has the necessary infrastructure, policies, and activities to meet its strategic goals, implement its alignment strategy, and support ongoing program development and coordination. Operational planning elements include:

  o State Strategy Implementation,

  o State Operating Systems and Policies,

  o Assurances,

  o Program-Specific Requirements for the Core Programs, and

  o Program-Specific Requirements for the Combined State Plan partner programs. (These requirements are available in a separate supplemental document, Supplement to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified and Combined State Plan Requirements. The Departments are not seeking comments on these particular requirements).

When responding to Unified or Combined State Plan requirements, States must identify specific strategies for coordinating programs and services for target populations.[2] States must develop strategies that look beyond strategies for the general population and develop approaches that also address the needs of target populations. Use of links to external websites and documents is permitted within the State Plan narrative submission, if such links remain active and adhere to Section 508 accessibility requirements.

Paperwork Reduction Act: The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA) provides that an agency may not conduct, and no person is required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. Public reporting burden for this information collection is estimated to be 86 hours per state; including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Responding to this collection is required to obtain or retain the Federal grant benefit. In addition, responses to this information collection are public, and the agencies offer no assurances of confidentiality. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Workforce Investment, and reference OMB control number 1205-0522. Note: Please do not return the completed plan to this address.

[2] Target populations include individuals with barriers to employment, as defined in WIOA Sec. 3, as well as veterans, unemployed workers, and youth.

I. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE

Unified or Combined State Plan. Select whether the State is submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan. At a minimum, a State must submit a Unified State Plan that covers the six core programs. Unified or Combined State Plan. Select whether the State is submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan. At a minimum, a State must submit a Unified State Plan that covers the six core programs.

Unified State Plan. This plan includes the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser Act, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and Vocational Rehabilitation programs.

Combined State Plan. This plan includes the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser Act, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and Vocational Rehabilitation programs, as well as one or more of the optional Combined State Plan partner programs identified below.

This is a combined plan.

COMBINED PLAN PARTNER PROGRAM(S)

Indicate which Combined Plan partner program(s) the state is electing to include in the plan.

Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)

> No

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)

> No

Employment and Training programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)))

> No

Work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o))

> No

Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers programs (activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.))

> No

Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et. seq.)

> No

Unemployment Insurance programs (programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law)

No

Senior Community Service Employment program (programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.))

Yes

Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development

No

Community Services Block Grant (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.))

No

B. PLAN INTRODUCTION OR EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Unified or Combined State Plan may include an introduction or executive summary. This element is optional.

Introduction

This plan submission covers the period of July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2028. The plan is written to represent a workforce system in which all core programs set forth in WIOA are under the purview of TWC. Through this Combined State Plan (plan), Texas proposes the implementation of jointly administered activities concerning the following core and optional programs authorized by WIOA:

- The Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs

- The Wagner-Peyser Employment Service (ES) program, including the Agricultural Outreach Plan

- The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program

- The Vocational Rehabilitation programs

- The Senior Community Service Employment program

The Texas workforce system is composed of a number of programs, services, and initiatives administered by eight state agencies, the Texas Association of Workforce Boards, local workforce development boards, community and technical colleges, local adult education providers, and independent school districts. System partners are responsible for the delivery of 23 programs and services that focus on workforce education and training for adults, adults with barriers to employment, and youth.

System partners operate within a complex, changing economic environment as they strive to provide employers, workers, and job seekers with services that are comprehensive, timely, and relevant. By 2030, the Texas population is projected to exceed 32.9 million people, with almost 11.2 million workers being 25-54 years of age, with Hispanics remaining the largest percentage of the Texas labor force (40.30 percent) and the number of females slightly exceeding that of males.[1]

The programs discussed in this plan reflect only a portion of the programs administered by TWC. Through the integrated workforce system in Texas, TWC also administers several other federal and state programs, including the following federally funded programs:

- Choices [the employment program for recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)]

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T)[3]

- Child Care and Development Block Grant Funds/Child Care Development Funds (CCDBG/CCDF)

- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)

- Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA)

- Registered Apprenticeship grant programs

TWC administers state-funded workforce development programs, including:

- Apprenticeship Texas

- Skills Development Fund training (customized training for businesses)

- Self-Sufficiency Fund training

- Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) (grants for community colleges, nonprofit organizations, and school districts that provide opportunities for students to pursue new career and technical education programs in high-growth industries)

Through this highly expansive ecosystem of programs and partners, TWC works to implement enhancements that continue to strengthen the state's workforce development system to put more Texans to work. Texas operates a highly integrated workforce system with a focus on ensuring that all Texans have opportunity to connect to employment in high demand fields. Because current and former foster youth receive priority of service in Texas before all other qualified candidates, except veterans, foster youth and people with disabilities are other underserved populations that TWC outreaches for participation in workforce initiatives.

By eliminating barriers to employment for populations at risk of leaving the workforce, TWC and the Boards are working to connect Texans with appropriate resources to support career growth. The plan describes a four-year strategy that spurs skill and credential attainment, employment, job retention, and an increase in the earnings of program participants, including those with barriers to employment, that results in a higher quality workforce, a reduced dependency on public assistance, and increased productivity and competitiveness for the state.

The plan complies with WIOA by aligning its core and optional programs to the state's workforce investment, education, and economic development systems, as discussed in the unified strategic planning requirements; common performance accountability measures; and requirements governing the one-stop delivery system. As WIOA intended, the plan serves as

a map to develop, align, and integrate the entire system across federal education, employment, and training programs. The plan enumerates the state's vision and strategic and operational goals for providing workforce services and continuously improving the quality and performance of its system.

Enhancing Service Delivery Through Technology

Over the past few years, Boards have expanded the use of technology for providing services. Boards often use software for online job fairs, virtual technology hubs to direct participants to workforce services, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, such as chatbots, to intuitively answer customer questions in real time. This technology has enabled Boards to provide a wide range of online services and innovative in-person services.

Enhancing Broadband Connectivity

Although more workforce services are provided online, and the enhanced use of technology allows for better in-person services, many individuals still lack access to fast, reliable, and affordable broadband connectivity. More than 30 percent of workers in the United States lack digital skills, and nearly 40 percent of those workers are required to use moderate or advanced computer skills on the job. The skills gap creates talent recruitment challenges for businesses of all sizes.[1]

TWC and the Texas Broadband Development Office (BDO) want to upskill the Texas workforce. To address this growing statewide concern, TWC participated in a BDO-hosted Statewide Working Group that provided written recommendations, promoted data collection tools, and provided feedback on program planning and design. As show in in the Texas Broadband Five-Year Action Plan, BDO addresses existing and emerging state priorities, compliance with state law, coordination with other state agencies that are key stakeholders in state efforts to expand broadband access, and strategies to close the digital divide.

Additionally, the 2021–2025 Texas Workforce Commission Strategic Plan highlights the need for innovative solutions that extend services to unserved areas. TWC's Strategic Plan outlines the use of mobile units, which "allow customers access to computer stations with internet access to search for jobs, improve their resumes, and receive training." Some rural areas have deployed mobile units, which consist of buses, vans, or trailers with computer stations that travel to multiple locations and offer services, such as career exploration and job readiness courses, training opportunities, and orientations for various workforce programs. The use of mobile units aligns with BDO's effort to expand internet access to unserved and underserved areas. Universal broadband access will enable the Boards to serve a greater number of individuals and better equip the Texas workforce for in-demand jobs and connect people to job openings, thereby reducing unemployment. [2]

[1] Texas Broadband Five-Year Action Plan. Broadband Equity, Access, and Development Program. Texas Broadband Development Office. August 2023.

[2] *Ibid*

Enhancing Middle Skills Opportunities

Growth in middle-skills jobs, those that require more than a high school degree but less than a four-year degree, continues to increase the demand for workers with industry-based

certifications. The Texas workforce employed in middle-skill occupations in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields is projected to increase by 24 percent to nearly $1.5 million workers within the next decade. This growth will include significant increases in health care, construction, and manufacturing fields. In Texas, future workers will also be needed in transportation and warehousing, and in professional, scientific, and technical services occupations. Overall, middle-skill jobs will make up nearly 36 percent of high-wage, high-demand job growth in Texas as projected through 2028.

TWC approved $2 million in WIOA statewide funds for a Middle-Skills Employment Supplies Pilot Project. This project makes not less than $300,000 available to each of Texas' Boards to partner with non-profit and community programs and other state agencies that provide training and certifications for middle-skills occupations but have limited or no funds to purchase tools or supplies that are required to be successful in these occupations. The project provides funds to WIOA-eligible individuals by allowing the purchase of the specific items required by the employer and support services, as needed.

TWC is committed to expanding the apprenticeship model, and as part of that effort, supports a number of initiatives under its Apprenticeship Texas program. TWC allocated $4 million to support the development of new registered apprenticeship programs that train workers in middle-skill jobs. The funds help employers operating in more than one location in the state secure US Department of Labor (DOL) registration and defray costs of curricula development, instruction or training for apprentices, training supplies for apprentices, instructor costs, and mentor activities.

Enhancing Access to Industry-Recognized Certifications

TWC and its 28 Boards have expanded training strategies to increase the completion of industry-recognized certifications that meet employer-defined needs, in part by streamlining new employment hiring and orientation. Boards and employers identified the top certifications needed for high-demand jobs in their local areas. Certifications were awarded in industries such as manufacturing, health care, construction, information technology, and transportation.

Securing industry-recognized certifications is an essential strategy for helping job seekers find and keep meaningful employment post-release from correctional facilities. The Windham School District works closely with industry partners to build a well-trained workforce for industrial and heavy construction industries. Partner program expansion efforts include adding training in technical fields, such as telecommunications connections, energy management, computer numerical control machining programming, and piloting self-paced training programs that utilize study guides and materials for selected certifications.

II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a Strategic Planning Elements section that analyzes the State's current economic environment and identifies the State's overall vision for its workforce development system. The required elements in this section allow the State to develop data-driven goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and to identify successful strategies for aligning workforce development programs to support economic growth. Unless otherwise noted, all Strategic Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs. Where requirements

identify the term "populations", these must include individuals with barriers to employment as defined at WIOA Section 3. This includes displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals. Additional populations include veterans, unemployed workers, and youth, and others that the State may identify.

A. ECONOMIC, WORKFORCE, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions, economic development strategies, and labor market in which the State's workforce system and programs will operate.

1. ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

A. ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions and trends in the State, including sub-State regions and any specific economic areas identified by the State. This must include—

I. EXISTING DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS

Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which there is existing demand.

II. EMERGING DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS

Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which demand is emerging.

III. EMPLOYERS' EMPLOYMENT NEEDS

With regard to the industry sectors and occupations identified in (A)(i) and (ii), provide an assessment of the employment needs of employers, including a description of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required, including credentials and licenses.

Introduction

Texas remains the best state in the nation to work, live, and own a business. Texas has achieved growth across all major private industries and continues to outpace the nation in job growth by fostering a business environment that enables Texas employers—large and small—to thrive, grow, and succeed.

As a result, in September 2023, Texas's labor market achieved new record highs in terms of the job count, number of people employed, and number of people in the civilian labor force. Total nonfarm employment increased by 61,400 positions over the month of September 2023 to reach a 24th consecutive series-high level with 14,049,400 jobs and a 31st consecutive

month of growth. Since September 2022, Lone Star State employment grew by 435,800 positions as Texas's annual growth rate of 3.2 percent outpaced the nation by 1.1 percentage points.

The seasonally adjusted number of employed persons increased by 26,900 people over the month of September 2023, raising Texas's new record high to 14,515,800. The Lone Star State's seasonally adjusted civilian labor force also reached a new record high of 15,141,300 after increasing by 29,500 people over the month. The state's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate held at 4.1 percent for September 2023.

Employment in nine of 11 major industries expanded over the month of September 2023. Trade, Transportation, and Utilities saw significant growth over the month with 15,200 jobs added, while the Professional and Business Services industry gained 14,900 jobs. Another 13,800 positions were added in Private Education and Health Services, and 8,000 jobs were tallied for Manufacturing.

As of September 2023, the Mining and Logging industry recorded an over-the-year gain of 18,500 positions, leading all industries with an annual growth rate of 9.0 percent. Education and Health Services achieved 5.3 percent annual growth in September 2023, with the Health Care and Social Assistance subsector expanding by 5.7 percent.

The Midland Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) maintained the lowest unemployment rate among Texas MSAs with a not-seasonally adjusted rate of 2.5 percent in September 2023, followed by Amarillo at 3.2 percent, College Station-Bryan at 3.2 percent, and Lubbock at 3.3 percent. Behind them, Odessa had an unemployment rate of 3.4 percent in September, while Abilene maintained a rate of 3.5 percent. Austin-Round Rock and San Angelo both matched the U.S. unemployment rate of 3.6 percent.

In addition, the civilian labor force in the San Antonio-New Braunfels MSA increased by 3,800 people in September 2023, and employment increased by nearly 10,000 jobs over the month. Employment in the Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land area grew by 14,300 jobs in September 2023, while the MSA's unemployment rate was half a percentage point lower than it was in the month prior.

Through conversations with industry leaders, TWC has learned that many industries are automating the most dangerous aspects of the work, which has increased safety and productivity in the labor market. According to data collected by the Texas Department of Insurance, workers' compensation claims in mining (including oil and gas and support activities) declined from 3,621 in 2014 to 1,483 in 2021, a reduction of 59.0 percent. Similarly, the rate of nonfatal injuries, as published by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, declined from 1.6 per hundred workers in 2014 to 0.6 in 2021. Meanwhile, Texas oil production rose from 1.16 billion barrels in 2014 to 1.74 billion barrels in 2021.

The following describes existing employment paired with projections by industry, occupation, and leading occupations within a top industry. Highest demand is categorized by either growth rate or largest growth as noted in the introduction of each section. Employers' highest overall needs are identified by job advertisements filtered by top occupations.

Existing and Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations by Growth Rate

The following industries in Texas are arranged by fastest projected growth rates for the 2020–2030 period.

Table 1: Industry Projections by Growth Rate

Industry Title	Annual Average Employment 2020	Annual Average Employment 2030	Number Change 2020–2030	Percent Change 2020–2030
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	183,954	251,534	67,580	36.7
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	114,897	154,449	39,552	34.4
Accommodation and Food Services	1,058,309	1,422,086	363,777	34.4
Management of Companies and Enterprises	143,907	190,154	46,247	32.1
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	761,785	965,920	204,135	26.8
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,567,737	1,935,146	367,409	23.4
Construction	721,290	876,030	154,740	21.5
Other Services (except Public Administration)	412,027	495,698	83,671	20.3
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	214,471	256,764	42,293	19.7
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	739,467	885,001	145,534	19.7
Transportation and Warehousing	581,898	695,289	113,391	19.5
Wholesale Trade	535,738	621,732	85,994	16.1
Finance and Insurance	528,461	604,215	75,754	14.3
Educational Services	1,187,797	1,349,674	161,877	13.6
Retail Trade	1,264,764	1,430,027	165,263	13.1
Manufacturing	856,801	968,443	111,642	13.0
Utilities	51,034	57,567	6,533	12.8
Information	188,048	207,803	19,755	10.5
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	59,302	65,406	6,104	10.3
Government, Except Postal Services, State and Local Education and Hospitals	713,255	765,790	52,535	7.4

Data Source: Texas Industry Projections, Long-Term 2020–2030

Of the 20 industries listed above, 19 represent a large cross section of the Texas economy and are expected to increase in employment by double-digit percentages. As of September 2023, Current Employment Statistics (CES) not seasonally adjusted data indicates that the Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation industry currently stands at 102.6 percent of September 2019 employment.

As of September 2023, Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction, which is an industry that requires a high degree of expertise and training, has not recovered to September 2019 employment levels as quickly. However, according to CES estimates, this industry reached a series-high, not seasonally adjusted employment level of 320,700 jobs in December 2014 and is projected to be the fastest growing two-digit industry by 2030, with 67,580 jobs added. The occupations within the Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction industry are projected to add the most jobs that pay above the 2021 statewide mean wage of $54,228 a year. These occupations are listed below in Table 2.

The Utilities industry is projected to add 6,533 jobs between 2020 and 2030, which is an increase of 12.8 percent. This projected growth is likely due to the increased infrastructure needs for Texas' rapidly expanding population.

Table 2: Occupations in Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction

Occupation Code	Occupational Title	2020 Empl.	2030 Empl.	Change	Percent Change	Typical Education for Entry
47-5012	Rotary Drill Operators, Oil and Gas	4,642	6,726	2,084	44.9	No formal educational credential
17-2171	Petroleum Engineers	6,360	8,002	1,642	25.8	Bachelor's degree
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	6,244	7,748	1,504	24.1	Bachelor's degree
53-7073	Wellhead Pumpers	4,774	6,092	1,318	27.6	High school diploma or equivalent
41-3091	Sales Representatives of Services, except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services, and Travel	1,940	2,865	925	47.7	High school diploma or equivalent
15-1211	Computer Systems Analysts	4,687	5,242	555	11.8	Bachelor's degree
19-2042	Geoscientists, except Hydrologists and Geographers	2,024	2,480	456	22.5	Bachelor's degree
19-5011	Occupational Health and Safety Specialists	1,006	1,459	453	45.0	Bachelor's degree

Occupation Code	Occupational Title	2020 Empl.	2030 Empl.	Change	Percent Change	Typical Education for Entry
53-1047	First-Line Supervisors of Transportation and Material Moving Workers, except Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors	1,284	1,736	452	35.2	High school diploma or equivalent
11-9021	Construction Managers	787	1,226	439	55.8	Bachelor's degree

Data Source: Texas Industry Projections, Long-Term 2020–2030

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics assigns a typical entry-level education to all occupations, which represents the level of education that most workers will need to enter the occupation. Knowing the entry-level education requirement for an occupation can help in planning skills development and training.

Six of the 10 occupations listed above require a bachelor's degree. The remaining four occupations require less than a four-year degree and still earn considerably more than the 2021 statewide median annual salary. Wellhead Pumpers and Sales Representatives of Services, except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services, and Travel are middle skill occupations, which typically require more education than a high school diploma but less education than a bachelor's degree.

Long-term projections data also point to industries that are likely to have the largest absolute employment growth over the projected period. These "existing" industries are among the largest by estimated employment size.

Existing and Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations by Largest Growth

The following industries in Texas are projected to experience the largest employment growth over the 2020–2030 period.

Table 3: Largest NAICS Two-Digit Projected Employment Growth by Industry, 2020–2030

Industry Title	Annual Average Employment 2020	Annual Average Employment 2030	Number Change 2020-2030	Percent Change 2020-2030
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,567,737	1,935,146	367,409	23.4
Accommodation and Food Services	1,058,309	1,422,086	363,777	34.4

Industry Title	Annual Average Employment 2020	Annual Average Employment 2030	Number Change 2020-2030	Percent Change 2020-2030
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	761,785	965,920	204,135	26.8
Retail Trade	1,264,764	1,430,027	165,263	13.1
Educational Services	1,187,797	1,349,674	161,877	13.6
Construction	721,290	876,030	154,740	21.5
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	739,467	885,001	145,534	19.7
Transportation and Warehousing	581,898	695,289	113,391	19.5
Manufacturing	856,801	968,443	111,642	13.0
Wholesale Trade	535,738	621,732	85,994	16.1
Other Services (except Public Administration)	412,027	495,698	83,671	20.3
Finance and Insurance	528,461	604,215	75,754	14.3
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	183,954	251,534	67,580	36.7
Government, Except Postal Services, State and Local Education & Hospitals	713,255	765,790	52,535	7.4
Management of Companies and Enterprises	143,907	190,154	46,247	32.1
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	214,471	256,764	42,293	19.7
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	114,897	154,449	39,552	34.4

Industry Title	Annual Average Employment 2020	Annual Average Employment 2030	Number Change 2020-2030	Percent Change 2020-2030
Information	188,048	207,803	19,755	10.5
Utilities	51,034	57,567	6,533	12.8
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	59,302	65,406	6,104	10.3

Data Source: Texas Industry Projections, Long-Term 2020–2030

As the state's populations of senior citizens and young people continues to grow, both of whom are primary customers of health care and social assistance, demand for health care workers in Texas is expected to continue to increase. Health care industries are faced with training challenges, as more employers require education beyond high school due to market demand and industry expectations. Four out of the 10 Health Care Occupations adding the most jobs require less than a bachelor's degree, while two require a bachelor's degree and four require a postgraduate degree. The critical skills occupations bulleted below highlight occupations that require more education than a high school diploma but less education than a bachelor's degree:

- Registered Nurses
- Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses
- Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians
- Dental Hygienists
- Respiratory Therapists

Table 4: Top 10 Largest Projected Occupations Paying above 2021 Median Wage in Health Care and Social Assistance by Employment Change 2020–2030

Occupation Code	Occupation Title	Estimated Employment (2020)	Projected Employment (2030)	Change In Employment	Percentage Change	Education
29-1141	Registered Nurses	186,821	219,435	32,614	17.46	Bachelor's degree
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	27,813	39,759	11,946	42.95	Bachelor's degree
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	58,775	68,904	10,129	17.23	Postsecondary nondegree award

Occupation Code	Occupation Title	Estimated Employment (2020)	Projected Employment (2030)	Change In Employment	Percentage Change	Education
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	12,707	22,049	9,342	73.52	Master's degree
29-1127	Speech-Language Pathologists	8,891	13,141	4,250	47.8	Master's degree
29-2010	Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	22,491	26,721	4,230	18.81	Associate's degree
29-1292	Dental Hygienists	12,320	16,357	4,037	32.77	Associate's degree
29-1126	Respiratory Therapists	10,852	14,518	3,666	33.78	Associate's degree
29-1071	Physician Assistants	8,001	11,630	3,629	45.36	Master's degree
29-1123	Physical Therapists	13,198	16,784	3,586	27.17	Doctoral or professional degree

Data Source: Texas Occupational Projections, Long-Term 2020–2030

Long-term projections data is helpful in ranking occupations in Texas without reference to industry, in terms of both percentage growth and absolute growth between 2020 and 2030.

Existing and Emerging Demand Occupations by Overall Industry and Fastest Growing

Between 2020 and 2030, Texas employment is projected to grow 18.3 percent among all occupations, increasing employment by 2.4 million. Nurse Practitioners, the fastest growing occupation, is expected to increase by 66.1 percent during this time while the state adds more than 100,000 Fast Food and Counter Workers.

The following occupations are projected to experience the highest growth among all industries in 2020–2030.

Table 5: Projected Fastest Growing Occupations 2020–2030 (Percent)

Occupational Code	Occupational Title	Annual Average Employment 2020	Annual Average Employment 2030	Number Change 2020-2030	Percent Change 2020-2030
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	14,815	24,604	9,789	66.1
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	104,601	172,085	67,484	64.5
15-2098	Data Scientists and Mathematical Science	4,112	6,146	2,034	49.5
15-1212	Information Security Analysts	12,494	18,673	6,179	49.5
13-1081	Logisticians	14,700	21,804	7,104	48.3
39-2021	Animal Caretakers	19,993	29,444	9,451	47.3
39-3031	Ushers, Lobby Attendants, and Ticket Takers	6,457	9,486	3,029	46.9
31-2011	Occupational Therapy Assistants	3,753	5,506	1,753	46.7
51-9162	Computer Numerically Controlled Tool Programmers	2,531	3,708	1,177	46.5
47-5071	Roustabouts, Oil and Gas	19,158	27,845	8,687	45.3
47-5081	Helpers-- Extraction Workers	4,406	6,402	1,996	45.3
47-5011	Derrick Operators, Oil and Gas	3,905	5,661	1,756	45.0

Occupational Code	Occupational Title	Annual Average Employment 2020	Annual Average Employment 2030	Number Change 2020-2030	Percent Change 2020-2030
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	6,442	9,306	2,864	44.5
47-5012	Rotary Drill Operators, Oil and Gas	4,905	7,036	2,131	43.4
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	35,485	50,695	15,210	42.9

Data Source: Texas Occupational Projections, Long-Term 2020–2030

NOTE: Occupations in this list must have had 2,500 or more employed in 2020.

Employers' Employment Needs for Fastest Growing Occupations

The Conference Board Help Wanted OnLine (HWOL), an internet-based data series, provides timely monthly measures of labor demand using advertised vacancies at the national, regional, state, and metropolitan area levels.

The following table shows the specialized and baseline skills and certifications employers most commonly require for the occupations in the previous table.

Table 6: Common Required Skills for Fastest Growing Occupations

Specialized Skills	Common Skills	Qualifications
- Nursing - Data Analysis - Auditing - Computer Science - SQL (Programming Language)	- Communications - Management - Operations - Leadership - Customer Service	- Registered Nurse (RN) - Management - Operations - Leadership - Customer Service

Source: Lightcast [TM]

Please note, due to a change in the source used for this information, Baseline Skills are now referred to as Common Skills, and Certifications are now referred to as Qualifications.

Specialized Skills:

- Nursing—a specialized healthcare field that focuses on the care and treatment of patients of all ages and backgrounds. Nurses work in various settings, including hospitals, clinics, schools, and private practices, and perform a wide range of duties,

from administering medications and monitoring patient vital signs to educating patients and providing emotional support. Nursing requires advanced medical knowledge, critical thinking skills, and the ability to work as part of a team to ensure the best possible outcomes for patients.

- Data Analysis—the process of evaluating and interpreting raw data using statistical and computational techniques to extract meaningful insights and draw conclusions.
- Auditing—the process of evaluating and verifying a company's financial and operational activities to determine whether they comply with regulatory requirements, accounting standards, and internal policies. It involves examining financial records, interviewing employees, and analyzing business practices to identify areas of risk and to provide recommendations for improvement. Auditing plays a critical role in promoting transparency, accountability, and trust in organizations.
- Computer Science—the study of algorithms, computation, programming languages, software development, and computer hardware. It involves the analysis, design, and implementation of computer systems to solve complex problems efficiently.
- SQL (Programming Language)—a domain-specific programming language designed for managing and manipulating data that is stored in relational database management systems (RDBMS). It allows users to create, modify, and retrieve data from database tables using a variety of statements and commands. SQL is widely used in industries such as finance, healthcare, and e-commerce for data analysis, business intelligence, and decision-making purposes.

Common Skills:

- Communication—the exchange of information through various channels, including verbal, written, and digital means. It requires effective listening, speaking, writing, and the presentation of skills to convey messages clearly and accurately to diverse audiences. The ability to communicate effectively is crucial in industries from business to healthcare, and helps to build strong relationships, foster collaboration, and achieve common goals.
- Management—the practice of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling resources (people, materials, finances) to achieve specific goals within an organization. It involves decision-making, delegation, communication, motivating employees, and problem-solving. Effective management is essential for the success of any business or organization.
- Operations—the process of planning, organizing, and controlling the day-to-day activities of a business to ensure efficient and effective outcomes. It involves managing resources, optimizing processes, and monitoring performance to achieve business objectives and satisfy customer needs. Operations can encompass a range of functions, including production, logistics, supply chain management, quality control, and customer service. Successful operations require strong analytical skills, attention to detail, and the ability to make informed decisions based on data and experience.
- Leadership—the ability to effectively guide and motivate a group towards a common goal, while promoting positive communication and collaboration among team members.
- Customer Service—the process of providing assistance and support to customers before, during, and after purchasing a product or service. It requires good

communication skills, patience, empathy, and the ability to problem-solve and handle difficult situations. Effective customer service ensures customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Qualifications:

- Registered Nurse (RN)—a certification that indicates an individual has completed a nursing program and has passed the national licensing exam. RNs work in a variety of healthcare settings where they provide patient care, administer medication, perform diagnostic tests, and collaborate with other healthcare professionals. They play a crucial role in promoting health and preventing illness, and often specialize in a particular area of medicine.
- Nurse Practitioner (APRN-CNP)—an advanced certification for nurses that allows them to deliver primary and specialty healthcare services. They are authorized to perform physical exams, diagnose illnesses, prescribe medications, and provide treatments and therapies for patients. To earn this certification, nurses must complete a master's or doctoral program in nursing, obtain a license as a registered nurse, and pass a certification exam.
- Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification—a vital certification for healthcare professionals that covers basic knowledge and skills that are necessary to provide emergency medical care in life-threatening situations, such as cardiac arrest, choking, or drowning. It involves performing chest compressions, delivering rescue breaths, and operating automated external defibrillators (AEDs), as well as recognizing early signs of an emergency and calling for help.
- Valid Driver's License—a legal certification issued by a government that permits the holder to operate a motor vehicle on public roads, indicating compliance with traffic laws and safety regulations.
- Certified Information Systems Security Professional—a globally recognized certification for professionals in the field of information security, covering topics such as security and risk management, asset security, security engineering, communication and network security, identity and access management, security assessment and testing, and operations security. CISSP certification indicates a high level of expertise and commitment to protecting information systems and assets.

Existing and Emerging Demand Occupations Overall Industry and Largest Growth

Table 7: Top 25 Occupations Projected to Add the Most Employment Growth 2020–2030

Occupational Code	Occupational Title	Annual Average Employment 2020	Annual Average Employment 2030	Number Change 2020-2030	Percent Change 2020-2030
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	372,759	474,545	101,786	27.3
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	104,601	172,085	67,484	64.5

Occupational Code	Occupational Title	Annual Average Employment 2020	Annual Average Employment 2030	Number Change 2020-2030	Percent Change 2020-2030
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	175,847	232,618	56,771	32.3
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	221,664	273,305	51,641	23.3
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	343,801	394,087	50,286	14.6
15-1256	Software Developers and Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers	126,106	171,767	45,661	36.2
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	203,041	248,370	45,329	22.3
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	189,799	230,658	40,859	21.5
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	192,230	232,139	39,909	20.8
29-1141	Registered Nurses	220,984	258,715	37,731	17.1
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	276,714	308,036	31,322	11.3
47-2061	Construction Laborers	132,679	162,638	29,959	22.6
35-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	88,062	117,485	29,423	33.4
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	178,561	207,728	29,167	16.3

Occupational Code	Occupational Title	Annual Average Employment 2020	Annual Average Employment 2030	Number Change 2020-2030	Percent Change 2020-2030
13-1198	Project Management Specialists and Business Operations Specialists, All Other	147,533	173,119	25,586	17.3
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	288,224	312,355	24,131	8.4
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	111,903	134,484	22,581	20.2
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	115,322	137,895	22,573	19.6
31-9092	Medical Assistants	72,039	92,936	20,897	29.0
41-3091	Sales Representatives of Services, Except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services, and Travel	88,796	108,868	20,072	22.6
41-4012	Sales Representatives Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	105,930	125,041	19,111	18.0
41-2011	Cashiers	282,493	301,153	18,660	6.6
53-3033	Light Truck Drivers	79,605	98,120	18,515	23.3
47-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	74,743	92,214	17,471	23.4

Occupational Code	Occupational Title	Annual Average Employment 2020	Annual Average Employment 2030	Number Change 2020-2030	Percent Change 2020-2030
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	132,235	149,638	17,403	13.2

Source: Texas Occupational Projections, Long-Term 2020–2030

Employers' Employment Needs for Largest Growth Occupations

The following table shows the most commonly required skills by employers for the occupations in the previous table.

Table 8: Common Required Skills for Occupations with the Highest Growth in Employment

Specialized Skills	Common Skills	Qualifications
- Nursing - Merchandising - Selling Techniques - Restaurant Operation - Nursing Care	- Communications - Customer Service - Sales - Management - Operations	- Registered Nurse (RN) - Valid Driver's License - Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification - Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) Certification - Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification

Source: Lightcast$^{(TM)}$

Please note, due to a change in the source used for this information, Baseline Skills are now referred to as Common Skills, and Certifications are now referred to as Qualifications.

Specialized Skills:

- Nursing—a specialized healthcare field focused on the care and treatment of patients of all ages and backgrounds. Nurses work in various settings, including hospitals, clinics, schools, and private practices, and perform a wide range of duties, from administering medications and monitoring patient vital signs to educating patients and providing emotional support. Nursing requires advanced medical knowledge, critical thinking skills, and the ability to work as part of a team to ensure the best possible outcomes for patients.
- Merchandising—the planning, development, and presentation of products to increase sales and profits. This includes product selection, pricing, placement, and promotion. It requires a strong understanding of customer behavior, market trends, and sales data. Successful merchandising strategies can build brand loyalty and maximize revenue.
- Selling Techniques—a set of methods and strategies used by sales professionals to persuade, influence, and close deals with potential customers. These techniques

include effective communication skills, active listening, assessing customer needs, building rapport, overcoming objections, and creating urgency. By using these techniques, salespeople can increase their chances of success, build stronger customer relationships, and ultimately drive revenue growth for their business.

- Restaurant Operation—the management and administration of a restaurant business, including tasks such as menu planning, inventory management, staff scheduling, maintaining customer satisfaction, and ensuring food safety and quality. A successful restaurant operation requires expertise in areas such as culinary arts, marketing, accounting, and human resources management.
- Nursing Care—the specialized provision of medical attention and assistance to individuals, families, and communities to maintain, recover, and improve their health and wellbeing. It involves the assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation of healthcare interventions, including medication administration, wound care, catheterization, and patient education. Nursing Care is performed by licensed nurses in various settings, including hospitals, clinics, and homes, and aims to promote optimal physical, mental, and emotional wellness.

Common Skills:

- Communications—the exchange of information through various channels, including verbal, written, and digital means. It requires effective listening, speaking, writing, and presenting skills to convey messages clearly and accurately to diverse audiences. The ability to communicate effectively is crucial in various industries, from business to healthcare, and helps build strong relationships, foster collaboration, and achieve common goals.
- Customer Service—the practice of providing assistance and support to customers before, during, and after purchasing a product or service. It requires good communication skills, patience, empathy, and the ability to problem-solve and handle difficult situations. Effective customer service ensures customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- Management—the practice of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling resources (people, materials, finances) to achieve specific goals within an organization. It involves decision-making, delegation, communication, motivating employees, and problem-solving. Effective management is essential for the success of any business or organization.
- Operations—the process of planning, organizing, and controlling the day-to-day activities of a business to ensure efficient and effective outcomes. It involves managing resources, optimizing processes, and monitoring performance to achieve business objectives and satisfy customer needs. Operations can encompass a range of functions, including production, logistics, supply chain management, quality control, and customer service. Successful operations require strong analytical skills, attention to detail, and the ability to make informed decisions based on data and experience.
- Sales—the practice of promoting and selling products or services to potential customers. It involves identifying customer needs and presenting solutions that meet those needs, as well as persuading customers to make a purchase. Effective salespeople employ various techniques, such as active listening, building rapport, and handling objections, to establish trust and close deals.

Qualifications:

- Registered Nurse (RN)—a certification that indicates an individual has completed a nursing program and has passed the national licensing exam. RNs work in a variety of healthcare settings, providing patient care, administering medication, performing diagnostic tests, and collaborating with other healthcare professionals. They play a crucial role in promoting health and preventing illness, and often specialize in a particular area of medicine.
- Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification—a vital certification for healthcare professionals that covers basic knowledge and skills to provide emergency medical care in life-threatening situations, such as cardiac arrest, choking, or drowning. It involves performing chest compressions, delivering rescue breaths, and operating automated external defibrillators (AEDs), as well as recognizing early signs of an emergency and calling for help.
- Valid Driver's License—a legal certification that is issued by a government that permits the holder to operate a motor vehicle on public roads, indicating compliance with traffic laws and safety regulations.
- Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) Certification—a specialized certification that equips medical professionals with the knowledge and skills required to handle emergencies such as cardiac arrest, stroke, and respiratory failure. It covers advanced life support techniques including intubation, defibrillation, and medication administration. ACLS Certification is essential for healthcare professionals who work in critical care units, emergency medicine, and other high-stress healthcare environments.
- Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification—a verified accreditation that demonstrates an individual's proficiency in administering life-saving measures for a person experiencing cardiac arrest or respiratory distress. This certification program involves CPR training, chest compression techniques, rescue breaths, and using automated external defibrillators (AEDs) to revive the patient. A CPR certificate may be a requirement for certain professions or emergency response roles.

Existing Demand by Job Advertisements

Current demand for labor can be measured using job posting analytics, as online job vacancies are a leading indicator of the labor market. While online labor demand exceeded pre-pandemic levels for many months, as of September 2023, Texas had 554,854 job postings, which is below the levels of February 2020.

Texas Seasonally Adjusted Monthly Job Ads

Feb-20, 590,520

Sep-23, 554,854
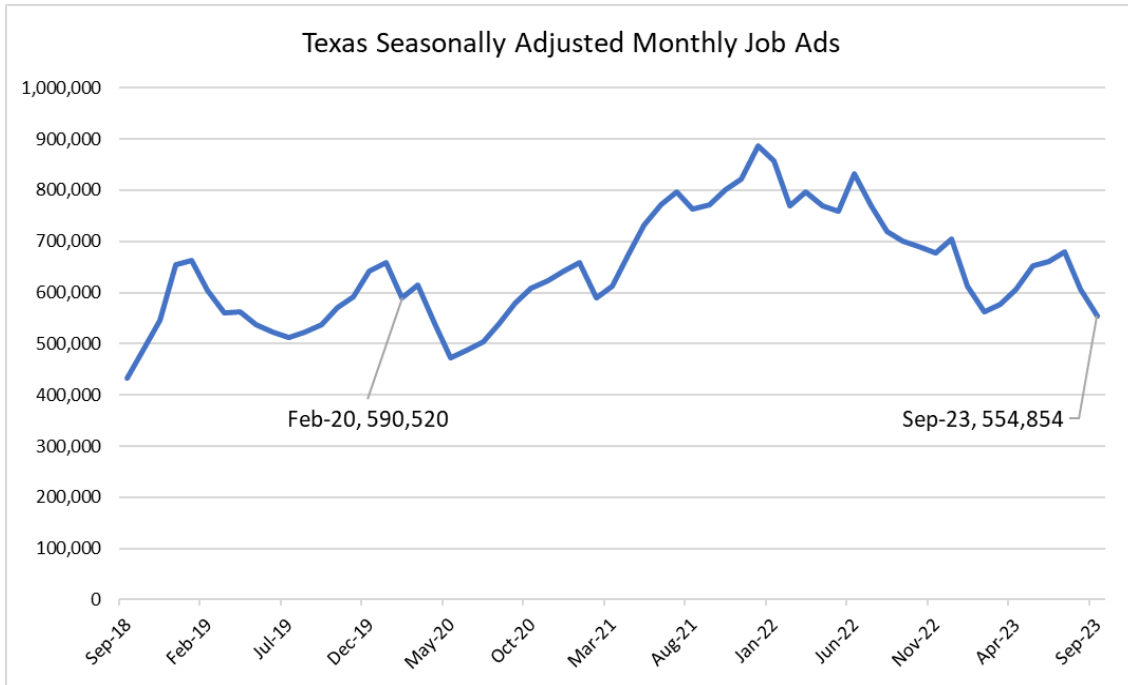
Source: Lightcast$^{(TM)}$, The Conference Board

The Healthcare Practitioners and Technical occupation family had the most job postings in September 2023. This was followed by the Sales and Related and Management occupation families.

Table 9: Jobs With the Most Demand by Job Posting, October 2022-September 2023:

Occupation	Job Postings
Registered Nurses	125,097
Retail Salespersons	81,164
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	68,199
Software Developers	64,387
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	61,980
Customer Service Representatives	54,615
Fast Food and Counter Workers	48,603
Managers, All Other	45,990
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	45,058
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	37,266

Nursing remains the most in-demand job in Texas. Three occupations in the list above fall under the Sales and Related occupational family. Demand for all occupations listed in the table reduced from the previous year which is indicative of the total job ad listings returning to expected normal levels as indicated in the monthly job ad time series.

B. WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the current workforce in the State and within various state regions. Provide key analytical conclusions in aggregate as well as disaggregated among populations to identify potential disparities in employment and educational attainment and understand labor force conditions for items (i)-(iii) below. Populations analyzed must include individuals with barriers to employment described in the first paragraph of Section II. Analysis must include—

[4] Individuals with barriers to employment include displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals.

[5] Veterans, unemployed workers, and youth, and others that the State may identify.

I. EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Provide an analysis of current employment and unemployment data, including labor force participation rates, and trends in the State.

Employment and Unemployment

Texas's labor market achieved new record highs in September 2023 in terms of the job count, number of people employed, and number of people in the civilian labor force. Total nonfarm employment increased by 61,400 positions over the month of September 2023 to reach a 24th consecutive series-high level with 14,049,400 jobs and a 31st consecutive month of growth. Since September 2022, Lone Star State employment grew by 435,800 positions as Texas's annual growth rate of 3.2 percent outpaced the nation by 1.1 percentage points.

The seasonally adjusted number of employed persons increased by 26,900 people over the month of September 2023, raising Texas's new record high to 14,515,800. The Lone Star State's seasonally adjusted civilian labor force also reached a new record high of 15,141,300 after increasing by 29,500 people over the month. The state's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate held at 4.1 percent for September 2023.

The Midland Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) maintained the lowest unemployment rate among Texas MSAs with a not-seasonally adjusted rate of 2.5 percent in September 2023,

followed by Amarillo at 3.2 percent, College Station-Bryan at 3.2 percent, and Lubbock at 3.3 percent. Behind them, Odessa had an unemployment rate of 3.4 percent in September, while Abilene maintained a rate of 3.5 percent. Austin-Round Rock and San Angelo both matched the U.S. unemployment rate of 3.6 percent.

In addition, the civilian labor force in the San Antonio-New Braunfels MSA increased by 3,800 people in September 2023, and employment increased by nearly 10,000 jobs over the month. Employment in the Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land area grew by 14,300 jobs in September 2023, while the MSA's unemployment rate was half a percentage point lower than it was in the month prior.

Table 10: Texas Nonagricultural Employment by Industry, February 2020–September 2023

Industry	February 2020	September 2023	Change	Percentage Change
Total Nonfarm	12,971,300	14,049,500	1,078,200	108.3
Total Private	10,969,500	11,981,300	1,011,800	109.2
Goods Producing	1,926,800	2,010,800	84,000	104.4
Service-Providing	11,044,500	12,038,700	994,200	109.0
Mining and Logging	235,300	224,500	-10,800	95.4
Construction	780,700	812,400	31,700	104.1
Manufacturing	910,800	973,900	63,100	106.9
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,521,900	2,799,000	277,100	111.0
Information	212,700	238,800	26,100	112.3
Financial Activities	819,000	926,500	107,500	113.1
Professional and Business Services	1,838,800	2,143,300	304,500	116.6
Private Education and Health Services	1,779,300	1,914,300	135,000	107.6
Leisure and Hospitality	1,417,800	1,474,700	56,900	104.0
Other Services	453,200	473,900	20,700	104.6
Government	2,001,800	2,068,200	66,400	103.3

Source: Current Employment Statistics, Seasonally Adjusted

In Texas, the Mining and Logging industry comprises of a substantially larger share of employment compared to national levels. The industry accounted for 1.6 percent of Texas employment, while accounting for 0.4 percent of jobs nationally. Texas has a lower share of Private Education and Health Services jobs compared to national levels (13.6 percent versus 16.3 percent). Of the 11 major industries, 10 recovered with nine of those expanding more quickly in Texas than at the national level when compared against the February 2020 employment peaks. At the national level, seven major industries have fully recovered to pre-pandemic employment levels, compared to 10 in Texas. These industries include Manufacturing, Trade, Transportation, and Utilities, Information, Financial Activities, Professional and Business Services, Private Education and Health Services, Leisure and Hospitality, Other Services, and Government. As of September 2023, Mining and Logging was recovering faster in Texas (95.4 percent) than at the national level (94.0 percent).

Table 11: Comparing Texas to US Industry Percent Share and Recovery, February 2020–September 2023

Industry	Texas Share (percent)	US Share (percent)	Texas Recovery (percent)	US Recovery (percent)
Total Nonfarm	100.0%	100.0%	108.3%	102.9%
Total Private	85.3%	85.4%	109.2%	103.4%
Goods Producing	14.3%	13.8%	104.4%	102.7%
Service-Providing	85.7%	86.2%	109.0%	102.9%
Mining and Logging	1.6%	0.4%	95.4%	94.0%
Construction	5.8%	5.1%	104.1%	105.3%
Manufacturing	6.9%	8.3%	106.9%	101.6%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	19.9%	18.4%	111.0%	104.1%
Information	1.7%	1.9%	112.3%	104.4%
Financial Activities	6.6%	5.8%	113.1%	103.2%
Professional and Business Services	15.3%	14.7%	116.6%	107.3%
Private Education and Health Services	13.6%	16.3%	107.6%	104.2%
Leisure and Hospitality	10.5%	10.7%	104.0%	98.6%
Other Services	3.4%	3.8%	104.6%	99.1%
Government	14.7%	14.6%	103.3%	99.9%

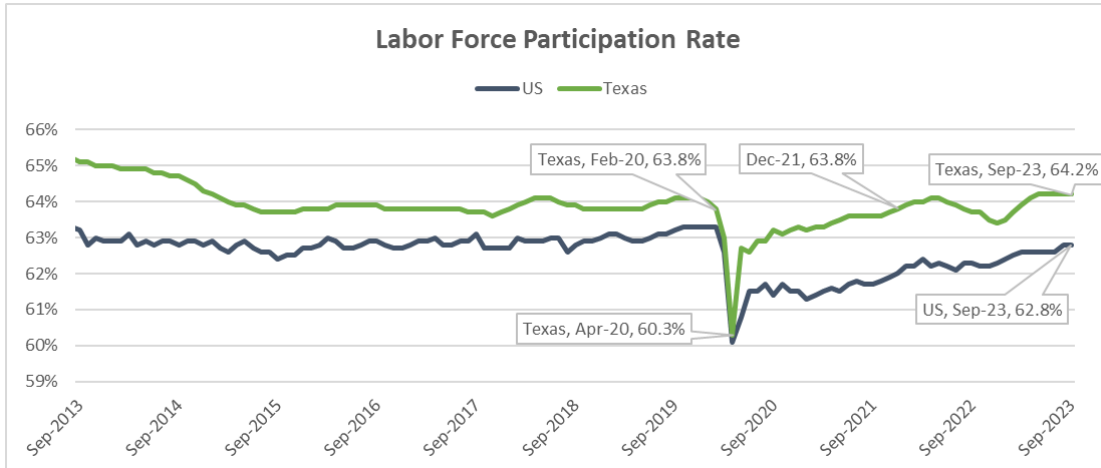Data Source: Current Employment Statistics, Seasonally Adjusted

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for Texas, which peaked in April 2020 at 12.8 percent, has dropped considerably. In September 2023, the unemployment rate stood at 4.1 percent.

Texas and United States Labor Unemployment Rates (Seasonally Adjusted)

Unemployment Rate

US — Texas

US, Apr-20, 14.7%
Texas, Apr-20, 12.8%
Texas, Aug-22, 3.7%
Texas, Feb-20, 3.6%
Texas, Sep-23, 4.1%
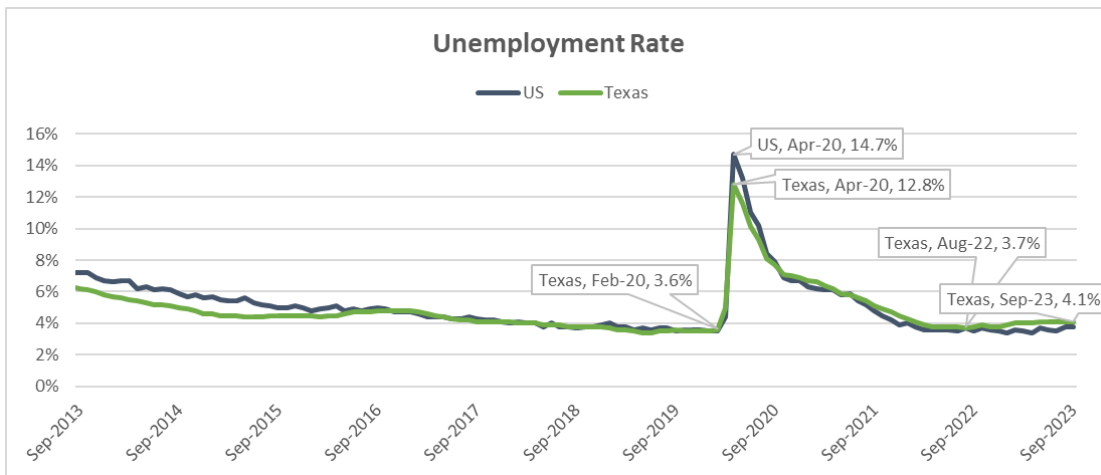
Because the unemployment rate is a relatively simple measure of labor surplus that represents the fraction of the total labor force that is not employed but is looking for work, many experts consider the labor force participation rate (LFPR) to be a better gauge of labor market conditions. The LFPR is the percentage of the total civilian population that is either employed or unemployed—that is, either working or actively seeking work. In September 2023, 64.2 percent of Texas' civilian noninstitutional population participated in the labor force. The United States had a lower participation rate—62.8 percent—during the same period. According to the LFPR chart below, participation rates have declined over time for both Texas and the United States. This decline can be attributed to a variety of factors, including an aging population, an increase in young people who are delaying work to pursue higher education, and, more recently, to the use of technology and automation tools in the workplace. The Texas participation rate experienced a series low in April 2020 at 60.3 percent but was able to recover to its pre-pandemic level by December 2021. In September 2023, the rate was four-tenths of a percentage points higher than the rate in February 2020.

Texas and United States Labor Force Participation Rates (Seasonally Adjusted)

Labor Force Participation Rate

US — Texas

Texas, Feb-20, 63.8%
Dec-21, 63.8%
Texas, Sep-23, 64.2%
Texas, Apr-20, 60.3%
US, Sep-23, 62.8%

II. LABOR MARKET TRENDS

Provide an analysis of key labor market trends, including across existing industries and occupations.

Labor Market Trends

Health Care and Social Assistance is the largest industry in 21 out of 28 of the local workforce development areas in Texas. The industry increased by more than 68,000 jobs from the fourth quarter of 2019 to the fourth quarter of 2022. Generally, this industry has shown to be resilient in Texas during slower economic times due to the population of aging residents, including retirees. However, claims filed indicate that this industry was heavily affected by layoffs related to elective procedures. The population of Texas continues to increase, with Health Care displaying long-term employment growth through 2022.

Manufacturing continues to dominate the Panhandle and Northeast Texas workforce areas. Often very closely connected with the Oil and Gas industry, Manufacturing still gained more than 32,000 jobs from fourth quarter 2019 to fourth quarter 2022. The Retail Trade industry dominates the North Central Texas and Rural Capital workforce areas, each of which surround large metro urban counties. The industry changed considerably from 2019 to 2021 as Retail shifted from brick-and-mortar stores to online retail, yet the industry expanded by more than 56,000 jobs between fourth quarter 2019 to fourth quarter 2022. Because of Texas A&M University, Educational Services continues to dominate the Brazos Valley workforce area. Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction leads other industries in the Permian Basin. Finally, Professional and Technical Services continues to dominate Capital Area, which is driven by Computer Systems Design and Related Services as more tech companies have relocated to the region.

Top Industry by Employment, 1990 to 2022
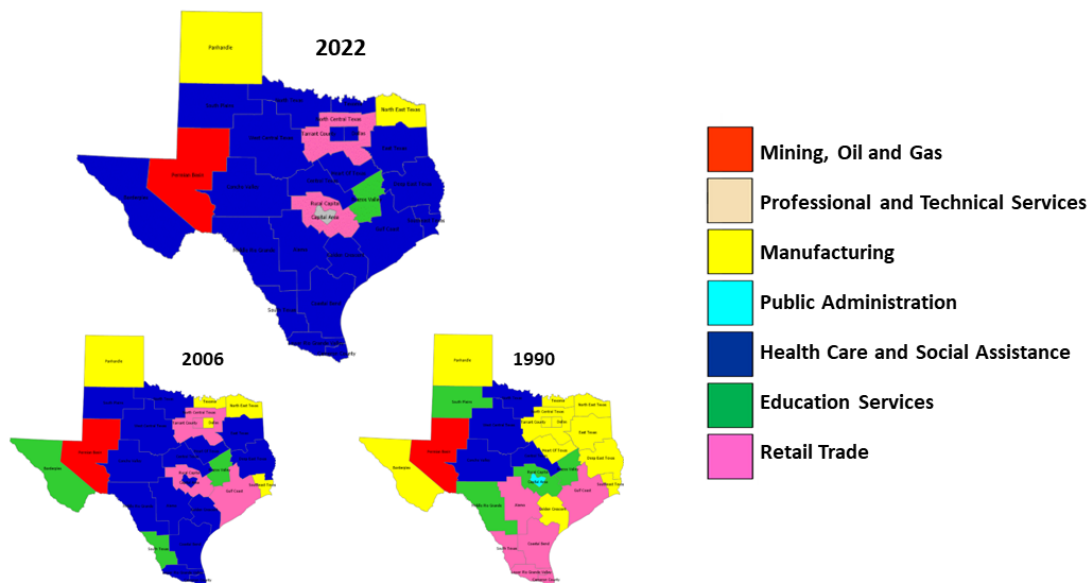
Data Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

When analyzing employers by employment levels, TWC finds that all 12-month average private unemployment insurance (UI) accounts have grown for all size classes since 2014 with the exception of 2020. In 2020, employment losses occurred among all class sizes greater than 10 while gains occurred for size classes ranging from one to nine employees. In 2020, UI accounts with one to four employees grew by 1.3 percent, while accounts with five to nine employees increased by 0.3 percent. Subsequently, in 2021, employment grew a respective 4.9 percent and 4.5 percent when all size classes grew beyond the 2019 12-month average. During 2020, wages for employers with fewer than 100 employees increased, while wages for class sizes greater than 100 employees decreased or stayed the same.

The Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) provides insight into wages paid by an industry as well as by ownership type (public or private). In 2019, 13.7 percent of all wages were attributable to local, state, and federal employment. In 2020, 14.3 percent of all wages in Texas were paid to government employees, which was an increase of 0.6 percentage point from the previous equivalent time frame. By 2022, the share of wages to government employees dropped to 12.8 percent of all wages. Private sector employees were paid 85.7 percent of wages in 2020 and increased to 87.2 percent of wages in 2022, a change of 1.5 percentage points which superseded the 2019 percentage by 0.9 of a percentage point. In comparison, in 2020, the nation paid a slightly larger share of wages to government employees, with 14.9 percent, and a lower share of wages to private employers, with 85.1 percent. In 2022, these values were 13.8 percent and 86.2 percent. In the private sector, the highest percentage of Texas wages in 2022 were paid to Professional and Business Services (23.7 percent), followed by Trade, Transportation, and Utilities (21.1 percent), Education and Health Services (12.5 percent), Financial Activities (11.0 percent), and Manufacturing (10.1 percent). Furthermore, the two private industries of Trade, Transportation, and Utilities and Natural Resources and Mining paid a significantly higher percent of wages in Texas than nationwide (21.1 percent and 3.9 percent in Texas, respectively, versus 18.2 percent and 1.3 percent in the United States).

III. EDUCATION AND SKILL LEVELS OF THE WORKFORCE

Provide an analysis of the educational and skill levels of the workforce.

Educational and Skill Levels of the Workforce

Through data collected by the Census Bureau's 2022 American Community Survey, the following information has been procured about educational attainment in Texas:

- 86.1 percent of Texans aged 25 years and older had attained an educational level of high school graduate or higher, compared to 89.6 percent nationwide. The percentage of Texans who had attained a bachelor's degree or higher stood at 33.9 percent, compared to 35.7 percent for the nation.

- 13.9 percent of the Texas population aged 25 years and older have less than a high school degree.

- 4.2 percent of Texas veterans aged 25 and older had attained less than a high school degree, compared to 14.7 percent of the same age cohort of Texas nonveterans. Similarly, 73.8 percent of Texas veterans aged 25 and older had attained at least some

college education, as compared to 60.9 percent of Texan nonveterans of that age group.

See the following tables for additional information on key Texas population characteristics, including educational attainment for the general population and for veterans.

Key Texas Population Characteristics:

- According to the 2020 decennial Census, the Texas population is 29,145,505.

- As of September 2023, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated the Texas seasonally adjusted civilian labor force at 15,141,194 individuals.

As of September 2023, Texas' seasonally adjusted unemployment rate of 4.1 percent stood 0.3 percentage points higher than the unemployment rate for the United States, 3.8 percent.

Table 12: Educational Attainment for the Population

Texas Population 18 to 24 Years	Percentage for Highest Level Achieved	Percentage for This Level or Higher
Less than high school diploma	14.2%	N/A
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	35.7%	85.8%
Some college or associate's degree	38.2%	50.1%
Bachelor's degree or higher	11.9%	11.9%

Texas Population 25 Years and Older	Percentage for Highest Level Achieved	Percentage for This Level or Higher
Less than 9th grade	7.2%	N/A
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	6.7%	N/A
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	24.2%	86.1%
Some college, no degree	20.3%	62%
Associate's degree	7.8%	41.7%
Bachelor's degree	21.6%	33.9%
Graduate or professional degree	12.3%	12.3%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table S1501

Table 13: Veteran Status by Highest Level of Educational Attainment

Texas Veterans 25 Years and Older	Percentage
Less than high school diploma	4.2%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	21.9%
Some college or associate's degree	38.9%
Bachelor's degree or higher	34.9%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table B21003

Based on Census Bureau data collected in 2022, 10.4 percent of Texans between the ages of 18 and 64 were classified as having a disability, a figure that was slightly lower than the rate of 11.0 percent for the United States. There were an estimated 931,544 working Texans with disabilities, totaling 6.8 percent of employed Texans. The estimated number of unemployed Texans with disabilities over this period was 87,582, which represented 14.3 percent of the total number of unemployed Texans.

Finally, the Census Bureau estimate from this period indicated that 22.3 percent of Texans 18 to 64 years old who were not in the labor force had some type of disability, an estimated 875,709 individuals.

**Table 14: Texas Employment Status by Disability Status and Type**

Employment and Disability Status	Estimate
Total number of Texans 18–64 years old	18,161,100
In the labor force:	14,226,421
Employed:	13,612,792
With a disability:	931,544
With a hearing difficulty	247,571
With a vision difficulty	246,315
With a cognitive difficulty	345,202
With an ambulatory difficulty	249,824
With a self-care difficulty	59,383
With an independent living difficulty	160,639
No disability	12,681,248
Unemployed:	613,629
With a disability:	87,582

Employment and Disability Status	Estimate
With a hearing difficulty	15,239
With a vision difficulty	22,836
With a cognitive difficulty	45,817
With an ambulatory difficulty	25,637
With a self-care difficulty	10,793
With an independent living difficulty	27,283
No disability	526,047
Not in labor force:	3,934,679
With a disability:	875,709
With a hearing difficulty	132,579
With a vision difficulty	171,029
With a cognitive difficulty	438,021
With an ambulatory difficulty	453,391
With a self-care difficulty	211,434
With an independent living difficulty	438,575
No disability	3,058,970

Source: US Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table B18120

Texas Unemployment Rates by Sex

The figure below illustrates the 12-month rolling average unemployment rate for males and females ages 16 and older for September 2019, 2022, and 2023 in Texas. While the 12-month rolling average unemployment rate for males has fluctuated over the last 2 years, we can see females have experienced increased unemployment rates over this same period.
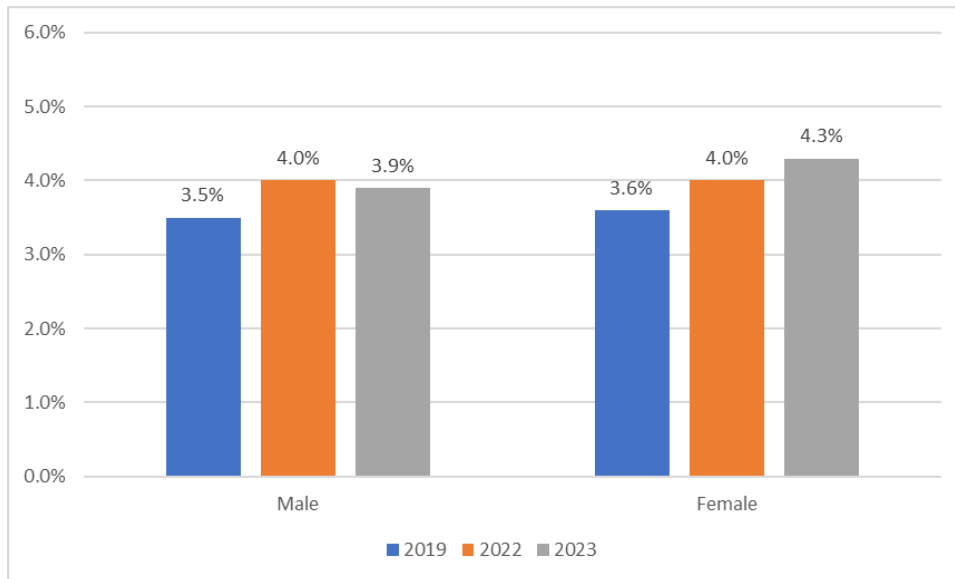

Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics & Current Population Survey, 12-month rolling average, October 2022 to September 2023, October 2021 to September 2022, October 2018 to September 2019

Texas Unemployment Rates by Race and Ethnicity

Despite the rise in unemployment rates in 2020, the unemployment rate decreased for White, Hispanic, Black, and Asian workers between 2011 and 2022. The rate for Black workers has historically run higher than that of other groups, but the gap had been narrowing prior to the pandemic. Hispanic workers experienced the second highest unemployment rate throughout the 12-year period followed by White and Asian workers. Asian workers experienced the lowest unemployment rate for a majority of the time frame.

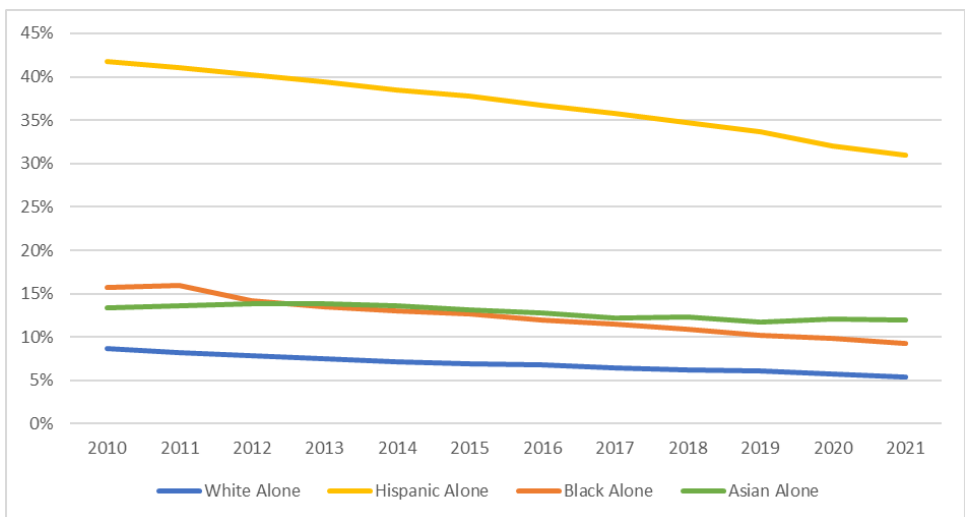## Texas Unemployment Rate by Race and Ethnicity
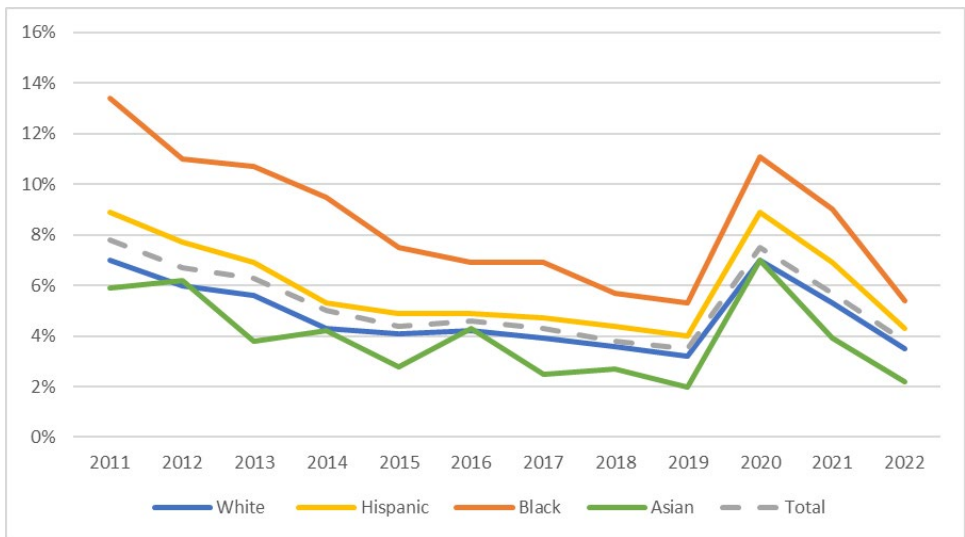
Source: BLS Geographic Profile, Table 14 (2011-2022)

Texas Educational Attainment by Race and Ethnicity

Between 2010 and 2021, people identifying as Hispanic have trailed behind other races in terms of educational attainment with over 30 percent of the population receiving less than a high school diploma or equivalent. Since 2010, Hispanics have shown the most improvement as the percentage for this category fell from a 2010 level of 41.8 percent to 31.0 percent in 2021. In 2021, the White population had the lowest percentage of those with less than a high school diploma at 5.4 percent, followed by the Black population at 9.2 percent.

The middle skills initiative promotes occupations that require more education than a high school diploma but less than a bachelor's degree. Improving high school graduation rates increases the number of potential candidates for higher educational opportunities, which will contribute to closing the middle skills gap.
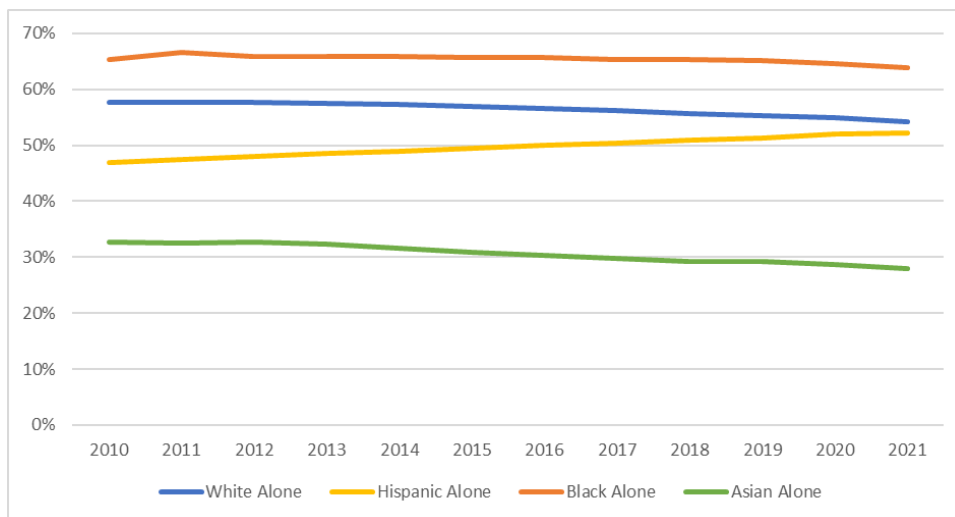
Educational Attainment by Race and Ethnicity: Less than High School

Over the last decade, people that identify as Asian alone have experienced a steady decline in the rate of people whose highest level of educational attainment is a high school diploma or an associate's degree. In 2017, the rate dropped below 30 percent, far below the rates experienced by other races and ethnicities. One reason for this drop could be because of Asians attaining bachelor's degrees and higher at a higher rate over the same period, as seen in the figure below.

Texas Educational Attainment by Race and Ethnicity: High School but less than Bachelor's Degree

In 2021, Hispanics trailed other races in terms of attaining a bachelor's degree or higher with only 16.8 percent of those aged 25 years or older having attained this level, though this has improved slightly. Asians continue to lead all races in this category with more than half of all Asians receiving a bachelor's degree or higher.

Texas Educational Attainment by Race and Ethnicity: Bachelor's Degree or Higher
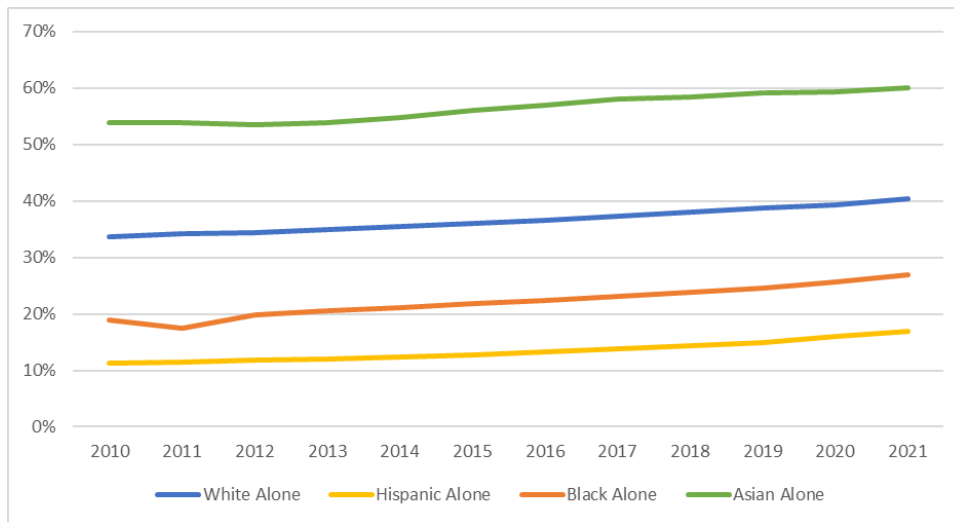
Source: US Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table C15002H, C15002B, C15002D, C15002I

IV. COMPARISON OF ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYTICAL CONCLUSION

Describe areas of opportunity for meeting hiring, education, and skills needs identified in the economy compared to the assets available in the labor force in the state.

Texas is a diverse stat that has a vibrant and growing labor market. Businesses require a qualified workforce to thrive in the modern economy and reap its benefits. To ensure that businesses succeed, TWC and its agency partners work to help and encourage all Texans to engage in meaningful employment and achieve career success. TWC uses occupational and skills data derived from 2030 employment projections to better understand how it may assist businesses and job seekers.

Identifying the Needs

One way in which TWC measures skill gaps is through recently released Bureau of Labor Statistics Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS) state data, which shows the size of the gaps between job openings and job hires. Because there are different forces that affect labor force participation, the difference between the two data sets does not exclusively identify a shortage caused by skill gaps. However, it may be used as a yardstick over time to identify whether the skill gaps have widened or are closing.

According to seasonally adjusted JOLTS data for Texas, job hires stood at 557,000 in September 2023, which was down 25,000 from September 2022. In February 2020, there were 585,000 job hires which declined to 314,000 in April 2020. This was immediately followed by a series high of 735,000 in May. Hires averaged 594,000 between June 2020-September 2023.

Job openings, on the other hand, stood at a series high of 1.088 million in March 2022. In September 2023, job openings were at 811,000 which was down from 995,000 in September 2022. This was a reduction of 184,000 from the September 2022 level, but it was still above the February 2020 level of 544,000. In September 2023, there were 254,000 more job openings than hires., although the amount of this gap has narrowed recently.

To help employers get the workers they need and fulfill TWC's mission, the agency identifies ways to address the growing demand for workers who have more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree, with a few occupational exceptions. TWC took on a middle skills initiative categorizing these occupations that are expected to be in demand. This list includes close to 400 occupations and, according to long-term occupational projections data, will represent over 43.0 percent of total employment by 2030. These occupations consist of a broad range of work and are led by Production occupations at 22.9 percent of all middle skills occupations, followed by Construction & Maintenance Occupations at 20.4 percent. Due to typical education requirements, Health Care Occupations represent 9.7 percent of all middle skills occupations but 19.5 percent of employment in 2030, while Computer, Engineering, & Science occupations represent 6.1 percent of occupations and 3.3 percent of employment. Office & Administrative Support workers led in terms of projected employment with 25.4 percent of all middle skills jobs.

Table 15: Projections by Occupational Family 2020–2030

Occupational Family	Number of Occupations	Occupational Family Percentage	2030 Projected Employment	2030 Projected Employment Percentage
Management, Business, & Financial	5	1.3	37,347	0.6
Computer, Engineering & Science	24	6.1	219,802	3.3
Education, Legal, Community Service, & Arts	20	5.1	265,971	4.0
Health Care	38	9.7	1,312,752	19.5
Service	45	11.5	548,206	8.1
Sales	6	1.5	342,136	5.1
Office & Administrative Support	50	12.7	1,711,663	25.4
Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	6	1.5	1,885	0.0
Construction & Maintenance	80	20.4	965,258	14.3
Production	90	22.9	589,491	8.8
Transportation & Material Moving	29	7.4	735,204	10.9
Grand Total*	393	100.0	6,729,715	100.0

Data Source: Texas Occupational Projections, Long-Term 2020–2030

*Grand Total will not equal the sum of values in the table due to suppression.

The following middle skills occupations are expected to add the most jobs by 2030.

Table 16: Top 25 Middle Skills Occupations Projected to Add the Most Jobs 2020–2030

Occ Code	Occupational Title	2020 Employment	2030 Employment	Number Change	Percent Change
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	320,777	418,497	97,720	30.5
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	203,041	248,370	45,329	22.3
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	189,799	230,658	40,859	21.5
29-1141	Registered Nurses	220,984	258,715	37,731	17.1
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	276,714	308,036	31,322	11.3
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	288,224	312,355	24,131	8.4
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	115,322	137,895	22,573	19.6
31-9092	Medical Assistants	72,039	92,936	20,897	29.0
41-3091	Sales Representatives of Services, except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services, and Travel	88,796	108,868	20,072	22.6
41-4012	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, except Technical and Scientific Products	105,930	125,041	19,111	18.0
53-3033	Light Truck Drivers	79,605	98,120	18,515	23.3
33-9032	Security Guards	83,514	100,845	17,331	20.8
47-2111	Electricians	64,442	81,751	17,309	26.9
43-6013	Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	75,575	91,486	15,911	21.1
53-3031	Driver/Sales Workers	47,780	62,967	15,187	31.8
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	39,442	53,065	13,623	34.5
39-5012	Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists	54,493	68,099	13,606	25.0
25-9045	Teaching Assistants, except Postsecondary	88,783	101,680	12,897	14.5
39-9011	Childcare Workers	77,635	90,532	12,897	16.6
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	137,527	149,763	12,236	8.9
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	57,502	69,529	12,027	20.9
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	69,684	81,352	11,668	16.7

Occ Code	Occupational Title	2020 Employment	2030 Employment	Number Change	Percent Change
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	48,334	59,531	11,197	23.2
31-1131	Nursing Assistants	75,884	86,994	11,110	14.6
47-2073	Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	44,093	54,413	10,320	23.4

Data Source: Texas Occupational Projections, Long-Term 2020–2030

Table 17: Common Required Skills for Middle Skill Occupations Projected to Add the Most Jobs

Specialized Skills	Common Skills	Qualifications
- Nursing - Nursing Care - Medical Records - Nursing Process - Selling Techniques	- Communications - Customer Service - Sales - Management - Problem Solving	- Registered Nurse (RN) - Valid Driver's License - Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification - Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) Certification - Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN)

Source: Lightcast [TM]

Note: Due to a change in the source used for this information, Baseline Skills are now referred to as Common Skills, and Certifications are now referred to as Qualifications.

Specialized Skills:

- Nursing—a specialized healthcare field focused on the care and treatment of patients of all ages and backgrounds. Nurses work in various settings, including hospitals, clinics, schools, and private practices, and perform a wide range of duties, from administering medications and monitoring patient vital signs to educating patients and providing emotional support. Nursing requires advanced medical knowledge, critical thinking skills, and the ability to work as part of a team to ensure the best possible outcomes for patients.
- Selling Techniques—a set of methods and strategies used by sales professionals to persuade, influence, and close deals with potential customers. These techniques include effective communication skills, active listening, assessing customer needs, building rapport, overcoming objections, and creating urgency. By utilizing these techniques, salespeople can increase their chances of success, build stronger customer relationships, and ultimately drive revenue growth for their business.
- Nursing Care—the specialized provision of medical attention and assistance to individuals, families, and communities to maintain, recover, and improve their health and wellbeing. It involves the assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation of healthcare interventions, including medication administration, wound care,

catheterization, and patient education. Nursing Care is performed by licensed nurses in various settings, including hospitals, clinics, and homes, and aims to promote optimal physical, mental, and emotional wellness.

- Medical Records—the systematic and comprehensive documentation of a patient medical history, including diagnoses, treatments, investigations, and other relevant medical information. It involves organizing, maintaining, and protecting patient records to ensure accuracy, completeness, and confidentiality. Medical Records play a vital role in patient care, clinical decision-making, quality control, research, and legal and regulatory compliance. Accurate and timely Medical Records are key to providing high-quality, safe, and patient-centered care.

- Nursing Process—a methodical approach for assessing and treating patients that involves five steps: assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation, and evaluation. This process helps nurses to provide efficient and effective care, and to identify and address patient needs.

Common Skills:

- Communications—the exchange of information through various channels, including verbal, written, and digital means. It requires effective listening, speaking, writing, and presenting skills to convey messages clearly and accurately to diverse audiences. The ability to communicate effectively is crucial in various industries, from business to healthcare, and helps build strong relationships, foster collaboration, and achieve common goals.

- Management—the practice of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling resources (people, materials, finances) to achieve specific goals within an organization. It involves decision-making, delegation, communication, motivating employees, and problem-solving. Effective management is essential for the success of any business or organization.

- Customer Service—the practice of providing assistance and support to customers before, during, and after purchasing a product or service. It requires good communication skills, patience, empathy, and the ability to problem-solve and handle difficult situations. Effective customer service ensures customer satisfaction and loyalty.

- Sales—the practice of promoting and selling products or services to potential customers. It involves identifying customer needs and presenting solutions that meet those needs, as well as persuading customers to make a purchase. Effective salespeople employ various techniques, such as active listening, building rapport, and handling objections, to establish trust and close deals.

- Problem Solving—the ability to identify, analyze, and resolve issues or challenges through a logical and systematic approach.

Qualifications:

- Registered Nurse (RN)—a certification that indicates an individual has completed a nursing program and has passed the national licensing exam. RNs work in a variety of healthcare settings, providing patient care, administering medication, performing diagnostic tests, and collaborating with other healthcare professionals. They play a

crucial role in promoting health and preventing illness, and often specialize in a particular area of medicine.

- Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification—a vital certification for healthcare professionals that covers basic knowledge and skills to provide emergency medical care in life-threatening situations, such as cardiac arrest, choking, or drowning. It involves performing chest compressions, delivering rescue breaths, and operating automated external defibrillators (AEDs), as well as recognizing early signs of an emergency and calling for help.

- Valid Driver's License—a legal certification that is issued by a government that permits the holder to operate a motor vehicle on public roads, indicating compliance with traffic laws and safety regulations.

- Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) Certification—a specialized certification that equips medical professionals with the knowledge and skills required to handle emergencies such as cardiac arrest, stroke, and respiratory failure. It covers advanced life support techniques including intubation, defibrillation, and medication administration. ACLS Certification is essential for healthcare professionals who work in critical care units, emergency medicine, and other high-stress healthcare environments.

- Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN)—a certification for healthcare professionals who provide basic nursing care to patients under the supervision of RNs or physicians. LVNs may administer medication, monitor vital signs, change dressings, and assist with basic patient care needs. They work in a variety of healthcare settings, including hospitals, nursing homes, and clinics. To practice, LVNs must complete a state-approved training program and pass a licensing exam.

The following middle skills occupations are expected to have the highest growth rates between 2020 and 2030.

Table 18: Top 25 Middle Skills Occupations Projected to Add Jobs at Highest Rate 2020–2030

Occ Code	Occupational Title	2020 Employment	2030 Employment	Number Change	Percent Change
49-9081	Wind Turbine Service Technicians	1,552	3,134	1,582	101.9
39-2021	Animal Caretakers	19,993	29,444	9,451	47.3
31-2011	Occupational Therapy Assistants	3,753	5,506	1,753	46.7
51-9162	Computer Numerically Controlled Tool Programmers	2,531	3,708	1,177	46.5
47-5081	Helpers—Extraction Workers	4,406	6,402	1,996	45.3
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	6,442	9,306	2,864	44.5
39-9031	Exercise Trainers and Group Fitness Instructors	22,311	31,349	9,038	40.5

Occ Code	Occupational Title	2020 Employment	2030 Employment	Number Change	Percent Change
31-9011	Massage Therapists	7,237	10,124	2,887	39.9
39-5094	Skincare Specialists	4,805	6,650	1,845	38.4
39-2011	Animal Trainers	2,015	2,783	768	38.1
39-5092	Manicurists and Pedicurists	2,255	3,103	848	37.6
39-3012	Gambling and Sports Book Writers and Runners	449	615	166	37.0
39-6011	Baggage Porters and Bellhops	1,297	1,775	478	36.9
27-2032	Choreographers	429	586	157	36.6
27-2023	Umpires, Referees, and Other Sports Officials	861	1,171	310	36.0
33-2022	Forest Fire Inspectors and Prevention Specialists	75	102	27	36.0
47-5098	Underground Mining Machine Operators and Extraction Workers, All Other	1,348	1,831	483	35.8
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	39,442	53,065	13,623	34.5
39-3099	Entertainment Attendants and Related Workers, All Other	136	182	46	33.8
31-9097	Phlebotomists	11,131	14,849	3,718	33.4
29-2092	Hearing Aid Specialists	769	1,024	255	33.2
51-7099	Woodworkers, All Other	516	685	169	32.8
29-1126	Respiratory Therapists	11,719	15,553	3,834	32.7
39-3011	Gambling Dealers	329	435	106	32.2
53-3031	Driver/Sales Workers	47,780	62,967	15,187	31.8

Data Source: Texas Occupational Projections, Long-Term 2020–2030

Table 19: Common Required Skills for Middle Skill Occupations Projected to Add Jobs at the Highest Rate 2020–2030

Specialized Skills	Common Skills	Qualifications
• Phlebotomy • Physical Therapy • Respiratory Therapy • Respiratory Care • Merchandising	• Customer Service • Communications • Good Driving Record • Lifting Ability • Management	• Valid Driver's License • Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification • Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification • Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT) • Respiratory Care Practitioner

Source: Lightcast [TM]

Please note, due to a change in the source used for this information, Baseline Skills are now referred to as Common Skills, and Certifications are now referred to as Qualifications.

Specialized Skills:

- Merchandising—the planning, development, and presentation of products in order to increase sales and profits. This includes product selection, pricing, placement, and promotion. It requires a strong understanding of customer behavior, market trends, and sales data. Successful merchandising strategies can build brand loyalty and maximize revenue.
- Phlebotomy—the specialized practice of collecting blood samples from patients for diagnostic or medical purposes. Skilled phlebotomists use a variety of techniques to safely and efficiently draw blood, and are also responsible for properly labeling, handling, and processing blood samples for laboratory testing.
- Physical Therapy—a form of rehabilitative healthcare that uses exercise, movement, and specialized techniques to assist patients in recovering from injuries, surgeries, and illnesses that affect their physical abilities. Physical therapists work with patients to reduce pain, improve strength and mobility, and increase overall function and independence.
- Respiratory Therapy—a branch of healthcare that specializes in assessing, treating, and managing patients with breathing disorders such as asthma, COPD, and emphysema. Respiratory therapists use various diagnostic tools and techniques such as chest physiotherapy, oxygen therapy, and mechanical ventilation to improve lung function and enhance patient comfort. Their aim is to prevent, manage, and treat respiratory-related problems to help patients achieve optimal health and wellbeing.
- Respiratory Care—a specialized skill that involves the treatment and management of patients with breathing-related disorders. It focuses on improving lung function, relieving respiratory distress and preventing further complications. Respiratory therapists diagnose and treat patients with asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), pneumonia, and other related conditions. They employ various techniques such as oxygen therapy, pulmonary function testing, mechanical

ventilation, chest physiotherapy and patient education to enhance the quality of life of patients.

Common Skills:

- Communications—the exchange of information through various channels, including verbal, written, and digital means. It requires effective listening, speaking, writing, and presenting skills to convey messages clearly and accurately to diverse audiences. The ability to communicate effectively is crucial in various industries, from business to healthcare, and helps build strong relationships, foster collaboration, and achieve common goals.
- Management—the practice of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling resources (people, materials, finances) to achieve specific goals within an organization. It involves decision-making, delegation, communication, motivating employees, and problem-solving. Effective management is essential for the success of any business or organization.
- Customer Service—the practice of providing assistance and support to customers before, during, and after purchasing a product or service. It requires good communication skills, patience, empathy, and the ability to problem-solve and handle difficult situations. Effective customer service ensures customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- Good Driving Record—a driver's history of obeying traffic laws and driving safely without any incidents or violations. This skill shows the ability to follow regulations and legal compliance in relation to driving, which is important for many jobs and positions that require safe driving practices.
- Lifting Ability—the capacity to lift and carry objects weighing different amounts, using appropriate technique and muscle strength.

Qualifications:

- Respiratory Care Practitioner (pulmonologist)—a physician who specializes in the treatment of patients with breathing issues and other respiratory conditions. A respiratory care practitioner assesses patients using a variety of tests, such as having the patient blow into a specialized device that measures lung capacity, and suggests different types of therapy and treatment options, such as oxygen, based on their assessment. Other responsibilities include supervising respiratory therapists and educating patients about their condition.
- Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification—a vital certification for healthcare professionals that covers basic knowledge and skills to provide emergency medical care in life-threatening situations, such as cardiac arrest, choking, or drowning. It involves performing chest compressions, delivering rescue breaths, and operating automated external defibrillators (AEDs), as well as recognizing early signs of an emergency and calling for help.
- Valid Driver's License—a legal certification that is issued by a government that permits the holder to operate a motor vehicle on public roads, indicating compliance with traffic laws and safety regulations.
- Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification—a verified accreditation that demonstrates an individual's proficiency in administering life-saving measures for a

person experiencing cardiac arrest or respiratory distress. This certification program involves CPR training, chest compression techniques, rescue breaths, and using automated external defibrillators (AEDs) to revive the patient. A CPR certificate may be a requirement for certain professions or emergency response roles.

- Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT)—a certified healthcare professional who specializes in treating patients with respiratory problems. They perform diagnostic tests, administer treatments, and educate patients on managing their conditions. RRTs work closely with doctors and other healthcare professionals to provide comprehensive care.

Meeting the Needs

TWC prioritizes programs and initiatives that assist specific populations, including veterans and youth. TWC supports projects that encourage and improve growth industries, the earning capabilities of job seekers facing barriers to employment, and the effectiveness of the Texas workforce system. Additionally, the Commission approves the use of statewide funds to conduct statewide initiatives to address WIOA's focus on workforce integration, quality improvement, capacity building, professional development, internships, externships, and more. TWC and its agency partners implement and support initiatives to address hiring, education, and skills needs in Texas, such as the following:

- Initiatives that provide youth with education, training, career exploration, and work experience are essential to the state's future growth and success. To ensure that young people have the skills necessary to meet future workforce needs, Texas supports youth programs that promote in-demand careers beginning at an early age and identifies educational and career pathways for students, including vocational and technical training, as well as those that require two-year, four-year, and higher education levels. These initiatives—such as Texas Externships, programming to address the needs and challenges of current and former foster youth, and STEM-related summer programs— are intended to support the Governor's vision of strengthening academic and future workplace outcomes for youth who are facing challenges and barriers to success.
- Texas is home to more than 1.5 million veterans. Each year over 25,000 military service members return to Texas as they transition out of military service, with many choosing to remain in Texas. As part of the commitment to serve veterans, TWC supports employment and training services to veterans to assist them as they transition to civilian life and join the Texas workforce. These initiatives, such as Hiring Red, White and You (statewide job fairs dedicated to veteran job seekers), College Credit for Heroes, Military Family Support programs, and the We Hire Vets campaign (supporting employers that hire veterans), demonstrate the commitment to supporting Texas' veteran population.
- Building a Talent Strong Texas—The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's (THECB) strategic plan's goal is to have 60 percent of Texans aged 25–64 have a college degree, certificate, or credential of value by 2030.
- Adult Education and Literacy—TWC's Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) programs help individuals acquire the skills needed to succeed in the workforce, earn

a high school equivalency certificate, or enter college or career training. Texas AEL and Texas Workforce Solutions partners are implementing a system with the goal of increasing employment, postsecondary transitions, skills gains, and secondary completions by using demonstrated approaches that fully integrate system services and leverage community partnerships. The program supports opportunities for individuals who are at least 16 years of age, lack a high school credential, function below a high school level, or are unable to speak, read, or write, and are seeking a career training, high school equivalency preparation, or postsecondary education.

- Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative—In March 2016, Governor Abbott established the Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative and tasked the commissioners of the Texas Education Agency (TEA), THECB, and TWC to collaboratively develop strong links between education and industry and help Texas grow in economic prosperity.

- Careers in Texas Industries—TWC's Careers in Texas Industries helps school counselors, parents, and students make informed choices about their future education and career paths. The Texas Reality Check online tool helps students, teachers, parents, and counselors determine the relationship between educational achievement and income.

- Job and Education for Texans (JET)—This TWC program provides grants to community, state, and technical colleges and independent school districts so they may purchase and install equipment that is necessary for the development of career and technical education courses or programs that lead to a license, certificate, or postsecondary degree in a high-demand occupation.

- Dual Credit Programs—Through the use of skills development funds and other resources, TWC partners with junior, state, and technical colleges and school districts to expand access to dual credit and career and technical education programs. TWC funds dual credit and technical education programs in order to respond to industry demands for skilled workers in technical fields. Additionally, by allowing high school students to enroll in postsecondary classes and work toward a degree or professional credential while simultaneously completing high school coursework, dual credit programs give students the opportunity to get a jump start on their educational and career goals.

- Child Care Services—TWC's Child Care Services program provides child care subsidies to families who meet income requirements. The services promote long-term self-sufficiency by enabling parents to work or participate in educational activities. Additionally, the program educates parents about the availability of quality child care, enhances children's early learning, and supports early learning programs while improving the quality of child care services.

- Skills for Small Business—Through TWC's Skills Development Fund, the program helps small businesses by providing training for new workers and upgrading the skills of incumbent workers. Small business employees participate in trainings offered by their local community, technical college, or the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX). Additionally, TWC works with the college to fund the courses that businesses want their employees to participate in.

2. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the workforce development activities, including education and training in the State, to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, as identified in (a)(1)(B)(iii) above, and the employment needs of employers, as identified in (a)(1)(A)(iii) above. This must include an analysis of—

A. THE STATE'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Provide an analysis of the State's workforce development activities, including education and training activities of the core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required [6] and optional one-stop delivery system partners.[7]

[6] Required one-stop partners: In addition to the core programs, the following partner programs are required to provide access through the one-stops: Career and Technical Education (Perkins), Community Services Block Grant, Indian and Native American programs, HUD Employment and Training programs, Job Corps, Local Veterans' Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program, National Farmworker Jobs program, Senior Community Service Employment program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (unless the Governor determines TANF will not be a required partner), Trade Adjustment Assistance programs, Unemployment Compensation programs, and YouthBuild.

[7] Workforce development activities may include a wide variety of programs and partners, including educational institutions, faith- and community-based organizations, and human services.

B. THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce development activities identified in (A), directly above.

C. STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

Provide an analysis of the capacity of State entities to provide the workforce development activities identified in (A), above.

For the Texas economy to grow and prosper, employers must convey to job seekers the skills their businesses need. Conversely, job seekers must recognize and promote the skills they possess or obtain new or upgraded skills to meet businesses' needs. The State's market-driven workforce development system plays a vital role in this process, acting as a hub for sharing information relating to jobs and skills, facilitating connections between businesses and job seekers, and aiding with job search and training needs. Boards and their contractors work collaboratively to ensure that these services and assistance are available to all employers and job seekers, including veterans, individuals with disabilities, and older adults.

TWC and its workforce development partners continue to collaborate with community and industry partners to expand these opportunities and find new ways to achieve positive results. The development of innovative workforce services to meet the needs of employers and workers is vital to the success of the workforce system.

As businesses expand their operations and new employers emerge during this period of rapid technology advances, there is a growing opportunity to assist with workforce skills development and training. The gap between in-demand skills and available labor force skills must be addressed at all levels. This includes the availability of technical training opportunities as well as efforts to increase the number of skilled craft specialists. The increased development of regional collaborations among employers, Boards, community colleges, and other training providers is engaged to address this opportunity.

TWC uses long-term projections data to identify industries likely to grow the fastest. Growth assumes, in part, an adequate supply of workers with relevant skills. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), however, foresees that a combination of slower growth of the civilian noninstitutional population and falling participation rates of youths and prime-age workers will lower national labor force growth to nearly 0.5 percent annually. In Texas, growth is sustained by improving programs for individuals with barriers to employment by identifying transferable skills that are valued by employers as well as providing education and training to upscale their skills in high-growth sectors.

The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities

The strengths of operating an integrated workforce development system are significant. Texas' implementation of WIOA's six core programs supports a service delivery system that meets the needs of employers and works to ensure that relevant training and employment assistance is available for job seekers, including those with disabilities, regardless of the funding source.

TWC continues to use funds from onetime pandemic-related increases in federal funding for unemployment insurance administration and child care. Funds are allocated through a strategic investment to maximize their effectiveness and allow TWC to operate the programs within its normal funding levels. The US Congress recently passed legislation that provides a significant five-year investment in infrastructure that includes funding for various workforce programs through federal agencies and those traditionally funded through the US Department of Labor. Future guidance issued by federal agencies will determine how states operate the programs and how much funding each state will receive. Currently, continual funding supports WIOA, as the program has statutorily expired. If Congress reauthorizes the program, changes may be made that would impact TWC programs and service delivery.

Boards work individually, together, and with other stakeholders to achieve cost efficiencies and a seamless service delivery system. Certain models, if replicated or expanded, could significantly enhance participant access to a range of workforce and associated support services. Collaborative efforts help ensure that there is an adequate supply of workers that meet the skills requirements of available jobs, which provides Texas employers with a competitive economic advantage.

State Workforce Development Capacity

TWC has emerged as a national leader in workforce development activities by developing a comprehensive workforce system that is fundamental to putting Texans back to work and spurring the state's economic competitiveness. Texas is experiencing growth in new jobs and the labor market overall, and efforts to strategically strengthen the workforce development system championed by TWC remains clear.

TWC works to align workforce development activities by establishing rigorous strategic planning requirements coupled with common performance accountability measures and requirements that govern Texas' one-stop delivery system. TWC coordinates and collaborates with the 28 Boards along with their contracted workforce service providers and community partners. Collectively known as Texas Workforce Solutions, this network offers local access to integrated and statewide services to all employers, workers, job seekers and youth, including individuals with disabilities and other barriers to employment.

Through WIOA, Boards continue to apply and improve upon their integrated strategies for serving the Texas labor market. Texas has implemented many programmatic changes that are mandated by WIOA, such as providing Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) participants with training and placement services by Wagner-Peyser Employment Services (ES) staff and using common performance measures across core programs for both adults and youth.

Recognizing that innovative, progressive services promote a stronger Texas, the Texas Workforce Solutions network has continued its strategy of providing value-added services, which improve customers' opportunities for growth.

Meeting the Needs

TWC is aware of the State's changing demographics and skills gaps and continues to design programs to meet the increasingly complex workforce needs. Through the Texas Workforce System, TWC connects job seekers to numerous career and training resources to prepare them to enter or reenter the workforce with the skills required for middle-skills occupations of Texas' high-growth industry sectors. Although services are targeted, their delivery is uniformly applied.

Leveraging an integrated workforce system enables TWC to create a seamless approach that attracts and retains in-demand employers. It is understood that an employer is most likely less concerned about which funding source is being used to fund their services. By maintaining specific Business Service Units (BSUs) at each Board, the workforce system rallies a group of dedicated individuals to meet employer needs and present employers with services in ways that are beneficial and easy to understand. BSUs are Boards' frontline business advocates, often having strong ties to the local business communities. Furthermore, because Boards are predominantly composed of local business leaders, TWC taps into a continuous flow of current and relevant information from employers. Board members can shape local policies and procedures to best fit the local marketplace.

Additionally, Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWS-VRS) Business Relations staff help employers fill open positions with qualified job seekers with disabilities, provide training and accommodation assistance, and assess the workplace, job descriptions, and recruitment and application processes to remove barriers. Business Relations staff can

also provide disability awareness training to businesses and their employees, and assist with business symposia, expos, and job and career fairs.

<div align="center">B. STATE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS</div>

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State's strategic vision and goals for developing its workforce and meeting employer needs in order to support economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. This must include—

<div align="center">1. VISION</div>

Describe the State's strategic vision for its workforce development system.

Mission

TWC's mission is to promote and support a workforce system that creates value and offers employers, individuals, and communities the opportunity to achieve and sustain economic prosperity.

Vision

TWC and its Texas Workforce Solutions partners will maximize the power of innovation and partnerships to boost superior business outcomes and realize a competitive advantage for all Texans in the global economy.

<div align="center">2. GOALS</div>

Describe the goals for achieving this vision based on the analysis in (a) above of the State's economic conditions, workforce, and workforce development activities. This must include—

(A) Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers to employment[8] and other populations.[9]

(B) Goals for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers.

TWC's vision is rooted in five strategic goals that consider the state's economic conditions, workforce, and workforce development activities. The following goals are intended to address critical populations, including unemployment insurance (UI) claimants, youth, individuals with barriers to employment, veterans, and individuals with disabilities. Each goal provides specific actions to be taken to achieve the goal.

1. Support a Workforce System that allows employers and workers to achieve and sustain economic prosperity.
    a. Expand workforce training, recruiting, and hiring services for employers to ensure that a skilled and ready workforce is available to meet the diverse needs of Texas businesses.
    b. Enhance workforce services and resources to help job seekers access information about in-demand occupations, gain the skills needed by Texas employers, and find and retain employment.
2. Promote employers' access to the talents and abilities of individuals with disabilities. Accommodate such workers in the workplace and assist with maintaining and advancing their careers successfully.

a. Continue to integrate the state's vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities within Texas Workforce Solutions so that local service delivery is able to work in concert with other workforce services, and so resources can be shared to better serve the needs of job seekers and workers with disabilities.

b. Expand the network of employers that recruit, train, and employ the talents and skills of individuals with disabilities through Texas Workforce Solutions business service representatives, Vocational Rehabilitation Services business relations staff, and Board partnerships with economic development and industry groups.

3. Prepare individuals for employment by supporting education and training that equips individuals with in-demand skills as identified by employers.

a. Continue to support education programs for students in Texas that inform them of and prepare them for high-skill, high-demand jobs through the identification and allocation of available state and federal programs and resources.

b. Address the workforce training needs of employers by leveraging Skills Development Fund grants and other available resources to support in-demand job training. Continue to support work-based learning opportunities through internships, mentorships, apprenticeships and job shadowing.

c. Continue to coordinate and collaborate with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to support and develop objectives for increasing the percentage of Texans with postsecondary degrees or certifications.

4. Accelerate employment pathways for veterans, service members, and their spouses as they transition to civilian occupations in Texas.

a. Provide an accelerated pathway and demonstrate new approaches for transitioning military service members to gain acknowledgement of their military training and quickly transition to employment in Texas through ongoing expansion of programs such as Texas Operation Welcome Home, College Credit for Heroes, veterans training, and the Texas Veterans Leadership peer mentorship.

b. Identify gaps in service to Texas veterans and advance strategies to enhance their education and employment opportunities to ensure seamless transition into the Texas workforce for veterans and their spouses.

5. Maintain the highest levels of integrity, accountability, and efficiency in all workforce systems and TWC programs. Through continuous improvements, develop a system that minimizes fraud, waste, and abuse within TWC and all the programs it administers.

a. Monitor and evaluate compliance of local area service delivery for fiscal accountability and program effectiveness.

b. Make technology and system improvements to leverage current resources and improve the oversight and monitoring of programs.

c. Investigate and resolve findings or questioned costs and track each resolution and recovery of disallowed costs.

The Texas workforce development system's market-driven approach incorporates all potential customers, including employers and job seekers, as well as workforce service providers, economic development entities, universities, community colleges, and training providers. This approach ensures that all workforce system customers are valued, informed contributors to and drivers of the system, thus allowing state and local policymakers to strategically plan for the current and future needs of the state.

Texas Workforce System continuously monitors and analyzes the needs of the state's workforce and businesses to ensure a solid approach that enables job growth, promotes a well-trained workforce, and ensures Texas' ability to compete on a global level.

3. PERFORMANCE GOALS

Using the tables provided within each Core Program section, include the State's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA. (This Strategic Planning element only applies to core programs.)

Table 1. Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)

Program	PY 2024 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2025 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	77.3%		77.3%	
Dislocated Workers	77.6%		77.6%	
Youth	73.7%		73.7%	
Adult Education	42.9%		42.9%	
Wagner-Peyser	67.8%		67.8%	
Vocational Rehabilitation	58.9%		58.9%	

Table 2. Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)

Program	PY 2024 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2025 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	76.4%		76.4%	
Dislocated Workers	79.0%		79.0%	
Youth	75.2%		75.2%	
Adult Education	43.8%		43.8%	
Wagner-Peyser	68.1%		68.1%	
Vocational Rehabilitation	60.8%		60.8%	

Table 3. Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

Program	PY 2024 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2025 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	$8,468		$8,468	
Dislocated Workers	$10,801		$10,801	
Youth	$4,649		$4,649	
Adult Education	$6,320		$6,320	
Wagner-Peyser	$7,481		$7,481	
Vocational Rehabilitation	$6,351		$6,351	

Table 4. Credential Attainment Rate

Program	PY 2024 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2025 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	72.9%		72.9%	
Dislocated Workers	80.3%		80.3%	
Youth	56.1%		56.1%	
Adult Education	42.2%		42.2%	
Wagner-Peyser	NA		NA	

Program	PY 2024 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2025 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Vocational Rehabilitation	40.6%		40.6%	

Table 5. Measurable Skill Gains

Program	PY 2024 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2025 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	74.7%		74.7%	
Dislocated Workers	78.7%		78.7%	
Youth	63.5%		63.5%	
Adult Education	42.7%		42.7%	
Wagner-Peyser	NA		NA	
Vocational Rehabilitation	51.6%		51.6%	

Table 6. Effectiveness in Serving Employers

Program	PY 2024 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2025 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	NA		NA	
Dislocated Workers	NA		NA	
Youth	NA		NA	
Adult Education	NA		NA	
Wagner-Peyser	NA		NA	
Vocational Rehabilitation	NA		NA	

NOTE: The Texas economy is strong and with record numbers of jobs in recent months and the state is continuously setting all-time highs. Our workforce system is very mature and we do not believe that performance is likely to slip below the current levels in any meaningful way. That said, if federal statistical models predict lower levels of performance when published, TWC's proposals will be lowered to match that modeling.

4. ASSESSMENT

Describe how the State will assess the overall effectiveness of the workforce development system in the State in relation to the strategic vision and goals stated above in sections (b)(1), (2), and (3) and how it will use the results of this assessment, which may include evaluation findings, and other feedback to make continuous or quality improvements.

Texas Government Code §2308.101 requires the Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC)— the state board—to monitor the state's workforce investment system. As part of that responsibility, TWIC annually reports to the governor and the legislature on the degree to which the system is achieving state and local workforce goals and objectives. In October 2023, TWIC released Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024–2031 (FY'24–'31), available at https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/organization/twic/System_Strategic_Plan_2024-2031.pdf.

Texas statute requires that TWIC evaluate six elements in the workforce system, as follows:

- Workforce agency program performance and alignment

- Formal and less formal performance measures

- Implementation of the system strategic plan

- Adult education actions and achievements

- Board activities and alignment

- Workforce development programs that focus on welfare-to-work initiatives

A primary focus of TWIC is the implementation of the workforce system strategic plan. Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024–2031 was approved by the governor on October 20, 2023. As with the previous strategic plan, workforce system evaluation uses a balanced scorecard approach to support system improvement. TWIC will continue conducting studies and producing reports that support the implementation of the strategic plan, along with designing and launching system projects that strengthen the four workforce system goals relating to employers, learners, partners, and policy and planning.

TWIC will also continue to evaluate programs to identify gaps and duplications that adversely affect the seamless delivery of workforce services and programs. Issues, and the results of measures taken by TWIC to address them, will be included in the annual evaluation report on strategic plan implementation.

Program data and other data from across the workforce system are critical in evaluating the extent to which workforce system programs, services, and products are meeting the needs of customers and stakeholders. The collection of key data, as well as the reporting and analysis of that data—in a consistent and useful manner—is essential in demonstrating outcomes, determining if changes are required or desired, and establishing benchmarks for future performance.

Under the workforce system strategic plan, TWIC will continue to work with system partners to build upon process improvements to implement workforce programs, services, and initiatives designed to achieve system objectives and goals.

C. STATE STRATEGY

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State's strategies to achieve its strategic vision and goals. These strategies must take into account the State's economic, workforce, and workforce development, education and training activities and analysis provided in Section (a) above. Include discussion of specific strategies to address the needs of populations provided in Section (a).

1. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT, INCLUDING INDUSTRY OR SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS RELATED TO IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS AND CAREER PATHWAYS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA SECTION 101(D)(3)(B), (D). "CAREER PATHWAY" IS DEFINED AT WIOA SECTION 3(7) AND INCLUDES REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP. "IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTOR OR OCCUPATION" IS DEFINED AT WIOA SECTION 3(23)

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and its partners serve as key connectors around the state to support Texas' growing economy. TWC's role in the state's economic development strategies is critical as it works to ensure that every employer, individual, family, and community has a clear path toward sustained economic prosperity.

Targeted Economic and Workforce Development Opportunities

TWC's workforce development efforts align with the governor's economic strategies by allocating resources to support opportunities in vital industry clusters.

Through the Governor's Tri-Agency Partnership, engagement with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and collaboration with key stakeholders, TWC has been able to use the state's workforce and educational systems to align with current and future industry needs. Such engagement enables TWC to equip Texans with the skills, education, and training needed to be competitive for the jobs of today and in the future.

Texas Industry Partnership Program

TWC developed the Texas Industry Partnership program to address skills gaps and ensure that a talent pipeline is available to address regional industry needs. The program provides an outlet for collaboration between Boards and industry partners by leveraging matching monetary contributions and qualifying expenditures for workforce-related activities. Matching funds may be used to support WIOA activities and emphasize in-demand or target occupations as determined by Boards, or the occupations in industries that are targeted by the Office of the Governor.

Focus on the Semiconductor Industry

With the growing interest in the semiconductor industry, TWC participates in the Governor's National Semiconductor Centers Texas Task Force, which is led by the Texas A&M University System. The Task Force brings together semiconductor industry stakeholders from the private sector, community partners, and institutions of higher education to collaborate on

addressing the workforce needs of the industry. Additionally, TWC and Boards have collaborated for years with industry partners and the education community to develop meaningful workforce services and programs that address the needs of both the manufacturing and construction industries. Many short- and long-term training programs and job placement tools are in place to meet the current demand and provide support to meet the ongoing workforce challenges related to industry expansion.

More than 150 training programs are currently included on the Statewide Eligible Training Provider List to support the growing demand for semiconductor-related jobs in both manufacturing and construction areas. Providers include community and technical colleges, private career schools, and apprenticeship programs. Many of these training programs offer short-term credentialing and credit programs.

Serving Youth, Aiding Economic Development

Education Outreach Specialists

Education Outreach Specialists from TWC and the Boards work in partnership with independent school districts across the state to provide career exploration, readiness, and development resources and services. The primary goal of these teams—comprised of Education Outreach Specialists, Board representatives, and district representatives—is to help students make informed decisions about what they choose to do beyond a high school diploma. These teams help expose students to a variety of postsecondary pathways as well as explore different industries and occupations. Additionally, these teams help students, families, teachers, and counselors understand how labor market data, occupation options, and different postsecondary pathways could align with a student's interests, competencies, knowledge, and skills.

2. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL USE TO ALIGN THE CORE PROGRAMS, ANY COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN, REQUIRED AND OPTIONAL ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS, AND ANY OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE STATE TO ACHIEVE FULLY INTEGRATED CUSTOMER SERVICES CONSISTENT WITH THE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS DESCRIBED ABOVE. ALSO DESCRIBE STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN REGARD TO WEAKNESSES IDENTIFIED IN SECTION II(A)(2)

Since its inception, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) has emerged as a national leader in workforce development activities by fostering a locally driven workforce system. Texas operates an integrated workforce system comprising numerous programs, services, and initiatives administered by various state agencies, Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards), the Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC), independent school districts, community and technical colleges, and local adult education providers. System partners are responsible for delivering a wide range of workforce education and training programs, as well as education programs that support career preparation and advancement. Such a system has become fundamental to the State's ability to put Texans back to work and spur economic competitiveness. Today, this system has enabled Texas to experience record-low unemployment and exceptional growth in new jobs and the labor market.

TWC and the Texas workforce system is successful because it aligns workforce development activities through the establishment of rigorous strategic planning requirements, common performance accountability measures, and guidelines that govern Texas' one-stop delivery system. To address these requirements, measures, and guidelines, TWC coordinates and collaborates with the State's 28 Boards, along with their contracted workforce service providers and community partners. This network, known as Texas Workforce Solutions, offers employers and job seekers local access to integrated and statewide services.

TWC aims to expand the Texas workforce into one that is diverse and trained in skills that are responsive to the local economies in which employers and industry engage in innovation and technology to advance their competitiveness. Texas employers, workers, and job seekers benefit from the resiliency of the Texas economy and the diversity of its industries. The Texas workforce is now at over 14.9 million individuals whose skills are world-class and ready to meet the needs of over 534,000 Texas employers.

The Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan

Through designated workforce development programs, partners serve a common customer and are charged with achieving similar employment and educational outcomes for their targeted customer groups. Therefore, the strategic planning process is designed to identify and focus on systemic issues that affect multiple parts of the system and address broad, big-picture workforce issues. TWIC and its system partners completed a year-long planning process, culminating with the development of a strategic plan for fiscal years 2024–2031. Because the strategic plan focuses on issues that span across agencies and programs, it fulfills a unique and complementary role in the workforce system.

The system strategic plan identifies several priority issues that system partners have addressed, are addressing, and will address during the strategic plan period. In identifying these issues, TWIC examined both program and participant outcomes that are critical to Texas' workforce and economic competitiveness, in addition to the critical issues and interdependencies that cross agencies.

The most recent system strategic plan is available at: https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/organization/twic/System_Strategic_Plan_2024-2031.pdf

Elements of the Local Service Delivery Structure

Local Board members are primarily private-sector employers, as wells as individuals who represent local education agencies, labor organizations, community-based organizations, economic development councils, and one-stop partners, such as Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). Boards designate one-stop partners, identify providers of training services, and monitor system performance against performance accountability measures.

Board staff conducts the Board's day-to-day administrative operations and operates with a high degree of local flexibility for service delivery design and partners with local training and educational institutions to ensure employment and training opportunities meet area employment needs.

Workforce Solutions Offices provide a variety of online, in-house, and on-site services, including employer services, job search resources, labor market information, and referrals for

training. In addition to traditional brick-and-mortar offices, mobile workforce units act as a moving extension of the Workforce Solutions Office and offer on-site, rapid response assistance to area employers and communities.

Boards use a variety of strategies to fully use their financial resources and meet the needs of their customers. Strategies include:

- leveraging additional funding sources;

- developing, analyzing, and sharing labor market information and regional economic studies;

- engaging in planning and service delivery across workforce areas and with other workforce and community partners;

- incorporating new strategies and adapting current delivery strategies to respond to local economic changes, such as the use of mobile units and modern technologies that make service more accessible; and

- sharing, modifying, and replicating effective training models and processes.

Funding

To provide needed services, TWC leverages multiple funding sources. Federal funds make up approximately 89 percent of TWC's budget with the remaining 11 percent coming from state sources. TWC receives federal funds from the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (DOLETA), the US Department of Health and Human Services, the US Department of Agriculture, and the US Department of Education.

Through prior consistent state law set forth in Texas Labor Code §302.061 and §302.062, TWC sources block grants from multiple funding streams to workforce areas to administer programs such as WIOA, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program/Choices employment services, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education & Training (SNAP E&T), and subsidized child care under the federal Child Care and Development Fund. Block grants allow Boards to provide integrated services and case management across programs. Boards are given autonomy to use the block grants to hire staff at Workforce Solutions Offices and make other necessary decisions to best serve their workforce areas.

Continued Flexibility through Waivers

The Texas workforce system and its customers have benefited from DOLETA's authority to waive certain WIOA provisions. Texas has requested federal waiver opportunities to allow for increased flexibility and innovation and provide for a more efficient use of staffing resources. With input from Boards and other stakeholders, Texas has developed waiver requests covering several workforce issues, including the ability to:

- use individual training accounts (ITAs) to serve in-school youth ages 16–21;

- modify performance measures to negotiate local program performance; and

- redistribute funds that have been voluntarily deobiligated.

State Leadership in Workforce Initiatives

In Texas, the development of workforce initiatives enables TWC and the Boards to effectively serve the needs of Texas job seekers, employers, and communities. Boards are familiar with local needs and opportunities through first-hand knowledge of local partners and baseline community assessments that ensure extensive local one-stops and that the system's initiatives deliver the maximum possible value to customers. Texas believes that federal rules, grants, and base funding should emphasize state roles and maximize a state's flexibility to design effective and comprehensive initiatives.

Spotlight on Semiconductors

With the growing interest in the semiconductor industry, TWC was asked to be a part of the Governor's National Semiconductor Centers Texas Task Force, led by The Texas A&M University System. The Task Force brings together semiconductor industry stakeholders from the private sector, community partners, and institutions of higher education to collaborate on the Texas initiative. TWC and Boards have collaborated for years with industry partners and the education community to develop meaningful workforce services and programs that address the needs of both the manufacturing and construction industries. Many short- and long-term training programs and job placement tools are in place that can be used to meet the current demand and provide support to meet the ongoing workforce challenges related to industry expansion.

More than 150 training programs are currently available to Workforce Solutions Offices to support the growing demand for semiconductor-related jobs in both manufacturing and construction areas. Providers include community and technical colleges, private career schools, and Registered Apprenticeship programs. Many of these training programs offer short-term credentialing and credit programs.

Apprenticeship Texas - Critical Skills Apprenticeships Initiative

The Critical Skills Apprenticeship Initiative, which TWC's three-member Commission (Commission) approved in February 2022, received continued governor's reserve statewide funding to address workforce shortages in middle skills occupations and develop the critical skills needed within those occupations. The initiative has focused on creating and expanding apprenticeship training programs in middle skills occupations, such as:

- automotive service technicians and mechanics;
- nursing assistants;
- patient care technicians;
- production machinists, assemblers, and fabricators; and
- logistics management and supply chain analysts.

Texas Credential Library Project

TWC, TEA, and THECB are working collaboratively to establish the Texas Credential Library as an extension of the preexisting National Credential Registry. When fully operational, the Texas Credential Library will expand the foundational work of the Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative to align workforce development with high-demand jobs in

Texas and allow users to compare credentials and programs and seek out pathways for educational or professional advancement. Data available within the library will adhere to statutory mandates and include information on diplomas, certificates, certifications, digital badges, apprenticeships, licenses, and degrees that are offered by public and private universities, colleges, career schools, or career-focused high-school courses.

Targeted Service Populations

Employers

Texas' strong economic foundation is largely a credit to the diversity and stability of its private-sector businesses. The state boasts an estimated 534,000 total employers representing hundreds of industries. The overwhelming majority (96.5 percent) of Texas employers are small businesses that employ fewer than 100 workers. However, the largest percentages of jobs (63.4 percent) are with companies that employ 100 or more workers. TWC and its workforce partners are committed to collaborating with local economic development entities to equip Texas employers of all sizes with a highly skilled workforce that will keep jobs in Texas and help companies remain competitive in the global marketplace.

TWC strives to ensure that the state's integrated workforce system attracts and retains in-demand employers. Each Board has dedicated Business Service Units (BSUs) that work to develop strong relationships with local business communities, which allows them to effectively meet an employer's specific needs. BSUs act as business associates as they offer specific services such as recruitment services, skills training, and other workforce development services that are designed to connect employers to qualified job seekers.

As one of the state's premier economic development tools, the Skills Development Fund (SDF) serves as an incentive to attract new firms to locate in Texas or to help existing companies expand. The SDF successfully merges employer needs and local job training opportunities into a winning formula that benefits employers and provides needed skills to workers. Skills grants help incumbent workers upgrade their skills or help create high-skill, high-wage jobs. The use of these grants for skills development is particularly significant because, unlike formula funding, these funds are not required to serve categorical populations; thus the funds can be used to target the workers whom employers identify as needing enhanced skills.

Workers

With a workforce of over 15.1 million workers, TWC aims to help all Texans succeed in a quality work environment. The agency provides workforce development and training, apprenticeship programs, and employment support services for members of its labor force. Long-term self-sufficiency is promoted by enabling parents to work or attend school and training to launch a career pathway, while their children receive quality child care. TWC investigates wage claims, child labor law violations, and employment discrimination claims to ensure that workers receive fair treatment and proper compensation for their work.

Job Seekers

TWC strives to provide employment services and develop innovative strategies to help individuals find employment opportunities in high-growth, high-wage industries. Additionally, TWC works to engage underserved populations, such as Second Chance

individuals and foster youth, to eliminate barriers to employment and extend services to everyone. As a result, the Texas workforce system is able to offer services that lead to hundreds of thousands of job seekers entering employment each year. Services include job search assistance, labor market and career planning information, training and education opportunities, and unemployment benefits to those who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own.

Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment Program for Unemployment Insurance Claimants

The Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) program helps Boards deliver services that provide early interventions to individuals receiving unemployment insurance (UI) benefits. The longer individuals draw UI, the more likely they are to exhaust their benefits. Through the use of evidence-based interventions, the RESEA program helps Boards improve employment outcomes, reduce the average duration of UI benefits for UI claimants, and provide claimants with an entry point into other workforce system partner programs. Dedicated Board staff provides comprehensive individualized one-on-one reemployment services. RESEA program services contribute to the alignment of program integration and service delivery with job seekers, including UI claimants, and helps strengthen the integrity of the UI program.

Veterans

Veterans are a priority population for TWC. The agency's own workforce is comprised of more than 11 percent veterans, compared to an average of about 4.5 percent in most other state agencies.

TWC promotes the hiring of veterans through several initiatives, including the We Hire Vets program. This program recognizes Texas employers whose workforce is comprised of 10 percent or more of US Military veterans. In 2008, TWC created the Texas Veterans Leadership Program (TVLP). This program was designed as a resource and referral network for veterans returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. TVLP staff works closely with the Texas Veterans Commission's Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) employment program to serve veterans who are not eligible to be served by the JVSG program.

 Services provided through TVLP include job search and employment assistance, the identification of education and training resources, and the referral to community-based organizations for supportive services such as housing assistance, substance abuse counseling, mental health services and referrals to address other identified needs. Veterans receive preference for jobs posted on TWC's online job matching website, WorkInTexas.com. Veterans can search for jobs, receive priority of service at Texas Workforce Solutions Offices, and access information on transition assistance and benefits. TWC maintains the Just for Veterans resource on the TWC website that provides information on services specifically for veterans. Additionally, TWC's College Credit for Heroes initiative assists veterans by awarding college credit for experience gained and training completed during military service.

In 2017, TWC created the Military Family Support Program (MFSP) in partnership with eight Boards that are located adjacent to Texas' major military installations. MFSP provides enhanced employment services to military spouses and family members. This includes training for high-demand occupations, if funding is available. The MFSP liaisons outreach

employers, military spouse employment programs, and chambers of commerce to promote the hiring of military spouses and family members.

Individuals with Disabilities

Approximately 12 percent of the Texas population has some type of disability. TWC is committed to helping individuals with disabilities become employed in integrated workplaces that provide pay, benefits, and advancement opportunities that are comparable to those offered to their peers who do not have disabilities. TWC offers individuals with disabilities, including young adults, individualized services, accessible information regarding their local labor market, and counseling about how employment may affect social security disability and other public benefits.

TWC's VR program helps individuals with disabilities prepare for, find, keep, and advance in employment, and helps students with disabilities transition from high school to postsecondary education and work. Work-related services are individualized and may include counseling, training, medical treatment, assistive devices, job placement assistance, and other services.

Additionally, TWC promotes partnerships with employers to overcome barriers to meeting workforce needs through the creative use of technology and innovation. TWC takes steps to ensure that the staff of public schools, vocational service programs, and community-based organizations are trained and supported to assist all individuals with disabilities in achieving competitive integrated employment. TWC also promotes the availability and accessibility of individualized training that is designed to prepare an individual with a disability for the individual's preferred employment. To this end, individuals with disabilities are given the opportunity to explore options for education and training, including postsecondary, graduate, and postgraduate education, vocational or technical training, or other training, as pathways to employment.

Foster Youth

Foster youth receive priority over other equally qualified individuals except eligible veterans. In addition to workforce services, foster youth are provided access to support services, such as child care and transportation. Upon the completion of an individual's eligibility determination, Boards determine which specific program services the foster youth participant is eligible to receive. These services may include, but are not limited to:

- job search assistance;
- résumé preparation;
- access to workforce education and training;
- access to information, tools, and room resources; and
- access to WorkInTexas.com.

The transition from the foster care system to independent adult life can be difficult. Many foster youths are unprepared for living on their own. TWC provides funding for Foster Youth Transition Centers that provide services to youth from ages 16 through 25. Transition Centers provide a central clearing house of one-stop services to serve the diverse needs of older foster youth. Working with Boards through an MOU agreement, Transition Centers provide services such as job readiness and job search assistance, career exploration, higher education enrollment assistance, food and housing assistance, and mentoring. Additionally, other

community partners provide services such as counseling for substance abuse and mental health issues, mentoring services, and leadership training.

Second Chance Individuals

TWC is dedicated to serving Second Chance individuals by offering skills training and employment opportunities in high-demand occupations. TWC understands the importance of helping Second Chance individuals find employment quickly after being released to prevent recidivism. One of the ways that TWC fulfills this goal is by hosting an annual Growth through Reentry to Advance Careers & Employment (GRACE) conference to offer Texas employers an opportunity to learn how to increase their workforce while helping formerly incarcerated individuals gain meaningful employment and the chance for a fresh start. To promote the event, TWC outreaches businesses around the state that are interested in developing a new talent pipeline with Second Chance individuals. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) partners with TWC to support the event and help improve the integration of services for these individuals.

Boards maintain partnerships with local judges, community supervision and correctional institutions, and other community-based organizations that support services to Second Chance individuals, enabling Boards to provide the most robust service options available. Boards also assist employers apply for fidelity bonds and other work incentives to ensure that employers are comfortable with hiring Second Chance individuals. TWC's fidelity bonding program offers employers an insurance policy through the Union Insurance Group that protects the employer against employee acts of dishonesty such as larceny, embezzlement, and theft. Employers that hire Second Chance individuals are also eligible for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), a federal income tax benefit administered by the US Department of Labor (DOL) for private, for-profit employers who hire individuals from specified target populations, including Second Chance individuals. Offering these opportunities in high-crime, high-poverty communities has proved to be impactful in reducing recidivism and helping Second Chance individuals move toward self-sufficiency.

TWC's Adult Education and Literacy's (AEL) program provides opportunities for Second Chance individuals through its Integrated Education and Training in Corrections pilot project with the Windham School District (WSD). AEL started a three-year pilot program with WSD to develop and implement integrated education and training (IET) programs in correctional facilities across the state. The objective of the pilot is to build a model in which basic skills–deficient residents are provided contextualized reading, writing, and math supports while participating in technical training programs in in-demand occupations and/or industries. The pilot is modeled from the state's participation in the nationwide technical assistance campaign constructed by the US Department of Education (ED) in which TWC, AEL, and WSD were partners. The lessons learned from the technical assistance campaign are currently being applied and implemented through an interagency contract. The pilot not only focuses on services during incarceration, but also building community support through re-entry services performed by AEL providers upon release. This allows participants to connect with additional resources to ensure that they can obtain the required credentials or licensing for the occupation in which they were trained and receive support for job placement.

Youth

Providing today's youth with education, training, career exploration, and workplace opportunities is essential to the state's future growth and success. To ensure that young people have the skills necessary to meet future workforce needs, Texas supports youth programs that promote in-demand careers beginning at an early age and identifies educational and career pathways for students, including vocational and technical training, as well as those that require two-year, four-year, and higher education levels.

Jobs Y'all

Through TWC's participation in the Tri-Agency Partnership, a collaboration between TWC, the Texas Education Agency (TEA), and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), the *Jobs Y'all: Your Career. Your Story* campaign was developed to raise awareness among Texans ages 14–24 about the opportunities in Texas industries, with the goal of inspiring young Texans to explore careers and understand what education and training is needed for in-demand jobs. With participation from employers, industry association representatives, workforce developers, parents, counselors, and other stakeholders, the campaign launched a website featuring eight in-demand industry sectors; career resources including *Texas Career Check*, *Texas Reality Check*, the *Texas Internship Challenge*, and *Texas OnCourse*; and links to industry career information. TWC's Education Outreach team introduces the website to thousands of students each year during virtual and in-person career exploration presentations, resulting in over 30,000 page views a year. The site serves as the number two referring source to *Texas Career Check* and a top referring source to *Texas Reality Check* and the *Texas Internship Challenge*. In 2022, the site experienced a refresh of its industry data with a refocus on middle skills occupations. The updated website features additional landing pages and information tailored to students with disabilities and foster youth, as well as more support and application resources for internship programs, such as *Summer Earn and Learn* and THECB's *TX Works*.

Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialist Program

In July 2018, TWC's Commission approved a two-year initiative, called the Workforce Career and Technical Education Outreach Specialist Pilot Program, to educate students and their parents on the availability of career resources and empower students to gain industry recognized certifications, graduate with marketable skills, and minimize future student debt. The program places local Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists in area school districts to provide career guidance and workforce information to students and their parents regarding:

- high-growth, high-demand occupations;
- opportunities and training in middle skills jobs;
- apprenticeship training programs;
- internships; and
- community and technical colleges.

In September 2022, the two-year pilot program became a permanent program. The program has since expanded to include 20 Board teams and one state-level team. Most of the teams operate with two staff members while the original pilot program teams operated with five to

seven staff members. Each new Board area and hired specialists are trained by the state-level Education Outreach team to ensure the successful duplication of state-level practices. However, local programs have the flexibility to implement programs and services that meet the specific needs of their local schools and employers.

Since October 2022, the program, at the state and local level, has reached 141,740 students through 4,739 sessions, and specialists have engaged in more than 6,700 one-on-one sessions.

Beginning on October 1, 2022, Boards were approved to use, as allowable, a mix of available programs to fund Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialist activities. Programs under which all or some of the activities may be allowable include, but are not limited to, the TANF Choices program and the WIOA Title I Youth program.

Pre-Employment Transition Services

TWC is committed to providing services and supports to students with disabilities. WIOA requires states to reserve and expend 15 percent of the federal VR grant for the provision of pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) to students with disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for the VR program. A student with a disability is defined as an individual with a disability, ages 14–22, who is in school. Pre-ETS support students with disabilities through a variety of services, including career exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on postsecondary opportunities, workplace readiness training, and self-advocacy.

Through the Pathways to Careers Initiative (PCI), TWC has cultivated statewide programs that provide Pre-ETS to students with disabilities. PCI's purpose is to expand Pre-ETS to Texas students with disabilities through a series of statewide strategies that feature partnerships with Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) and education entities (secondary and postsecondary). These initiatives focus on career exploration, higher education counseling, self-advocacy, workplace readiness training, and paid work experiences.

Summer Earn and Learn

The Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL) program is the largest employer partnership that is administered by VR and its Board partners. Through this program, students with disabilities complete work readiness training and are partnered with a local employer for a five-week minimum paid internship. Students gain valuable and transferrable skills while the employer receives hands-on support and a chance to work closely with students. Each of the 28 Boards coordinate with VR to assist in recruiting employers and supporting the program.

Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH is a long-standing, successful employer partnership, in which TWC continues to strengthen and expand across the state in a variety of industries. Project SEARCH is a one-year, business-led pre-employment training program that includes a combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through work site rotations. Project SEARCH promotes the successful long-term employment of students with disabilities, including those with significant intellectual and developmental impairments, in jobs that are stable, meaningful, integrated, and competitively compensated. Each student has the opportunity to participate in three internships that expose them to a variety of career

paths. Each student works with a team that includes the student's family and partnering agencies. The team helps the student create an employment goal and supports the transition from school to work. Currently, there are a total of 30 active Project SEARCH sites throughout Texas that represent partnerships between TWC's VR program, host businesses, independent school districts, employment service providers, and Workforce Solutions Offices.

Based on a January 2023 study by TWC's Division of Information Innovation and Insight, Project SEARCH generates better program outcomes than other traditional methods of serving this population in terms of success rate and retention rate. Success rates reflect the proportion of participants who maintained competitive integrated employment for at least 90 days before exiting the VR program. Retention rates reflect the proportion of VR exiters who retained employment, based on unemployment insurance wage records, during the second through fourth quarters after their VR program exit date. From 2015 to 2019, Project SEARCH participants had a success rate of 87.4 percent, versus 60.4 percent in a comparison group. Additionally, during the same time period, Project SEARCH exiters had a retention rate of 70.35 percent, versus 63.27 percent for the comparison group.

Adult Education and Literacy Program

The Adult Education and Literacy Program delivers the basic foundational skills, workforce preparation, workforce training, and other career advancement services that are necessary to prepare Texans to support their families, careers, and communities. Adult Education and Literacy supports growth in the state by offering programs for individuals with barriers to employment, by identifying transferable skills valued by employers, and by delivering education and training to individuals who want to complete postsecondary education and training and find employment in in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

In January 2021, TWC's three-member Commission (Commission) adopted the Strategic Plan for Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) for Fiscal Years 2021–2026. During the development of the Strategic Plan, the state's AEL advisory committee, which consists of representatives from the business communities and Board partners, identified four key goals. The following goals are outlined in the plan:

- Increase workforce, secondary, and postsecondary education and training outcomes to support increases in education and work-related outcomes through enhanced delivery and service integration
- Address demand for AEL in Texas by implementing strategies that increase and streamline access for current and future students
- Enhance the workforce customer's experience through increased coordination and integration among state and local system stakeholders
- Improve AEL program effectiveness, which includes program accountability and fiscal integrity, and provide tools to communicate the AEL program impact to AEL stakeholders

To meet these goals, AEL grantees have implemented a diverse service delivery system that delivers both the foundational skills and career pathway transitions needed to support and prepare Texans to support their families, careers, and communities.

Under WIOA, Boards engage and support AEL grant recipients in various activities that promote students' success in meeting their career and educational goals. Finding ways to innovate AEL and leverage education, training, support, and career development resources continues to be key to fostering student and system success. AEL and its Texas workforce partners share the goal of building a wider, more valuable array of services that better assist their mutual customers in attaining educational goals that support career development and the transition to higher education while helping strengthen families and communities. Workplace literacy programs focus on developing workplace competencies that are tailored to specific employer needs. Additionally, programs for internationally trained professionals support individuals who are highly skilled but need English language acquisition to be competitive job seekers. These programs are supported by both Boards and AEL grant recipients as they work together to identify employers and job seekers who could benefit from services.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program

TWC's VR program is an integral part of the state's comprehensive workforce development system. VR services are delivered by VR staff, in collaboration with Boards, independent school districts, colleges, service providers, and numerous other partners. The VR program provides an array of services to support individuals with disabilities in preparing for, obtaining, retaining, or advancing in competitive integrated employment. Services are based on the needs of each individual to achieve their employment goals which may include vocational counseling and guidance, academic and vocational training, diagnosis and treatment of impairments, assessment of medical and vocational needs, assistive technology and equipment, disability-related skills training, transportation, job exploration and work-based learning, and supported employment. Guided by the principle of informed choice, an individual's employment goal guides the services that are provided, consistent with the individual's strengths, resources, interests, and capabilities.

The VR program aims to enhance collaboration and coordination with Boards, employers, community organizations, and other stakeholders to increase competitive integrated employment outcomes and work-based learning experiences, such as internships, volunteer positions, and summer and year-round work experience programs. VR collaborates with its Texas workforce system partners to participate in joint strategies that address employers' workforce needs. VR partners with TWC's We Hire Ability Employer Recognition Program to recognize employers whose workforce composition consists of 10 percent or more of individuals with disabilities. VR's Business Relations team works with local employers to learn about open positions, host virtual employer spotlight events, and cultivate understanding regarding the value of hiring individuals with disabilities. The team also collaborates with local Workforce Solutions Business Service Unit (BSU) staff, community organizations, and local chambers of commerce regarding employment of individuals with disabilities.

Concluding Comments

Texas' implementation of WIOA's six core programs supports a service delivery system that meets the needs of employers and works to ensure that relevant training and employment assistance is available for job seekers, including those with disabilities, regardless of the funding source. Boards work individually, together, and with other stakeholders to achieve a cost efficient and seamless service delivery system. Such a system enhances participant

access to a range of workforce and associated support services. Collaborative efforts aid in providing an adequate supply of workers that meet the skills requirements of available jobs, thus assisting the state's employers with retaining and enhancing a competitive economic advantage.

III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an Operational Planning Elements section that supports the State's strategy and the system-wide vision described in Section II(c) above. Unless otherwise noted, all Operational Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs. This section must include—

A. STATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include–

1. STATE BOARD FUNCTIONS

Describe how the State board will implement its functions under section 101(d) of WIOA (i.e., provide a description of Board operational structures and decision making processes to ensure such functions are carried out).

TWIC was created by the 73rd Texas Legislature, Regular Session (1993). TWIC's purpose is to promote the development of a highly skilled and well-educated workforce for Texas and to assist the governor and the legislature with strategic planning for and evaluation of the Texas workforce system.

The scope of TWIC's work is "workforce development," which is defined in state statutes that pertain to TWIC as "workforce education and workforce training and services." Workforce education includes articulated career path programs and the constituent courses of those programs that lead to a sub-baccalaureate license, credential, certificate, or degree.

Texas statute assigns TWIC five primary functions within the Texas workforce system, as follows:

- Strategic planning
- Evaluation and performance measurement
- Research and continuous improvement
- Review of state and local workforce plans and reports to ensure alignment with statewide goals and objectives
- Maintaining the Texas skill standards system

TWIC also serves as the state workforce investment board (state board) as required under federal workforce law. As the state board, TWIC operated under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) (Public Law 105-220) since Texas' implementation of the Act in 1999. On July 22, 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) (Public Law 113-128) was signed into law, thereby establishing new federal workforce law and repealing WIA. TWIC continues to serve as the state board under WIOA.

In some states, prior consistent state law has determined that the state board will be largely responsible for system strategic planning and evaluation and that the state workforce agency will be responsible for program administration.

Because of the significant workforce system reform initiated by the Texas legislature in 1993 and 1995, WIOA contains provisions that allow Texas to retain—or grandfather—major elements of its workforce system that are consistent with WIOA, including TWIC's composition and roles. As a result, the duties assigned to the state board under WIOA are implemented in a manner that is consistent with TWIC's role under state legislation enacted before WIOA. Accordingly, TWIC does not operate programs or directly manage the flow of state and federal funding to the system's state agencies. Rather, TWIC's focus is strategic, as its functions are guided by the duties and responsibilities established under Texas Government Code, Chapter 2308.

Because TWIC is the state board, federal agencies periodically engage it in the federal system oversight role to participate in program reviews. For example, in the past, TWIC has participated in program reviews and site visits conducted by the Department of Labor (DOL) Region 4 Office; the DOL Office of Inspector General; the Rehabilitation Services Administration; the Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education; and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

One of TWIC's key functions is the development of an overarching strategic plan for the Texas workforce system. The Texas workforce system is composed of a number of programs, services, and initiatives administered by eight state agencies, the Texas Association of Workforce Boards, local workforce development boards, community and technical colleges, local adult education providers, and independent school districts. Texas workforce system partners include the following:

- Governor's Office of Economic Development and Tourism
- Texas Association of Workforce Boards
- Texas Department of Criminal Justice and the Windham School District
- Texas Education Agency
- Texas Health and Human Services Commission
- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Texas Juvenile Justice Department
- Texas Veterans Commission
- Texas Workforce Commission

TWIC is required to meet quarterly and at other times as deemed necessary by the chair. All meetings of TWIC and its committees are posted in the *Texas Register* in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act. The chair is authorized to appoint subcommittees and technical advisory committees to inform the work of the Council and to assist TWIC in fulfilling its legislative mandates. Current TWIC committees include the Executive Committee and the Apprenticeship and Training Advisory Committee. A recommendation from any committee must be considered by TWIC and is not considered an approved action until TWIC conducts a vote. A recommendation or action must be approved by a majority of the quorum present at the meeting.

The chair appoints an executive director, who is responsible for TWIC's daily operations. The executive director establishes administrative and personnel policies and procedures on behalf of TWIC, hires staff to address TWIC's duties and responsibilities, and provides periodic and annual reports to TWIC, the governor, and the legislature. TWIC is responsible for developing and implementing policies that clearly separate its policymaking responsibilities from the management responsibilities of the executive director and staff.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGY

Describe how the lead State agency with responsibility for the administration of each core program or a Combined Plan partner program included in this plan will implement the State's Strategies identified in Section II(c). above. This must include a description of—

A. CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE'S STRATEGY

Describe the activities the entities carrying out the respective core programs will fund to implement the State's strategies. Also, describe how such activities will be aligned across the core programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan and among the entities administering the programs, including using co-enrollment and other strategies, as appropriate.

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) is the state agency in Texas responsible for the administration of all WIOA core and partner programs.

TWC and the 28 Local Workforce Development Boards provide workforce development services that help workers find and keep good jobs and help employers hire the skilled workers they need to grow their businesses. Our workforce partners include community colleges, adult basic education providers, local independent school districts, economic development groups, businesses, and other state agencies. Collaboration and coordination among these partners plays a critical role in the success of the Texas workforce system.

Boards are responsible for implementing the strategic planning of workforce services for employers and job seekers. The integrated workforce delivery system maximizes funding and productivity while eliminating duplicate efforts. Through performance-based contracts, TWC monitors and holds the Boards accountable for program performance and provides technical assistance.

TWC continues to cultivate emerging industries, support existing businesses, and enhance the skills development of the Texas workforce, taking advantage of strategic opportunities provided by economic change. TWC is dedicated to leading a market-driven workforce system that meets the needs of employers and workers and helps Texans prosper.

Texas has enjoyed efficiencies in providing services to employers, job seekers, and special population groups, including low-income and basic skills–deficient individuals and veterans, by colocating core programs. These efficiencies include the following:

- Provision of comprehensive and seamless workforce and support services

- Elimination of duplicative efforts and the effective management of program funds

- Systemic approach to providing guidance and technical assistance consistently across programs

- Colocation and integration of Texas Workforce Solutions and Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWS-VRS) business relations staff to help employers fill open positions with qualified job seekers with disabilities, thus enhancing the one-stop service delivery model

- Using labor market information to inform targeted business development, explore industry and economic trends, and research and track emerging and evolving occupations in Texas

Core Program Activities to Implement the State's Strategy

The following activities support WIOA core programs and align with the State's strategies, as previously described.

TWC administers the development and integration of workforce services in cooperation with the Board's oversight and planning efforts. Service delivery is provided through Texas Workforce Boards, which contract with one-stop providers to operate a variety of program components. This network gives customers local access to workforce solutions and statewide services at 174 Workforce Solutions Offices, four UI telecenters, and numerous partner locations.

WIOA continues to support Texas' progress toward integrating services for customers. In Texas, many one-stop required-partners are Board-administered or are under direct agency control and do not require the development of memoranda of understanding (MOUs). These include:

- WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs

- Wagner-Peyser Employment Service (ES) program

- UI program, including the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program

- Choices, the TANF employment and training program

- SNAP E&T

- Child Care Services

- TAA

- AEL programs (when Board is the grantee)

- VR programs (MOUs are required between TWC and Board)

- National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) program

Additionally, the following required programs are not under the direct oversight of the Boards; therefore, Boards are required to establish MOUs with:

- AEL (when Board is not the grantee)

- Apprenticeship programs under the Texas Education Code, Chapter 133

- Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) (20 USC 2301 et seq.)

- Job counseling, training, and placement services for veterans (38 USC 41 et seq.)

- Education and vocational training programs through Job Corps, administered by DOL

- Native American programs authorized under Title I of WIOA

- US Department of Housing and Urban Development-administered employment and training programs

- Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act

- Reintegration of Offenders programs authorized under the Second Chance Act, 2007

- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker programs authorized under WIOA §167

- Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

TWC also recommends that Boards enter into MOUs with the following optional partner activities:

- Employment and training programs administered by the Social Security Administration, including the Ticket-to-Work and the Self-Sufficiency Program, established under §1148 of the Social Security Act (42 USC §1320b-19 et seq.)

- Employment and training programs carried out by the Small Business Administration

- Programs administered by OneStar Foundation, authorized under the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 USC §12401 et seq.)

- Other appropriate federal, state, or local programs, which may include employment, education, and training programs provided by public libraries or in the private sector

Additionally, Boards are encouraged to continually expand and enhance their network by forming partnerships outside of the Workforce Solutions Offices. Some agencies and services with which Boards have established additional cooperative relationships include the following:

- Local boards of education

- Local-level vocational education agencies

- Economic Development Organizations (EDOs)

- Chambers of Commerce

- Community-based Organizations (CBOs)

- Faith-based Organizations (FBOs)

Texas state law requires TWC and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to jointly develop a MOU establishing guidelines for a coordinated interagency case management plan. Additionally, TWC requires in the contracts between TWC and the Boards that the Boards, in cooperation with HHSC local offices, develop and implement a coordinated interagency case management plan.

Information about TWC's use of coenrollment and other state strategies are discussed in Operational Planning Element b2.

B. ALIGNMENT WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PLAN

Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be aligned with programs and activities provided by required one-stop partners and other optional one-stop partners and activities provided under employment, training (including Registered Apprenticeships), education (including career and technical education), human services and other programs not covered by the plan, as appropriate, assuring coordination of, and avoiding duplication among these activities.

Apprenticeship Texas

Apprenticeship training is designed to prepare and train individuals for careers in skilled trades and crafts. Apprenticeships combine on-the-job training that is supervised by experienced journey workers with job-related classroom instruction in which workers learn the practical and theoretical aspects of a highly skilled occupation.

The purpose of the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) Apprenticeship Texas program is to stimulate and assist industries in developing and improving apprenticeship opportunities and other training programs that are designed to provide employers with the skilled workers who are needed to compete in a global economy. As authorized in the Texas Education Code, Chapter 133, TWC provides funding to local education agencies (LEAs) and apprenticeship committees to support a portion of the costs of job-related classroom instruction in registered apprenticeship training programs. LEAs and the apprenticeship committees serve as the funding link between registered apprenticeship training programs and TWC. To qualify for funding, apprenticeship training programs and apprentices must be registered with the US Department of Labor's (DOL) Office of Apprenticeship.

The 88th Texas Legislature (2023) approved funding to support quality pre-apprenticeship programs, in which the individual has a clear pathway to a Registered Apprenticeship. The approved funding is approximately $6 million for the FY'24–FY'25 biennium.

Additionally, the 88th Texas Legislature also approved $20 million for the FY'24–FY'25 biennium to support Texas Industry Recognized Apprenticeships (TIRAs). TIRAs combine on-the-job training that is supervised by experienced workers with job-related classroom instruction. The goal of this training mirrors the desired outcomes of providing skilled workers industry needs to compete in a global economy.

Apprenticeship training programs have demonstrated that employers that invest in training have lower employee turnover, increased employee productivity, better employee problem-solving skills, and improved employee relations. As a result, both the employer and employee are equally committed to the program's success.

Job Corps

The Job Corps program is a no-cost education and vocational training program that is administered by DOL. Authorized under Title I of WIOA as a required partner within the one-stop system, Job Corps programs assist eligible youth, ages 16 to 24, with obtaining the skills and knowledge that are necessary to succeed in high-demand industries through a combination of academic coursework, vocational training, and hands-on work experience.

Located primarily in residential centers, Job Corps programs provide opportunities for participants to obtain secondary school diplomas or recognized postsecondary credentials that lead to successful careers in in-demand industry sectors such as health care, construction, information technology, and hospitality or the Armed Forces. Program goals include economic self-sufficiency; providing opportunities for educational and career advancement; enrollment in postsecondary education, including apprenticeship programs; and supporting responsible citizenship. There are 131 Job Corps centers located throughout the United States, each offering educational training and a variety of vocational training programs. In Texas, Job Corps programs are coordinated out of the DOL Region 4, Dallas office, with programs operating in El Paso, San Marcos, Laredo, and McKinney, Texas.

YouthBuild

YouthBuild is a community-based pre-apprenticeship program administered by DOL's Office of Workforce Investment's Division of Youth Services. YouthBuild grantees in Texas offer programs in Austin, Houston, Pharr, and Brownsville, and empower young individuals to reach their full potential by providing education, job training, and leadership development opportunities. Designed for young people who have faced barriers to success, such as those who have experienced a lack of education, have limited job prospects, or are involved in the justice system, the YouthBuild program offers a transformative pathway toward self-sufficiency and community engagement. Through a comprehensive curriculum that combines academic instruction with hands-on construction training, participants gain valuable skills while earning a high school diploma or equivalent credential. Additionally, the program fosters personal growth and civic responsibility by encouraging youth to actively participate in community service projects, thus fostering a sense of belonging and giving back.

YouthBuild also continues to strengthen connections to career pathways through apprenticeships. Traditionally, the YouthBuild model has provided connections to apprenticeship opportunities in the building trades.

Child Care and Early Learning

High-quality child care promotes healthy child development and school readiness while enabling parents to work, search for work, or attend a training or education program. The mission of the Child Care & Early Learning Division is to enhance the quality of and increase access to high-quality child care through program supports while providing financial aid to low-income families.

TWC's Child Care Services (CCS) program provides child care subsidy assistance to eligible low-income families with children under the age of thirteen, which allows parents to work or search for work, attend school, or participate in training. Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) administer child care financial assistance to support eligible low-income

families and families that participate in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)/Choices employment program. CCS staff members use a monthly report to identify child care parents who may benefit from reemployment services, education, and training.

When a parent who is receiving child care subsidies loses their job, they have up to three months to find employment and retain child care assistance. During the three-month job search period, the family continues to receive child care assistance. Additionally, parents who are engaged in job search can qualify for child care while they search for employment. If the parent becomes employed within three months, they retain their child care benefits for a full 12-month eligibility period (nine additional months).

Improving the Quality of Child Care

The Texas Rising Star Program is a quality rating and improvement system for child care providers participating in the CCS program. The program requires providers to exceed minimum licensing requirements and encourages the attainment of progressively higher levels of quality. As of March 31, 2023, all child care providers in the CCS program are required to participate in the Texas Rising Star Program at least at the Entry Level. Child care providers in the CCS program must attain star-level certification by September 30, 2024. To assist these providers, Boards employ Texas Rising Star mentors who provide coaching and technical assistance to CCS providers that are working toward initial and higher levels of certification.

Another function of Texas Rising Star is the assessment of individual provider's quality using on-site observations, evaluations, and standardized criteria. TWC is transitioning responsibility for Texas Rising Star assessments to a statewide entity—the Children's Learning Institute (CLI) at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston—that will employ Texas Rising Star assessors. Previously, Boards were responsible for assessing the quality level of child care providers.

Assessors must be certified through the Texas Rising Star Assessment Training and Certification Program (ATCP) and maintain reliability as measured through quarterly checks. All mentors must participate in the Texas Rising Star Mentor Micro-Credentials program. Both the ATCP and the Mentor Micro-Credentials program are funded by TWC and administered by CLI.

Additionally, Boards are required to expend 4 percent of their annual allocation of child care funds to improve the quality of child care in their community. Boards must determine the community's needs and develop annual Child Care Quality Expenditure Plans that outline their strategic investment of quality improvement funds. Many Boards use these funds to support ongoing education and training for child care professionals.

Early Care and Education Workforce Initiatives

In January 2023, TWC published its first Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan to improve the quality of the child care workforce in Texas. The plan, which will be updated every three years, includes demographic and workforce data along with goals and strategies to support the current child care workforce and provide a pipeline of qualified early educators. Strategies include the following:

- Making improvements to the Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System (TECPDS) as well as updating its core competencies and career pathways tool
- Expanding Child Care Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs)
- Revising TWC's Child Care Quality Improvement Strategic Planning and Expenditures Guide to include additional workforce support strategies

RAPs help child care providers recruit and retain high-quality teachers. TWC awarded planning and implementation grants to six applicants through two rounds of funding. TWC will also implement the Preschool Development Grant, which will offer additional funding for Child Care RAPs in FY'24.

TWC has partnered with an institute of higher education to fund a $2.7 million pilot project that will support students in their pursuit of postsecondary credentials that relate to early childhood education. As part of this project, a competency-based online Texas Core Curriculum will be designed and developed that will be geared toward the early childhood education workforce. By Fall 2024, it is projected that this project will impact 500 early childhood educators who will obtain industry recognized credentials. These awards will go to early childhood educators employed in Texas Rising Star–certified centers. The project will also support 500 bachelor's degree students as they work to meet Texas Success Initiative criteria, which is a required admissions standard for a bachelor's degree program in Texas. Students that complete each semester will be eligible for tuition waivers and scholarships to cover the standard tuition.

Additionally, TWC has significantly increased investments in the Early Childhood Educator Professional Development Scholarship (ECEPDS) program, which is modeled after the national Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) program. The ECEPDS program uses a cost-sharing partnership between the scholarship recipient, their sponsoring employer, and the scholarship program, currently administered by the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children. Scholarship recipients, who must be employed at a regulated child care provider, also earn bonuses after completing a set number of credits each year.

Foster Youth

TWC recognizes that helping foster youth transition to independent living requires more than simply addressing the need for shelter, food, and safety. Intensive and coordinated efforts are required from public agencies, community organizations, professionals, community leaders, and concerned volunteers to support youth in becoming engaged, responsible, and economically self-sufficient adults. TWC, along with Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) regional offices and local Boards, have jointly developed and entered into agreements that address the unique challenges current and former foster youth face as they transition into successful adults, including the need to improve employment outcomes for such individuals. Through a memorandum of understanding (MOU), DFPS and the Boards collaborate to further the objectives of DFPS' Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program. The objectives of PAL include ensuring that services are prioritized and targeted to meet the needs of current and former foster youth and referring, as appropriate, foster youth to short-term housing.

DFPS staff, caregivers, and PAL contractors refer youth ages 16 and older to local Workforce Solutions Offices for job search and readiness assistance, career exploration, and employment and training services. Each Board has a designated point of contact for staff and youth to access assistance and services. Youth are encouraged to use the TWC online job matching system, WorkInTexas.com, to search for jobs, create a resume, and submit applications for employment.

To ensure the effective provision of workforce-funded services for education and training programs, and to avoid the duplication of services to foster youth, Boards are familiar with other non-workforce programs and state tuition and fee waivers that are available to foster youth. WIOA Youth formula funds for Individual Training Accounts may provide tuition for foster youth to complete training. In Texas, tuition and fees are waived for foster youth enrolled in these training programs (Texas Family Code 264.121 and Education Code 61.003). Foster youth enrolled in training are also eligible to receive vouchers that expand and supplement the tuition waiver for youth to meet their educational or vocational goals.

The transition from the foster care system to independent adult life can be difficult. Many former foster youths struggle with fear and loneliness, and some even suffer from untreated health problems, financial insecurity, and homelessness. Foster Youth Transition Centers (transition centers) act as a central clearinghouse to serve the diverse needs of older foster youth, youth experiencing homelessness, and other at-risk youth. TWC provides funding to transition centers to provide services to youth from ages 16 to 25. Transition centers provide services such as job readiness and job search assistance, career exploration, higher education enrollment assistance, food and housing assistance, and mentoring. Additionally, other community partners provide services such as counseling for substance abuse and mental health issues, mentoring services, and leadership training. Transition centers provide colocation opportunities for local partners, such as Workforce Solutions Office staff, TWC-funded workforce advocates, and colleges and universities, to jointly serve the diverse needs of youth in one location. Across Texas, there are 18 transition centers, which are funded, operated, and supported through partnerships between DFPS, DFPS providers, community partners, and TWC. Transition center services are considered a supplement to Board services and are not meant to replace Board services.

The Labor Market Information (LMI) Department of TWC supports Texas Career Check, a website that can facilitate career and education exploration for youth in and formerly in foster care. The website serves as a valuable resource, offering a range of information and tools that enable users to gather career-related information. Users can access data on occupation trends and information, military occupations, school information, programs of study, and even develop a high school graduation plan. One of the notable features of the website is an online interest profiler that helps young individuals determine their preferences and interests. To further engage and assist users, the website incorporates an interactive game for career exploration that allows youth to explore different career options and make informed decisions about their futures. (https://texascareercheck.com/)

Priority of Service

Texas Family Code §264.121 directs that workforce services be prioritized and targeted to meet the unique needs of foster youth and former foster youth.

Boards must ensure that:

- eligible foster youth receive priority over all other equally qualified individuals, except veterans and eligible spouses, in the receipt of federal and state-funded services; and

- workforce services are prioritized and targeted for youth transitioning out of the foster care system and for former foster youth.

To ensure that eligible foster youth receive priority over all other equally qualified individuals, except veterans and eligible spouses, in the receipt of workforce services, they also must have access to needed support services.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

Both state and federal welfare reform legislation emphasize personal responsibility, time-limited cash assistance benefits, and the goal of work instead of public assistance. To support these mandates, TWC and the Boards have developed a service delivery model with the goal of employment at the earliest opportunity for applicants and recipients of cash assistance. TWC maintains a collaborative partnership with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to address public assistance reform through the Choices Program, which provides training and employment services to those receiving cash benefits from TANF.

The Choices program assists applicants, recipients, nonrecipient parents, and former recipients of TANF cash assistance in transitioning from receiving public assistance to obtaining and maintaining work through participation in work-related activities, including job search, job readiness classes, basic skills training, education, vocational training, and support services. Workforce Solutions Offices provide these services that are designed to lead to self-sustaining employment. Choices services help both employers and job seekers by providing training opportunities for job seekers along with job-matching tools that enable employers to find qualified, trained employees.

Choices staff meets with TANF recipients, who are referred by HHSC, to provide an overview of Choices services and requirements, conduct an in-depth assessment and develop a Family Employment Plan. Participation for most recipients includes job readiness activities and job search activities as a means of testing the labor market and locating employment at the earliest opportunity. Job readiness activities include the following:

- Self-esteem building

- Job search skills

- Labor market information

- Employment goal setting

- Resume writing

- Interviewing techniques

- General workplace expectations

- Job retention skills

Noncustodial Parent Choices

The Non-Custodial Parent Choices (NCP Choices) program is a collaborative effort between TWC, the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) of Texas, Boards, Workforce Solutions Office staff, and family court judges. The program targets low-income unemployed or underemployed Non-Custodial Parents (NCPs) who are behind on their child support payments or who have had a child support obligation established.

Mirrored after TWC's Choices employment and training program for TANF recipients, the goal of the NCP Choices program is to help NCPs overcome substantial barriers to employment and career advancement while becoming economically self-sufficient and making consistent child support payments.

The success of the NCP Choices program is largely attributable to four core elements:

1. Court-ordered program participation. Failure to participate leads to "swift and certain consequences," up to, and including, jail time;

2. Presence of Workforce Solutions Office staff at the court to meet with NCPs immediately after being ordered into the program;

3. Intensive case management by Workforce Solutions Office staff, including weekly in-person contact until NCPs enter employment, and monthly verification of continued employment; and

4. Close communication with program partners regarding NCPs' participation and progress in the program.

TWC also encourages collaboration and coenrollment with other programs when appropriate to ensure the NCP receives a range of services.

Even though this is one of the hardest-to-serve populations, the NCP Choices program has seen positive employment, job retention, and child support results. The following Texas program information was collected between August 2005 and August 2022:

- More than 52,000 NCPs have been served.
- During Program Year 2022, 50.1 percent of participating NCPs entered employment and 72.8 percent of participating NCPs retained employment for at least six months.
- More than $756 million was collected and paid toward child support, with more than $99,000 collected during the first quarter of State Fiscal Year 2022.
- Custodial parents participating in the NCP Choices program were 21 percent less likely to receive TANF benefits.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education and Training (SNAP E&T) program helps SNAP recipients gain skills, training, or work experience to obtain regular employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency. The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) has administrative authority over the SNAP E&T program in Texas. HHSC and TWC operate under an Interagency Cooperation Agreement that provides agency-

specific responsibilities for the administration of the program and provision of services. TWC coordinates and collaborates with 28 Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) and their contracted workforce service providers and community partners to provide SNAP E&T services.

TWC rules (40 TAC §813.2(1)(D), §813.12, and §813.32(b)) and federal regulations (7 CFR §273.7(a) and 7 CFR §273.24(a)(1)) require SNAP recipients to meet work requirements unless they are exempt. SNAP recipients who have been exempt may volunteer to participate in SNAP E&T services. Federal regulations at 7 CFR §273.7(c)(5) require each component of the state's SNAP E&T program to be delivered through its statewide Workforce Solutions Offices. The SNAP E&T program components offered in Texas include:

- supervised job search;
- job search training;
- workfare;
- work experience;
- basic education;
- vocational training; and
- job retention services.

SNAP E&T participants receive reimbursements for expenses, including child care and transportation, that are reasonable, necessary, and directly related to participation in the program.

While some SNAP recipients participate only in SNAP E&T, others are also coenrolled in WIOA. Coenrollment in WIOA provides SNAP E&T participants additional opportunities, including work-based learning activities, to gain the skills necessary to meet the emerging demands of local businesses. SNAP E&T participants may enroll in the following WIOA services:

- Career services, including:
    - Assessments (basic and specialized)
    - Job search
    - Provision of referrals
    - Development of employment plan
    - Work experience
- Training services, including:
    - AEL services
    - Job readiness training
    - Occupational skills training
    - Registered apprenticeship
    - On-the-job training
    - Internship

SNAP E&T participants, when appropriate, may also be coenrolled in Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) to receive additional employment services and training.

On January 5, 2021, FNS issued a final rule, Employment and Training Opportunities in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, most provisions of which were effective March

8, 2021, to implement changes made by §4005 of the Act to the SNAP E&T program. The final rule requires state agencies to consult with their Boards on the design of their E&T programs and to document in their E&T State Plans the extent in which their E&T programs will be carried out in coordination with activities under Title I of WIOA.

English Language Learners

English Language Learners (ELL)—individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and have a limited ability to read, write, speak, and/or understand English—continue to be a growing population of job seekers in Texas. TWC continues to develop policies, guidance, technical assistance, and language assistance to ensure meaningful access to workforce services for all customers. TWC integrates English literacy with civics education, workforce preparation activities, secondary education, and occupational skills training. This approach stresses contextualized learning to help transition participants to postsecondary education, further skills training, or lead to employment.

As Texas employers continue to compete in the global marketplace, maintaining a skilled workforce has become a primary objective. Supporting the employment and training goals of ELLs has become a core mission for Boards, training providers, and adult education programs. Boards help AEL grant recipients by making connections with employers who wish to support diverse English language acquisition services through workplace literacy programs. These partnerships allow AEL grant recipients to customize workplace literacy programs to meet individual employer needs, which enables employers to retain incumbent workers and prepare them for advancement within key industries across Texas. Since 2018, workplace literacy programs have been a state priority. Across the state, AEL grant recipients implemented specific enrollment targets to bolster such service models.

Homeless Individuals

TWC strives to make services available to individuals with barriers to employment, including homeless populations, as identified by WIOA §171(b)(4). As part of this effort, TWC serves on the Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless (TICH), a group that consists of representatives from the following agencies:

- Office of the Governor
- Office of Lieutenant Governor
- Office of the Speaker of the House
- Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)
- Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)
- Department of State Health Services (DHS)
- Texas Education Agency (TEA)
- Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ)
- Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD)
- Texas Veterans Commission (TVC)
- Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA)

The duties of the group are to:

- survey current resources and services for the homeless in the state;

- assist in coordinating and providing statewide services for homeless individuals in the state;
- increase the flow of information among providers and appropriate authorities;
- provide technical assistance to TDHCA in assessing the need for housing for individuals with special needs in different localities; and
- maintain a central resource and information center for homeless services.

TWC partners with grantees of the US Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Services (DOLVETS) Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) to offer job search and placement services, occupational training and counseling, and other vital assistance to homeless Texas veterans.

Additionally, Boards are charged with establishing collaborative partnerships with housing authorities and sponsors of local housing programs to address unmet housing needs of Choices recipients. Workforce Solutions Office staff performs initial and ongoing assessments to determine the employability needs of individuals. These assessments must report on unmet housing needs and whether those needs are a barrier to full participation in the workforce and progression to self-sufficiency.

TWC also prioritizes Child Care Services (CCS) for families experiencing homelessness. Such parents can qualify for three months of child care subsidies regardless of whether they are employed. If a parent finds work or starts an education or training program within the initial three months, they can retain their child care eligibility for a full 12-month eligibility period (nine additional months). Families experiencing homelessness also do not have to contribute a copay for CCS.

Second Chance Individuals

TWC is a member of the State Reentry Task Force, which is led by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ). The task force consists of 29 individuals representing a cross-section of Texas agencies, organizations, and communities. The Reentry Task Force maintains working groups to address specific barriers to successful reentry. The Employment Working Group identifies strategies to eliminate barriers to employment in a post-release environment as well as coordination of resources, job training, and assistance.

TDCJ maintains the Website for Work program that helps connect individuals on parole supervision with Second Chance employers looking for skilled applicants. Website for Work is a web-based application that is managed by a dedicated employment specialist to connect qualified unemployed or underemployed Second Chance individuals across the state with Second Chance employers in need of a skilled worker based on education, vocational training, certifications, and work experience.

Employers that hire a Second Chance individual within a year of their release from prison qualify for the federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC). Additionally, TWC offers fidelity bonding through local Workforce Solutions Offices. Fidelity bonding for employment is offered and marketed for certain at-risk job seekers, including individuals in the Second Chance population.

Reemployment Service and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA)

The Reemployment Service and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program is a federal grant program designed to allow states to provide personalized reemployment assistance to individuals who are receiving unemployment benefits and are determined likely to exhaust their benefits before becoming reemployed. The program uses statistical modeling to generate a risk score for UI claimants based on their likelihood to exhaust their benefits. The model considers a variety of work-related and economic variables, including the length of workforce attachment, occupational field, wage, and location. By focusing reemployment services on UI claimants who are likely to exhaust benefits, Boards are able to provide effective reemployment interventions. The RESEA program focuses on the following strategies:

- Conducting one-on-one reemployment and eligibility assessments to determine continued eligibility for UI benefits

- Providing customized reemployment services that are proven to improve employment outcomes and shorten the duration in which a claimant receives unemployment compensation

The goals of RESEA include:

- providing claimants with a wide array of resources that support a quick reattachment to the workforce; and
- providing claimants an entry point to other workforce system partner programs, which contributes to the alignment of program integration and service delivery, including coenrollment in the WIOA title I programs or other program services, as appropriate.

Required RESEA activities include:

- providing an orientation to inform and connect claimants to available services through Workforce Solutions Offices;

- assessing continued unemployment benefit eligibility;

- registering in Wagner-Peyser employment services;

- developing an individualized reemployment plan;

- providing labor market information that is customized to meet individual claimant needs; and

- referring claimants to job search services and/or job readiness training.

RESEA helps strengthen the integrity of the UI program. Texas' RESEA program further promotes the integration of workforce services as envisioned by WIOA and helps strengthen the integrity of the UI program.

C. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS

Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required and optional one-stop

partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality, customer-centered services, including supportive services (e.g. transportation), to individuals, including those populations identified in section II(a)(1)(B), and individuals in remote areas. The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

The Texas workforce system is a complex structure comprised of numerous programs, services, and initiatives administered by state agencies, local workforce development boards (Boards), the Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC), independent school districts, community and technical colleges, and local adult education providers. System partners are responsible for the delivery of a wide range of workforce education and training programs and related services, as well as education programs that support career preparation and advancement.

The workforce system is interconnected by the programs and agencies that either serve common customers or are charged with achieving similar employment and educational outcomes for their targeted customer groups. Crucial to the system planning process and alignment with federal and state statutes, the Texas workforce system builds upon the system's core elements, goals, and objectives to meet the vision and mission of the system, including the core programs under WIOA. Improved access and efficiency, along with value-added support services, are a few of the many benefits customers receive from the state workforce system. System partners are responsible for the delivery of various workforce education and training programs and related services, as well as education programs that support career preparation and advancement, including:

- providing services that facilitate the match between employers and employees;

- providing employment, training, and retention services for eligible WIOA participants and prioritizing services to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals with disabilities and/or basic skills deficient to facilitate financial self-sufficiency;

- developing adult education and family literacy programs that ensure all adults have the basic education skills they need to contribute to their families and communities;

- providing employment, training, and retention services to individuals with barriers to employment, including veterans, individuals with disabilities, trade-affected individuals, older individuals, ex-offenders, homeless individuals, long-term unemployed individuals, and youth;

- encouraging the use of training services that provide transferable credit and credentials;

- providing support services, such as child care, UI benefits, and transportation to enable eligible individuals to work or participate in education and training activities;

- monitoring and evaluating compliance of local area service delivery for fiscal accountability and program protection; and

- providing technical assistance to local Boards and training providers to ensure the most effective delivery of workforce services.

TWC, the 28 Boards, their contracted service providers, and community partners are continuously working toward full integration of WIOA's core programs. The strategy of alignment, coordination, and integration of education, employment, and training programs is close to being fully realized.

D. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS

Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, any Combined State Plan partner program included in this plan, required and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality services to employers to meet their current and projected workforce needs and to achieve the goals of industry or sector partners in the state. The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

Texas businesses receive value-added assistance through an integrated workforce system. Businesses have access to job seekers at all levels of education and experience, which allows potential employers to tailor their recruitment efforts to the requirements of the job and build a better skilled workforce. Close ties to the local labor market enable Boards to work with businesses to provide work experiences and on-the-job trainings (OJT) while allowing low-skilled workers to build skill sets that are relevant to current labor market needs. Additionally, Boards are well positioned to work with community partners, such as economic development organizations, to expand opportunities to all customers.

Dedicated Business Services Units (BSUs), along with Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), provide businesses with access to customized service options that address their specific business needs. BSUs and VRS offer a range of services that are designed to help employers with their recruitment and training needs to maximize their competitiveness, including:

- applicant recruitment, screening, and referral;

- listing and maintaining job orders through WorkInTexas.com;

- assistance with and participation in job fairs;

- information resources (for example, labor market and business statistics, employment and labor law, UI benefits);

- testing and prescreening job candidates;

- basic employment skills training and referral to education and training providers;

- customized training—including training through the state-funded Skills Development Fund—and OJT;

- assist with and inform on the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and Fidelity Bonding programs; and

- rapid response and lay-off aversion assistance in the event of closings or mass layoffs.

Continued efforts for system-wide improvement include the expansion of employers' access to grants through the Skills Development Fund. Participants in this program are able to build skill competencies to meet current and future demand in high-growth industry sectors. When a specific need is identified, community-based organizations (CBOs) and technical colleges partner with TWC and local employers to provide necessary job training. Such training enables incumbent employees to advance their skills while enabling new job growth with partnering businesses. TWC works with employers and training providers to ensure that programs meet specific performance measures and provide benefits to both the employer and the trainee.

TWC closely measures performance to evaluate the Boards' effectiveness in meeting the needs of employers. Measures include the Board's ability to:

- assist employers in filling vacancies; and
- expedite UI claimants' return to work, thereby protecting the state's unemployment trust fund as well as containing the UI tax rates of employers.

TWC's Office of the Commissioner Representing Employers outreaches businesses by sponsoring the Texas Business Conferences, an annual series of 12–15 employer seminars held around the state. The seminars present practical, up-to-date information for operating a successful business and managing employees. Topics include Texas employment law, the basics of hiring, employee policy handbooks, handling unemployment claims, independent contractors, and federal and Texas wage and hour laws.

TWC's Skills for Small Business initiative provides further training opportunities for both employers and employees. TWC also partners with the Office of the Governor's Economic Development and Tourism to host the Governor's Small Business events, along with the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) to provide geographic mapping access through SitesOnTexas.com. This website assists employers in planning for business expansion, job retention, and workforce training.

Through the Texas Industry Partnership and collaborations among Boards, private employers, and corporate foundations (partners), TWC has dedicated WIOA funds to address skills gaps and ensure a talent pipeline to address regional industry needs. The partners engage in allowable WIOA activities that support workforce development in one of the governor's designated industry clusters. The High Demand Job Training program, similarly, is intended to support collaboration between Boards and Economic Development Corporations (EDCs). The program focuses on training high demand/target occupations (as determined by the Board) and/or occupations in industries that are targeted by the Office of the Governor.

The intent of the Texas Industry Partnership and the High Demand Job Training programs is to support Boards in strengthening their partnerships with local communities, leveraging available state and local resources, and fostering collaboration with partners to promote occupational job training in Texas.

Through the creative use of technology and innovation, TWC promotes partnerships with employers to overcome barriers in meeting workforce needs. TWC takes steps to ensure that the staff of public schools, vocational service programs, and CBOs are trained and supported in their efforts to assist all individuals with disabilities in achieving the goal of obtaining integrated competitive employment. TWC also promotes the availability and accessibility of

individualized training that is designed to prepare an individual with a disability for the individual's preferred employment. To this end, individuals with disabilities are given the opportunity to understand and explore options for education and training, including postsecondary, graduate, and postgraduate education, vocational or technical training, or other training, as pathways to employment.

TWC collaborates with Boards to develop and implement a coordinated, team-based approach to serving employers. Strategies include partnering with other state and federal entities, such as the Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs and the Veterans Administration, to conduct ongoing outreach with federal contractors to increase awareness, recruitment, hiring, and retention of qualified individuals with disabilities, including veterans.

E. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS

Describe how the State's Strategies will engage the State's community colleges, adult education providers, area career and technical education schools, providers on the State's eligible training provider list, and other education and training providers, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training system. WIOA section 102(b)(2)(B)(iv). Include how the State's strategies will enable the State to leverage other Federal, State, and local investments to enhance access to workforce development programs at these institutions.

Governor Abbott established the Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative and tasked the commissioners of the Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and TWC to work together in developing strong links between education and industry and to help Texans grow in economic prosperity. The Tri-Agency Initiative was codified in state law and requires TEA, THECB, and TWC to develop unified workforce education goals and strategies and align work-based learning programs across the state.

Higher Education Partnerships

As part of its partner engagement with educational institutions, TWC is involved in a unique collaboration with TEA and THECB that assesses the curriculum requirements for public schools as well as legislation that promotes early college high schools. TWC shares relevant labor market and career information to assist with decision making that directs resources toward a curriculum that meets the occupational needs of the state. Support of early childhood education and professional development, along with English as a Second Language (ESL) and other AEL programs, are critical collaborations. The partnership between THECB, TWC, and participating public universities through the College Credit for Heroes (CCH) program has enabled veterans to receive college credit for the experience and training they received while serving in the armed forces. Additionally, THECB and TWC promote the Texas Fast Start program which aims to provide the rapid delivery of workforce education and development. This program focuses resources on meeting the needs of employers and other interested parties for certification programs in high-growth target industries that can be quickly obtained and are affordable.

Additionally, Boards annually publish invitations to community colleges, area career and technical education schools, and other training providers, encouraging the submission of applications for consideration as an eligible training provider.

All-Star College Award

TWC promotes and recognizes higher-education partner engagement through the All-Star College Award. Each year, this award is presented to a community college, technical college, or Texas engineering extension service (TEEX) whose efforts and partnership have improved the Texas workforce system and local community by contributing to skills enhancement and training in order to best support business needs.

Skills Development Programs

TWC administers the state's Skills Development Fund (SDF) that provides local customized training opportunities for Texas businesses and workers to increase the skill levels and wages of the Texas workforce. Collaborations with Texas community, technical colleges, and the TEEX support job training programs among training and education providers. Through this collaboration, employers that need skilled workers or wish to upgrade the skills of their current workforce are provided customized training solutions.

In FY'22, the SDF awarded grants for 47 projects that served 73 businesses and supported the creation of 2,369 jobs along with assisting 6,059 existing jobs. The SDF continues to expand and support dual-credit programs that are offered by school districts in partnership with public junior colleges, public state colleges, and public technical institutions, which help accelerate a student's ability to obtain a degree. The grants that were awarded help support the purchase of training equipment used in dual-credit programs. Business partners contribute to the success of the SDF grant program through in-kind support, which includes providing trainees' wages during training, the use of training space and equipment, funding a portion of course costs as necessary, the provision of complementary courses that are not part of the SDF grant, and salaries for staff members who are assisting with the grant. In FY'22, these in-kind contributions totaled over $10.8 million.

Supporting Adult Learners

TWC strongly supports partnerships that increase opportunities for adult learners to transition to postsecondary credentials, including registered apprenticeships, industry-recognized certificates, licenses, and certifications that are stackable. Current initiatives strategically position the statewide system for innovation in new directions related to full system integration and postsecondary education outcomes, as measured by high school equivalency, college and career readiness, enrollment in nonremedial, for-credit courses in postsecondary educational institutions, occupational and industry skill standards, and certifications that are widely used and recognized by businesses and industries. Initiatives include:

- integrating services to support the alignment of AEL activities with other core programs in the workforce system along with developing linkages to employers and community-based organizations (CBOs) through workforce events, ongoing technical assistance efforts, and the sharing of best practices that were developed across the state; and

- continuing to develop content and models for integrated education and training career pathways, along with other postsecondary transition models and workplace projects including:
  - ➢ Registered apprenticeships with employers;
  - ➢ AEL's Employer Engagement project, which is designed to build capacity and expand the deployment of workplace literacy programs that support job advancements, skills gains, and demonstrated approaches serving employers while improving the transferrable skills of Texans; and
  - ➢ AEL's Pre-Apprenticeship Bridge program, which is designed to build capacity and expand the use of AEL funds to support eligible individuals as they transition to Registered Apprenticeships.

Eligible Training Providers and Career Schools and Colleges

Eligible Training Providers (ETP) and Career Schools and Colleges (CSC) are part of the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) education and training system. TWC works closely with these programs to create a job-driven education and training system that is performance and results driven.

TWC maintains a robust and growing list of over 5,500 quality ETPs that are made available to students throughout Texas through the statewide ETP List. ETPs are job training programs that are certified by TWC to provide WIOA-funded training services through vouchers known as Individual Training Accounts. WIOA requires Boards to target high-growth, high-demand, and emerging occupations within their workforce areas. To be approved for the statewide ETP List, a training program must align with an occupation included on the state's target occupations list. ETPs are also required to submit initial and ongoing annual student performance data. DOL Registered Apprenticeships are approved upon request regardless of connection to target occupations and are not required to submit data on student outcomes.

CSCs are privately owned institutions that offer classroom or online training in which students are taught the skills needed to perform a particular job. TWC regulates career schools in Texas and provides information and technical assistance to schools, students, and the public.

Regulatory functions include licensing schools, approval of programs of instruction, approval of key school staff, site inspections, investigation of student complaints and unlicensed schools, administration of the Tuition Trust Account to assist students of closed schools and coordinating with other approval and regulatory agencies.

Leveraging Resources to Increase Educational Access

Federal Perkins funding that is administered by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) offers opportunities for Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) programs to leverage federal resources for programs providing workforce training. AEL grant recipients can use Perkins-funded career and technical training program resources, such as technical instructors, equipment, and classrooms, to help support elements of workforce training programs for adult learners in the AEL program. The technical trainers that teach high school students in areas such as HVAC, electrical, automotive, computer repair, and more, also serve as workforce instructors for the AEL's integrated education and training program.

Additionally, some community colleges in Texas work to provide, or have provided, Ability to Benefit (ATB) alternatives under federal law and ED guidance. To implement the model, coalitions must be established among college departments (registration, financial aid, assessment, advising, academic disciplines, and continuing education), workforce training programs, AEL, Boards, and other partner providers. The Texas Workforce Commission has funded ATB expansion initiatives to help community colleges implement this model.

F. IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS

Describe how the State's strategies will improve access to activities leading to recognized postsecondary credentials, including Registered Apprenticeship certificates. This includes credentials that are industry-recognized certificates, licenses or certifications, and that are portable and stackable.

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) continues to encourage state education and training providers to deliver services beyond those that are provided solely through workforce system's funding. By doing so, local adult education programs form partnerships that join educational, workforce development, and other human services agencies to collaboratively develop Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) services.

TWC strongly supports partnerships that increase opportunities for adult learners to transition to postsecondary credentials, including Registered Apprenticeship certifications and industry-recognized certificates and licenses that are stackable. Current initiatives strategically position the statewide system for innovation in new directions that are related to full system integration and postsecondary education outcomes. These outcomes are measured by high school equivalency, college and career readiness, enrollment in nonremedial, for-credit courses in postsecondary educational institutions, and occupational and industry skill standards and certifications that are widely used and recognized by businesses and industries. Initiatives include:

- integrating services to support aligning AEL activities with other core programs in the workforce system, thus bringing employers and community-based organizations (CBOs) together through workforce events, ongoing technical assistance efforts, and sharing best practices developed across the state;

- developing content and models for integrated education and training career pathways, and other postsecondary transition models and workplace projects, including apprenticeships; and

- capacity-building that is designed to expand the deployment of successful career pathway programs that lead to increased employment, transitions to higher education, skill gains, and secondary education completion through demonstrated approaches that integrate system services and leverage community partnerships.

Apprenticeship Texas

Since 2016, DOL has awarded Apprenticeship Expansion grants to TWC to develop new RAPs and conduct outreach campaigns to expand Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) in traditional and nontraditional industries and occupations. The goal of these grants is to align with the Tri-Agency (TWC, the Texas Education Agency (TEA), and the Texas

Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB)) recommendations to expand apprenticeship opportunities for all Texans. New RAPs have been developed in Texas, thus increasing the number of career pathways for Texas citizens and transitioning many into high-paying, high-skilled jobs resulting in nationally recognized certifications. From 2016 through 2022, TWC has received a total of $31.6 million dollars to provide continual support for the expansion of registered apprenticeship throughout Texas. Additionally, the Texas Legislature authorized $20 million for the FY'24 and FY'25 biennium to promote apprenticeships as a viable option for employers and workers.

The funds discussed above allow Texas to continue its efforts to expand the number of apprentices in registered programs, support and encourage RAP diversification, and integrate RAPs into state workforce development strategies. Part of TWC's plan for these funds is to encourage community and technical colleges, as eligible grantees, to use allotment funding to address workforce development needs in the communities they serve. This approach supports RAPs by building staff knowledge and increasing the capacity to imbed RAPs in more areas of the state.

G. COORDINATING WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be coordinated with economic development entities, strategies, and activities in the State.

TWC works continuously to cultivate emerging industries, support existing businesses, and enhance the skills development of the Texas workforce, while taking advantage of the strategic opportunities provided through economic change. TWC is dedicated to leading a market-driven workforce system that meets the needs of employers and workers and helps Texans prosper.

Through TWC's market-driven approach, the agency is able to engage all potential customers, including economic development entities. TWC's OEI Division and its network of regional Texas Workforce Solutions partners hold events throughout Texas to learn about the achievements and challenges experienced within each region. Through these meetings, new initiatives are launched, and new industry-aligned strategies are formed. OEI also partners with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to host regional meetings with employers, higher education and public education leaders, economic development and local workforce professionals, and other key community leaders to discuss regional economic priorities, employer workforce needs, and the career planning and preparation needed for Texas students to be ready for success in college or a career.

These efforts highlight the importance of coordinating employer engagement across the workforce system and programs. TWC and Boards use regular and effective partnerships to communicate directly with employers in order to align education and training outcomes with required skills needs. By increasing understanding through communication and data analysis, TWC and Boards are also able to provide employers and job seekers with targeted support. Additionally, TWC and Boards use employers' consultations to inform instructional design and agency initiatives and provide partnership in offering work-based training and employment opportunities. In order to ensure that a targeted and effective service delivery

model connects employers with job seekers, TWC must evaluate existing Board outreach and job referral strategies as well as outreach staff training programs.

TWC will use the following strategies to support economic development within the state:

- Facilitate a data user's group to provide peer-to-peer mentoring and technical assistance in using data
- Develop engagement strategies to connect Boards with their community economic development partners
- Use the governor's reserve statewide funding to develop a training program for assessing employer needs, conducting employer outreach, and job referral/job matching strategies
- Create a statewide working group to gather best practices and innovative strategies from each Board and discuss regional opportunities and challenges
- Use the information collected by the statewide working group to help TWC staff develop a comprehensive service delivery tool kit and business engagement standards and policies for Boards

In addition to collaborating with employers and economic entities, TWC helps coordinate presentations and resources that support the Texas Economic Development Corporation (TxEDC) and the Governor's Office of Economic Development and Tourism (EDT), both of which serve as a gateway for bringing jobs to Texas. TxEDC and EDT offer many services to facilitate corporate relocation and expansion, including valuable incentives, financing options, and resources to streamline business site search.

Programs and Initiatives

OEI manages several programs and initiatives that support business-focused workforce needs, including the Skills Development Fund (SDF), Skills for Small Business, High Demand Job Training (HDJT), the Texas Industry Partnership (TIP) program, and Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) Grant.

Skills Development Fund

The Skills Development Fund (SDF) provides site-specific, customized training opportunities for Texas businesses and their employees to increase skill levels and wages of the Texas workforce. Success comes through collaboration among economic development partners, business partners, and eligible grant applicants, which include public community or technical colleges, the Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX), community-based organizations in partnership with one of these entities, or a Local Workforce Development Board.

Skills for Small Business

As an extension of the SDF, small businesses may apply to TWC for the Skills for Small Business training that is offered by local community or technical colleges or the TEEX. TWC processes the applications and works with the college to fund the specific courses selected by businesses for their employees.

This opportunity supports businesses with fewer than 100 employees and emphasizes training for new workers although it also may help upgrade the skills of incumbent workers. The program emphasizes training newly hired employees.

High Demand Job Training

The High Demand Job Training (HDJT) program was established by TWC to support collaborations between Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) and economic development corporations (EDCs) to provide job training in their communities using Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds.

The HDJT program is intended to support Boards in partnering with local EDCs to use local economic development sales taxes for high-demand job training and workforce-related activities. TWC supports these partnerships by providing funds to Boards as a match to local economic development sales tax funds and jointly supports the provision of such projects.

Training must focus on high demand/target occupations (as determined by the Board) and/or occupations in industries targeted by the Office of the Governor.

Texas Industry Partnership

The Texas Industry Partnership (TIP) program was established by TWC to address skills gaps and ensure the availability of a talent pipeline to address regional industry needs. Private employers, corporate foundations, and 501(c)6 organizations collaborate with Boards to apply for funding for WIOA activities to support workforce development projects.

Jobs and Education for Texans

JET funding is used to defray start-up costs associated with the development of career and technical education programs to public community, state, and technical colleges, and independent school districts. Applicants apply for JET grants to purchase and install equipment that is necessary for the development of career and technical education courses or programs that lead to a license, certificate, or postsecondary degree in a high-demand occupation.

B. STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the State operating systems and policies that will support the implementation of the State strategy described in section II Strategic Elements. This includes—

1. THE STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS THAT WILL SUPPORT COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGIES (E.G., LABOR MARKET INFORMATION SYSTEMS, DATA SYSTEMS, COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS, CASE-MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS, JOB BANKS, ETC.)

WIOA emphasizes the importance of labor market and system performance information in driving strategic and operational decision-making in the workforce system. In adherence to this doctrine, TWC recognizes the importance of using data to drive decision-making and has made the availability and evaluation of data a key part of its strategic development and oversight processes and consumer education efforts.

State Operating Systems

State operating systems are primarily divided into three categories:

- Labor Market Information (LMI) and Career Exploration

- Participant Eligibility, Service Tracking, Job Matching, and Case Management

- System Oversight

Labor Market Information and Career Exploration Systems

TWC's LMI Department provides information relating to trends within the Texas labor market regarding different industries, occupations, employment levels, and wages. This useful and reliable information regarding careers, educational training options, and jobs is critical to the strategic planning processes of TWC and the local Boards as it improves the way Texans make career and educational decisions. The department's products range from online career information to a variety of specialized economic development and regional planning tools.

Texas LMI (TexasLMI.com) is an interactive website hosted by TWC that disseminates Texas labor-market statistics. On TexasLMI.com, users can access a suite of easy-to-use labor-market research tools that provide time-series labor-market data, inquiry capabilities for labor force, employment/unemployment estimates, industry and occupational projections, and occupational wage data.

TexasWages.com is an online application that lets users explore occupational wages by workforce area and by metropolitan statistical area. Long-term employment projections data was also added to the tool to provide an enhanced user experience. Through TexasWages.com, a customer can find hourly or annual wages for the mean, median, entry and experience levels for over 800 detailed occupations. Users can view and compare the different wages across all the sub-state areas in Texas to make informed decisions or carry out research.

To gain insight into a region's labor supply and demand, the LMI Department designed the Texas Labor Analysis (TLA) tool. This application is an online suite of labor analysis tools that lets users create in-depth statewide or regional reports for aggregated or single regions. Users can choose any of five separate applications in Labor Analysis including Gap Analysis, Demand, Supply, Regional Occupational Profile, or Top Statistics.

Gap Analysis enables users to compare the various sources of potential labor market supply (such as graduates from educational programs and registered job seekers) and labor market demand (such as job openings and projected employment). Users can customize the report by region or by occupations and can view the statistics on a map which shows the spread of the supply-demand relationship by workforce regions in Texas.

The Demand module in TLA allows users to discover real-time demand for occupations based on current Help Wanted Online postings. Customers can perform a regional demand analysis using projected and current employment numbers and salaries. Reports can be generated on Industry, Occupation, and the relationship between the two.

On the supply side, users can estimate the formal supply of skilled workforce by viewing an area's education and workforce training programs. The Supply application displays the number of enrollments and graduates for different programs of study offered by various schools across Texas.

Regional Occupational Profiles compares different workforce regions of Texas on employment indicators like wages, employment projections, and the trend of online job postings. This tool gives users more insight into occupational wage and employment numbers by offering metrics such as wage differentials and location quotient data.

Top Statistics is a quick way to find the top 25 occupations by region. The data can be viewed by highest employment, job openings, highest wage, or highest projected employment.

Changes in the education system that were brought about by legislation provide TWC the opportunity to help students transition from the classroom to career readiness. TWC supports school counselors, school districts, students, and parents by providing LMCI to assist them with student career-planning and preparation. Additionally, the agency provides information and supports efforts to prepare students for occupational training at the presecondary, secondary, postsecondary, and college and university levels.

Texas Consumer Resource on Education and Workforce Statistics (Texas CREWS) - Texas CREWS (http://www.txcrews.org) is a dashboard tool that provides information about Texas' public two-year and four-year postsecondary institutions; evaluates programs/institutions based on resulting wages and student loan levels; and enables parents and students to make informed decisions about college and thereby obtain the best return on their educational investment.

Participant Eligibility, Service Tracking, and Case Management Systems

TWC provides the main automated systems used by the local Boards and other grantees for job matching, data collection, and case management, including adult education and vocational rehabilitation, as well as child care assistance. Additionally, the Boards and other grantees use a financial reporting system developed by TWC.

WorkInTexas.com is the free job-matching website TWC administers for Texas' workforce system. It provides:

- extensive job matching options based on skills and experience;

- links to labor market and career development information; and

- free, 24-hour-a-day access.

The current WorkInTexas.com was launched in summer 2019. The new system improved job matching to better meet the hiring and job search needs of employers and job seekers. Job-seeker functions include resume upload, resume versioning, resume builder, and Career Pathways. System customers have access to labor analytics and supply and demand tools to enhance job searches. Other improvements include a user-friendly mobile design, modern communications capabilities and increased access to jobs and workforce talent. The improved

site also enables Texas Workforce Solutions to enhance service delivery by offering employers and job seekers a way to connect with their local workforce development boards.

During the development of the new WorkInTexas.com, job-seekers and employers provided valuable input to help craft the requirements for the new website. This helped to create a system that would increase employer access to talent, improve candidate matches to job descriptions, and incorporate local and regional labor market information to support informed business decisions.

WorkInTexas.com enables employers to post jobs, search résumés, recruit candidates, get labor market information, and receive a variety of other services available through a network of statewide Workforce Solutions Offices. Individuals seeking a new job, different job, or an additional job can post their résumé, search job listings (including Texas state agency jobs), obtain employer contact information to apply for jobs, get information about the job market, and receive a variety of other services available through Workforce Solutions Offices.

The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST) is the integrated intake, eligibility, case management, and reporting system for employment and training services. It was designed as a central repository for customer information. TWIST decreases duplication within and across the Texas workforce system while streamlining the provision of services to customers. It enables Workforce Solutions Office staff to enter intake information for customers only once for multiple employment and training programs and to retrieve it statewide. TWIST also includes interfaces with other automated systems— WorkInTexas.com, the UI benefits system, and HHSC's Texas Integrated Eligibility Redesign System (TIERS).

To continue ensuring seamless customer service and integration of information systems, in 2020, TWC launched a modernization initiative to replace the TWIST case management system. The planned go-live date for the new case management system is early 2024.

The new TX3C Attendance system (powered by KinderConnect) tracks attendance for child care participants electronically. Child care providers were issued tablets that parents can use to easily check their children in and out. Parents can also use the smart phone app to check their children in and out. TX3C Attendance is compatible with many center management systems that are used by providers which enables parents to use the same system as other families for attendance. TX3C Attendance was launched May 17, 2023, with full implementation expected by October 1, 2023.

Texas Educating Adults Management System (TEAMS) is Texas' state-of-the-art, web-enabled system that maintains student-level data, including demographic, assessment, and outcome data, as well as class, site, program, and provider information. TEAMS users can analyze class, site, or program information using standard reports that are generated at the user level. TEAMS provides a wide range of information about adult education, including snapshots of student and program performance, personnel qualifications, and staff development activities. The Texas 88th Legislature (2023) approved $3,400,000 in appropriations for a TEAMS enhancement project to ensure that Texas can exceed federal system requirements and enhance program management and data security for all users. The two-year project began in September 2023.

ReHabWorks is a web-based case management system. It is the portal through which field staff enter information from and about the customer to manage the VR process. Functionalities include collecting required information for state/federal reports, guiding processes and forms, and reporting requirements.

TWC's online Cash Draw and Expenditure Reporting (CDER) system is a web application that is used by Boards to draw funds from their program allocations. All financial transactions are handled through this online system, and Boards are no longer required to submit paper documents or Excel spreadsheets. CDER has significantly decreased manual processing and has greatly improved the reporting of data to all parties.

TWC makes extensive use of quarterly wage records, both for required and ad hoc reporting. TWC uses Texas wage records and those obtained from other states through the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) for required WIOA, Wagner-Peyser, and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) reporting. A fuller discussion of the use of quarterly wage records is contained in the Program Data section of this plan.

System Oversight Systems

TWC provides access to performance and management information reports to Boards and grantees. TWC has recently deployed and continues work to build out an Enterprise Data Warehouse system that utilizes a set of highly interactive Tableau dashboards. While this system does not yet contain all of the agency's key data or reports, WIOA-based reporting for DOL programs is fully operational Work on the VR program is underway with an expected launch date of late 2023/early 2024. Work on the Adult Education programs is expected to commence in spring of 2024 with completion in early PY2024. Additionally, TWC utilizes a variety of systems that provide summary and customer-specific data to support management and oversight functions that are part of the underlying case management systems (TEAMS and WorkInTexas.com, for example, each have a set of reports that can be run). Because Boards and other grantees are generally able to access these systems, TWC can ensure a high degree of transparency in the Texas workforce system.

The systems produce data on hundreds of subpopulations for most performance measures, which allows for a thorough evaluation of performance and management information. This level of detail allows TWC to perform complex evaluations of performance data that can be utilized for forecasting, target setting, and determining general effectiveness.

2. THE STATE POLICIES THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES (FOR EXAMPLE, CO-ENROLLMENT POLICIES AND UNIVERSAL INTAKE PROCESSES WHERE APPROPRIATE). IN ADDITION, PROVIDE THE STATE'S GUIDELINES FOR STATE-ADMINISTERED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO A ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM AND ANY ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR ONE-STOP PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS.

State Policies

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) is governed by a three-member Commission (Commission) appointed by the governor. The three full-time Commissioners represent employers, labor, and the public. Together they serve as the rule making authority for TWC, oversee agency functions, and develop agency policy.

Twenty days after adoption by the Commissioners, TWC rules, which guide agency operations and its programs, are codified in the Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 40, Part 20. Policies that support the implementation of TWC strategies and programs related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) are available on TWC's website and include the following:

- Texas Workforce Commission Rules

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Guidelines for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth and WIOA Eligibility Documentation Log for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs provide Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) with the criteria and documentation sources for establishing WIOA Title I program eligibility for adults, dislocated workers, and youth. The policy guides are based on WIOA statute, final rules for Titles I–IV, and applicable Training and Employment Guidance Letters and Training and Employment Notices issued by the US Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration. As updates become available, the policy guides are updated.

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Guide to Texas Workforce System Operations describes the roles of TWC, Boards, chief elected officials, and local workforce partner programs. Boards are required to ensure that all state policies provided in this document are adhered to and followed according to established timelines.

- Operational guidance and active workforce policy provided to local Boards in the form of Workforce Development (WD) Letters, Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Letters, Technical Assistance Bulletins (TAB), and comprehensive guides are based on Commission-approved policies and are available at TWC's Workforce Policy and Guidance web page.

- TWC maintains a repository of major publications, including the agency's strategic plans, annual reports, publications for employers and job seekers, and program information, available at TWC's Reports, Plans, & Publications web page.

- Reports, policy guides, and customer information relating to vocational rehabilitation (VR) services are available at Vocational Rehabilitation - Program Overview and Vocational Rehabilitation Division Publications.

Core Program Activities to Implement the State's Strategy

Pay-for-Performance Contracts

TWC and Boards maintain, where applicable, performance-based contracts. However, TWC and Boards also consider developing, with stakeholder input, a WIOA pay-for-performance contracting strategy for Title I programs, as defined in WIOA §3(47).

The development of a performance-based contract is contingent on the pay-for-performance contract strategy, which establishes specific benchmarks that must be achieved for the contractor to receive payment. WIOA calls for the benchmarks to be tied to the prime indicators of performance and adjustments thereof related to economic conditions and the population demographics.

TWC aims to maintain the latitude provided for in WIOA to consider the development of a pay-for- performance contract strategy as guidance is issued.

Determination of Funds Provided for Infrastructure Costs

TWC provides policy and procedural guidance to Boards regarding the requirements for funding infrastructure costs in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Guide to Texas Workforce System Operations, Section D. Infrastructure Funding. The guide states that Boards, with the agreement of CEOs, must develop and enter into MOUs with statutorily required one-stop partners for the operation and funding of a one-stop delivery system in the local workforce development area (workforce area). Boards may also enter into MOUs with other optional partners, as described by WIOA. Among several required provisions, the MOU must include a final plan, or an interim plan if needed, on how the infrastructure costs of the one-stop centers will be funded.

As described in WIOA §121(c)(1) and 20 CFR §678.500(b)(2)(i), each Board and its workforce partners must establish within each MOU an infrastructure funding agreement (IFA) that describes how the Board and partner programs will fund the infrastructure costs of the Workforce Solutions Offices that are part of the workforce area. If a Board and its required workforce partners are unable to reach consensus on the terms of the IFAs for the program year, then the Board must notify TWC of an impasse no later than March 15 of the program year immediately preceding the program year for which the IFA must be negotiated (20 CFR §678.510(c)). TWC, in turn, notifies the state agency responsible for administering the partner's program. If TWC cannot help the Board resolve the issue, TWC notifies the governor, the Texas Workforce Investment Council, the US Secretary of Labor, and the head of any other federal agency responsible for overseeing a workforce partner's program.

Boards and workforce partners must fund infrastructure costs through either the Local Funding Mechanism (LFM) or the State Funding Mechanism (SFM). The LFM provides Boards, CEOs, and workforce partners with the flexibility to design and locally agree on the methods to fund infrastructure costs. However, if a Board fails to reach consensus with all the required workforce partners operating within its workforce area regarding the amount each partner will contribute to the local workforce system's infrastructure costs, the statute replaces local flexibility for determining how to fund infrastructure costs with the SFM. Under the SFM, TWC (on behalf of the governor) is charged with allocating infrastructure costs and determining each partner's proportionate share of costs for Boards that did not reach consensus on the LFM. The LFM and SFM apply only to the funding of infrastructure costs.

Trade Adjustment Assistance Coenrollment

TWC requires Boards to coenroll trade-affected workers in WIOA Dislocated Worker (DW) services whenever eligible. Further information about TWC's coenrollment efforts for trade-affected workers can be found in Program-Specific Requirements for Core Programs Elements b6 and b7.

Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Program Coenrollment

UI claimants determined eligible for the RESEA program are informed of and encouraged to coenroll in the WIOA program at initial program intake. This allows Boards to leverage

support services in a way that increases positive employment outcomes. TWC has developed an expedited eligibility process for RESEA claimants to enroll in the WIOA dislocated worker program.

3. STATE PROGRAM AND STATE BOARD OVERVIEW

A. STATE AGENCY ORGANIZATION

Describe the organization and delivery systems at the State and local levels for the programs covered in the plan, including the organizational structure. Include an organizational chart.

TWC is governed by a three-member Commission appointed by the Governor. The agency's executive director is accountable to the Commission and is responsible for the daily operations of the agency. The executive director is assisted by a deputy executive director who is responsible for the oversight of the agency's administrative support divisions. The agency is organized into fifteen distinct program and administrative support divisions. The program areas facilitate workforce services delivery through twenty-eight local Boards. A description of the agency divisions is provided below.

Customer Care Division

TWC's Customer Care Division is responsible for planning and implementing a coordinated management system across the workforce system to provide the highest-quality customer service experience possible. The division includes the Governmental Relations, Customer Relations, and Customer Experience departments. The Governmental Relations department is responsible for communicating with legislators and their staff regarding constituent issues, requests for data, and questions on policies and procedures. The Customer Relations department also helps TWC customers by coordinating with the ombudsman and contacting executive staff. The Customer Experience department manages TWC's public website, researches and implements new technologies to improve service delivery processes, and analyzes customer data and feedback.

Division of Fraud Deterrence and Compliance Monitoring

The Division of Fraud Deterrence and Compliance Monitoring (FDCM) supports TWC in administering and enforcing all regulatory statutes within its jurisdiction, including the Texas Labor Code, the Texas Education Code, WIOA, and other applicable state and federal statutes. FDCM's mission is to detect and deter fraud, waste, theft, and abuse within TWC's programs and operations; and monitor the effectiveness, efficiency, economy, and integrity of TWC's programs and operations, including those performed by its contractors and grantees. FDCM ensures that TWC's customers have equal opportunity (EO) and equity of access to all services by monitoring and enforcing TWC's compliance with federal EO laws and regulations. The division prioritizes the prevention, detection, and elimination of fraud and abuse in the Unemployment Insurance (UI) Division.

Information Technology Division

The Information Technology (IT) Division is responsible for the applications and information systems that support TWC's critical business operations. Staff members work closely with TWC business areas and other stakeholders to create and maintain automated applications

that best serve evolving business needs. The division also supports, whether directly or through a contract, the infrastructure required for TWC systems, including data center operations, networks, personal computers, email, desktop software tools, database administration, scanner operation, telephony, help desk services, system access/provisioning, and print/mail services. IT is also responsible for IT project management, IT accessibility compliance, and the planning, maintenance, and testing of an ongoing disaster recovery program.

Unemployment Insurance Division

The UI Division includes UI benefits support services, call center operations, and appellate services. The TWC Tax department and Unemployment Benefits Services are managed by this division. The division assists employers and claimants with eligibility requirements, benefit extensions and deadlines, and appeal procedures.

Unemployment Benefits Services, which is funded through employer taxes, provides temporary income to workers who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own. TWC collects unemployment taxes from liable employers and pays unemployment benefits to qualified claimants. TWC has a formal appeals process to address claim issues and employers' tax liability, contribution, and reimbursement disputes.

Workforce Development Division

The Workforce Development Division provides oversight, coordination, guidance, planning, technical assistance, and implementation of employment and training activities, with a focus on meeting the needs of employers throughout Texas. The division currently administers programs such as WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth; Adult Education and Literacy; Wagner-Peyser Employment Service; Choices (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Employment and Training); Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T); Apprenticeship; Texas Veterans Leadership Program; Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers program; Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA); Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative; and Career Schools and Colleges.

Civil Rights Division

The Civil Rights Division (CRD) enforces the state's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Fair Housing laws through education, conciliation, mediation, and investigation. The division investigates complaints of employment and housing discrimination, conducts personnel policy reviews and EEO compliance monitoring for state agencies and institutions of higher education, and provides training and technical assistance to public and private entities to reduce employment and housing discrimination throughout the state. The CRD enters into annual work-sharing agreements with the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), its federal partners, which review CRD's cases and ensure compliance with applicable federal EEO and Fair Housing statutes.

CRD was formerly the Texas Commission on Human Rights (TCHR) and was governed by its own set of commissioners, who established policies for the division and supervised the director in administering the division's activities. TCHR served as the state's established

authority on EEO and Fair Housing, also known as a fair employment practice agency and the Fair Housing initiative program. In 2015, the Texas Legislature streamlined oversight of the division by eliminating its separate seven-member board and placing it under the oversight of TWC's Executive Director and three Commissioners.

Business Operations Division

The Business Operations Division consists of Procurement and Contract Services, Infrastructure Services, Human Resources, Training and Development, Risk and Security Management, Document Services, Cybersecurity, and Conference Planning and Media Services. The division provides day-to-day leadership, management, and vision by planning, directing, and coordinating administrative functions and operations to support TWC's business needs.

Vocational Rehabilitation Division

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Division serves adults, youth, and students with disabilities. Program services include, but are not limited to, evaluations, counseling and guidance, training and education assistance, assistive technology, and employment services, as well as referrals to the Business Enterprises of Texas program and the Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center. Students with disabilities may receive preemployment transition services that help with the transition to postsecondary education or employment.

Additionally, the VR program helps businesses that are seeking to recruit, hire, and accommodate employees with disabilities. Services include assistance accommodating employees with disabilities, disability awareness training, recruitment and job-matching assistance, and coordination of employer job fairs.

Finance Division

The Finance Division provides financial services that promote highly effective financial management controls, helps agency management use financial resources efficiently, and ensures the availability of accurate financial information in a timely manner. Division responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Managing TWC's:
    - budget;
    - revenue; and
    - trust.
- Managing encumbrances
- Developing financial reports
- Providing financial systems support
- Providing financial technical assistance
- Conducting general ledger accounting
- Managing accounts payable

- Managing TWC's payroll system

- Conducting financial reconciliation

- Managing travel requests

Office of Internal Audit

The Office of Internal Audit (OIA) aims to enhance and protect organizational value by providing risk-based and objective assurance, advice, and insight to the Commission and agency management. OIA helps TWC in accomplishing its objectives by establishing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control, and governance processes. TWC's Internal Audit function is mandated by the Internal Auditing Act, Texas Government Code, Chapter 2102.

Office of General Counsel

The Office of General Counsel (OGC) provides the Commission and TWC staff with the highest quality of customer service and sound legal counsel to minimize legal risk and costs, reduce litigation exposure, and ensure legal compliance, and to do so efficiently, expeditiously, reliably, and professionally.

OGC supports the Commission and TWC staff by providing legal services to foster sound decision-making in all areas of operation. Services include advice and client support for legal issues relating to litigation, contracts, policymaking, governance, programs, performance, rulemaking, administrative functions, and services provided by or through the Commission, the Boards, and contractors, as well as agency operations. The Open Records Section coordinates compliance with the Public Information Act and requests for access to TWC information under subpoenas and governmental requests for information.

Office of Outreach & Employer Initiatives

The Office of Outreach & Employer Initiatives (OEI) is responsible for providing leadership and direction within the Texas workforce system to engage employers, business organizations, educational institutions, and economic developers in the ongoing development of a customer-focused, market-driven workforce system. OEI markets toward and educates stakeholders on the programs, career pathways, and funding opportunities that are available through TWC to encourage the education, training, and growth of the Texas workforce. Additionally, OEI administers select grant programs and manages TWC's outreach campaigns, branding, design, and communication efforts. The office develops cluster-based strategies and industry partnerships and implements innovative industry-led programs for business recruitment, retention, and growth. The office receives no funding under WIOA.

Division of Information Innovation & Insight

The Division of Information Innovation & Insight (I|3), works with its partners to produce and analyze data and business processes to better serve Texas employers, individuals, families, and communities. I|3 consists of two units that are responsible for different aspects of the division's mission. The first, Operational Insight, evaluates operational, programmatic, and outcome data to generate actionable operational insights that may be used to improve the Texas workforce system's impact on employers, individuals, families, and communities and

help transform TWC into an evidenced-based learning organization. I|3's other department, Labor Market Information (LMI), aims to improve the way in which Texans make career and educational decisions by providing useful and reliable information about careers, educational training options, and jobs. LMI's products range from career exploration tools for students and parents to a variety of specialized economic development and regional planning tools.

The Child Care & Early Learning Division

The Child Care & Early Learning Division (CC&EL) oversees services that are funded by the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant. TWC and the state's 28 Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) administer child care subsidy assistance to support eligible families and promote long-term self-sufficiency by enabling parents to work or attend workforce training or education activities. The division also educates parents on the availability of quality child care, which enhances children's early learning. Additionally, CC&EL oversees the state's quality rating improvement system for subsidy child care providers—Texas Rising Star. This mandatory system recognizes child care programs that achieve higher quality standards.

For more information, refer to the [TWC Organizational Chart November 2023](#).

B. STATE BOARD

Provide a description of the State Board activities that will assist State Board members and staff in carrying out State Board functions effectively. Also, provide a membership roster for the State Board consistent with 20 CFR 679.110-120, including members' organizational affiliations and position titles.

Strategic Planning

Section 2308.104 of the Texas Government Code mandates TWIC to develop a "single strategic plan that establishes the framework for budgeting and operation of the workforce development system." The plan must include goals, objectives, and performance measures for the workforce system that involve programs of all state agencies that administer workforce programs. As such, the plan lays out the mission and vision for the Texas workforce system.

State statute also directs TWIC to "develop and implement immediate and long-range strategies to address problems identified within the workforce system."

The system strategic plan is intended to guide system partners in implementing workforce programs, services, and initiatives while avoiding the duplication of partner agencies' strategic plans. The system plan is strategic in that it is designed to focus on the outcomes that will make the most significant progress in achieving the mission and vision of the system. The strategic plan is supported by research conducted by TWIC and an annual evaluation of how well the plan and programs are working. The activities—strategic planning and implementation, system and performance evaluation, and research to support system and program improvement—constitute most of the work that TWIC performs.

Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan, FY'24–'31

In March 2021, TWIC, in collaboration with its workforce system partner agencies, began development of the FY'24–'31 Texas workforce system strategic plan. Using the framework of the previous plan, the Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan FY 2016–FY 2023, TWIC

mapped out a planning process that involved several activities to gather information on issues and opportunities that will be of strategic significance over the next five to eight years. During the plan's development, TWIC identified and assessed high-priority, high-impact issues to improve outcomes for the workforce system and its customers.

TWIC and its workforce system partner agencies identified 21 key issues based on 37 challenges and opportunities identified during preplanning listening sessions and consultations. After refining, consolidating, and prioritizing the issues, the Strategic Planning Committee recommended that TWIC approve a strategic plan architecture that encompasses four system goal areas, 12 system strategies, and related system objectives. Goal areas include employers, learners, partners, and policy and planning. System strategies include 35 action plans by partner agencies.

Additionally, the strategic plan denotes three opportunities intended to effectuate a better future state and suggests actions that TWIC's partner agencies may take to accelerate achievement of the four system goals. The opportunities include:

- engaging employers through cross-agency coordination to gain insight into employers' needs and minimize undue burdens on employers;
- engaging Texans with diverse needs, including individuals with disabilities, foster youth, sex-trafficking victims, incarcerated juveniles and adults, and opportunity youth and young adults, by designing programs and supports that address their needs, maximize outcomes, and improve career opportunities; and
- using data to support investment decisions—identifying and targeting strategic investments to improve system performance.

Table 1 outlines the architecture of the strategic plan, which is composed of the system goals, strategies, and related objectives. Each system goal area is presented with its related system objectives and strategies and the agency or agencies responsible for implementing each strategy. In action plans, each partner agency outlines how the agency will implement the strategy. Acronyms for partner agencies, as reflected in Table 1, are as follows:

- Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) and the Windham School District (WSD)
- Texas Education Agency (TEA)
- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB)
- Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD)
- Texas Veterans Commission (TVC)
- Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)

Table 1: Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan FY 2024–FY 2031 Architecture

System Goal	System Objective	System Strategy	Partner Agency
Employers Accelerate the delivery of relevant education and training programs to meet the demand of employers.	Increase upskilling and reskilling programs.	Institute and expand upskilling and reskilling programs as part of core education and training inventory, with an emphasis on meeting the needs of employers for middle-skill-level workers.	TWC THECB TDCJ WSD
Employers	Increase adult education student transition to employment.	Expand integrated education and training programs for middle-skill occupations, and increase learner persistence to completion, certification, and employment.	TWC
Employers	Increase short-term credentials in high-demand occupations.	Respond flexibly to employment changes through the identification and delivery of programs that support the attainment of short-term credentials, including industry-based certifications and licenses.	TWC THECB TEA TDCJ WSD TJJD
Learners Accelerate the expansion of and access to work-based skills and knowledge acquisition to better respond to learners' needs.	Increase work-based learning.	Expand work-based learning as a core education and training program preemployment strategy for youth and adults.	TWC THECB TEA
Learners	Increase apprenticeship.	Expand registered and industry-recognized apprenticeship programs in both traditional and nontraditional areas to ease workforce shortages by engaging and assisting employers to begin new programs.	TWC WSD

System Goal	System Objective	System Strategy	Partner Agency
Partners Accelerate the development and use of models to support and build system partners' capacity, responsiveness, continuous improvement, and decision-making.	Identify credentials of value.	Develop and execute a model to identify credentials of value, including postsecondary technical sub-baccalaureate credit and noncredit credentials, industry-based certifications, apprenticeship certificates, and licenses.	TWC THECB TEA
Partners	Clarify and connect Pathways.	Streamline and clarify existing career pathways and models to increase alignment between secondary and postsecondary technical programs to maximize credit for credentials of value.	THECB TEA
Policy and Planning 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 policymakers and planners.	Increase Texas Rising Star certification levels.	Promote and support the attainment of high-tier Texas Rising Star certification by all child care providers.	TWC
Policy and Planning	Identify and quantify quality outcomes.	Execute a secure, shared data infrastructure and governance model that will facilitate data import, storage, access, integration, analysis, and reporting to understand and quantify quality program outcomes.	TWC THECB TEA
Policy and Planning	Enhance wage records.	Pilot and expand enhanced wage records for use in determining program outcomes and employment in occupational areas of study.	TWC THECB TEA
Policy and Planning	Identify and collect industry-based certification data.	Develop and implement strategies and procedures to collect and report certification data, including	TWC THECB TEA TDCJ

System Goal	System Objective	System Strategy	Partner Agency
		certifications attained by name of certification and by name of the third-party, national certifying entity.	WSD TJJD TVC

Partner Agency Action Plans

Partner agency action plans detail high-level actions that agency partners intend to take to address system strategies and system objectives. For the purposes of the Texas workforce system strategic plan, the action planning process ensures that agency partner plans for implementation meet the workforce system planning goals. The action plans include activities, a timeline, and performance measures specifically tied to the system objectives identified in the Texas workforce system strategic plan.

Organized by goal area, each partner agency action plan follows a standard template that defines the following elements for each system strategy that the agency partner intends to address:

- System goal area
- System objective
- System strategy
- Partner agency actions
- Timeline
- Less formal performance measures

Measuring System Strategic Plan Performance: Formal and Less Formal Measures

The Texas Government Code requires that the workforce system strategic plan include two types of measures: formal and less formal measures.

The purpose of such performance measures is to determine whether the system strategies were successfully executed and to establish that the measures contributed to the achievement of system goals and objectives. TWIC, in collaboration with its partner agencies, formulated a set of measures based on the federal and state mandates associated with this strategic plan.

Formal measures are tied to system outcomes and are central to demonstrating the success of system programs and services administered by partner agencies. The measures are relatively consistent across workforce programs and are ultimately tied to the state's performance budget and accounting system. Performance measures are also linked to each state agency that administers a workforce program through the measures contained in each agency's biennial state strategic plan.

The four formal measures approved by the governor in 2003, 2009, and 2015 are incorporated into the strategic plan for FY'24–'31. The measures include:

- educational achievement;
- entered employment;
- employment retention; and

- customers served.

Less formal measures are essential to the implementation of the strategic plan. The measures align with the strategies and provide information and feedback during the development and implementation of the system strategic plan. The less formal measures determine which performance measures will be documented in each of the partner agency action plans and evaluate progress on each strategy (see Table 1).

Partner Agency Alignment with System Strategic Plan

Each partner agency that administers a workforce program uses the system strategic plan when developing its operational plan. Agency operational plans align with the long-term objectives outlined in the current system strategic plan as well as the performance measures negotiated with TWIC and approved by both TWIC and the governor. Agency strategic plans, which are submitted in even-numbered years to the Legislative Budget Board and the Office of the Governor, Budget and Policy Division, are evaluated for alignment with the system goals and objectives outlined in the strategic plan and for incorporation of action plan accountability. Of the eight partner agencies included as part of the Texas workforce system, six are required to submit an agency strategic plan. Agencies that do not operate workforce programs or services—the Governor's Office of Economic Development and Tourism and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission—are not subject to this requirement.

System Evaluation and Performance Measurement

Each year TWIC reports on the progress in achieving the objectives of the strategic plan and on the performance of workforce programs related to key metrics. The Texas Government Code requires TWIC to prepare an annual report for submission to the governor and the legislature on the extent to which the system is achieving workforce goals and objectives. The report also evaluates partner-agency alignment under the strategic plan for the Texas workforce system. Approved by the governor in 2023, the Texas workforce system strategic plan focuses on high-level system objectives that require multi-partner collaboration for programs, initiatives, and outcomes. Reporting elements are designed to provide a system-wide view of achievements for partner agencies and other system stakeholders and to meet statutory requirements for reporting to the governor and legislature. Statutory requirements addressed in the evaluation report include the following:

- System strategic plan implementation
- Formal and less formal measures
- Welfare-to-work initiatives
- Adult education and literacy
- Skills standards system

System Strategic Plan Implementation and Performance

As part of the evaluation framework for the FY'24–'31 strategic plan, five balanced scorecards were developed to complement the strategic plan's structure. The scorecards incorporate narrative and graphics to illustrate the achievements of the Texas workforce system. The components of the balanced scorecards display the actions of partner agencies and their delivery agents, including Boards, independent school districts, community and technical colleges, and local adult education providers. These system partners are responsible

for programs and services focused on education, workforce education, and workforce training services. Four of the five scorecards focus on the system goals laid out in the strategic plan: employers, learners, partners, and policy and planning. The fifth scorecard focuses on the following system performance metrics, or formal measures: educational achievement, entered employment, retained employment, and customers served. Data from the eight partner agencies are collected and aggregated to determine system performance for a short period as well as for longer periods. Aggregating data from an extended period is possible because TWIC has worked with its system partners since 2004 to standardize definitions and methods across all workforce programs.

To achieve a high degree of consistency when aggregating data across programs, TWIC requested that federal definitions be adopted for the formal measures where relevant and that program periods similar to federal periods be used. After renegotiation in 2009, definitions and program periods continued to differ slightly from those used during the previous strategic plan period.

TWIC worked with partner agencies to review and update the formal measure definitions and methods and to further align them with WIOA requirements. Both entered employment and employment retention are essentially consistent across partner agencies and, where required, the program periods for reporting were adjusted based on federal guidance.

System Review

Another primary function of TWIC is the review of state and local workforce plans and reports to ensure alignment with statewide workforce goals and objectives. TWIC reviews and comments on state plans required by applicable federal law for Texas to receive federal funds, and on certain reports required under WIOA.

Additionally, TWIC reviews state agency strategic plans for alignment with the system strategic plan, as specified in state law. TWIC last reviewed state agency strategic plans in 2022 and is scheduled to review the plans in 2024, as state agencies submit the plans on a biennial basis to the governor and legislature.

TWIC also reviews all comprehensive, four-year plans and modifications to the plans every two years to ensure alignment with system strategic plan goals. TWIC last reviewed two-year modifications to Board plans in 2023 for alignment with the previous strategic plan. TWIC is scheduled to review the comprehensive, four-year Board plans in 2025 for alignment with the FY'24–'31 Texas workforce system strategic plan goals.

Additionally, TWIC is charged with recommending that the governor approve Board plans as required under federal and state law.

As part of this function, TWIC also considers and reviews requests for the designation or redesignation of local workforce development areas and recommends to the governor the requests for action, as needed.

Examples of Research and System Initiatives

TWIC supports system planning, implementation of the system strategic plan, and evaluation through research products and news updates that are distributed to members, system partners, and workforce stakeholders. Available on TWIC's website, research products include the

strategic plan for the workforce system, evaluation reports, resource publications, reports on critical and emerging issues, and recommendations to the governor.

Examples of research and system initiatives that support the workforce system strategic plan include the following:

Research to Support Workforce System Strategic Planning

As part of the strategic planning process, TWIC staff reviewed research findings relating to emerging issues identified by members and partner agencies. To inform the development of the next workforce system strategic plan, the compendium includes summaries of research on current workforce issues and research relevant to TWIC. Each summary includes the source, date, and a link to the original source document.

Industry-Based Certifications for Middle-Skill STEM Occupations in Texas

This report presents the results of TWIC's system initiative to identify third-party, industry-based certifications that are of value to Texas employers and that can positively affect employment outcomes in middle-skill STEM occupations. The list of certifications contained in this report can be used as a resource to help workforce system partners achieve objectives related to increasing certification outcomes for education and training participants.

Demographic Studies: Veterans, Mature Workers, and Individuals with Disabilities

These reports provide information about various demographic populations in Texas. The research may be used as a primer to understand the significant issues relating to labor force participants and as a reference for data about a specific segment of the population.

System Initiative—Results for America

To meet the statutory requirement that it encourage or support research and demonstration projects designed to develop new programs and service delivery approaches, TWIC participates in the Results for America Workforce Fellowship for evidence-based funding decisions and grant making.

As TWIC noted in its 2022 Annual Report, the initiative supports continuous, data-driven improvement as a foundational element for increasing system capacity. Embedding evidence- and performance-based practices into grant programs has helped the State of Texas learn about the implementation, effectiveness, and cost of various workforce interventions. During Phase 1 of the fellowship, the Texas fellows team developed an evidence framework of clearly defined tiers, including the documentation required to achieve each tier. The framework encourages grant applicants to incorporate evidence into their application development process. Additionally, performance-based contracting requires grantees to develop procedures to collect data and to track program outcomes. In Phase 2 of the fellowship, the team developed procedures that identify and address issues. Furthermore, they implemented evidence-based bonus scoring for applications with a high likelihood of success. To date, the State of Texas has improved outcomes by using evidence to determine funding allocations for several grant solicitations, including Texas Talent Connection, Building and Construction Trades, and Adult Education and Literacy programs. In FY'22, the State of Texas further expanded the initiative into higher education, linking evidence to funding and building evidence to inform future initiatives through Carl D. Perkins Leadership grants.

Membership

TWIC is composed of 19 members. The governor appoints 14 members who represent business, organized labor, education, and community-based organizations (CBOs). The remaining members are ex officio representatives from TWIC's five-member state agencies. Appointed members serve six-year staggered terms, of which one-third of the members' terms expire each odd-numbered year. Ex officio members serve while they are the presiding officer of the member agency they represent. Texas Government Code, §2308.052 specifies that TWIC's membership composition must have:

- five governor-appointed members who represent business and industry, including business members serving on Boards or private-industry councils;

- five governor-appointed members who represent organized labor, with input from recognized labor organizations;

- three governor-appointed members who represent education, including local public education, public postsecondary education, and vocational education;

- one governor-appointed member who represents CBOs; and

- five ex officio members who represent statutory agency members, as follows:

    o The Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Economic Development and Tourism

    o The Commissioner of the Texas Education Agency

    o The Executive Commissioner of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission

    o The Commissioner of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

    o The Executive Director of the Texas Workforce Commission.

Membership Roster

As a result of state legislation, the Texas workforce system underwent a period of reform between 1993 and 1995. The effects of the reform are seen today, as WIOA contains provisions that allow Texas to retain—or grandfather—major elements of its workforce system that are consistent with WIOA, including TWIC's composition and the roles established under Texas Government Code, Chapter 2308.

Current TWIC members, by member category, include:

Business and Industry

- Rick Rhodes, Chair (Austin) – Rural Engagement Coordinator, Texas Rural Funders

- Thomas Halbouty (Southlake) – Industry Advisor, Formation 8; Vice President, Chief Information Officer and Chief Technology Officer, Pioneer Natural Resources (retired)

- Paloma Ahmadi (Shavano Park) – Associate General Counsel for Employment, Brex Inc.

- Wayne Oswald (Houston) – Executive Director, Houston Business Roundtable (retired)

- Lauren Gore (Houston) – Partner, LDR Investment Group LLC

Organized Labor

- Jesse Gatewood (Corpus Christi) – Business Manager, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local Union 278

- Lindsey Geeslin (Lorena) – Manager, Lhoist North America

- John Martin (San Antonio) – Training Director, South Texas Electrical Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee

- Paul Puente (Houston) – Executive Secretary, Houston Gulf Coast Building and Construction Trades Council

- Brandon Willis (Beaumont) – Public Affairs Agent, International Union of Operation Engineers Local 450

Education

- Joe Arnold (Muldoon) – Deputy Vice Chancellor and Executive External Relations Officer, Texas State Technical College

- Richard Rhodes (Austin) – Interim President, Texas A&M University-Central Texas

- Johnny Vahalik (San Antonio) – Assistant Superintendent, San Antonio Independent School District

Community-Based Organization

- Michelle Harper (San Marcos) – President/Chief Executive Officer, United Way of Hays and Caldwell Counties

State Agency Ex Officio

- Adriana Cruz (Governor's Office of Economic Development and Tourism)

- Harrison Keller (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board)

- Ed Serna (Texas Workforce Commission)

- Cecile Young (Texas Health and Human Services Commission)

- Mike Morath (Texas Education Agency)

A current membership roster is available on TWIC's website at: https://gov.texas.gov/organization/twic/members

4. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS AND ONE-STOP PROGRAM PARTNERS

A. ASSESSMENT OF CORE AND ONE-STOP PROGRAM PARTNER PROGRAMS

Describe how the core programs will be assessed each year based on State performance accountability measures described in section 116(b) of WIOA. Describe how other one-stop delivery system partner program services and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan will be assessed each year. This State assessment must include the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of programs broken down by local area or provider. Such state assessments should take into account local and regional planning goals.

TWC regularly uses performance data to evaluate programs and partners. Additionally, TWC was an early implementer of the Common Measures and, in 2005, extended their use beyond that of Wagner-Peyser and WIA to cover other federal and state-funded workforce system programs. TWC realized that using the same measures and definitions across programs would help improve program evaluations and remove potential barriers to the integration of services by creating a common understanding of success.

TWC actively monitors the system through monthly, and in some cases, weekly, performance reports. Program staff reviews the reports and communicates with system partners, as appropriate, to provide technical assistance and obtain information on best practices to share with other partners.

To evaluate its programs and partners, TWC uses a system that compares performance to targets. The comparison establishes a "Percent of Target" for each measure, and, depending on where the Percent of Target falls within a given range, performance is rated as "Meeting" the target (MP) or as being either "Positive Performance" (+P) or "Negative Performance" (-P), as follows:

Performance	Where "High is Good" (e.g., Number Served, % Reemployed within 10 Weeks, etc.)	Where "Low is Good" (e.g., Aver. Cost, Weeks to Remploy, etc.)
Positive Performance (+P)	more than 105% of Target	less than 95% of Target
Meeting Performance (MP)	95–105% of Target	95–105% of Target
Negative Performance (-P)	less than 95% of Target	more than 105% of Target

Regarding WIOA measures, however, the system has been modified to align more closely with federal standards:

Performance Ratings	WIOA Statutory Measures
Positive Performance (+P)	more than 110% of Target
Meeting Performance (MP)	90–110% of Target
Negative Performance (-P)	less than 90% of Target

Target setting is a key part of TWC's evaluation and accountability system. TWC's I|3 Division uses a variety of models to help set performance targets based on assumed case mixes and economic conditions. The evaluation methods are continuously evolving based on input from partners through the negotiation process and additional research. The ongoing dialogue between TWC and its partners represents the agency's commitment to continuous improvement.

WIOA requires continuous improvement, which TWC adheres to by setting targets in the areas of strength at a "maintenance" level to concentrate on improving in areas of lesser strength. In an environment of fewer resources or greater demand for similar resources, solely maintaining performance may represent an improvement in efficiency.

Developing effective statistical models to guide target setting helps improve program performance. WIOA requires that the US Secretaries of Labor and Education create statistical models to help set targets for WIOA performance indicators for Title I and Title III programs. Since 2019, TWC has embraced the use of Statistical Adjustment Models (SAMs) and has modified them to help ensure accountability among Boards for the common WIOA measures. Starting in 2022, TWC's I|3 Division began creating Performance Assessment Models (PAMs) that use internally produced state data structures to develop models to evaluate WIOA performance measures in Program Years 2024 and 2025.

WIOA provides performance measures to evaluate the six core programs and system partners. Additionally, WIOA emphasizes the importance of career pathways that a person might follow over a period of many years. The performance measures and the joint performance reporting constructs are based on the notion that if an individual loses employment, they may use a one-stop system for a relatively short, finite period to find a job. The statutory measures do not recognize that post-exit enrollment in an education program is sometimes an appropriate outcome for non-youth, such as those who are transitioning out of the military and using their GI Bill benefits to attend school. Additionally, the statutory measures do not address whether exiters are able to retain employment, which is a key concern for TWC customers.

Although TWC applies the statutorily prescribed performance measures to assess performance across the six core programs, TWC also applies state-prescribed performance measures and—with input from Boards, grantees, and other partners—works to continuously develop and test other measures that may provide a more meaningful way of communicating strengths and identifying areas of improvement. For example, TWC developed a set of WIOA-based measures that focused on employment and enrollment in education post-exit. The measures addressed individuals who were employed or enrolled in the second quarter post-exit and individuals who remained employed or enrolled in the third and fourth quarters post-exit. TWC is also working to implement a set of new Meaningful Measures that focus on the connection between a worker and their employer and ensure that workers have the skills that employers need.

Although TWC's current reports provide historic trend data that may help identify improvements over time, the findings are limited. As part of the Enterprise Data Warehouse (EDW) system, TWC is developing new ways to view, interact with, and evaluate data to

identify the quality, effectiveness, and improvement made within programs operated by the state, Boards, and other grantees. The EDW has been instrumental in supporting fraud detection and prevention as well as helping Boards serve those impacted by the pandemic. An early example of this was the development of a Tableau-based claimant supply dashboard, which allowed Boards to further examine their customer populations and better understand their needs and current status. In 2023, as part of its Career & Training Rosetta Initiative, TWC's I|3 Division spearheaded the development of modern Tableau-based tools for Board-operated programs.

B. PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

For each four-year state plan and state plan modifications, provide the results of assessments of the effectiveness of the core programs and other one-stop partner programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the Unified or Combined State plan during the preceding 2-year period (i.e. the 2-year period of the plan modification cycle), in accordance with methods described in 4(A). Describe how the State is adapting its strategies based on these assessments.

Per Training and Employment Notice (TEN) 04-23, the US Departments of Labor (DOL) and Education (ED) determined that it is appropriate and reasonable to assess Program Year 2022 (PY'22) WIOA core programs performance for the following performance indicators, as applicable:

- Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit
- Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit
- Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit
- Credential Attainment Rate

In accordance with WIOA §503(a), the departments must delay the assessment of the remaining performance indicators, as the available baseline data is not sufficient to produce reliable estimates using the required statistical adjustment model.

Except for the VR and youth credential rates (92.3 percent and 93.5 percent of negotiated/adjusted level, respectively), TWC achieved or exceeded all performance targets for PY'22. Similar performance outcomes are anticipated in PY'23, and an increase in the VR and youth credential rates is also anticipated due to enhanced data integrity and entry measures and staff education initiatives about the importance of recording education and training data.

Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)

Program	PY'22 Performance	PY'22 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	Performance % of Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	Performance Rating
Adults	77.3%	70.0%	110.4%	+P
Dislocated Workers	77.6%	71.0%	109.3%	+P
Youth	73.7%	72.0%	102.4%	MP

Program	PY'22 Performance	PY'22 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	Performance % of Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	Performance Rating
Adult Education	42.9%	37.0%	115.9%	+P
Wagner-Peyser	67.8%	61.0%	111.1%	+P
Vocational Rehabilitation	58.9%	57.8%	101.9%	MP

Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)

Program	PY'22 Performance	PY'22 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	Performance % of Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	Performance Rating
Adults	76.4%	67.0%	114.0%	+P
Dislocated Workers	79.0%	72.5%	109.0%	+P
Youth	75.2%	70.0%	107.4%	+P
Adult Education	43.8%	36.0%	121.7%	+P
Wagner-Peyser	68.1%	63.0%	108.1%	+P
Vocational Rehabilitation	60.8%	54.5%	111.6%	+P

Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

Program	PY'22 Performance	PY'22 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	Performance % of Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	Performance Rating
Adults	$8,468	$5,400	156.8%	+P
Dislocated Workers	$10,801	$9,134	118.3%	+P
Youth	$4,649	$3,200	145.3%	+P
Adult Education	$6,320	$5,150	122.7%	+P
Wagner-Peyser	$7,481	$6,300	118.7%	+P
Vocational Rehabilitation	$6,351	$5,500	115.5%	+P

Credential Attainment Rate

Program	PY'22 Performance	PY'22 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	Performance % of Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	Performance Rating
Adults	72.9%	73.0%	99.9%	MP
Dislocated Workers	80.3%	75.0%	107.1%	+P
Youth	56.1%	60.0%	93.5%	-P
Adult Education	42.2%	35.0%	120.6%	+P
Wagner-Peyser	NA	NA	NA	NA
Vocational Rehabilitation	40.6%	44.0%	92.3%	-P

Measurable Skill Gains

Program	PY'22 Performance	PY'22 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	Performance % of Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	Performance Rating
Adults	74.7%	67.5%	110.7%	+P
Dislocated Workers	78.7%	70.0%	112.4%	+P
Youth	63.5%	55.0%	115.5%	+P
Adult Education	42.7%	43.0%	99.3%	MP
Wagner-Peyser	NA	NA	NA	NA
Vocational Rehabilitation	51.6%	43.0%	120.0%	+P

Overall, DOL and ED have assessed that the programs have met PY'22 performance expectations, indicating that programmatic changes and improvement efforts were driven by agency priorities and not by a need to correct performance deficiencies. In recent months, the Texas economy has achieved record-breaking employment outcomes, and TWC does not believe that performance is likely to slip below the current levels in any meaningful way. However, if federal statistical models predict lower levels of performance when published, TWC's proposals will be lowered accordingly.

C. EVALUATION

Describe how the State will conduct evaluations and research projects of activities carried out in the State under WIOA core programs; how such projects will be coordinated with, and designed in conjunction with, State and local boards and with State agencies responsible for the administration of all respective core programs; and, further, how the projects will be coordinated with the evaluations provided for by the

Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Education under WIOA (WIOA Section 116(e)).

Historically, TWC has used a blend of Six Sigma, Lean, and Theory of Constraints methodologies for a continuous improvement model called Rapid Process Improvement (RPI). RPI has been used to evaluate several system processes, identify opportunities for improvement, and test the results of implemented changes. Over the last four years, TWC has further expanded its continuous improvement model to move beyond RPI by designing a new methodology called Business Transformation (BT). As opposed to RPI, which seeks to improve quality and efficiency in business processes, BT uncovers and addresses the root causes of system-level issues and limitations and has been used to address broader problems that exists within multiple processes. The goal of BT is to provide a strategic rethinking of the business approaches, priorities, and value systems associated with core business functions.

One recent and ongoing BT effort came about as a result of TWC's triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) for Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). CSNA is a critical resource to understanding how the Texas' VR program is viewed by Title IV program participants, VR service providers, employers, families, and disability support communities. Additionally, CSNA findings are only valuable insofar as they are analyzed and used to guide action. For example, VR service providers voiced their concerns about low reimbursement rates, the inconsistency and declining number of referrals from TWC, and the burdensome paperwork and requirements to do business with the Texas VR program, and, after analyzing the data, TWC validated the cumulative impact of their concerns. Over the past five years, the number of service provider locations that were doing business with the Texas VR program decreased by 51.5 percent (from 11,723 to 5,688). As of FY'20, only 24 percent of available provider locations were doing business with the VR program, which coincided with a significant reduction in referrals to many of those providers.

The decline in VR service provider locations and the use of service providers led to a reduction of options for VR participants and made it increasingly difficult for staff to find provider referrals. The existing RPI methodology was incapable of solving the issue because there were no existing processes that could be improved to reverse the declining provider and referral trends. Therefore, the issue became the focus of TWC's initial BT project. TWC took the following actions:

- After examining reimbursement rates and history, TWC concluded that rates were too low and recommended rate adjustments, which TWC's Commissioners approved.

- As a result of several conversations with VR counselors, TWC found that the reduction in referrals to service providers was driven in part by staff turnover. Newer staff members did not have relationships with local providers and were not able to easily search for available providers in their area. In response, TWC built a new Tableau-based provider locator that staff members were able to use to quickly find providers by location and types of services offered.

- To reduce provider burdens, TWC began reassessing established service provider requirements by comparing them to less burdensome policies in other states. This

ongoing work is being performed in a targeted way to maximize the program's impact.

- TWC began building solutions to quickly answer providers' questions and offer them necessary guidance to ensure the provision of quality services to customers.

- TWC began building a data-driven approach to provider recruitment that would target the providers that were most in need based on customer and provider density in geographical areas.

TWC works with Boards, academic researchers, and other partners on the development and execution of system evaluations and looks for opportunities to cooperate and partner with the Secretaries of Labor and Education in conducting studies that complement and enhance the research priorities of TWC, Boards, and other partners. Additionally, TWC partakes in webinars and regional calls that DOL and ED provide to coordinate such work and share results between states and departments.

TWC has also performed evaluation work relating to the VR program. One such project involves a quasi-experimental evaluation of the impact of TWC's Project SEARCH on individuals with developmental disabilities. Project SEARCH allows participants to compare three 10- to 12-week paid internships in competitive integrated employment settings, thus giving them the opportunity to focus on gaining proficiency in their preferred occupation with the goal of obtaining and retaining permanent employment. Project SEARCH participants have engaged in internships in areas such as office administration, data entry, assembly/packaging, housekeeping, and food preparation.

Another project in the early stages of development involves a machine-learning model that was developed to identify VR participants who are six months into their cases and appear to be headed for an unsuccessful closure. The goal of this project is to develop an intervention that may transform an unsuccessful trajectory into a successful one. Additionally, the VR Division has been developing an intervention that will be tested through a randomized controlled trial (RCT). Individuals on a path to failure will be identified and subsequently randomly assigned to receive the new intervention. This RCT is designed to enable staff to determine whether the intervention has a causal impact on program outcomes. Although this work is being conducted within the VR program, it is expected to be applicable to other programs, including WIOA core partner programs.

TWC has also been working on several evaluations for DOL-funded programs. The first is an RCT for a new service, which will be funded with WIOA dislocated worker (DW) statewide funding, that involves special job-coaching and related resources. The evaluation will involve the random selection of Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) claimants for access to such services. The evaluation will serve as both a WIOA DW and RESEA evaluation and is expected to meet CLEAR's "high causality" standard. Another study, using a broader quasi-experimental design, aims to investigate the impact of RESEA services on reducing UI duration and increasing reemployment outcomes. This evaluation is expected to meet CLEAR's "moderate causality" standard.

Finally, TWC is using analytical resources to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse within the UI system by developing predictive analytics models to be used by UI's benefit payment control and investigative staff. TWC supports other states' efforts to promote integrity in their

systems by sharing best practices and contributing to the UI Integrity Center's Suspicious Actor Repository.

Foundational to TWC's ambitions to fully leverage its data is TWC's EDW system, which supports advanced reporting, analytics, and high-quality evaluations that meet moderate and high causal evidence ratings. The system aims to streamline standard reporting in order to improve efficiency and provide more resources for analysis and evaluation work. The system also allows TWC to better connect data relating to participants, services, and outcomes across programs, which facilitates monitoring at the highest level (systemwide) as well as the program level (WIOA Titles I–IV), the characteristic level (that is, subpopulations across all programs), or a combination thereof (individuals in a program who meet specific conditions).

A key part of the work is the development of a common data model for customers in all programs. The system, called Rosetta, is designed to allow customer data to be transformed, standardized, and more easily combined. Rosetta also enables the development of Tableau dashboards that can work for any program.

The EDW buildout was supported by a Workforce Data Quality Initiative grant application that accelerated system development and brought additional capabilities online much sooner than would have been possible without the funding.

Over the next few years, TWC plans to replace or significantly modify several key enterprise-level information technology (IT) systems that support core programs and services. The systems are designed to provide high-quality data that can support the levels of evaluation that WIOA requires. TWC will ensure that its effort to modernize its IT systems pays off both in the short run, by serving customers, and in the long run, by yielding information about which efforts work under which conditions.

Once the Rosetta data system is fully implemented, TWC will apply market basket analysis to identify common customer groups similar to the way business marketing does when analyzing consumer purchasing patterns. However, this approach will reach further than the identification of common customer groups, as TWC intends to evaluate each group to determine whether service-based differences exist between high- and low-achieving customers in each group and then evaluate those services for effectiveness. It is assumed that, although most services have value, the value varies by individual and the degree in which services are provided in conjunction with other services or through other means.

Through this approach, TWC hopes to implement a system that better uses data to determine appropriate service delivery strategies that are unique to each individual customer. This approach is not intended to remove local flexibility or to disregard staff experience, but rather to support staff by providing better evidence-based options that are based on precise data that is obtained through market basket analysis, to help plan an approach likely to lead to customer success. This approach will also help bring new staff up to speed more quickly.

TWC's evidence-based data analysis and evaluation provide a more efficient way to serve employers. TWC works to identify employers that might benefit from outreach and education regarding short-term UI compensation as a way to help employers retain their skilled labor force during a period of temporary financial difficulty.

5. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

Describe the methods and factors the State will use in distributing funds under the core programs in accordance with the provisions authorizing such distributions.

A. FOR TITLE I PROGRAMS

Provide a description of the written policies that establish the State's methods and factors used to distribute funds to local areas for—

I. YOUTH ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 128(B)(2) OR (B)(3)

TWC's three-member Commission (Commission) adopted Fiscal Year 2024 (FY'24) WIOA Block Grant Allocations on August 8, 2023, pursuant to Texas Labor Code §§301.001, 302.002, and 302.065. These sections direct TWC to operate an integrated workforce development system in the state, specifically, through the consolidation of job training, employment, and employment-support services (including subsidized child care), to achieve an efficient and effective delivery of services and to allocate funds to workforce areas for the purpose of meeting or exceeding statewide performance targets, as set forth in the General Appropriations Act and consistent with federal and state program requirements.

Texas Labor Code §302.062(a) prescribes that TWC must provide funding through a block grant process to the workforce areas in which Boards have been certified and local plans have been approved by the governor.

The funds appropriated to TWC under House Bill (HB) 1, the General Appropriations Act, 88th Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2023), for the FY'24–'25 biennium, are included in the block grant allocations to all workforce areas throughout the state (including those allocations adopted for WIOA Title I and Title II programs). The block grant allocations, which consist of state and federal program funds for workforce training, employment, and support services, are awarded in concert with the requirements of associated state and federal statutes, program regulations and rules, and TWC contract provisions and requirements.

Pertinent informational references to TWC rules are made throughout the block grant allocations package. The references clarify:

- how allocations were computed;

- what allocation factors were used;

- the sources of the allocation factor data;

- why the allocations were largely based on estimated federal amounts and may need to be subsequently amended (because federal FY'24 appropriations have not yet been enacted); and

- various other details regarding relevant assumptions, explanations, and associated information.

The TWC executive director is ordered to administer the block grant allocations in the most efficient and economical manner and within all guidelines prescribed by HB 1, General Appropriations Act, 88th Legislature, Regular Session (2023); the Texas Labor Code; and TWC rules.

For Title I Programs

Within-State Allocations of formula-funded WIOA Title I will be made pursuant to statutory provisions for Youth Activities under §128(b), and Adult Employment and Training Activities and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities under §133(b), and pursuant to TWC General Administration rule §800.63. Youth Activities funds that are not reserved for statewide workforce investment activities (as authorized under WIOA §128(a)(1)) are made available as Within-State Allocations for Youth Activities to workforce areas based on the following formula:

- one-third of the funds allocated based on the relative number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment (as defined in WIOA §127(b)(2)(B) and §132(b)(1)(B)(v)(III)) residing within each workforce area, compared to the total number of unemployed individuals within all areas of substantial unemployment in the state[1];

- one-third of the funds allocated based on the relative excess number of unemployed individuals (as defined in WIOA §127(b)(2)(D) and §132(b)(1)(B)(v)(VI)) residing within each workforce area, compared to the total excess number of unemployed individuals within the state[2]; and

- one-third of the funds allocated based on the relative number of disadvantaged youth (as defined in WIOA §127(b)(2)(C)) residing within each workforce area, compared to the total number of disadvantaged youth within the state.[3]

Within-State Allocations to workforce areas (as provided in WIOA §128(b)(2)(A)(ii), §133(b)(2)(A)(ii), and §133(b)(B)(iii)) shall meet minimum percentages for Youth Activities, Adult Employment and Training Activities, and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities (for FY'06 or a subsequent year) that are no less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage among the workforce areas in the state for the two preceding fiscal years.

In accordance with the requirements of Texas Labor Code §302.062(d), block grant–allocated funds for workforce training, employment services, and associated support services will be allocated by the Commission among the workforce areas in the state that are no less than 90 percent or more than 125 percent of the proportion during the two preceding fiscal years.

Of the amount allocated from the Within-State Allocation for a fiscal year, not more than 10 percent of the amount may be used by the Board for the administrative costs of carrying out local workforce investment activities (as provided in WIOA §128(b)(4) and §133(b)).

1. Period and Source of the Data: the higher of the 12-month period ending June of the prior year or the prior calendar year, TWC LMI Department

2. Period and Source of the Data: 12-month period ending June of the prior year, TWC LMI Department

3. Period and Source of the Data: US DOLETA, Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) No. 01-23, July 31, 2023, Table 6

II. ADULT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) OR (B)(3)

Adult Employment and Training Activities funds that are not reserved for statewide activities (as provided in WIOA §128(a)(1) and §133(a)(1)) are made available as Within-State Allocations for Adult Employment and Training Activities to workforce areas based on the following formula:

- one-third of the funds allocated based on the relative number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment (as defined in WIOA §127(b)(2)(B) and §132(b)(1)(B)(v)(III)) residing within each workforce area, compared to the total number of unemployed individuals within all such areas of substantial unemployment in the state;[1]

- one-third of the funds allocated based on the relative excess number of unemployed individuals (as defined in WIOA §127(b)(2)(D) and §132(b)(1)(B)(v)(VI)) residing within each workforce area, compared to the total excess number of unemployed individuals within the state[2]; and (Period and Source of the Data: the higher of 12-month period ending June of the prior fiscal year or the prior calendar year, TWC LMI department); and

- one-third of the funds allocated based on the relative number of disadvantaged adults (as defined in WIOA §132(b)(1)(B)(v)(IV)) residing within each workforce area, compared to the total number of disadvantaged adults within the state.[3]

Within-State Allocations to workforce areas (as provided in WIOA §§128(b)(2)(A)(ii), 133(b)(2)(A)(ii), and 133(b)(B)(iii)) must meet minimum percentages for Youth Activities, Adult Employment and Training Activities, and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities (for FY'06 or a subsequent year) that are no less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage among the workforce areas in the state for the two preceding fiscal years.

In accordance with the requirements of Texas Labor Code §302.062(d), block grant–allocated funds for workforce training, employment services, and associated support services will be allocated by the Commission among the workforce areas in the state that are no less than 90 percent or more than 125 percent of the proportion during the two preceding fiscal years.

Of the amount allocated from the Within-State Allocation for a fiscal year, not more than 10 percent of the amount may be used by the Board for the administrative costs of carrying out local workforce investment activities (as provided in WIOA §128(b)(4) and §133(b)).

1. Period and Source of the Data: 12-month period ending June of the prior year, TWC LMI department

2. Period and Source of the Data: the higher of 12-month period ending June of the prior fiscal year or the prior calendar year, TWC LMI department

3. Period and Source of the Data: DOLETA, TEGL No. 01-23, July 31, 2023, Table 6

III. DISLOCATED WORKER EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) AND BASED ON DATA AND WEIGHTS ASSIGNED

Dislocated Worker Employment and Training funds that are not reserved for statewide activities (as provided in WIOA §128(a)(1) and §133(a)(1)) or statewide rapid response activities (as described in WIOA §132 (b)(2)(B)) are made available as Within-State Allocations for Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities to workforce areas based on the following formula:

- 20 percent (Program Year 2023 (PY'23) factor weight) of the funds based on the relative number of insured unemployed individuals (that is, average monthly total number of unemployed individuals who are covered by state and federal unemployment insurance program) residing within each workforce area, compared to the total number of insured unemployed individuals within the state (Period and Source of the Data: prior calendar year, TWC's Claimant Characteristics Report);

- 19.67 percent (PY'23 factor weight) of the funds based on the relative average number of unemployed individuals residing within each workforce area, compared to the average number of unemployed individuals within the state (Period and Source of the Data: prior calendar year, Monthly Local Area Unemployment Statistics, LAUS Estimates Report, TWC LMI department);

- 10.33 percent (PY'23 factor weight) of the funds based on the relative number of workers residing within each workforce area who are included on Texas plant closure and layoff notices issued under authority of the Worker Adjustment Retraining Notification Act (WARN), compared to the number of such workers within the state (Period and Source of the Data: prior calendar year, TWC Workforce Development Division);

- 20 percent (PY'23 factor weight) of the funds on the basis of the relative proportion of the state's declining industries (for the four calendar quarters ending the prior September, compared to the four quarters ending September of two years earlier), for any industry group reflecting statewide decline, for any workforce area, and also showing a decline in those respective industry groups (six-digit NAICS industry classification), aggregated by workforce area (Period and Source of the Data: period of data as described, TWC LMI department);

- 19.67 percent (PY'23 factor weight) of the funds on the basis of the relative proportion of individuals in Farmer-Rancher Economic Hardship (that is, total population of farm and ranch employees who are not covered by UI) residing within the workforce area, compared to the total number of individuals within the state in Farmer-Rancher Economic Hardship (Period and Source of the Data: prior calendar year, Texas State Data Center); and

- 10.33 percent (PY'23 factor weight) of the funds on the basis of the relative proportion of individuals in Long-Term Unemployment (that is, the average monthly number of individuals, residing within each workforce area who have been unemployed for 14 weeks or longer) residing within the workforce area, compared to

the total number of individuals within the state in Long-Term Unemployment (Period and Source of the Data: prior calendar year, TWC's Claimant Characteristics Report).

Within-State Allocations to workforce areas (as provided in WIOA §128(b)(2)(A)(ii), §133(b)(2)(A)(ii), and §133(b)(B)(iii)) must meet minimum percentages for Youth Activities, Adult Employment and Training Activities, and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities (for FY'16 or a subsequent year) that are no less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage among the workforce areas in the state for the two preceding fiscal years.

In accordance with the requirements of Texas Labor Code §302.062(d), block grant-allocated funds for workforce training, employment services, and associated support services will be allocated by the Commission among the workforce areas in the state that are no less than 90 percent or more than 125 percent of the proportion during the two preceding fiscal years.

Of the amount allocated from the Within-State Allocation for a fiscal year, not more than 10 percent of the amount may be used by the Board for the administrative costs of carrying out local workforce investment activities (as provided in WIOA §128(b)(4) and §133(b)).

B. FOR TITLE II

I. DESCRIBE THE METHODS AND FACTORS THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL USE TO DISTRIBUTE TITLE II FUNDS.

WIOA Title II §§211, 225, and 231, provide the methodology for awarding state grants for adult education and literacy (AEL) activities and state how funds are to be used for corrections. In accordance with the methodology and pursuant to TWC General Administration rule §800.68, as outlined below, AEL allocations are made available to each workforce area through a county-level allocation methodology. In November 2022, TWC revised the language on the deobligation and reallocation of funds to provide greater flexibility to recapture unused funds and redistribute funds to providers that are meeting or exceeding expenditure and performance benchmarks.

- The US Department of Education (ED) allocates AEL State Grant funds based on the state's relative proportion of the nation's total number of individuals who are older than 18 years of age, who are without a secondary school diploma, and who are not enrolled in school. TWC allocates these funds (with associated state General Revenue matching funds) on the same basis to workforce areas across the state. As directed by the Texas Labor Code and TWC rules, each year TWC uses data collected by the Texas State Data Center for this allocation factor. Allocation factors for TWC block grants are aggregated to the state's 28 workforce areas. The most effective approach is to obtain allocation factor data values/estimates by county and then to aggregate the grants to the workforce areas.

- Pursuant to TWC rule §800.68(b) and (c), federal funds constituting the state award of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) grants (excluding amounts received for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IEL/CE)) and the associated state General Revenue matching funds will be allocated to workforce areas based on the relative proportion of individuals residing within each workforce area who are at least 18 years of age, do not have a secondary school diploma or its

recognized equivalent, and are not enrolled in secondary school, during the most recent period for which statistics are available.

- Federal funds encompassing the state award of AEFLA State Grants (excluding amounts received for IEL/CE) and associated state General Revenue matching funds for the pertinent program year/fiscal year are allocated using statistics provided by the Texas State Data Center. The allocation factor data consists of the most recent estimates available by the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) three-year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) applied to county population estimates (aggregated to workforce area populations), as provided by the Texas State Data Center. This data set is consistent with the data set that ED uses to determine AEFLA state grants.

- At least 82.5 percent of the federal funds encompassing the state award of AEFLA state grants (excluding amounts received for IEL/CE) and associated state General Revenue matching funds for the pertinent program year/fiscal year are allocated based on the relative proportion of individuals residing within each workforce area who are at least 18 years of age, do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and are not enrolled in secondary school, during the most recent period for which statistics are available; an equal base amount; and the application of a hold-harmless procedure.

- Under §800.68(d), AEFLA federal funds received for IEL/CE are allocated to workforce areas based on the same methodology and data factors provided in WIOA §243(b). The federal funds constituting the state allotment of amounts for IEL/CE for the pertinent program year/fiscal year are allocated based on:

  o the relative proportion of:

    - 65 percent of the average number of legal permanent residents during the most recent 10-year period, as determined from data compiled by US Citizenship and Immigration Services; and

    - 35 percent of the average number of legal permanent residents during the most recent three-year period, as determined from data compiled by US Citizenship and Immigration Services;

  o an equal base amount; and

  o the application of a hold-harmless procedure.

TWC is in the process of amending §800.68 in response to the ED Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education's (OCTAE) recently issued guidance that requires competitive grant applications to allow for the selection of individual funding streams. The State believes that a revised approach to the allocation methodology will provide the greatest capability to use WIOA §243 funds to implement robust IEL/CE programs in the state. The rule revision process is underway, and the rule is expected to be active no later than July 1, 2024.

- Pursuant to §800.68(e), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) federal funds associated with the AEL program will be allocated by the Commission to

workforce areas according to a need-based formula. One hundred percent of the TANF funds will be based on:

- o the relative proportion of the unduplicated number of TANF adult recipients residing within the workforce area who attained an education level of less than a secondary diploma during the most recently completed calendar year;

- o an equal base amount; and

- o the application of a hold-harmless procedure.

Title II Adult Education and Literacy Statewide Competition and Awards

In October 2019, OCTAE conducted a review of the statewide competition to ensure that processes for the award of WIOA Title II funds to eligible providers adhered to WIOA requirements. In its final report, OCTAE noted that the next statewide competition was to be held no later than Program Year 2023; however, in March 2023, Texas was provided an extension in order to implement rule changes for how WIOA §243 funds are allocated in the state's competitive grant process. The rule amendments were necessary to ensure that items noted in OCTAE's 2019 review of the state's unpublished Request for Applications (RFA) had been corrected.

For the statewide RFA scheduled for the fall of 2023, state staff members will revise the application items that were addressed during OCTAE's 2019 review of Texas' grant application process, including separating past effectiveness criteria (one of the 13 considerations) from demonstrated effectiveness as well as other items that resulted from the unpublished RFA review conducted by OCTAE in August 2022.

The RFA will provide:

- instructions for preparing proposals;

- a deadline for submitting a notice of intent to apply;

- a deadline for receipt of the proposals;

- review criteria;

- assurances and other legal, fiscal, and program requirements; and

- plans for cooperative arrangements that the eligible provider will develop with other agencies, institutions, or organizations for the delivery of AEL services.

Grantees will respond to questions in the proposal, including questions regarding the requirements outlined in WIOA §232(1)–(7). The review of proposals will include rating responses to questions aligned with the 13 considerations in WIOA §231(e)(1)–(13).

In its RFA, Texas incorporated and specifically indicated the considerations specified in WIOA §231(e) as grant award requirements that eligible providers must meet. The considerations are scored as narrative questions in the RFA, and offerors are required to provide a detailed narrative to demonstrate how they will meet each consideration.

Texas intends to continue allowing a grant period of two years (24 months), with an option for TWC to renew the grant for an additional one-year period up to three times. The start date for the original two-year period (24-month period) is tentatively scheduled for July 1, 2024. If at the end of the initial two-year term TWC determines that the grantee is not performing or that the outcomes are not being achieved, TWC may allow the grant to expire. If the grantee is struggling and TWC has an enhanced technical assistance plan in place to support the grantee, TWC may authorize the grant for another year to reassess at the end of that year whether to continue to fund the grant.

Title II Adult Education and Literacy Determining Demonstrated Effectiveness

As part of the AEL competition, applicants must demonstrate effectiveness by providing three years of performance data. Prior AEL grant recipients must provide performance data required under WIOA §116 to demonstrate past effectiveness, as evidenced by data from the Texas Educating Adults Management System and the extent to which the grant recipients met state-negotiated performance measures.

Applicants that have not been previously funded under WIOA Title II must provide performance data to demonstrate its past effectiveness in serving basic skills–deficient eligible individuals, including individuals with low levels of literacy in the content domains of reading, writing, mathematics, English language acquisition, and other subject areas relevant to the application for funds, and demonstrate the extent to which they objectively evaluate performance criteria in achieving outcomes listed under WIOA §116.

Applicants must also provide information regarding outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and transition to postsecondary education and training.

TWC will determine each applicant's eligibility to apply for AEFLA funds based on whether it has demonstrated effectiveness in providing AEL services, as required under 34 CFR §463.24 and in guidance outlined in OCTAE's technical assistance guide, "Determining Applicant Eligibility When Conducting a State Competition for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Fund."

II. DESCRIBE HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE DIRECT AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS TO APPLY AND COMPETE FOR FUNDS AND HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE THAT IT IS USING THE SAME GRANT OR CONTRACT ANNOUNCEMENT AND APPLICATION PROCEDURE FOR ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS

TWC's AEL department will hold a full and open competition consistent with the standards of 2 CFR §200.319. All eligible applicants will be granted direct and equitable access to apply and compete for grants and contracts. The following steps will be initiated to ensure direct and equitable access:

- An announcement of the availability of federal funds, under the auspices of WIOA Title II, will be posted on the Texas Smart Buy Electronic State Business Daily website and disseminated through other methods such as social media. The announcement will contain information pertaining to the following:
  - Type of grants available
  - Contact person

- o Timeline with grant application due date
- The same announcement, grant, and application process will be used for all eligible providers in the state in correlation with WIOA §§221, 225, and 243. Standard criteria for the evaluation of proposals will be used for all applicants. Application processes will be designed so that direct application to the State is evident, customary, and nonnegotiable.
- An RFA Bidder's Conference webinar will be conducted to provide information to those interested in applying. The specific date, time, and directions for accessing the webinar are included in the RFA package. The webinar will be recorded and posted on the website, along with the RFA guidelines, information, resources, application, and Frequently Asked Questions.

C. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

In the case of a State that, under section 101(a)(2)(A)(i) of the Rehabilitation Act designates a State agency to administer the part of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under which VR services are provided for individuals who are blind, describe the process and the factors used by the State to determine the distribution of funds among the two VR agencies in the State.

TWC's VR Division serves as the Designated State Unit (DSU) for the VR program as required under § 721(a)(2)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. (Title IV). As such, the VR Division is responsible for the distribution and expenditure of VR funds for the delivery of services to eligible students and adults with disabilities, and to potentially eligible students with disabilities.

Funds are distributed to local VR offices in each of the six TWC VR regions based on projected expenditures to serve customers in the region for the fiscal year. Projections are based on several factors, including expenditures and customers served in the prior year and anticipated for the subsequent year, as well as the implementation of statewide initiatives and new or revised service delivery strategies.

Services to VR customers may be provided, arranged, or purchased by VR staff. Services must be determined necessary to assist the customer with achieving their employment goals and be based upon the customer's Individualized Plan for Employment that was developed jointly by the VR counselor and the customer.

Pursuant to 34 CFR §76.50(b), VR funds may not be sub-granted because neither the Rehabilitation Act nor its implementing program regulations specifically permit sub-granting under the VR program. As a result, community rehabilitation programs and other providers with whom TWC VR contracts for the provision of VR services are considered vendors or contractors not subgrantees.

6. PROGRAM DATA

A. DATA ALIGNMENT AND INTEGRATION

Describe the plans of the lead State agencies with responsibility for the administration of the core programs, along with the State Board, to align and integrate available workforce and education data systems for the core programs, unemployment insurance programs, and education through postsecondary education, and to the extent possible,

the Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan. The description of the State's plan for integrating data systems should include the State's goals for achieving integration and any progress to date. Describe data-collection and reporting processes used for all programs and activities, including the State's process to collect and report data on co-enrollment, and for those present in the one-stop centers.

I. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PLANS TO MAKE THE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR THE CORE PROGRAMS INTEROPERABLE TO MAXIMIZE THE EFFICIENT EXCHANGE OF COMMON DATA ELEMENTS TO SUPPORT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

TWC operates a collection of different IT systems to capture participant information, services, and outcomes. Over the years, as programs were transferred from other state agencies to TWC, TWC obtained many legacy IT systems. Today, not only do these systems operate on outdated technology, but they were also originally designed to support the predecessors to the WIOA core programs.

Modifying the systems to meet WIOA's requirements has proven to be challenging to achieve such a goal, TWC has been engaging in a system modernization project that includes the:

1. Continued implementation of a recently procured unemployment insurance system replacement

2. Enhancing and modernization of TWC's VR case management system

3. Procurement of a new case management system to support TWC's subsidized child care and early learning programs

4. Configuration of a recently procured case management system that will support all DOL programs that are operated by TWC, aspects of the TANF and SNAP E&T program, and other miscellaneous programs. The system will be highly adaptable to new programs and initiatives as they are developed by TWC.

The Texas workforce system has been on the leading edge of performance measurement, evaluation, and accountability within the national workforce structure for nearly two decades. TWC implemented a set of system-wide performance measures that was able to successfully improved employer engagement and TWC's ability to effectively serve employers. TWC has embraced the Common Measures and has applied them to all state- and federally funded employment and training programs through the use of common Periods of Participation and integrated reporting. TWC also obtained and currently utilizes a performance measure waiver that provides TWC with the flexibility to select performance measures to contract with Boards so that the system can break down program siloes and focus on the provision of integrated services. TWC participated in the redevelopment of DOL's Workforce Investment Streamlined Performance Reporting System (WISPR) to simplify the system and add additional functionality. Texas was the first state to file a WISPR. TWC has since mentored other states that are interested in using integrated reporting with or without the WISPR.

As noted, TWC has undertaken a new enterprise data warehousing project to support data integration, reporting, consumer education, evaluation work, and decision-making at all levels of the workforce system. As the source systems listed above are replaced, TWC plans to conduct parallel projects that will integrate data from the new systems into the warehouse. This will allow TWC to combine data from different TWC eras spanning up to two decades in duration. These parallel projects are critical to ensuring a smooth analytics transition from one set of systems to their replacements without disrupting the flow of the data needed to effectively manage and innovate these programs.

In addition to reporting requirements under WIOA §116(d), TWC actively monitors and evaluates the Texas workforce system under WIOA §116(e). Evaluation efforts include applying both federal- and state-prescribed performance measures, while continuously developing and testing other measures. As consistent with WIOA §116(i), TWC uses data obtained from other states to implement this part of TWC's Combined State Plan.

Regarding co-enrollment, TWC currently, compares data from program and one-stop source systems to identify common customers through the use of personally identifiable information such as social security numbers. There are not yet automated systems in place to notify most programs and one-stops if a customer is being served by multiple components of the workforce system at intake. However, TWC has been working to improve the ability to connect data through the Enterprise Data Warehouse Initiative and has plans to develop ways to connect the core infrastructure systems to allow for greater integration and cross-system/program data utilization.

II. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PLANS TO INTEGRATE DATA SYSTEMS TO FACILITATE STREAMLINED INTAKE AND SERVICE DELIVERY TO TRACK PARTICIPATION ACROSS ALL PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN

TWC was appropriated more than $64 million during the FY '20–'21 biennium to replace legacy workforce systems.

UI Systems Replacement Project

Using a competitive procurement process, TWC sought to acquire a turnkey modifiable off-the-shelf (MOTS) technology solution to replace its existing UI legacy systems, including benefits, tax, and appeals applications. The procurement included services to implement the MOTS technology solution, make the essential modifications required for Texas, migrate relevant data, and provide a shared maintenance and operations solution after the MOTS technology solution is put into production. TWC engaged a third-party vendor to perform independent verification and validation (IV&V) activities for the duration of the project. The project was placed on hold in March 2023.

Workforce Case Management Replacement Project

To streamline case management activities and processes, TWC requires an integrated system that is based on a common platform. The Workforce Case Management Replacement project will replace The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST), excluding the child care component; Texas Educating Adults Management System (TEAMS); Texas Review, Oversight, and Coaching System (TxROCS); and ReHabWorks. The new system will provide

TWC and its partners with innovative technology and tools. TWC engaged a third-party vendor to perform IV&V activities for the duration of the project.

The new system will advance Commission goals by:

- increasing staff access to systems services;

- integrating and aligning TWC systems with TWC services; and

- equipping TWC staff, Boards and their partners, and grantees with innovative technology and tools.

The new system will add value to our customers by delivering high-quality:

- customer service;

- customer experiences; and

- customer outcomes.

TWC anticipates that this project will:

- ensure that TWC meets or exceeds its electronic and information resources (EIR) accessibility requirements; and

- streamline case management services and activities for staff members and Boards, which will address issues related to complicated integration and/or lack of integration between TWC's multiple stand-alone systems and platforms of varying ages.

III. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE BOARD WILL ASSIST THE GOVERNOR IN ALIGNING TECHNOLOGY AND DATA SYSTEMS ACROSS REQUIRED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS (INCLUDING DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMON INTAKE, DATA COLLECTION, ETC.) AND HOW SUCH ALIGNMENT WILL IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY TO INDIVIDUALS, INCLUDING UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

TWC's case management system, The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST), was developed in the mid-1990s. In August 2021, TWC contracted with a vendor to develop a new case management system to replace TWIST. The new system will provide case management functionality for TANF/Choices, SNAP, WIOA, Trade, veterans, other agency programs, and special grants. The vendor that was contracted to develop this system also developed TWC's labor exchange system in 2019. With both labor exchange and case management functionalities in a single system, it is anticipated that staff efficiency will improve.

TWC staff continues to work to refine the enterprise data warehouse and is actively working to upgrade legacy solution systems to provide state leadership with accurate data and a proven method for analyzing business needs to support and improve data driven decision-making. The project aims to improve interfaces between systems to ensure efficient data integration and facilitate the coordination of services and communications across programs.

The Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC), the state board, developed the workforce system strategic plan, *Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for*

Fiscal Years 2024–2031. The system plan, which is designed to complement and not duplicate partner agency strategic plans, guides the Texas Workforce System partners in implementing workforce programs, services, and initiatives. The Policy and Planning workforce system goal supports the alignment of technology and data through the following system strategy and objective:

System Goal	System Strategy	System Objective
Policy and Planning: 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 policymakers and planners.	Identify and quantify quality outcomes	Execute a secure, shared data infrastructure and governance model that will facilitate data import, storage, access, integration, analysis, and reporting to understand and quantify quality program outcomes.

Partner agency action plans detail high-level actions that agency partners will implement to address system strategies and system objectives.

Additionally, TWIC reviews all comprehensive, four-year local Board plans and two-year modifications to ensure alignment with the system strategic plan. TWIC will review the comprehensive, four-year local Board Plans in 2025 for alignment with the FY2024–2031 Texas workforce system strategic plan.

IV. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S DATA SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES TO PRODUCE THE REPORTS REQUIRED UNDER SECTION 116, PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM. (WIOA SECTION 116(D)(2))

As noted, TWC's EDW is being developed to produce reports that are required under WIOA §116(d)(2).

The EDW advances Commission goals by:

- allowing TWC to provide statistical information regarding the outcomes and effectiveness of the workforce services provided to job seekers and employers; and

- meeting the data utility requirements for areas listed in the State Strategic Plan for Information Resources Management including data management and governance, open data, and data analytics.

The EDW will:

- improve reporting accuracy and the speed of report generation;

- allow for more sophisticated and comprehensive data analysis;

- increase the scope and availability of relationally-connected data that provides reporting capabilities and outcome inferences that may not currently be possible;

- enable the development of cross-functional dashboards that identify program relationships and impacts that are harder to identify and monitor with the current system;

- create a single historical reporting system of record;

- reduce the risk of statutory noncompliance regarding required data reporting;

- eliminate manual processes to run and/or store reports; and

- reduce data preparation time, which allows staff to focus on developing better coding and analyses.

Additionally, groups of TWC's I|3 Division staff members have begun migrating to a cloud computing model using virtual workspaces. This allows for increased automation and accelerates efficient data extraction and analysis from the EDW, which exists on the same remote server.

B. ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPANTS' POST-PROGRAM SUCCESS

Describe how lead State agencies will use the workforce development system to assess the progress of participants who are exiting from core programs in entering, persisting in, and completing postsecondary education, or entering or remaining in employment. States may choose to set additional indicators of performance.

TWC continues to work with local partners to develop performance reporting measures that provide information about how services impact customer outcomes. TWC's improved suite of automated systems enables partners to capture a more complete set of customer data that supports categorical workforce programs and store the associated data in a central repository.

TWC's vision for the next generation of integrated performance reporting system involves the incorporation of customer data from all state- and federally funded employment and training programs and a customer-focused data model that supports the aggregation of data into any combination of programs and characteristics. This incorporation of data would allow the system to meet program reporting requirements while enabling the user to customize how they view the data. To ensure its effectiveness and ability to support transparency and accountability, the system must be able to report customer outcomes the same way for each program or aggregation of data while ensuring the security and confidentiality of such data. For example, if a customer received services from WIOA Adult and SNAP E&T and was identified as employed in the second quarter post-exit through data obtained from another state, the success must be reported in both WIOA Adult and SNAP E&T performance measures to ensure that stakeholders and elected officials have a complete and accurate view of each program's contribution to successful employment outcomes.

Evaluating participant outcomes is important to ensuring accountability. Additionally, TWC evaluates current and historic data to understand what factors influence performance in order to determine whether the results achieved were reasonable, predict what levels of performance are likely to be achieved in the future, and identify what actions the system should take when serving specific customers to achieve effective outcomes. These efforts support continuous improvement and set the foundation for developing the means to measure the return on investment.

Finally, TWC is in the process of redeveloping its existing longitudinal outcome system into a broader system, to be called Rosetta, that will incorporate more programs and provide a more complete picture of how TWC customers progress over time.

C. USE OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) WAGE RECORD DATA

Explain how the State will meet the requirements to utilize quarterly UI wage records for performance accountability, evaluations, and as a source for workforce and labor market information, consistent with Federal and State law. (This Operational Planning element applies to core programs.)

Wage records remain the best, most objective source of information for determining employment-related outcomes. Measures that use wage records are also far more efficient and less costly than those that depend on administrative data. For example, TWC can match to UI wage records to verify program-specific, customer-level data that is furnished by providers of training services. Additionally, TWC encourages the Secretary of Labor to consider—in consultation with the Workforce Information Advisory Council, federal agencies, and states—developing standardized definitions for the data elements composing wage records as well as improved processes and systems for the collection and reporting of such records. TWC currently makes extensive use of quarterly UI wage records as part of its common data systems both for required and ad hoc reporting and makes the data available to the Boards, other state agencies, and various researchers either directly or by performing matches to seed records provided by external entities.

While TWC and the Boards generally operate Texas Workforce Solutions as an integrated system that focuses on customer outcomes rather than program outcomes, there is often interest in program-specific outcomes. TWC is committed to providing consistent, reliable, and comparable performance data to partners, stakeholders, and the public. Therefore, TWC calculates performance at the customer-level across programs and then aggregates the results by sublevel, such as by program or for customers with given characteristics.

However, WIOA §116(i)(2) states that the Secretary of Labor shall provide access to wage data from other states to the extent that the data is necessary to carry out the state plan or the annual report as prescribed by WIOA §116(d). WIOA §116(e) requires that the State, in coordination with the Boards, conduct ongoing evaluations of activities carried out by the State. Therefore, as noted, TWC intends to use the data obtained through the State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) to evaluate system and program performance through a variety of federal and state-developed performance measures, as well as to evaluate system and program impact and return on investment.

D. PRIVACY SAFEGUARDS

Describe the privacy safeguards incorporated in the State's workforce development system, including safeguards required by section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) and other applicable Federal laws.

TWC administers and enforces state and federal laws that cover workforce-related privacy issues. These laws are intended to set high standards for performance and customer satisfaction. TWC's compliance includes legislation that addresses §444 of the General Education Provisions Act, Business and Commerce Code 521, and other applicable federal

laws. TWC is considered a state educational agency under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), as it administers two US Department of Education programs: WIOA Titles II and IV.

TWC maintains internal control structures and written policies that provide safeguards to protect personally identifiable information (PII) and Sensitive Personal Information (SPI) and other information that is readily or easily exchanged in the open market or considered to be sensitive. Confidentiality is maintained for student-identifying information that is received by TWC from career schools or colleges, or any other school, business entity, or educational institution that TWC reviews. Violating the confidentiality of this information is a Class-A misdemeanor offense.

TWC's compliance is facilitated by such resources as the Texas Educating Adults Management System (TEAMS), the data management system for federally funded AEL programs in Texas. TEAMS access is limited to individuals who work for an AEL grant recipient or subrecipient and have satisfactorily completed TWC-provided FERPA training. Similarly, TWC's ReHabWorks system, which supports the Title IV VR program, uses strict access controls to safeguard privacy. TWC completed cybersecurity maturity assessments for each of the 28 Boards, which included the updating of security language in the Agency-Board Agreements.

Within each department, TWC's Privacy Office maintains Local Privacy Liaisons (LPLs). LPLs are responsible for communicating privacy policy requirements and best practices to division staff. Privacy migration strategies are imposed to aid in the reduction of privacy vulnerabilities. Strategies include Privacy Threshold Analyses (PTAs) and Privacy Impact Assessments (PIAs). PTAs are tracked and reported within the Business Operations Department. These measures help to enhance TWC's compliance with the state and federal laws that govern the protection of PII and sensitive information.

Additionally, TWC publishes guidelines online to protect the security and confidentiality of customers' PII and SII to which Boards and other TWC grantees must adhere. These guidelines and other guidance include the following:
- TWC Information Security Manual
- TWC Privacy Manual
- Employment Service Guide
- Privacy Incident Response Plan
- Privacy Program Governance
- WD Letter 02-18, issued March 23, 2018, and titled "Handling and Protection of Personally Identifiable Information and Other Sensitive Information," and subsequent updates
- WD Letter 11-16, issued June 15, 2016, and titled "Access and Data Security for Workplace Applications," and subsequent updates
- WD Letter 14-08, issued March 19, 2008, and titled "Modifications to Unemployment Insurance Benefits System Access," and subsequent updates

7. PRIORITY OF SERVICE FOR VETERANS

A. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT THE PRIORITY OF SERVICE PROVISIONS FOR COVERED PERSONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE JOBS FOR VETERANS ACT, CODIFIED AT SECTION 4215

OF 38 U.S.C., WHICH APPLIES TO ALL EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS FUNDED IN WHOLE OR IN PART BY THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR.

Texas is home to 1.5 million veterans, the second largest veteran population in the nation. TWC uses the newest workforce development strategies and initiatives to expand services for veterans and their spouses.

Priority of Service for Veterans

Texas Workforce Solutions provides priority of service to veterans and eligible spouses in all DOL-funded programs. Additionally, the Texas legislature mandated that priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses be applicable to all state-funded workforce services.

The Jobs for Veterans Act ensures that priority of service of covered veterans and eligible spouses occurs during the provision of employment, training, and placement services provided under WIOA. However, a veteran must still meet each program's eligibility criteria to receive services under the respective employment and training program.

Texas Workforce Solutions staff ensure that the requirements for priority of service apply to all workforce service programs that are funded in whole or in part by DOLETA or state funds. Specifically, Texas Workforce Solutions staff members apply priority of service to the following two categories of qualified job training programs:

- Universal access programs (such as Wagner-Peyser– funded services) that deliver services as a whole and that do not target specific groups
- Programs with eligibility criteria (such as WIOA–funded services)

Veterans and eligible spouses are:

- identified at the point of entry;

- informed of their entitlement to priority of service;

- informed of the full array of employment, training, and placement services available; and

- informed of any programs or services applicable eligibility requirements.

Priority of service for WIOA and other programs with statutory priorities is then applied in the following order:

1. Veterans and eligible spouses who meet the mandatory priorities or spending requirement or limitation must receive the highest priority for the program or service.

2. Non-veterans within the program's mandatory priority or spending requirement or limitation must receive priority for the program or service over veterans and eligible spouses outside the program-specific mandatory priority or spending requirement or limitation.

3. Veterans and eligible spouses outside the program-specific mandatory priority or spending requirement or limitation must receive priority for the program or service over non-veterans outside the program-specific mandatory priority or spending requirement or limitation.

In Texas, the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) program is administered by the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC). Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists, Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs), and Consolidated Positions (CPs) are integrated within each Board's service provider staff and Wagner-Peyser Employment Service staff in each of the Board's Workforce Areas. TWC, TVC, and the 28 Boards work collaboratively to coordinate and deliver employment and other support services to all veteran job seekers and their families.

Texas' automated labor exchange, WorkInTexas.com, has several features that are specifically tailored to serve veterans and eligible spouses, including the following:

- A two-day hold on all newly created job orders—these jobs are available only to veterans and eligible spouses for the first two days in which they are open to order to ensure that veterans get the first opportunity to review and apply.

- Employers may designate job orders for Veteran Applicants Only.

- WorkInTexas.com provides information to veterans and eligible spouses when they register online that explains veteran's entitlement to priority of service and information relating to the availability of workforce services and programs.

- WorkInTexas.com sends email or mail notifications to veterans and eligible spouses who have completed online registration that reiterates their entitlement to priority of service for all workforce programs and services.

- WorkInTexas.com provides features that are tailored to veterans and eligible spouses, such as:

    o icons that identify veteran job seekers to employers;

    o job search options for veterans and eligible spouses, including search options that provide listings for Veteran Only job orders and federal contractor job orders;

    o a veteran icon that lists Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) indicators including the following:

        ▪ Homeless

        ▪ Disability

        ▪ Veteran Disability

        ▪ Recently Separated Veteran

        ▪ Transitioning Service Member

        ▪ Veteran Age Priority

        ▪ Low Income

        ▪ Career Readiness Standards

        ▪ Reduction in Force

- Spouse or Family Care Giver

- Wounded, Ill or Injured Service Member

- Released from Incarceration

- Drawn Unemployment for 27 or more Weeks

- Meet Vietnam-Era Veteran Designation

- Veteran Between age 18 and 24

- We Hire Vets icon;

- We Hire Ability icon; and

- the development of a Hire Vets Medallion Program icon in WorkInTexas.com.

WorkInTexas.com uses a hands-off software-based process to gather job orders from the National Labor Exchange (USNLX.com) and other large job boards, such as Monster and Career Builder, and adds them to Texas' automated labor exchange. This imported job data provides veterans and eligible spouses with quality job opportunities through the state labor exchange.

Additionally, Senate Bill 389, 84th Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2015), requires that state agencies include relevant Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) codes on all job orders that are added to WorkInTexas.com. The State Auditor's Office (SAO), in conjunction with TVC, developed a State Classification-to-MOS crosswalk that is maintained and accessed by state agencies from the SAO website. The Military Crosswalk is attached to each occupational category on the SAO's website to help state agencies easily find state classification titles, identify related MOS codes, and include those MOS codes on job orders.

Significant Barriers to Employment

A veteran or eligible spouse is determined to have a significant barrier to employment if they meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Special disabled or disabled veteran, as defined in 38 USC §4211(1) and (3), are individuals who:

  - are entitled to compensation (or who, but for the receipt of military retired pay, would be entitled to compensation) under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs;

  - have a disability claim pending with the US Department of Veterans Affairs; or

  - were discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability;

- Homeless, as defined in 42 USC §11302(a) and (b) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as amended

- Recently separated service member, as defined in 38 USC §4211(6), who in the previous 12 months has been unemployed for 27 weeks or more

- Offender, as defined by WIOA §3(38), who is currently incarcerated or who has been released from incarceration

- Veteran lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate

- Low income, as defined in WIOA §3(36)

A veteran or eligible spouse that is identified as having a significant barrier to employment is immediately referred to DVOP or CP staff. When DVOP or CP staff are not available, Workforce Solutions Office staff provides or arranges for services to be provided.

Wagner Peyser Employment Services staff, WIOA staff, or other Workforce Solutions Office staff members provide services to veterans and eligible spouses who have been determined:

- to have significant barriers to employment, but for whom no DVOP or CP staff are available to provide services; or

- to not have significant barriers to employment.

Boards screen individuals seeking services with the Significant Barriers to Employment Triage Tool, whether in person, via telephone, or by other electronic means (such as email and/or text) to determine whether they are veterans or eligible spouses and whether they are eligible for services from DVOP or CP staff.

The following active-duty service members or Transitioning Service Personnel are eligible for DVOP or CP services:

- Transitioning members of the US Armed Forces who have been identified as needing individualized career services

- Members of the US Armed Forces who are wounded, ill, or injured and receiving treatment in military treatment facilities or warrior transition units

- Service members who have not met Career Readiness Standards and who can provide a Form DD-2958 signed by their commander

- Transitioning service members ages 18-24

- Active-duty service members being involuntarily separated through a service reduction- in-force

B. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL MONITOR PRIORITY OF SERVICE PROVISIONS FOR VETERANS.

TWC's Subrecipient Monitoring department maintains a risk assessment methodology for monitoring local Board activities, in which priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is included in the items that are applied to this methodology. Monitoring activities generally include on-site visits, interviews with staff, and regular reviews of local Board policies that relate specifically to priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses.

C. DESCRIBE THE TRIAGE AND REFERRAL PROCESS FOR ELIGIBLE VETERANS AND OTHER POPULATIONS DETERMINED ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE SERVICES FROM THE JOBS FOR VETERANS STATE GRANTS (JVSG) PROGRAM'S DISABLED

VETERANS' OUTREACH PROGRAM (DVOP) SPECIALIST/CONSOLIDATED POSITION.

Veterans Triage

All Workforce Solutions Office staff who have the potential to triage veterans, whether it be in person, over the phone, or electronically, must complete the National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI's) Serving Veterans training on an annual basis.

When screening individuals to determine their veteran status, Workforce Solutions Office staff:

- determines the purpose of the visit, telephone call, or electronic correspondence;

- explains that the purpose of the triage tool is to determine which staff are best suited to assist them;

- ensures that the individual identifies whether he or she is a veteran, eligible spouse transitioning service member, or spouse or other family caregiver; and

- ensures that veterans and eligible spouses confirm whether any of the significant barriers to employment criteria apply

Additionally, Workforce Solutions Office staff members also utilize the DVOP Eligibility Triage Form, which was developed by the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA), to triage individuals at point of entry.

TWC's policy regarding serving veterans and eligible spouses with significant barriers to employment through the JVSG program is provided in WD Letter 19-22, issued August 24, 2022, and titled "Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program: Reforms and Responsibilities of Workforce Solutions Office Staff Serving Veterans."

8. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners), will comply with section 188 of WIOA (if applicable) and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. This also must include a description of compliance through providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. Describe the State's one-stop center certification policy, particularly the accessibility criteria.

Achieving excellence in accessibility is based on three core principles:

- ensuring that all customers have equal access to and can effectively use workforce products and services;

- creating an accessible workspace for individuals with disabilities; and

- complying with all federal and state legal requirements.

Electronic and Information and Resources

TWC adheres to the core principles by making its websites and other electronic and information resources (EIR) accessible and its content user friendly for individuals with disabilities, pursuant to Title I of the Texas Administrative Code, Chapters 206 and 213. TWC's public online job matching system, WorkinTexas.com, is tested for compliance after all system updates by using the most current Job Access With Speech (JAWS) software.

Additionally, TWC employs an EIR accessibility coordinator to serve as a contact for EIR accessibility concerns. The coordinator both monitors agency-wide compliance with accessibility policy and facilitates correction of noncompliant EIR. To these ends, the coordinator partners with accessibility-designated liaisons in each business area. An accessibility liaison functions as the primary contact for the business area's compliance with EIR accessibility requirements. The liaison also assists in staff development, addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities, as well as in sharing TWC's accessibility goals and requirements.

Other agency efforts to achieve excellence in accessibility include:

- providing staff with regular classroom training sessions on multiple accessibility topics;

- developing and maintaining an inventory of all agency EIR;

- consulting on accessibility purchases and facilitating the exception request process;

- working with business areas to develop and implement remediation plans for noncompliant websites, applications, and products, and consulting as needed during remediation;

- developing intranet pages with accessibility resources for employees; and

- meeting regularly with accessibility liaisons.

Accessibility at Workforce Solutions Offices and TWC-Owned Buildings

The TWC Equal Opportunity (EO) Compliance Department functions within the Division of Fraud Deterrence and Compliance Monitoring (FDCM). The EO Compliance Department monitors recipients of WIOA Title I financial assistance to determine compliance with the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of WIOA §188. Both programmatic and physical accessibility are addressed during an EO compliance monitoring review.

As recipients of WIOA funding, Boards and their EO Officers must conduct local EO monitoring of all programs and facilities within their local workforce development area (workforce area). TWC's EO Compliance Department then monitors Boards annually through either a desk or on-site review, as referenced in the Nondiscrimination Plan (NDP) that is on file with DOL's Civil Rights Center (DOL-CRC).

When determining which sites are selected for on-site physical accessibility reviews, the EO Coordinator conducts a risk assessment based on whether the center location:

- has not previously been reviewed by TWC staff based on historical review data;

- has not previously been reviewed by TWC staff during the tenure of the current Board EO Officer; and/or

- has received numerous deficiencies in the previous EO monitoring review, thus warranting a TWC follow-up review .

A TWC's EO Compliance Department's accessibility checklist, which aligns with the Texas Accessibility Standards (TAS), is used by both the local Board EO Officer staff and TWC staff when conducting physical accessibility reviews. The TAS checklist outlines all compliance requirements within the following four priorities:

- Priority 1–Accessible approach and entrance

- Priority 2–Access to goods and services

- Priority 3–Access to public toilet rooms

- Priority 4–Access to other items such as water fountains and public telephones

TWC's EO Coordinator may provide training during the Quality Assurance Network's biannual meetings, new Board EO Officer orientations, and through other EO trainings as requested by the local EO Officers. Trainings and technical assistance address all facets of WIOA Section 188 compliance, including physical accessibility compliance and accessibility best practices.

One-Stop Certification

WIOA regulations at 20 CFR §678.800 require Workforce Solutions Offices in each workforce area to be certified by TWC once every three years.

TWC uses the following objective criteria and procedures to evaluate one-stop certifications and the effectiveness of the workforce area and the Workforce Solutions Offices:

- Customer satisfaction
- Physical and programmatic accessibility
- Continuous improvement

Evaluations for effectiveness address how well the Workforce Solutions Office:

- integrates available services for participants and businesses;
- meets the workforce development needs of participants and the needs of local employers;
- operates in a cost-efficient manner, which includes, at a minimum, a quarterly review of Board's financial status and its service provider and for all funding sources the Board administers;
- coordinates services among the workforce partner programs;
- includes the common identifier tagline on all:
    - products;
    - programs;
    - activities;

- online and in-person services;
- primary electronic resources;
- websites;
- printed, purchased, or created materials;
- facilities and related property; and
- new materials;
- provides access to workforce partner program services outside of regular business hours when there is a workforce need identified by the Board; and
- takes feedback from customers into account.

TWC also conducts evaluations for effectiveness related to accessibility. The following considerations are made:

- How well the Workforce Solutions Office ensures equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities to participate in or benefit from Workforce Solutions Office services
- How well the Workforce Solutions Office and local workforce systems comply with the disability-related regulations implementing WIOA §188, including, but not limited to:
  - providing reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities;
  - making reasonable and necessary modifications to policies, practices, and procedures to avoid discrimination against persons with disabilities;
  - administering programs in an appropriately integrated setting;
  - communicating with individuals with disabilities as effectively as with other individuals without disabilities;
  - providing appropriate auxiliary aids and services, including assistive technology devices and services, to give individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in and enjoy the benefits of the program or activity; and
  - ensuring that individuals with disabilities have physical access to the one-stop center.

9. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners) will ensure that each one-stop center is able to meet the needs of English language learners, such as through established procedures, staff training, resources, and other materials. Describe how English language learners will be made aware of the opportunity to enroll and/or co-enroll in all the core programs for which they are eligible.

TWC adheres to its accessibility core principles by making its websites and other electronic and information resources (EIR) accessible and its content user-friendly for individuals with Limited-English Proficiency (LEP). TWC's public online job matching system, WorkInTexas.com, is available in English and Spanish. TWC's website also provides information in Spanish regarding unemployment benefits, labor law, employment discrimination, housing discrimination, and TWC press releases.

TWC requires Boards to ensure that all individuals with LEP have equal opportunity to access and participate in all federally funded workforce services, including those funded under WIOA, TANF, Choices, and SNAP E&T, as well as the three One-Stop partner programs (Vocational Rehabilitation, Unemployment Insurance, and Child Care).

Boards are required to review WIOA's nondiscrimination and equal opportunity regulations to ensure:

- the provision of information in languages other than English to ensure meaningful access for persons with LEP so that such individuals are effectively informed about and/or are able to participate in WIOA programs and activities; and

- that communications with individuals with disabilities are as effective as communications with individuals without disabilities.

Boards must comply with the following requirements to ensure meaningful language access:

- A thorough assessment of language needs, including:

  o an analysis of the language needs of each Board's local workforce development area;

  o the identification of the language needs of each LEP individual;

  o the identification of situations in which the individual will need language services;

  o a statement of resource needs; and

  o recommendations for how to make these resources available.

- A comprehensive written policy to ensure meaningful communication with LEP individuals. This includes notices to LEP individuals of their rights to free language assistance; staff training; monitoring; and translation of written materials containing vital information. The guidance warns that the use of family, friends, and/or minor children as interpreters may raise Title VI liability issues.

- Training staff to implement the language access policy. Boards must ensure that service providers and those entities to which a referral is made have the requisite training and knowledge.

- Vigilant monitoring to ensure that LEP individuals have equal access to services.

Babel Notices

Boards are required to use Babel notices to inform customers that the information contained in a document or communication is available in other languages. Additionally, Boards must ensure that vital information available in written documents or communications is translated into languages spoken by a significant number or portion of the population eligible to be served by Workforce Solutions Offices in the local workforce development area. Such translations must be made readily available in hard copy, upon request, or electronically, such as on a website.

When conducting outreach, Boards must convey information in languages spoken by a significant number or portion of the workforce areas' general population. Methods of outreach in which information may be provided in languages other than English include:

- hard copy distribution;
- electronically on web pages or social media; or
- through other broadcast means such as newspapers or radio programs.

IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS

Describe the methods used for joint planning and coordination among the core programs, and with the required one-stop partner programs and other programs and activities included in the Unified or Combined State Plan.

Planning and Coordination

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) places a strong emphasis on planning across multiple workforce partner programs to ensure alignment in service delivery. One important goal is to develop effective partnerships across programs and community-based providers to provide individuals with the employment, education, and training services they need. Effective partnering is essential to leverage resources and align services with career pathways and sector strategies. It is vital that WIOA-required and optional workforce partners and programs work together to ensure a customer-centered approach to service delivery.

The Texas workforce system brings together workforce development, employment and training, and educational services in a seamless customer-focused service-delivery network to enhance access to program services and improve long-term employment outcomes for individuals receiving assistance. Workforce partners administer separately funded programs that contribute to a host of integrated streamlined services to customers.

The vision for the Texas workforce system is to align a wide range of publicly and privately funded education, employment, and training programs while also providing high-quality customer service to all job seekers, workers, and businesses.

Texas workforce system's six core programs include:

- Title I Adult program;

- Title I Dislocated Worker program;

- Title I Youth program;

- Title II AEFLA program;

- Employment Services program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by Title III of WIOA; and

- The VR program, authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV of WIOA.

The Texas workforce system includes other required partners and optional workforce partners consistent with WIOA statute. Through Workforce Solutions Offices, these workforce partner

programs, and their direct service providers ensure that businesses and job seekers—a shared client base across multiple programs—have access to information and services that lead to positive educational and employment outcomes.

As required in WIOA §121(e)(1), each local workforce delivery system must provide the following:

- Career services, as defined in WIOA §134(c)(2) and in Appendix A of the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Guide to Texas Workforce System Operations

- Access to training services, as described in WIOA §134(c)(3)

- Access to local employment and training activities, as described in WIOA §134(d)

- Access to all programs and activities provided by required workforce partners and any optional workforce partners

- Access to the data, information, and analysis described in the Wagner-Peyser Act §15(a), including all job search, job placement, recruitment, and other labor-exchange services authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act

The required Board workforce partners in Texas include:

- WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs;

- Wagner-Peyser Employment Service (ES) program;

- Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs, including the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program;

- Choices, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) employment and training program;

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) E&T;

- Child Care Services;

- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA);

- Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) programs;

- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs;

- National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) program;

- Apprenticeship programs;

- Career and Technical Education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) (20 USC §2301, et seq.);

- Job counseling, training, and placement services for veterans (38 USC §41, et seq.);

- Education and vocational training programs through Job Corps, administered by DOL;

- Native American programs authorized under Title I of WIOA;

- US Department of Housing and Urban Development–administered employment and training programs;

- Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act;

- Reintegration of Offenders programs authorized under the Second Chance Act of 2007;

- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker programs authorized under WIOA §167; and

- Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP).

TWC also requires Boards to jointly develop and adopt an MOU with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHS). This MOU fulfills state law regarding the coordinated interagency case management of recipients of financial assistance in employment and training activities and support services (Texas Human Resources Code §31.0128).

TWC also recommends that Boards enter into MOUs with the following optional partner programs:

- Employment and training programs administered by the Social Security Administration, including the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program, established under §1148 of the Social Security Act (42 USC §1320b-19, et seq.)

- Employment and training programs administered by the Small Business Administration

- Programs administered by OneStar Foundation, authorized under the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 USC §12401, et seq.)

- Other appropriate federal, state, or local programs, which may include employment, education, and training programs provided by public libraries or in the private sector.

Public Comment

From December 14, 2023, through January 13, 2024, TWC solicited comments from representatives of Workforce Development Boards and chief elected officials, representatives of agricultural organizations, community-based organizations, adult education providers, institutions of higher education, and the public. TWC received the comment below.

Comment:

Educate Texas, an initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas, provided comments relating to alignment of education and workforce partnerships in Texas. Educate Texas commended the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) on numerous elements of the WIOA Combined State Plan (CSP) by commenting on the agency's:

- dedication to supporting education and training that equips individuals with in-demand skills that are based on labor market data and ensures that youth are a target population for programming and services;
- engagement with the Tri-Agency Initiative;
- investment in work-based learning (WBL) and apprenticeship programs; and
- use of the Skills Development Fund.

Additionally, Educate Texas provided suggestions for subsequent implementation action and/or clarification in certain areas of the WIOA CSP to strengthen the alignment between education and workforce partnerships. The following suggestions were made:

Tri-Agency Alignment

- Incorporate the career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 as a partner program in the WIOA CSP to foster alignment between WIOA and Perkins V.
- Provide additional opportunities to fund apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships with secondary and postsecondary education institutions as funding opportunities become available.
- Through the Tri-Agency Initiative, align the definitions and measures of high-wage, high-demand, high-skilled jobs; industry-based credentials; and credentials of value as a way to improve the determination of the impact of education and training investments made by the three agencies with federal and state funds.
- Seek opportunities to align and standardize data systems and coordinate data sharing and reporting between agencies and the public.

The Strategic Framework for Work-Based Learning

- Seek opportunities to further incorporate the [Tri-Agency Strategic Framework for Work-Based Learning Report](#) within the WIOA CSP or through subsequent implementation and/or guidance to Local Workforce Development Boards.

The Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)

- Explore ways to identify and report ETPL programs that incorporate WBL outside of Registered Apprenticeship Programs. Additionally, Educate Texas suggested that TWC explore incentives for ETPs to utilize WBL programs.

Response:

TWC thanks Educate Texas for its comments and recommendations. While developing the plan, TWC did consider including the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 as a partner program in the WIOA CSP. Staff discussed this possibility with the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. All agencies see value in the inclusion; however, it was determined that the misalignment of federal plan timelines creates significant challenges. The agencies remain interested in exploring this option again before the next planning cycle.

Regarding further alignment across the three agencies, the Tri-Agency Initiative recognizes the benefits of adopting common definitions and measures when allowed and will continue to

do so. When developing the Tri-Agency Strategic Framework for Work-Based Learning Report, the three agencies adopted a common nomenclature to ensure clarity and understanding across all stakeholders. Because support and growth of work-based learning (WBL) opportunities are included in TWC's strategic plan, the agency will continue to inform stakeholders, including Boards, of the benefits of WBL.

The three agencies also continue to work together to align data systems, to identify new data elements, and to develop a secure portal. The portal, currently in its first phase, allows data sharing and reporting across the three agencies. A future phase includes a public-facing interface. The Tri-Agency Initiative also recognizes the value of WBL and will continue to align in its messaging, outreach, and funding of various initiatives, including apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, and internships.

Regarding the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), TWC is in the process of reviewing the ETPL, identifying specific credentials offered by ETPs, and determining the value of those credentials. The determined value will enable Boards and participants to make better-informed choices for training and education. These steps will give TWC greater insight into the programs offered by ETPs and their efficacy.

V. COMMON ASSURANCES (FOR ALL CORE PROGRAMS)

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts;	Yes
2. The State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State Boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes;	Yes
3. The lead State agencies with optimal policy-making authority and responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified or Combined State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs;	Yes
4. (a) The State obtained input into the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administrating the core programs, required one-stop partners and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public; (b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board;	Yes
5. The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities;	Yes
6. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3);	Yes
7. The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable;	Yes
8. The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;	Yes
9. The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs;	Yes

10. The State has a one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);	Yes
11. Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and	Yes
12. Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor.	Yes

VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

The State must address all program-specific requirements in this section for the WIOA core programs regardless of whether the State submits either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE I-B

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following with respect to activities carried out under subtitle B—

A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1. REGIONS AND LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

A. IDENTIFY THE REGIONS AND THE LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS DESIGNATED IN THE STATE

A map identifying each Board area is available at https://www.twc.texas.gov/partners/workforce-development-boards-websites#texasWorkforceDevelopmentBoardWebsites. The 28 Boards are the following:

1. Panhandle
2. South Plains
3. North Texas
4. North Central Texas
5. Tarrant County
6. Greater Dallas
7. Northeast Texas
8. East Texas
9. West Central Texas
10. Borderplex
11. Permian Basin
12. Concho Valley

13. Heart of Texas

14. Capital Area

15. Rural Capital Area

16. Brazos Valley

17. Deep East Texas

18. Southeast Texas

19. Golden Crescent

20. Alamo

21. South Texas

22. Coastal Bend

23. Lower Rio Grande Valley

24. Cameron

25. Texoma

26. Central Texas

27. Middle Rio Grande

28. Gulf Coast

The Commission recognizes Texas' current workforce areas as their own independent regions.

B. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS AND POLICY USED FOR DESIGNATING LOCAL AREAS, INCLUDING PROCEDURES FOR DETERMINING WHETHER THE LOCAL AREA MET THE CRITERIA FOR "PERFORMED SUCCESSFULLY" AND "SUSTAINED FISCAL INTEGRITY" IN ACCORDANCE WITH 106(B)(2) AND (3) OF WIOA. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS USED FOR IDENTIFYING REGIONS AND PLANNING REGIONS UNDER SECTION 106(A) OF WIOA. THIS MUST INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE STATE CONSULTED WITH THE LOCAL BOARDS AND CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIALS IN IDENTIFYING THE REGIONS

Background

In 1993, the Texas legislature passed Senate Bill 642, the Workforce and Economic Competitiveness Act (Act), which transformed the state's fragmented workforce development system into an integrated service delivery network to improve the quality and effectiveness of services. At the time of the Act, Texas had 35 service delivery areas, which were developed under the federal Job Training Partnership Act of 1982.

The 1993 Act required TWIC to recommend the designation of workforce areas within the state. This was the first step in establishing a system for delivering integrated services, including workforce training, TANF and SNAP E&T programs, community services, and the basic labor exchange system.

In 1998, Congress passed the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Recognizing that Texas had previously established the framework of an integrated workforce system, WIA provided several grandfather provisions, which allowed Texas to continue certain provisions under prior consistent state law. One such provision was specific to the designation of workforce areas. This provision allowed Texas' Boards to continue if they performed successfully and maintained sustained fiscal integrity.

The Act also required that the local elected officials reach agreement on the designation for a workforce area. After much analysis and deliberation, including significant public input, and the recognition that even contiguous areas often have very diverse needs, 28 workforce areas— governed by Boards—were identified and designated by the governor. The realignment from 35 to 28 workforce areas supported Texas' vision of an integrated and streamlined workforce system, a precursor to the purposes of WIOA.

Local Area Designation

WIOA §189(i)(1) allows states that have enacted, not later than December 31, 1997, a state law providing for the designation of service delivery areas for the delivery of workforce investment activities, to use such areas as local areas under Title I of WIOA. Prior consistent state law found at Texas Government Code §2308.252 provides for the designation of workforce areas in Texas. Therefore, the provisions of WIOA §106 related to local area designation do not apply in Texas.

Compliant with WIOA §108, each Board develops and submits to the governor a comprehensive four-year local plan in partnership with the chief elected official (CEO). Texas Government Code §2308.304(b) also requires each Board to develop a local plan with goals and objectives that are consistent with statewide goals, objectives, and performance standards. State and federal law require TWIC to review the Board's local plans and modifications and make recommendations to the governor for approval.

Regional Collaboration

WIOA requires states to identify regions in the state. WIOA's intent regarding regional identification is to engage locals in regional efforts that result in the analysis of the regional labor market, establishment of regional service strategies, development, and implementation of sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors or occupations for the region, and the coordination of services with regional economic development needs. TWC continues to comply with these WIOA requirements.

Long before a federal requirement existed, Boards across Texas had a demonstrated history of collaboration beyond the designated workforce areas. These regional collaborative efforts have resulted in workforce system leaders partnering to align workforce policies and services with regional economies and supporting service delivery strategies tailored to these needs. A few examples of regional collaboration include:

- The Rural Workforce Network (RWN) Consortium Biotechnology/Life Sciences-Medical Targeted Industries Project was designed to further build capacity to meet the skills readiness and skills training needs of employers and job seekers in the RWN region, through an understanding of employers' needs, assessments of job seekers' skills, and the creation and credentialing of a work-ready workforce. Five Boards—

Concho Valley, West Central Texas, Permian Basin, North Texas, and South Plains—four employers, and nine public colleges participated in this project.

- Many Texas Boards share labor sheds with adjacent states. Such Boards have found it beneficial to establish partnerships with out-of-state partners to create a regional response to workforce and economic challenges. Workforce Solutions Texoma has partnered with the Southern Oklahoma Workforce Board, Southeastern Oklahoma State University, and several other key organizations in Oklahoma to form the Texoma Regional Consortium, which covers a 13-county region along the Texas and Oklahoma borders. The Texoma Regional Consortium addresses needs of local business and industry in both Texas and Oklahoma through participating in strategic planning to identify key regional strategic themes, develop regional labor market analysis, sponsor regional job fairs, and participate in other joint ventures to address workforce and economic challenges.

- Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley and Workforce Solutions Cameron continue to collaborate on special initiatives such as the Texas Internship Program for High School Youth. Through this initiative, youth are enrolled in Dual Credit CTE programs throughout Cameron County and are provided the opportunity to participate in an internship that supports their classroom training instruction. Additionally, the Boards collaborate to administer a teacher externship program. The program allows school districts within the region to place teachers in externships that provide them with professional development opportunities to enrich their classroom curricula and make career connections for their students.

- Workforce Solutions Capital Area, Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area, and Workforce Solutions Alamo, in partnership with TWC, piloted the Texas Talent and Economic Growth Project to identify innovative, collaborative strategies to be scaled statewide. The project focused on using workforce data to unlock insights for economic development entities and attract employers that are considering Texas as a potential site to expand or locate their businesses. Specifically, the project has explored ways in which TWC and the 28 Boards could consistently deliver information of value to employers and economic development entities in Texas. Insights from the project were used to guide the development of a statewide action plan.

- Multiple Boards across the state have partnered with each other to respond to disasters and leverage resources to help support those most in need.

The development and implementation of the above regional collaborations were based on the analysis of labor markets, industry needs, and the needs of economic development entities. These efforts have enhanced and continue to enhance both the capacity and performance of the Texas workforce system. The Boards continue to meet WIOA expectations.

In Texas, local leadership—CEOs, Boards, and Board staff—have long championed regional planning, particularly in developing opportunities in in-demand industry sectors and occupations. The benefits of regionalism include collaborative planning, pooling and leveraging of resources, capacity building, and ensuring that services are delivered in the best way possible. Regionalism is essential to the Boards' mission.

To ensure that Boards are meeting the WIOA criteria for "performed successfully" and "sustained fiscal integrity" TWC requires Boards to submit data on designated performance measures. Performance measure data is reported monthly and maintained by the Information Innovation & Insight (I|3) division on TWC's website. As consistent with Texas Administrative Code §802.62 and §802.64, TWC's Fraud Deterrence and Compliance Monitoring division conducts routine monitoring visits that verify fiscal integrity and assist Boards in addressing any identified issues. Fiscal monitoring activities help to ensure sound fiscal management. Board grant and financial monitoring information is available on the TWC website.

C. PROVIDE THE APPEALS PROCESS AND POLICY REFERRED TO IN SECTION 106(B)(5) OF WIOA RELATING TO DESIGNATION OF LOCAL AREAS

Units of local government or grant recipients that request but are not granted designation or re-designation (in accordance with TWIC rules §901.1) as a local workforce development area, may appeal in accordance with the state's written policy and procedure described in TWIC rule §901.2 (40 TAC Part 22).

Appeals must be delivered to the Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC) no later than 30 days after the date in which the designation or redesignation was made. The appeal must include the specific reasons for the appeal and any new information that the requestor/Board would like to have considered as part of the appeal process. When the appeal is received, the notice of the appeal will be published in the *Texas Register*, along with a statement inviting public input and the deadline to submit public input. At TWIC's discretion, they may also schedule a public meeting to allow for oral comments. TWIC may consider the appeal or designate a committee to do so and make a recommendation to TWIC. All relevant information is reviewed, including that submitted with the appeal and obtained during the public comment period. Finally, TWIC will make a recommendation to the governor within 120 days of the date of receipt of the appeal request.

D. PROVIDE THE APPEALS PROCESS AND POLICY REFERRED TO IN SECTION 121(H)(2)(E) OF WIOA RELATING TO DETERMINATIONS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

TWC is required to establish a process for a required workforce partner to appeal a determination:

- regarding the portion of funds to be provided under the state funding mechanism (SFM), and

- on the basis that the determination is inconsistent with the requirements of the SFM.

The appeal process established by TWC must provide prompt resolution of the appeal to ensure that the funds are distributed in a timely manner, as consistent with WIOA §182(e)—Prompt Allocation of Funds.

The appeals process established by the Texas governor specifies that a one-stop partner may appeal a governor's determination regarding the one-stop partner's portion of funds for one-stop infrastructure costs.

40 TAC Part 22 §901.2—Appeal of Decision on Designation or Redesignation.

- The appeal of a designation or redesignation of a workforce area must be delivered to TWIC no later than 30 days after the date in which the designation or redesignation was made.

- The appeal must be submitted to TWIC in writing or electronically on the TWIC website (or TWC website). The appeal must be signed and submitted by the chief executive officer of the one-stop partner submitting the appeal. The appeal must specify the circumstances and details of the appeal.

- The notice of appeal, once received, shall be published in the *Texas Register* with a statement inviting input, specifying the deadline for submitting written input. The council, at its discretion, may also schedule a public meeting at which oral comments on the appeal will be accepted.

- The appeal may be considered by TWIC or TWIC may designate a committee to do so and make a recommendation to TWIC. In considering an appeal, all relevant information is reviewed in addition to the information submitted with the appeal and the information obtained during the public comment process.

- After considering an appeal, TWIC will make a recommendation to the governor within 120 days of the date of receipt of the appeal request.

2. STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES

A. PROVIDE STATE POLICIES OR GUIDANCE FOR THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM AND FOR USE OF STATE FUNDS FOR WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES

State Policies

The State makes information on state-imposed requirements—such as guidance for the statewide workforce development system, including policy for the use of state funds for workforce investment activities—available to the public.

The following materials are readily accessible through the TWC website:

- WIOA Guidelines—overview, implementation, guidance, service, and stakeholder input

- Current TWC rules, as codified in Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 40, Part 20, as well as information on past rule amendments

- All active workforce policy issued through guides

- Workforce Development (WD) Letters, Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Letters, and Technical Assistance (TA) Bulletins, available at TWC's Workforce Policy and Guidance web page

- Reports, plans, and publications—agency strategic plans and annual reports, publications for employers and job seekers, and program plans and reports, available at TWC's Reports, Plans, & Publications web page

The following VR materials are readily accessible through the Texas Workforce Commission website:

- New or modified manuals, guides, and publications, available at [Vocational Rehabilitation - Program Overview](#) and [Vocational Rehabilitation Division Publications](#)

B. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE INTENDS TO USE GOVERNOR'S SET ASIDE FUNDING FOR MANDATORY AND DISCRETIONARY ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING HOW THE STATE WILL CONDUCT EVALUATIONS OF TITLE I ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES.

Texas Talent Connection

The Texas governor has reserved Wagner-Peyser 7(b) federal funds through the Texas Talent Connection grant program to fund 18 innovative workforce skills training and job placement programs in communities across the state. This grant program supports innovation in workforce development and addresses the primary focuses of the fund, which are to:

- support exemplary workforce training projects that lead to job placement, increased wages, and job retention;

- deliver workforce services in more efficient and innovative ways; and

- provide services to workforce populations with special needs.

These competitive grant awards are administered by the Texas Workforce Investment Council in the Governor's Office of Economic Development and Tourism. The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) is responsible for processes related to Texas Talent Connection grant award negotiation, funding, management, and monitoring.

TWC Initiatives

TWC uses Governor's reserve statewide funding and Adult Education and Family Literacy Act state leadership funding, in conjunction with other funding where feasible and appropriate, to encourage innovation at the local level through grants to Boards, institutions of higher education, community-based organizations (CBOs), and other suitable entities. TWC prioritizes programs and initiatives that assist specific populations, including veterans and youth. TWC supports projects that encourage and improve growth industries, the earning capabilities of job seekers facing barriers to employment, and the effectiveness of the Texas Workforce System. Additionally, the Commission approves the use of such funds to conduct statewide initiatives to address WIOA's focus on workforce integration, quality improvement, capacity building, professional development, internships, externships, and more. The initiatives apply across the following programs and services.

Veterans Initiatives

Hiring Red, White & You! (HRWY)

Each November, TWC hosts an annual statewide job fair to connect Texas veterans and their spouses to Texas employers that value the experience, discipline, and other exceptional qualities that are often inherent in a military background. Since its 2012 inception, HRWY

has connected more than 125,828 job seekers, including 44,213 active-duty military and transitioning service members, veterans, and spouses, to 22,284 employers, with more than 3,436 same-day hires.

College Credit for Heroes (CCH)

CCH seeks to maximize the number of college credits awarded to veterans and service members for their military experience to expedite their transition into the Texas workforce. The program's goal is to eliminate obstacles to attaining licensing, certification, accreditation, and degrees that are awarded at state and national levels. To achieve this goal, CCH program grants help Texas institutions develop or improve an integrated system for evaluating military transcripts.

Throughout the life of CCH, 46 grants have been awarded. To date, 22 Texas colleges and universities have been awarded grants, which has resulted in the creation of 91 acceleration curricula courses in fields such as emergency medical services, surgical technology, respiratory therapy, health information technology, nursing, cybersecurity, information technology, advanced manufacturing, and logistics.

CCH Phase 9 Capacity Building and Sustainability Program

In July 2023, TWC awarded grants to three institutions of higher education (IHEs) for the CCH Capacity Building and Sustainability Program, which will allow the IHEs to develop or improve their military training and education evaluation processes by using a fully integrated system to identify and track veterans participating in the CCH program.

Career Schools and Colleges Credit for Veterans Program

In 2021, the 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, passed HB 33, which required TWC to evaluate programs of study and courses provided by career schools and colleges that lead to industry-based certifications and other workforce credentials to identify programs and courses in which the skills obtained through military experience, education, and training align. The bill also required TWC to publish the list of the programs of study and courses that were identified on the agency's website. In November 2022, the requirements of this bill were codified in the Texas Administrative Code (40 TAC 20, Chapter 807).

As a result of the bill, TWC implemented the Career Schools and Colleges Credit for Veterans Program which seeks to facilitate the award of postsecondary course credit that leads to workforce credentialling for veterans and service members based on their military experience, education, and training. A directory is maintained to match Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes to military occupations codes (MOC). This tool can be used to award course credits. *Veterans Workforce Outreach Initiative*

The Veterans Workforce Outreach initiative is designed to outreach veterans who have one or more barriers to employment and who are not currently receiving services through Workforce Solutions Offices. This initiative focuses on addressing the employment barriers faced by such individuals and helping them regain meaningful employment.

Through this initiative, case managers identify employment barriers and help veterans access resources to overcome such barriers. Veterans benefit from a range of services including skills and aptitude assessments; job development and job placement; case management and

support services, such as transportation; rent and utility assistance; mental health assistance, including clinical counseling; wheelchairs, crutches, and medical beds; food assistance; and financial assistance.

The Texas Veterans Network

Through a competitive selection process, a community-based organization (CBO) was selected to create a comprehensive statewide automated service coordination referral system for veterans that captures services received, referrals made, and services that are available through an integrated network that can increase a veteran's opportunity to receive the assistance needed to successfully transition into civilian life and meaningful employment. It was also intended that a shared veteran service coordination referral system among veteran service providers would reduce the impediments to comprehensive and coordinated service provision, thereby reducing barriers to employment. As of 2023, there are 474 network organizations. Over 48,000 veterans have been served with over 84,000 referrals made within the network.

Military Family Support Program

The Military Family Support Program provides military spouses with enhanced job search assistance, assessment of skills, labor market information, résumé writing, and interview skills. As funding is available, military spouses may also receive certification or licensure training in target occupations. The program connects military spouses to local business leaders, peers, and career development support programs. Currently, eight Texas military installations participate in the program.

We Hire Vets Campaign

We Hire Vets is an employer recognition program that recognizes Texas employers for their commitment to hiring veterans. Employers whose workforces are composed of at least 10 percent military veterans are eligible to receive a We Hire Vets employer recognition decal to display on their storefronts and an electronic decal to display on their websites. Since 2017, TWC has issued 1,019 decals and recognition letters to Texas employers.

Jobs Y'all

The "Jobs Y'all: Your Career. Your Story." campaign is designed to inspire young Texans to discover and explore the state's in-demand industries and learn about skills needed to enter the workforce. This online program educates and inspires young Texans to create self-directed career paths, features in-demand industries, and connects participants to career resources. The website introduces users to the governor's industry clusters, features a career explorer app, and other online resources.

Youth Initiatives

Teacher Externships—TWC supports externships for middle school and high school teachers to allow them to learn firsthand about the skills required for in-demand occupations. These externships allow teachers to better understand in-demand careers in their local communities and convey to students the opportunities available to them. More than 2,500 teachers have participated since 2015. In March 2023, TWC awarded 14 Teacher Externship grants.

Foster Youth—TWC provides grants to eighteen Foster Youth Transition Centers across the state that provide a comprehensive menu of services and referrals to help transitioning foster youth overcome barriers. TWC hosts an annual Foster Youth conference to support the local delivery of integrated services for foster youth, to share perspectives and information from state and local partners on their critical work and resources for foster youth, and to provide opportunities to expand the network of partnerships among state and local organizations that serve foster youth.

Texas Science Careers Consortium (Texas Science and Engineering Fair)—This science and engineering fair is a competition for Texas middle school and high school science fair winners to showcase their STEM research projects.

Governor's Challenge Camp—The Governor's Science and Technology Champions' Academy provides a STEM-related one-week residential summer camp for students in grades 9–12. Participants are selected from those who participant in the Texas Science and Engineering Fair.

Other Selected Initiatives

Small Business Initiatives—TWC provides training and information to Texans who are interested in entrepreneurship and starting or expanding a business or small business, including those that are run by veterans, minorities, and women. Information regarding governmental services, workforce training programs, contracting opportunities, and other areas relevant to small business inception and growth is made available through this initiative.

High Demand Job Training Program—TWC supports collaborations between Boards and economic development corporations (EDCs) to provide high-demand occupational job training in local workforce areas. Through this program, Boards partner with local EDCs to use their local economic development sales taxes to provide high-demand job training. Boards collaborate with local EDCs and match their local economic development sales tax funds to jointly support the provision of such training.

Texas Industry Partnership (TIP) Program—TWC supports collaborations between Boards and private employers, corporations, and foundations (Industry Partner(s)) to address skills gaps and ensure the availability of a talent pipeline that meets industry needs. Such collaborations engage in allowable WIOA activities, focus on six designated industry clusters, and leverage funds.

Building and Construction Trades—Consistent with the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) section 238, Texas companies create significant opportunities for workers in high-demand construction and building trade occupations, including carpenters, plumbers, pipefitters, welders, masons, and electricians. Grants support workforce development training for Texas adults and Opportunity Youth by preparing them for employment in high-demand occupations in the building and construction trades.

Evaluations of Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities

TWC actively monitors core programs through monthly, and in some cases, weekly, performance reports. These reports are reviewed and subsequently communicated with

system partners as appropriate to provide technical assistance and obtain information on best practices to share with other partners.

When evaluating programs and partners TWC compares performance to targets. Target setting is a key part of TWC's evaluation and accountability system. TWC uses a variety of different models to help set performance targets based on assumed case mixes and economic conditions. Methods are continuously evolving based on input from partners through the negotiation process and additional research.

Since 2019, TWC has embraced the use of the federal Statistical Adjustment Models (SAMs) and has modified them to ensure accountability among Boards for the common WIOA measures. In 2022, TWC's I|3 Division began working on Performance Assessment Models (PAMs) that use internally produced state data structures to develop models for WIOA measures in Program Years 2024 and 2025.

WIOA provides performance measures to use to evaluate the six core programs and system partners. Additionally, TWC applies state-prescribed performance measures and—with input from local Boards, grantees, and other partners—works to continuously develop and test other measures that lead to the identification of strengths and areas of improvement. For example, TWC developed a set of WIOA-based measures that focused on employment and enrollment in education post-exit, regardless of the program, a retention-like measure that focused on individuals who were employed or enrolled in the second quarter post-exit, and a measure to identify whether individuals remained employed or enrolled in the third and fourth quarters post-exit. TWC is also working to implement new Meaningful Measures that focus on the connection made between a worker and employer while also ensuring that workers have the skills required by employers.

C. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE RAPID RESPONSE FUNDS TO RESPOND TO LAYOFFS AND PLANT CLOSINGS AND COORDINATE SERVICES TO QUICKLY AID COMPANIES AND THEIR AFFECTED WORKERS. STATES ALSO SHOULD DESCRIBE ANY LAYOFF AVERSION STRATEGIES THEY HAVE IMPLEMENTED TO ADDRESS AT RISK COMPANIES AND WORKERS

TWC and Workforce Solutions Office staff provide rapid response assistance to help workers who have lost their jobs due to layoffs, plant closures, or natural disasters. Rapid Response services include immediate on-site and/or virtual assistance with reemployment services and UI information. In some cases, mobile units are dispatched to offer these services.

Rapid response services focus on providing early interventions to area employers, workers, and the community in managing reductions in the labor force. To ensure that Texas is poised to meet the needs of local employers, rapid response services are funded through the Boards' WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth formula programs. The funding stream allows for a prompt response to layoffs, as funds are readily and locally available. Texas has also reserved rapid response funds at the state level for Boards that demonstrate a need for additional assistance.

The rapid response system first pursues strategies to avert layoffs, while maintaining the capacity to quickly return workers to productive employment if the layoff is unavoidable. TWC and Boards use multiple employment and training resources to craft layoff aversion solutions. Past solutions have supported the development of incumbent worker programs that

help address employer training needs and avert or mitigate a layoff. Training usually focuses on skills attainment activities.

The second objective of rapid response is reemployment on or before the affected worker's last day of work. Upon notification of layoff, transition efforts are implemented to help dislocated workers engage in employment or training services that facilitate a quick return to work. Layoff notices, including those that are submitted in compliance with Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act and Trade Act petitions, are received at the state level and are forwarded to Boards by the following business day.

Boards and providers are also responsible for outreaching employers. Board and Workforce Solutions Office staff members use current labor market information to assess the needs of and options for at-risk companies as well as offering employment and training activities to address risk factors. Following the initial contact with the employer and worker representatives, an employee information orientation may be conducted on-site and on company time. The orientation offers an overview of available services and additional activities. Additional activities include workshops or seminars on the psychology of job loss/stress management, debt/financial management and negotiations for debt-payment arrangements, job search skills, and labor market information. The orientation also provides information on UI benefits and, if appropriate, the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program.

Workforce areas are also encouraged to engage rapid response staff in the BSUs. Rapid response staff members that are attached to a BSU have access to team resources that help match worker skill sets to company hiring requirements. TWC and the Boards assist businesses with future staffing needs by maintaining a positive relationship throughout the layoff process. To this end, outreach efforts highlight both the services available to at-risk employers and those services available once business improves and staff needs rebound.

Texas' layoff aversion strategies provide a proactive approach to assisting at-risk companies before they reach the layoff stage. Effective layoff aversion strategies and activities help employers develop the skilled workforce that is necessary to adapt to the changing economy, stay in business, and retain employees. TWC has identified and encourages the use of layoff aversion strategies that:

- retain jobs;

- retain critical industries in individual regions;

- improves coordination among state agencies, Boards, and economic development and other public- and private-sector partnerships; and

- creates new labor-management partnerships.

Identifying at-risk companies and developing a customized plan to address each company's unique set of circumstances requires a coordinated effort among all community partners, including state agencies, Boards, economic development agencies, and public and private entities. Boards and their partners utilize a full range of programs and resources to directly provide and facilitate the provision of an array of benefits to address the challenges presented by specific circumstances.

Through their connections with local businesses and the use of rapid response activities, Boards are in a unique position to assist companies in averting layoffs by implementing effective strategies.

Examples of effective layoff aversion strategies that may be implemented to address at-risk companies and workers include, but are not limited to:

- helping employers manage reductions in their workforce, including the identification of companies at risk of layoffs, the assessment of needs and options for at-risk companies, and the provision of services to address and support their needs;

- developing, funding, and managing incumbent worker training programs or other worker upskilling approaches as part of a layoff aversion strategy or activity;

- connecting companies with state programs that are designed to prevent layoffs or re-employ dislocated workers; employer loan programs for employee skill upgrading; and other federal, state, and local resources that are necessary to address their business needs;

- connecting businesses and workers to short-term, on-the-job, or customized training programs and apprenticeships before or after layoff to help facilitate rapid reemployment;

- activating a rapid response team and services after receiving a WARN or other notification; and

- responding to information received from other sources about possible closures.

While WIOA provides broad flexibility when using rapid response funds for layoff aversion activities that are intended to minimize the negative impacts of dislocation on workers, employers, and communities, Boards are encouraged to conduct rapid response activities to support creative approaches and strategies.

The Shared Work Unemployment Benefit Program provides an alternative to layoffs by affording employers an opportunity to manage business cycles and seasonal adjustments without losing trained employees. The program allows for the payment of UI benefits to employees to supplement lost wages due to reduced hours. TWC identifies early warning indicators within its EDW system that identifies employers that might benefit from rapid response activities and short-time compensation services.

D. DESCRIBE THE STATE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO PROVIDE RAPID RESPONSES IN CASES OF NATURAL DISASTERS INCLUDING COORDINATION WITH FEMA AND OTHER ENTITIES

When businesses close their plants or lay off workers due to natural disasters, depending on the severity of the conditions, Workforce Solutions Offices are able to provide immediate on-site and/or virtual services to assist workers facing job loss. Activities are coordinated with various agencies, including the Federal Emergency Management System (FEMA), the Texas Division of Emergency Management, the Texas General Land Office, and others. Managed rapid response services provide assistance that is designed to transition workers quickly to their next employment opportunity.

TWC seeks opportunities to assist those who have been laid off due to plant closures or work disruptions that are related to natural disasters. By leveraging available resources, such as Disaster Dislocated Worker Grants (DDWGs) from the United States Department of Labor (DOL), TWC is able to provide assistance to both job seekers and employers.

E. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE PROVIDES EARLY INTERVENTION (E.G., RAPID RESPONSE) AND ENSURES THE PROVISION OF APPROPRIATE CAREER SERVICES TO WORKER GROUPS ON WHOSE BEHALF A TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE (TAA) PETITION HAS BEEN FILED. (SECTION 134(A)(2)(A) AND TAA SECTION 221(A)(2)(A).) THIS DESCRIPTION MUST INCLUDE HOW THE STATE DISSEMINATES BENEFIT INFORMATION TO PROVIDE WORKERS IN THE GROUPS IDENTIFIED IN THE TAA PETITIONS WITH AN ACCURATE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROVISION OF TAA BENEFITS AND SERVICES IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY ARE TRANSPARENT TO THE DISLOCATED WORKER APPLYING FOR THEM (TRADE ACT SEC. 221(A)(2)(A) AND SEC. 225; GOVERNOR-SECRETARY AGREEMENT). DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE FUNDS THAT HAVE BEEN RESERVED FOR RAPID RESPONSE TO PROVIDE SERVICES FOR EVERY WORKER GROUP THAT FILES A TAA PETITION AND HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THE PROVISION OF APPROPRIATE CAREER SERVICE TO WORKERS IN THE GROUPS IDENTIFIED IN THE PETITION (TAA SEC. 221(A)(2)(A)).

Rapid Response

Rapid Response is an on-site, early-intervention program that provides transition and reemployment services to workers facing major layoffs within their company. The goal of Rapid Response services is to help affected workers find new employment before they become eligible to receive UI benefits. The best employment transition results in unemployment lasting no more than a few days.

Rapid Response is administered at the state level but is operated at the Board level. Each Board has a Rapid Response coordinator who provides information about Rapid Response services. While Boards are encouraged to make Rapid Response services available to all potential Trade-affected employers, they are required to provide the services when the following circumstances occur:

- An announcement of a permanent closure of a facility or plant, including Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) notices, regardless of the number of workers affected
- A layoff involving 50 or more workers is announced
- A mass job dislocation results from a natural disaster
- A TAA petition is filed

Rapid Response services include the following:

- Job search assistance
- Labor market information
- Group stress management seminars
- Group financial management seminars

- Information about mass filing of UI claims
- Group orientation to Workforce Solutions Office services
- Seminars on change management

For larger numbers of affected workers, on-site services may be made available. If the number of affected workers is small, workers are directed to a Workforce Solutions Office to receive Rapid Response services.

Trade-Rapid Response Participants

All Trade-certified workers are eligible for WIOA dislocated worker services. The Trade Act requires Boards to provide Rapid Response services and career services, as available under WIOA and other federal programs, to dislocated workers who file a Trade petition. Staff work to ensure that the delivery of these services flows seamlessly from the time of the initiation of Rapid Response services to reemployment while utilizing an array of services that provides eligible customers with the benefit of activities most suited to their needs.

Potential Trade-certified workers undergo an employee orientation which includes the following:

- Completion of Rapid Response registration and survey
- Orientation to the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program, including an explanation of the TAA benefits notification process and instructions on what to do if the petition is approved
- Registration with WorkInTexas.com, TWC's job-matching and service-tracking system
- Distribution of the TAA Handbook and related materials
- Time frames for approval of TAA petitions, UI claims, and applications for TRAs, which may require enrollment in training
- Information on Alternative/Reemployment Trade Adjustment Assistance.

Rapid Response services that are provided at a work site, including workshops and seminars for employees, must include information about the following topics:

- Financial management and budgeting, including financial literacy
- Labor market information, including a list of area high-demand occupations with wage information
- Stress management
- Résumé writing
- Interviewing skills
- Job search procedures and strategies.

Trade Adjustment Assistance

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) helps individuals who have lost their employment due to increased imports or shifts in production to a foreign country. Integrated services and benefits for dislocated workers, including those affected by trade changes, are available at local Workforce Solutions Offices.

As part of an integrated delivery system, TAA early intervention services (rapid response) are carried out under WIOA. When state staff becomes aware of a layoff or closure, staff determines whether the dislocation has trade implications; if it does, assistance is provided to the company, workers, or affected unions that are submitting the TAA petition. Furthermore, when a petition is submitted with prior staff notification by one of these groups, the TAA state coordinator notifies the responsible Board and ensures that rapid response efforts are conducted to assist the company with transitional services.

To comply with 20 CFR Part 618, the State of Texas uses both state merit staff and partner staff to conduct TAA case management services. Merit staff are located in areas with large TAA activity to ensure that workers receive adequate service provisions. Where TAA merit staff is not present, WIOA or Employment Service (ES) staff provides TAA case management to help the workers. Additionally, the state coenrolls all trade-affected workers in the WIOA dislocated worker program. Staffing flexibilities and coenrollment between the programs allow Texas to help workers who have been adversely impacted return to suitable employment quickly.

The Texas Workforce Solutions system provides employment and job search assistance services to help TAA workers find long-term employment. Adversely affected workers are assessed to determine their transferable skills, knowledge, and abilities and to help in researching the labor market information for previous and future occupational goals.

Additional TAA benefits and services are available if the worker is unable to secure suitable employment. Through the use of national, state, and local labor market information, staff members are able to help workers in considering available employment opportunities in the their area or the area of relocation. TAA workers are required to identify an occupational goal that is specific to the required training.

In addition to considering labor market information and the occupational goal in developing a training plan, staff conducts in-depth objective and comprehensive assessments to determine the worker's abilities. These instruments include, but are not limited to, Accuplacer, Compass, Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), and other tools that are specific to training providers. Local staff members develop a plan, with merit staff approval, to ensure that training meets the TAA approval criteria in 20 CFR §618.610.

B. ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKERS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

1. WORK-BASED TRAINING MODELS

If the State is utilizing work-based training models (e.g. on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, transitional jobs, and customized training) as part of its training strategy and these strategies are not already discussed in other sections of the plan, describe the State's strategies for how these models ensure high quality training for both the participant and the employer.

Workforce development and adult education and training are key services that are made available to job seekers to help prepare them for success in jobs that employers need filled. The services aim to improve the skills, education, and literacy levels of adults and dislocated

workers, which can effectively improve their subsequent employment, job retention, and earnings.

Work-Based Training Model

The Tri-Agency partnership developed a strategic framework to encourage work-based learning (WBL) in Texas. Through framework development, Tri-Agency partners recognized the shared work of expanding and improving WBL programs, such as apprenticeships, internships, and on-the-job trainings (OJT), to address current and future market demands for a skilled and knowledgeable workforce. The partners identified WBL as a continuum that consists of learning about work (career exploration), learning through work (career preparation), and learning at work (career training).

Ensuring that learners of all ages are prepared to enter the workforce or progress along a career pathway with the knowledge and skills employers need requires collaboration among stakeholders, including public and private schools, public institutions of higher education, employers, Boards, and TWC. Together they ensure that WBL programs are consistently implemented and are of high-quality.

Successful WBL programs lead to recognized, verifiable credentials and provide the means for participants to find and compare education and training programs, pursue stackable credentials, and demonstrate specific skills and competencies. In the effort to promote successful WBL programs, TWC, TEA, and THECB are developing a credential library that will use Credential Transparency Description Language (CTDL), a repository of standardized terms and definitions, comparisons, and evaluation of programs in the credential marketplace. CTDL will be publicly available to all stakeholders, including students, parents, job seekers, employers, and credentialing entities.

Alternative Training Models

Texas uses several alternative training programs as part of its workforce development strategy. TWC collaborates with Boards, companies, and education and training providers to improve the training programs, as well as awards competitive grants for the programs. These are discussed in other sections of the plan; however, three notable programs are described below due to their success in advancing high-quality OJT and incumbent worker training for participants and employers.

The Skills Development Fund (SDF) is Texas's program that provides training opportunities for Texas businesses and workers. TWC administers the funding for the program. Success is achieved through collaboration among businesses, public community and technical colleges, Boards, and economic development partners.

SDF assists businesses and trade unions by financing the design and implementation of customized job-training projects. This fund merges business needs and local customized training opportunities into a winning formula to increase the skills levels and wages of the Texas workforce.

The Skills for Small Business program receives financing from the Skills Development Fund. This program is dedicated to supporting the backbone of Texas' economy—small employers. Businesses with fewer than 100 employees can apply to TWC for training offered by their local community or technical college, or the Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX).

The program trains newly hired employees, with the intent of helping to fill positions for work that employers currently cannot fill and that often pay better than most jobs. TWC works with the college to fund the specific courses selected by businesses for their employees.

The Self-Sufficiency Fund program assists businesses and trade unions by financing the development and implementation of customized job-training projects for new and current workers. Self-Sufficiency Fund grants offer businesses customized training solutions that support workforce hiring efforts and skills upgrading for current workers. The purpose of the Self-Sufficiency Fund is to provide training for targeted employment opportunities, primarily for adult TANF recipients and individuals who are at risk of becoming dependent on public assistance.

2. REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

Describe how the State will incorporate Registered Apprenticeship into its strategy for service design and delivery (e.g., outreach to sponsors and prospective sponsors, identifying potential participants and connecting them to apprenticeship opportunities).

Apprenticeship Texas offers industry-driven, high-quality career pathways during which employers develop and prepare their future workforce. Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) are automatically eligible for the statewide Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). RAP sponsors make a request through the state's ETP Unit or TWC's Office of Apprenticeship and provide their information to TWC for inclusion on the ETPL.

Once included on the statewide ETPL, a RAP is available for WIOA participants in Texas. Boards may use their WIOA formula funds to issue Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for the instructional portion of the programs. Additionally, Boards are encouraged to consider funding the work component of RAPs through on-the-job training contracts. To promote informed consumer choice, Boards provide access to the full statewide ETPL, ensuring that program participants that are approved for training can choose the program that best meets their needs.

Since 2016, TWC has received $31.6 million in apprenticeship expansion grant funding to increase and integrate the RAP model into new occupations and new populations, while further increasing RAP opportunities in which Boards may use their local formula funds. Since January 1, 2023, TWC's use of apprenticeship expansion grant funding and its outreach efforts has aided in the development of over 40 new RAPs and the expansion of over 70 existing RAPs. There have been 2,447 new apprentices within these existing and new RAPs. The most recent Texas Expansion grant ended on June 30, 2023.

TWC's Commissioners and Office of Apprenticeship promote the Apprenticeship Texas model to Boards, employers, and industry groups throughout the year, including at TWC's annual Apprenticeship Texas conference.

Boards use allocated WIOA formula funds to train individuals based on training eligibility, need, skills, and interests. Work-based training is a priority for the State and Boards. The "earn while you learn" model helps participants gain a hands-on education while earning a salary. Boards promote pre-apprenticeship programs—such as Austin's MC3 building trades

program or Houston's Trio Electric training program—to their younger community not only as a step toward apprenticeship programs but as a step toward financial security.

The apprenticeship program benefits both employers and job seekers by providing training opportunities for workers to gain well-paying jobs with promising futures. TWC coordinates the state's apprenticeship training program, applying approximately $1 million in WIOA statewide-discretionary funds to supplement state general revenue appropriations. The Texas Legislature authorized $20 million for the FY'24 and FY'25 biennium to bolster the state's commitment to apprenticeships as a viable option for employers and workers. In Fiscal Year 2023, 7,410 apprentices participated in the Ch. 133 apprenticeship training program, trending toward the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) performance measure of 10,207.

Healthcare Apprenticeship Programs

In February 2022, TWC announced the allocation of $15 million for the development of a statewide registered apprenticeship initiative for the health care industry to increase the number of career pathway opportunities for registered nurses (RNs) and health care professionals in the state. The Statewide Health Care Registered Apprenticeship Initiative was designed to offer employers an innovative approach to hiring and training future nurses and health care staff by expanding opportunities for students who wish to pursue career pathways to RN certification and other health care fields.

According to TWC's Labor Market Information department, nursing has been a top demand job posting for the past 10 years in Texas. Texas continues to address the nursing shortage through apprenticeship opportunities and focused training. By 2032, it is anticipated Texas will need 57,012 additional RNs in the Texas labor market. The initiative establishes short-term pathways for entry into health care professions by expediting application processes and coordinating across multiple workforce areas.

The initiative is expected to address industry needs, help solve the RN shortage, and build on the foundations of:

- providing paid RN clinicals;

- convening workshops that include subject matter experts representing health care providers, higher education, and workforce to explore ways to support pathway credentialing for Certified Nurse Assistants, Licensed Vocational Nurses, Associate Degree in Nursing to Registered Nurse, and Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing;

- identifying, mapping, and incorporating credentials that are relevant and of value to the health care industry and are also stackable and portable; and

- developing articulated crosswalks, thereby enabling students who have completed registered apprenticeship programs to earn college credit.

Apprenticeships in Middle Skills Careers

In February 2022, TWC announced the allocation of $4 million to support apprenticeships in middle skills careers, which are defined as occupations that require some education beyond high school but less than a four-year degree. As the Texas economy continues to grow, employment demand has dramatically increased for individuals in middle-skills occupations.

Through this initiative, TWC supports the creation and expansion of RAPs in key industry areas that are identified as in especially high demand, including automotive service technicians and mechanics; production machinists, assemblers, and fabricators; and logistics management and supply chain analysts. To support employers through this initiative, TWC's Office of Apprenticeship has awarded funds to help employers secure DOL registration and defray costs related to curricula development, related instruction, or training for apprentices (in-person, online, or hybrid), training supplies for apprentices, and instructor costs or mentor activities. This initiative is designed to specifically benefit those employers with locations in multiple areas of the state.

3. TRAINING PROVIDER ELIGIBILITY PROCEDURE

Provide the procedure, eligibility criteria, and information requirements for determining training provider initial and continued eligibility, including Registered Apprenticeship programs (WIOA Section 122).

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) establishes requirements regarding the provision of information and criteria for initial and continued eligibility for inclusion on the Statewide Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL). The requirements ensure both the quality of the training programs and the opportunity for customer-informed choice regarding the available programs.

The Boards continue to solicit training and education providers to submit applications for eligibility to receive WIOA funds for training and educational programs through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), which are available only to ETPL programs. Eligible Training Providers (ETPs) must support statewide targeted occupations and lead to a recognized secondary or postsecondary credential, measurable skill gain, or employment. The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) solicits Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) sponsors at least annually for inclusion on the Statewide ETPL. This solicitation serves to ensure the continuation of a robust list of training providers throughout the state and in rural areas, including distance-learning options.

All training providers are required to submit information and criteria, as established under WIOA §122(d) through (g). Providers of training programs, including RAPs, must provide all required information for initial eligibility for each program of study directly to local Boards or TWC, respectively. Except for RAPs, which are provided automatic inclusion on the Statewide ETPL, Boards review and certify training providers and programs to determine whether the minimum requirements established by the Commission are met. Following local review, Boards submit training provider and program information to TWC for final review before the information is added to the Statewide ETPL. The Statewide ETPL is published on TWC's website. ETPs are required to submit student-level data directly to TWC annually, in July. Continued eligibility determinations take place on a biennial basis, using the annually provided student-level data.

TWC is engaged in ongoing enhancements to the ETP system to further align with WIOA requirements and improve the application and eligibility determination processes for providers of training programs. TWC actively revises its ETP guidance for Boards to include information on accessibility for individuals with barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities.

Initial Eligibility Criteria

Prior to inclusion on the Statewide ETPL, except for RAPs, a training provider must submit general information through the ETPS to its local Board, as determined by the primary campus location. The required general information includes:

- data required by ETA-9171;

- contact information; and

- other information useful for the Statewide ETPL, such as:

    o a description of each training program offered by the provider;

    o the presence of onsite child care for campuses;

    o alternate hours for trainings; and

    o campus accessibility.

In addition to the general information listed above, a provider must submit to the Board evidence of each program's partnership with a business. The Board must ensure that each program aligns with an in-demand or targeted occupation in the state and is appropriately licensed or exempt in accordance with the Texas Education Code.

Following Board review, providers must submit student-level information, including Social Security numbers (SSNs) and credential outcomes where applicable, for all students connected to the trainings during the most recently reported ETP Performance Year (PY). TWC uses SSN data to gather WIOA performance indicator–related data for programs beyond the credential rate information provided by the training providers. During initial eligibility determination, TWC may review existing programs for a provider, or exempt from student reporting for new programs, those which have not been delivered to any students at the time of application.

Continued Eligibility Criteria

Continued eligibility is determined by using the provider's information from the most recent annual reporting period. The annual reporting information provided by ETPs includes information on alternate hours of trainings (for employed individuals) and accessibility-related features of campuses and programs. This information is included on the Statewide ETPL. Texas maintains a robust system of training providers and programs that includes hundreds of online training programs available to students anywhere in the state, including in rural areas. This guidance is available at TWC's Policy and Guidance web page.

Continued eligibility for the Statewide ETPL requires that programs, except RAPs:

- submit evidence of a partnership with a business;

- are aligned with an in-demand or targeted occupation in the state;

- are appropriately licensed, or exempt from licensure, in accordance with the Texas Education Code; and

- on or before the required reporting deadline, submit annual reports that:

- provide TWC with data needed to determine performance outcomes related to WIOA employment and credential performance indicators;
- identify whether a program leads to a recognized postsecondary credential; and
- indicate the overall quality of provider programs.

Annual Reporting

All providers, except RAPs, are required to report information, including performance outcomes, on each program included on the Statewide ETPL.

Annual reports require providers to submit, or verify, the following information:

- General provider, location, and program information (including contacts)
- Compliance with WIOA provisions and regulations
- Acknowledgment of TWC's Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) authority
- Student-level data for all students participating in programs during the previous PY
- Other information that TWC determines necessary or useful for the Statewide ETPL

Such information is required to be submitted no later than TWC's deadline each year, usually the end of July. Providers requiring assistance with completing these reports are encouraged to reach out to TWC for direct assistance before the reporting deadline. Reporting extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis to providers/programs when requested before the reporting deadline. TWC consider requests related to circumstances beyond the provider's control, such as:

- natural disasters;
- national emergencies; and
- unexpected personnel or technology issues (provided these occurred within 30 days or fewer from the reporting deadline).

Providers failing to report information on or before the deadline or extended deadline will have affected programs removed from the Statewide ETPL as described in the Removal from the Statewide ETPL section.

TWC accepts schools in compliance with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) as eligible for the Statewide ETPL once they submit information required by WIOA. Additionally, proprietary schools in Texas must be licensed (or exempted from such licensure) by TWC's Career Schools and Colleges (CSC) Department. This licensure includes annual student performance reporting. TWC collaborates with TEA and THECB in a Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative known as 60X30TX. As part of this project, integrated reporting on all Texas schools and student outcomes is made available publicly on THECB's website.

Performance Targets

Beginning November 26, 2018, TWC removed minimum performance standards for programs from eligibility standards but continues to collect this information during required annual reporting. TWC is evaluating this data for purposes of proposing new state performance standards. TWC continues to require providers, except RAPs, to submit performance outcomes annually. Program outcomes are included on the Statewide ETPL for all programs, in aggregate form. (Any program with five or fewer student records to report in a single year will not have data published to protect the individual's information.)

Removal from the Statewide ETPL

Training providers may request voluntary removal of training programs from the Statewide ETPL at any time for programs they no longer offer or wish to maintain training programs on the Statewide ETPL. Providers, including RAP sponsors, that violate WIOA Title I provisions or WIOA regulations (including 29 CFR Part 38), or are found to have intentionally supplied inaccurate or false information, will be removed from the Statewide ETPL at such time as the violation is discovered. For such substantial violations, removal will result in ineligibility for the Statewide ETPL for a minimum of two years. Providers that fail to provide required annual performance and other information for programs, will have such programs, except RAPs, removed from the Statewide ETPL.

Providers may appeal involuntary removal decisions to the Board or TWC, as appropriate, in accordance with TWC's existing appeals process as set forth in TWC rules, Integrated Complaints, Hearings, and Appeals (40 TAC Part 20 Chapter 823). Providers may appeal Board decisions to TWC. TWC decisions are final.

Registered Apprenticeship Programs

Apprenticeship programs that are registered with the DOL Office of Apprenticeship are automatically eligible for inclusion on the Statewide ETPL. RAPs are given an opportunity to request inclusion on the Statewide ETPL directly to TWC. RAP sponsors must provide basic program information, which includes general descriptions of the sponsor and training sites, contact information, program details, and general cost information. This data is used by Boards to inform participants of training expectations prior to referral. RAPs are not required to provide performance or outcome data to TWC. To ensure a robust system of consumer choice, RAP sponsors may choose to provide such data. Data submission will not delay, or otherwise affect, a RAP's inclusion on the Statewide ETPL.

Except where WIOA violations occur, RAPs will remain on the Statewide ETPL for as long as the program is registered with DOL or until they request to be removed.

4. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR FOR THE ADULT PRIORITY OF SERVICE REQUIREMENT IN WIOA SECTION 134 (C)(3)(E) THAT REQUIRES AMERICAN JOB CENTER STAFF, WHEN USING WIOA ADULT PROGRAM FUNDS TO PROVIDE INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER SERVICES AND TRAINING SERVICES, TO GIVE PRIORITY OF SERVICE TO RECIPIENTS OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS, AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT (INCLUDING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS).

Individualized career services and training services are provided on a priority basis, regardless of funding levels, to:

- public assistance recipients;

- other low-income adults; and

- individuals who are basic skills deficient.

The individuals who receive these services are prioritized accordingly:

1. Eligible veterans and eligible spouses (as defined in WD Letter 01-21) who also are recipients of public assistance, low-income, and/or basic-skills deficient

2. Foster youth and former foster youth, up to age 23, who also are recipients of public assistance, low-income, and/or basic skills deficient

3. All other individuals who are recipients of public assistance, low-income, and/or basic skills deficient

4. All other eligible veterans and eligible spouses

5. All other foster youth and former foster youth, up to age 23

6. All other individuals, including Boards' local priority groups

TWC ensures that local Board policies are in place to guarantee that priority is provided for the populations described above. Additionally, TWC allows Boards the flexibility to create policies to give priority to other individuals, if priority for those individuals come after the first five groups described above.

For example, Boards may establish local priority groups for older workers (age 40 or older) or employed individuals whose income is below the Board's self-sufficiency level. These local priority groups do not replace the statutory priority given to individuals who are recipients of public assistance, low-income, or basic skills deficient. The Board's local priority groups must fall within Group 6, "All other individuals, including local Boards' local priority groups" as listed above.

Relevant state guidance includes:

- WD Letter 01-21, issued January 22, 2021, titled "Applying Priority of Service and Identifying and Documenting Veterans and Transitioning Service Members."
- WD Letter 43-11, Change 2, issued February 19, 2020, titled "Priority of Service for Eligible Foster Youth—Update."

5. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S CRITERIA REGARDING LOCAL AREA TRANSFER OF FUNDS BETWEEN THE ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAMS

TWC established a policy, consistent with WIOA provisions, that allows Boards the flexibility to transfer up to 100 percent of funds between WIOA adult and dislocated worker allocations. The policy states that Boards that are under a Technical Assistance Plan or Corrective Action Plan for an adult or dislocated worker program may be subject to limitations on the amounts that they can transfer.

6. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S POLICY ON WIOA AND TAA CO-ENROLLMENT AND WHETHER AND HOW OFTEN THIS POLICY IS DISSEMINATED TO THE LOCAL

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARDS AND REQUIRED ONE-STOP PARTNERS TRADE ACT SEC. 239(F), SEC. 235, 20 CFR 618.325, 20 CFR 618.824(A)(3)(I).

To ensure a seamless delivery of services that is most suited to their needs, TWC requires Boards to coenroll trade-affected workers in WIOA Dislocated Worker (DW) services whenever eligible. In September 2021, WD Letter 18-21, issued September 27, 2021, and titled "Coenrollment in the Trade Adjustment Assistance and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Dislocated Worker Programs," laid out the requirements that Boards must determine the eligibility of potential trade-affected workers for WIOA DW program services and provide career and training services, as applicable. Additionally, following TAA petition certification, local Workforce Solutions Office staff must enroll trade-affected workers in the WIOA DW program and provide appropriate services throughout the duration of TAA program participation. TWC has developed an expedited WIOA eligibility determination process for such trade-affected workers.

7. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S FORMAL STRATEGY TO ENSURE THAT WIOA AND TAA CO-ENROLLED PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE NECESSARY FUNDED BENEFITS AND SERVICES. TRADE ACT SEC. 239(F), SEC. 235, 20 CFR 618.816(C).

To promote the integration of employment and training services as envisioned by WIOA, TWC encourages trade-affected workers to access all appropriate services to help them reenter the workforce through their local Workforce Solutions Office. Services include labor market information, training referrals, career planning, and follow-up services.

TWC Chapter 849 Employment and Training Services for Dislocated Workers rules detail Texas' formal strategy to ensure statewide availability of services to TAA participants. Boards have established policies that outline their trade service strategies to assist trade-affected workers in obtaining suitable employment as an alternative to training referrals; promote the use of WIOA career services to support successful reemployment; and help them in employment retention and career advancement.

WD Letter 12-22, issued July 13, 2022, and titled "Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program Sunset," ensures that Boards continue to administer the TAA program and serve trade-affected workers according to statutory and guidance provided by DOL during the TAA program sunset. Furthermore, TAA staff members call and email previously certified workers who have not received TAA services. TAA staff members review TAA outreach reports to identify participants who had previously attended a rapid response event, are dislocated workers, and are trade eligible. This allows dislocated workers to receive TAA training and coenroll in the WIOA program for additional support.

https://www.twc.texas.gov/sites/default/files/ogc/docs/rules-chapter-849-employment-and-training-services-for-dislocated-workers-eligible-for-trade-benefits-twc.pdf

8. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PROCESS FOR FAMILIARIZING ONE-STOP STAFF WITH THE TAA PROGRAM. 20 CFR 618.804(J), 20 CFR 618.305.

TWC staff uses a variety of methods to ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff are familiar with the TAA program. TWC staff provides programmatic and skill-building information through Board calls, webinars, training events, TWC conferences, and

customized technical assistance. Most recently, TWC staff published an online webinar to provide on-demand access to an overview of the program.

<div align="center">C. YOUTH PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.</div>

With respect to youth workforce investment activities authorized in section 129 of WIOA, States should describe their strategies that will support the implementation of youth activities under WIOA. State's must-

<div align="center">1. IDENTIFY THE STATE-DEVELOPED CRITERIA TO BE USED BY LOCAL BOARDS IN AWARDING GRANTS OR CONTRACTS FOR YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES AND DESCRIBE HOW THE LOCAL BOARDS WILL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE ABILITY OF THE PROVIDERS TO MEET PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES BASED ON PRIMARY INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YOUTH PROGRAM AS DESCRIBED IN SECTION 116(B)(2)(A)(II) OF WIOA.[11] FURTHER, INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE STATE ASSISTS LOCAL AREAS IN DETERMINING WHETHER TO CONTRACT FOR SERVICES OR TO PROVIDE SOME OR ALL OF THE PROGRAM ELEMENTS DIRECTLY.</div>

[11] Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(V)

State-Developed Criteria in Award of Grants or Contracts for Youth Workforce Investment Activities

TWC allocates youth formula funds to Boards, which, in turn, contract with service providers to deliver services to youth in their respective workforce areas. Boards are required to meet all federal and state programmatic requirements.

Boards will ensure that:

- contracts include clearly defined goals, outputs, and measurable outcomes that directly relate to program objectives;

- contracts include clearly defined sanctions or penalties for noncompliance with the contract's terms and conditions; and

- the contractor has implemented a formal program using a risk assessment methodology to monitor compliance with financial and performance requirements under the contract, including a determination of whether performance objectives have been achieved.

Board Performance Accountability

TWC maintains a rigorous performance and accountability system that holds Boards accountable for their performance as it pertains to the youth program and other workforce programs.

Contracting for Services

Texas Government Code § 2308.264 prohibits Boards from directly providing workforce training and services within the workforce development area. This restriction is further codified in TWC rule §801.29 (40 TAC Part 20, Chapter 801).

2. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE ASSISTS LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS IN ACHIEVING EQUITABLE RESULTS FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL AND IN-SCHOOL YOUTH. DESCRIBE PROMISING PRACTICES OR PARTNERSHIP MODELS THAT LOCAL AREAS ARE IMPLEMENTING AND THE STATE'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING AND SCALING THOSE MODELS WITHIN THE STATE FOR BOTH IN-SCHOOL AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH.

The wide range of barriers faced by individuals within the out-of-school youth (OSY) population poses a challenge to workforce and youth service providers seeking to establish a comprehensive framework that positions the workforce system as an on-ramp for training, education, and supportive services needed to enter a career pathway. Helping OSY successfully transition into school and work requires TWC to collaborate and coordinate with local workforce development boards (Boards), the Texas Education Agency (TEA), adult education providers, institutions of higher education (IHEs), community-based organizations (CBOs), businesses, and industry leaders. Because this population often seeks assistive services from public or private CBOs, relationships are developed with child welfare agencies, social service organizations, group homes, probation and parole officers, and local schools to find and engage at-risk youth before they become disconnected. While their functions may vary based on each community's needs, every entity has a role to play, and no single entity can effectively identify and serve OSY on its own. Therefore, it is essential that programs serving OSY cultivate strong partnerships and a sense of shared responsibility.

TWC aims to position Boards and local workforce systems as entry points to career pathways for OSY, while subsequently providing the education, training, and support services needed for Texans facing barriers to employment to achieve career success. To achieve such goals, TWC provides Boards with the resources and guidance they need to construct efficient service delivery systems that enable participants to access a comprehensive menu of services that are provided by dedicated service providers. Improved alignment among providers presents a dual benefit to both providers and participants by making services more accessible and making service delivery more efficient by braiding resources of local programs that serve OSY and reducing duplicative services among organizations. Boards are thus uniquely positioned to address the challenge of establishing an integrated service delivery infrastructure by developing and strengthening partnerships with organizations that currently serve the OSY population.

To achieve their educational and career goals, OSY need services that help them tackle substantial barriers. Youth who have dropped out of school often face significant challenges to obtaining educational success including homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse, and teen pregnancy and parenting. These barriers often cause youth to disconnect from school, feel inadequate, and struggle to return even after overcoming adversity. To be successful, OSY-specific programs must not only address academic and skills development needs, but also offer solutions to the socio-emotional, economic, health, and other barriers that these young people continue to face. As a result, Boards must target services based on individual needs,

create supportive learning experiences and environments, and enable the development of positive relationships with caring adults who can act as mentors. To better serve these youth, Boards have designed services that:

- acknowledge the problems and characteristics of participant;

- outreach and engage with the growing out-of-school youth population;

- obtain and use information concerning the conditions of employment affecting youth and labor laws restricting their employment;

- develop and maintain effective relationships with schools, colleges, and other training providers; and

- develop employment opportunities with career potential for youth.

To meet the individual needs of OSY, specialized programs offer customized pathways to education and employment that provide multiple entry and exit points. This includes a variety of options for recovering credits, earning a high school diploma, gaining job skills, and transitioning into postsecondary education and training. In many cases, Boards and their partners work together to develop pathways that go beyond traditional high school. Individualized plans increase a youth's chances of skill mastery and overall chances of success. Such plans consider a youth's unique academic, career, social, and emotional needs as well as their interests to guide them toward reengaging in educational and career opportunities.

Outreach specialists dedicated to the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW) community collaborate with Boards to inform youth in this targeted population of educational, training, and employment services. Concurrently, local youth-serving agencies facilitate counseling of MSFW youth on programs to complete their secondary education and prepare for economically sustaining employment.

Local Area Best Practices

Engagement with Advisory Boards

At Workforce Solutions South Plains, designated staff serve on a variety of advisory boards throughout the local community such as the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), local Chambers, Goodwill, and the Adult Education Coalition. These memberships help South Plains develop and maintain community relationships with agency partners. Additionally, Youth Program staff maintain ongoing collaborations with entities such as:

- Adult Education Coalition
- Migrant Programs
- Training Providers
- Juvenile Probation
- Catholic Charities
- Buckner Children and Family Services
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- School District's At-Risk/Drop-Out Coordinators/ISD Officers

Youth staff maintain partnerships with agencies such as Buckner Children and Family Services and refer youth to these agencies to address specific barriers for special populations and to access services included as part of the 14 essential service elements. Buckner's serves youth aging out of foster care. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program provides services to youth with disabilities. The partner agencies collaborate with the Board to ensure that all 14 youth program elements are available to participating youth.

Board-Led Advisory Group

Workforce Solutions North Texas hosts a Youth Advisory Group that includes Board members from school districts, the Wichita Adult Literacy Council, and Communities in Schools, in addition to representatives from other organizations including Midwestern State University and Region 9 Education Service Center, to hear reports from the workforce center's WIOA Youth Case Manager and coordinate youth activities. Successful models of activities that have come out of this advisory group include the Transition Fair, which annually attracts hundreds of high school juniors and seniors with disabilities to visit with employers and training providers and learn about area resources and options for work and education after high school. The annual Youth Career Fair provides career pathway information to eighth graders. Additionally, Careers in Texas funding has been used to introduce eighth grade students to hands-on skills training, visits with employers and their vehicles, including ambulances, fire trucks, police tactical vehicles, as well as robotic equipment.

3. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE ASSISTS LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS IN IMPLEMENTING INNOVATIVE MODELS FOR DELIVERING YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING EFFECTIVE WAYS LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS CAN MAKE AVAILABLE THE 14 PROGRAM ELEMENTS DESCRIBED IN WIOA SECTION 129(C)(2); AND EXPLAIN HOW LOCAL AREAS CAN ENSURE WORK EXPERIENCE, INCLUDING QUALITY PRE-APPRENTICESHIP AND REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP, IS PRIORITIZED AS A KEY ELEMENT WITHIN A BROADER CAREER PATHWAYS STRATEGY.

[12] Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(I)

Texas has adopted the purposes of WIOA, including fostering integrated systems, coordinating services, implementing career pathways, and engaging with businesses to benefit all customers, particularly youth. TWC recognizes that career and personal success is a result of lifelong learning and continued growth in skills and abilities.

Each Board develops a strategic and operational plan for implementing WIOA youth programs that is consistent with the Governor's vision of strengthening academic and future workplace outcomes for youth who are facing challenges and barriers to success. Boards design activities that are consistent with the specific eligibility criteria for the two groups as described in the WIOA Title I youth formula-funded program: in-school youth (ISY) and out-of-school youth (OSY).

TWC provides guidance to the Boards as to how the 14 program elements are made available to youth participants. To ensure such availability, TWC requires Boards to develop policies that identify:

- who will be providing each of the youth program elements;
- how referrals to youth service providers will be made and documented; and
- the documentation process for the provision of youth services.

The goal of such a policy is to ensure that Boards conduct a thorough analysis of local gaps in youth-serving programs and can identify the most appropriate education, training, and/or employment activities, for each youth participant.

Additionally, Boards ensure that Workforce Solutions Office staff:

- provides youth participants with written information regarding the full array of services that may help them transition into the workforce, as provided through the Board, providers, and partners;
- saves a copy of the document, as signed by the youth participant and case manager, within the youth participant's case file;
- provides the youth participant with a copy of the signed document; and
- refers the youth participant to appropriate training and educational programs that have the capacity to serve them either on a sequential or concurrent basis.

Boards are required to provide the following services, in accordance with 20 CFR §681.460 and WIOA §129(c)(2):

- Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent or postsecondary credential

- Alternative secondary school services or dropout recovery services

- Paid and unpaid work experiences that have academic and occupational education as a component, such as summer and non-seasonal employment, pre-apprenticeship programs, internships and job shadowing, and on-the-job training, in the private for-profit or nonprofit sectors

- Occupational skills training, which includes priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials in in-demand industries or occupations in the local area

- Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation

- Leadership development opportunities, including community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors

- Support services, such as linkages to community services, assistance with transportation, child and dependent care, assistance with housing, needs-related payments, assistance with educational testing, reasonable accommodations for youth with disabilities, referrals to health care, and assistance with uniforms or other appropriate work attire and tools

- Adult mentoring for at least 12 months

- Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after completing participation

- Comprehensive guidance and counseling, such as drug and alcohol abuse, as well as referrals to counseling, as appropriate

- Financial literacy education

- Entrepreneurial skills training

- Services providing labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services

- Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training

Every individual that meets the designated eligibility criteria for ISY or OSY may participate in the above services if the youth is formally enrolled in the program and participation is appropriate for the participant per their assessment and individual service strategy.

Continuous performance assessment, technical assistance, and monitoring are fundamental to the Boards' compliance with the design framework service of local youth programs, as proposed in 20 CFR §681.420.

4. PROVIDE THE LANGUAGE CONTAINED IN THE STATE POLICY FOR "REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO ENTER OR COMPLETE AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT" CRITERION FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(III)(VIII) AND FOR "REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO COMPLETE AN EDUCATION PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT" CRITERION FOR IN-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(IV)(VII). IF THE STATE DOES NOT HAVE A POLICY, DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THAT LOCAL AREAS WILL HAVE A POLICY FOR THESE CRITERIA.

TWC provides Boards the flexibility to define the "additional assistance to complete an educational program, or to obtain or retain employment" criterion, as set forth in WIOA. The state policy is as follows:

"The Board must establish definitions and eligibility documentation requirements for the 'requires additional assistance to complete an educational program, or to obtain or retain employment' criterion of ISY and OSY eligibility."

D. SINGLE-AREA STATE REQUIREMENTS

In States where there is only one local workforce investment area, the governor serves as both the State and local chief elected official. In such cases, the State must submit any information required in the local plan (WIOA section 106(d)(2)). States with a single workforce area must include—

1. ANY COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD THAT REPRESENT DISAGREEMENT WITH THE PLAN. (WIOA SECTION 108(D)(3).)

2. THE ENTITY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISBURSAL OF GRANT FUNDS, AS DETERMINED BY THE GOVERNOR, IF DIFFERENT FROM THAT FOR THE STATE. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(15).)

N/A -- this section does not apply to Texas.

3. A DESCRIPTION OF THE TYPE AND AVAILABILITY OF WIOA TITLE I YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND SUCCESSFUL MODELS, INCLUDING FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(9).)

N/A -- this section does not apply to Texas.

4. A DESCRIPTION OF THE ROLES AND RESOURCE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE ONE-STOP PARTNERS.

N/A -- this section does not apply to Texas.

5. THE COMPETITIVE PROCESS USED TO AWARD THE SUBGRANTS AND CONTRACTS FOR TITLE I ACTIVITIES.

N/A -- this section does not apply to Texas.

6. HOW TRAINING SERVICES OUTLINED IN SECTION 134 WILL BE PROVIDED THROUGH INDIVIDUAL TRAINING ACCOUNTS AND/OR THROUGH CONTRACTS, AND HOW SUCH TRAINING APPROACHES WILL BE COORDINATED. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL MEET INFORMED CUSTOMER CHOICE REQUIREMENTS REGARDLESS OF TRAINING APPROACH.

N/A -- this section does not apply to Texas.

7. HOW THE STATE BOARD, IN FULFILLING LOCAL BOARD FUNCTIONS, WILL COORDINATE TITLE I ACTIVITIES WITH THOSE ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE II. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE BOARD WILL CARRY OUT THE REVIEW OF LOCAL APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED UNDER TITLE II CONSISTENT WITH WIOA SECS. 107(D)(11)(A) AND (B)(I) AND WIOA SEC. 232.

N/A -- this section does not apply to Texas.

8. COPIES OF EXECUTED COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WHICH DEFINE HOW ALL LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDERS WILL CARRY OUT THE REQUIREMENTS FOR INTEGRATION OF AND ACCESS TO THE ENTIRE SET OF SERVICES AVAILABLE IN THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM, INCLUDING COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH ENTITIES ADMINISTERING REHABILITATION ACT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.

N/A -- this section does not apply to Texas.

E. WAIVER REQUESTS (OPTIONAL)

States wanting to request waivers as part of their title I-B Operational Plan must include a waiver plan that includes the following information for each waiver requested:

1. IDENTIFIES THE STATUTORY OR REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR WHICH A WAIVER IS REQUESTED AND THE GOALS THAT THE STATE OR LOCAL AREA, AS APPROPRIATE, INTENDS TO ACHIEVE AS A RESULT OF THE WAIVER AND HOW THOSE GOALS RELATE TO THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

2. DESCRIBES THE ACTIONS THAT THE STATE OR LOCAL AREA, AS APPROPRIATE, HAS UNDERTAKEN TO REMOVE STATE OR LOCAL STATUTORY OR REGULATORY BARRIERS;

3. DESCRIBES THE GOALS OF THE WAIVER AND THE EXPECTED PROGRAMMATIC OUTCOMES IF THE REQUEST IS GRANTED;

4. DESCRIBES HOW THE WAIVER WILL ALIGN WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S POLICY PRIORITIES, SUCH AS:

A. SUPPORTING EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT;

B. CONNECTING EDUCATION AND TRAINING STRATEGIES;

C. SUPPORTING WORK-BASED LEARNING;

D. IMPROVING JOB AND CAREER RESULTS, AND

E. OTHER GUIDANCE ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT.

5. DESCRIBES THE INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER, INCLUDING HOW THE WAIVER WILL IMPACT SERVICES FOR DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS OR INDIVIDUALS WITH MULTIPLE BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT; AND

6. DESCRIBES THE PROCESSES USED TO:

A. MONITOR THE PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE WAIVER;

B. PROVIDE NOTICE TO ANY LOCAL BOARD AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER;

C. PROVIDE ANY LOCAL BOARD AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON THE REQUEST;

D. ENSURE MEANINGFUL PUBLIC COMMENT, INCLUDING COMMENT BY BUSINESS AND ORGANIZED LABOR, ON THE WAIVER.

E. COLLECT AND REPORT INFORMATION ABOUT WAIVER OUTCOMES IN THE STATE'S WIOA ANNUAL REPORT.

7. THE MOST RECENT DATA AVAILABLE REGARDING THE RESULTS AND OUTCOMES OBSERVED THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EXISTING WAIVER, IN CASES WHERE THE STATE SEEKS RENEWAL OF A PREVIOUSLY APPROVED WAIVER.

WAIVER REQUEST 1

Youth Individual Training Accounts

1. The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the State would like to waive

TWC is seeking a waiver of the requirement under WIOA rule at 20 CFR §681.550, which limits the use of individual training accounts (ITAs) for youth participants to out-of-school youth (OSY) ages 16 to 24. TWC is seeking a waiver of this rule to extend the use of ITAs to in-school youth (ISY).

2. Actions the State has taken to remove state or local barriers

There are no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers that would impede implementation of the requested waiver.

3. State strategic goal(s) and Department of Labor priorities (e.g. expansion of apprenticeship, improved employer engagement, etc.) supported by the waiver

This request is for a statewide waiver to grant ISY ages 16–21 the same participant choice options that OSY have by allowing workforce area staff to use ITAs when appropriate to provide ISY with education and training.

On September 20, 2022, DOLETA approved this waiver request for Program Years (PY) 2022 and 2023 (July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2024). Of the ISY receiving training services, 35 percent in PY '21 and 47 percent in PY'22 were funded through ITAs.

Boards currently use or have used ITAs to fund training for ISYs enrolled in the following programs:

- Welding and welding technology

- Nursing, including CNA, LVN, and RN

- TTDR 500 Tractor Trailer

- Pre-apprenticeship programs, including plumbing and electrical

- HVAC

- Accounting

- Emergency Medical Technician

Boards view this waiver as an opportunity to promote apprenticeship programs and the use of pre-apprenticeship standards, with a focus on nontraditional industries and occupations. This waiver will also help ISY living in rural workforce areas to overcome the unique economic and employment challenges facing rural and often remote Texas communities.

Once a youth enrolls in a WIOA program as an ISY, the youth maintains ISY status until they exit the program. Excluding ISY from receiving ITAs undermines WIOA's goals to expand program options, increase program flexibility, and enhance customer choice. DOL states in the preamble to the WIOA Final Rule that ISY age 18 or older may access ITAs through the adult program. This is problematic in that it excludes ISY from entering ITA-funded educational and training programs that may be critical to ISY who drop out or are at risk of dropping out of school. Youth caught in this gap are susceptible to leaving the workforce program and not achieving the education, training, and certifications that develop the skills employers require and that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

Successful program participation most often results in individuals who exit and no longer require TWC's services. However, some participants continue to need services. These individuals are best served not by exit and re-enrollment in adult programs, but by continued service through the current program and with help by staff who know the individual and their needs.

This waiver would permit Boards to provide certain ISY with ITAs. Such flexibility would provide workforce area staff with the necessary flexibility to use youth formula funds, when appropriate, to meet the individual training and employment needs of certain at-risk ISY participants without delays. Such delays may be caused by untimely procurement processes to contract with training providers through standard youth channels. Without access to ITAs for these youth, Boards may need to contract with a school for delivery of one program to a single individual. Boards would be required to track performance for ISYs using ITAs.

Five of Texas' 28 Boards used this flexibility to fund ISY in training during 2019. More than 25 ISY participants benefitted from ITA-funded (dual-credit, apprenticeship, or stand-alone) training programs that focused on skilled trades such as nursing and other health care careers. Additionally, seven more Boards had plans to implement strategies using ITA-funded trainings in early 2020. These programs largely focus on dual-credit and CTE programs through secondary schools, as well as engagement with youth in need of financial assistance who do not qualify for other financial aid programs.

Approval of this waiver request would allow TWC to meet the following state goals:

- **Increase ISYs' access to educational and training programs:** Providing Boards with the flexibility to use ITAs to provide education and training for ISY would increase the number of available workforce opportunities that are provided to youth and help at-risk ISY pursue education and training that would lead to meaningful work and economic self-sufficiency.

- **Decrease delays in service delivery:** By providing the flexibility to use the programs that are made available through the statewide Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) for all youth, Boards will be able to connect students to necessary trainings. Delays caused by procurement may result in participants missing enrollment deadlines and being required to wait a full semester to begin training programs.

This waiver request aligns with DOL's policy priorities in that it:

- increases youths' access to and opportunities for the education, training, employment, and support services that they need;

- ensures that at-risk ISY do not fall into a regulatory gap that could prevent them from receiving the education and training necessary to secure meaningful work and economic self-sufficiency; and supports WIOA's goals to expand program options, increase program flexibility, and enhance customer choice.

4. Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver

Disrupting a youth participant's access to education and training services increases the probability that the youth will not complete the program. The approval of this waiver would enable Boards to provide seamless service continuity to ISY who drop out of school or who

are at risk of dropping out of school. Through this waiver, ISY who drop out of school would not be required to exit the youth program and then wait 90 days to re-enroll as an OSY.

By eliminating the 90-day period between ISY exit and OSY or adult enrollment, TWC expects that the waiver will be able to increase the number of at-risk ISY who will be able to enroll in and complete education and training programs.

TWC projects more than 25 percent of Texas' ISY enrolled in post-secondary training programs will use ITAs to fund training from PY'24 through PY'25.

5. Individuals, groups, or populations benefiting from the waiver

ISY who drop out of school or who are at risk of dropping out of school.

6. How the State plans to monitor waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information

Upon DOL's approval of this waiver request, TWC will communicate the waiver allowance to Boards and workforce system partner programs. TWC will monitor progress under this waiver by reviewing monthly performance reports that are submitted by the Boards, through regularly scheduled conference calls with Board executive directors, and through the agency's monitoring and performance accountability system. TWC will report waiver outcomes in the state's WIOA Annual Report. If the state requests renewal of this waiver, then TWC will provide the most recent outcomes data available.

7. Assurance of State's posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected Local Workforce Development Boards

TWC included this waiver request as part of the agency's 2024–2027 WIOA Combined State Plan when the plan was presented for public comment from December 14, 2023, to January 13, 2024.

Before posting the plan for public comment, TWC notified all Boards and sought their input regarding this waiver request.

No public comments related to this waiver were received during the 30-day comment period.

WAIVER REQUEST 2

Local Performance Accountability Flexibility

1. The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the State would like to waive

TWC is seeking a waiver from WIOA §116(c) pertaining to local performance accountability measures for Subtitle B.

2. Actions the State has taken to remove state or local barriers

There are no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers that would impede implementation of the requested waiver.

3. State strategic goal(s) and Department of Labor priorities (e.g. expansion of apprenticeship, improved employer engagement, etc.) supported by the waiver

TWC requests a waiver from WIOA §116(c) to allow greater flexibility when contracting performance measures with the Boards to allow TWC to promote the further integration of services within Workforce Solutions Offices.

Specifically, TWC is requesting the flexibility to modify Board performance measures. Under this proposed waiver, TWC will continue to track and report the core indicators of performance at both state and Board levels as required by WIOA §116; however, the waiver will give TWC the continued flexibility to select among the statutory Title I measures and develop other measures to be used in Board contracts. TWC is interested in developing Board-contracted measures that support the integration and minimization of local administrative burden while making the statutorily prescribed measures more useful to the Boards.

On September 20, 2022, DOLETA approved this waiver request for PY'22–'23 (July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2024). Prior to WIOA, under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), TWC had a similar waiver that provided flexibility in selecting and developing local performance accountability measures. This waiver was in place for more than 10 years and allowed TWC to use a set of integrated outcome measures that were aligned with the old WIA common measures but were applicable to all participants, regardless of program. Through the Local Accountability Flexibility Waiver, TWC was able to improve program integration and streamline the agency's performance accountability model.

However, the implementation of WIOA resulted in the loss of the waiver as it reintroduced a focus on "siloed" program outcomes rather than purely customer-focused considerations into the Texas workforce system. WIOA's requirement to contract separate indicators of performance by program unnecessarily siloes service delivery and may lead to the development of a barrier to integration that TWC was able to largely remove under the prior waiver.

While this proposed waiver would provide TWC with the flexibility to select Board performance measures, WIOA §116(g) will continue to provide sanctions for a Board's failure to meet any of the WIOA performance measures. Although the approval of this waiver would provide TWC with additional flexibility in determining which measures to formally contract to the Boards, accountability will not be impacted, as TWC would still apply the sanction provisions of WIOA §116(g) to those measures that are formally contracted.

Approval of this waiver request would allow TWC to meet the following state goals:

- **Increase the integration of services to customers:** Boards are responsible for implementing many federal and state workforce development programs, which enables them to integrate service delivery; however, programs are partially driven by how performance is measured. Programs with different measures of success require different means of management. Rather than focusing on employers' needs and finding job seekers to fill those needs, staff must focus on the specific outcome expectations of the program that funds the services that the customer receives.

- **Better alignment in performance accountability at the state, local, and service provider levels:** Because Boards are responsible for numerous workforce development programs, the coenrollment of customers in multiple programs is becoming increasingly commonplace. Therefore, TWC believes that the most

effective way to evaluate Boards and to promote accountability is to use integrated performance measures.

- **Providing greater flexibility to Boards in designing and implementing one-stop services:** By eliminating program-specific measures and applying integrated performance measures across all programs, TWC will promote service-delivery designs that are based on the needs of its customers, including employers, rather than siloed program requirements.

This waiver request aligns with DOL's policy priorities in that it:

- supports employer engagement by promoting service-delivery designs that are based on employer needs;

- improves job and career results by identifying employers' needs and connecting employers with job seekers to meet those needs;

- promotes integrated case management across multiple programs, as WIOA envisions; and

- maintains and enhances state and local performance accountability.

4. Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver

The approval of this waiver would result in the continued administrative relief that would remove barriers to coenrollment and promote more integrated case management across multiple programs, as WIOA envisions. TWC strongly supports the concept that programs with similar outcome objectives should be measured in a similar fashion.

Approval of this waiver would continue to allow the streamlining of administrative processes, resulting in maximized resources focused on employment outcomes.

5. Individuals, groups, or populations benefiting from the waiver

- Employers

- Job seekers

- Incumbent workers

- Workforce area staff

6. How the State plans to monitor waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information

Upon DOL's approval of this waiver request, TWC will communicate the waiver allowance to Boards and workforce system partner programs. TWC will monitor progress under this waiver by reviewing monthly performance reports submitted by the Boards, through regularly scheduled conference calls with Board executive directors, and through the agency's monitoring and performance accountability system. TWC will report waiver outcomes in the state's WIOA Annual Report. If the state requests renewal of this waiver, TWC will provide the most recent outcomes data available.

7. Assurance of State's posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected Local Workforce Development Boards

TWC included this waiver request as part of the agency's 2024–2027 WIOA Combined State Plan when the plan was presented for public comment from December 14, 2023, to January 13, 2024.

Before posting the plan for public comment, TWC notified all Boards and sought their input regarding this waiver request.

No public comments related to this waiver were received during the 30-day comment period.

<center>WAIVER REQUEST 3</center>

Reallocation Waiver

1. The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the State would like to waive

TWC is seeking a waiver from the provisions of WIOA §128(c)(3) and §133(c), regarding reallocation among local areas. This waiver would provide flexibility to TWC in redistributing funds among workforce areas.

2. Actions the State has taken to remove state or local barriers

There are no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers to implementing the requested waiver.

This waiver request was first approved on November 17, 2010 under WIA and then in 2016 under WIOA. The waiver was most recently approved on September 20, 2022, for PY22-23 which has provided TWC with the flexibility to redistribute recaptured funds to workforce areas where the greatest potential may be realized, thus ensuring a more effective and more efficient use of federal funds. TWC will continue to apply this strategy and monitor outcome success.

In June 2006, TWC adopted rules to integrate the agency's deobligation and reallocation policies for all Board-administered funds, thus establishing consistent procedures to apply to all workforce funds administered by the Boards, in support of a fully integrated system.

- The deobligation of funds involves a multilevel review process:
  - Expenditures and performance are reviewed on a monthly basis.
  - If expenditures are trending low, TWC staff provide technical assistance to the Boards.
  - Boards are given an opportunity to get expenditures back on track.
  - If it becomes clear that Boards will not be able to meet the expenditure benchmark, discussions regarding the possible deobligation of funds occurs and TWC receive concurrence from the Board executive directors that they will not be able to use the funds.
  - The Commission takes final action in a public meeting.
- The reallocation of funds involves a multilevel review process:

- Expenditures and performance are reviewed on a monthly basis.

- If expenditures are trending high, TWC staff provides technical assistance to the Boards:

  - Boards are given an opportunity to explain why expenditures appear to be high.

  - Boards may identify that the numbers of participants to be served is higher than anticipated and additional funds are needed.

  - Using performance reports, TWC staff verify that the number of participants is consistent with the Board's explanation of need.

- The Commission takes final action in a public meeting.

This process has worked well for several years with all Board-administered funds. The same process for reallocation would be used for WIOA funds upon approval of the waiver.

3. State strategic goal(s) and Department of Labor priorities (e.g. expansion of apprenticeship, improved employer engagement, etc.) supported by the waiver

TWC requests to continue this waiver of the WIOA statutes relating to the redistribution of recaptured local funds and proposes to base the redistribution of WIOA funds on TWC's allocation rules (40 TAC §§800.51-800.75). TWC ensures that financial reporting will be consistent with current DOLETA requirements and that federal funds will be effectively managed for maximum service provision and program performance.

Approval of this waiver request would allow TWC to continue meeting the following state goals:

- **Redistribution of recaptured funds to workforce areas based on factors established by TWC to ensure that funds are redistributed to workforce areas with the greatest need:** TWC will determine the amounts to be redistributed to workforce areas based on factors such as:

  - requested amount;

  - demonstrated need for and ability to use additional funds to serve low-income individuals, public assistance recipients, dislocated workers, and unemployment insurance claimants;

  - demonstrated capacity to expend the formula funds;

  - a Board's established plan for working with at least one of the governor's industry clusters, as specified in the Board's plan; and

  - performance in the current and prior program years.

- **Facilitation of maximum expenditure of recaptured federal funds:** TWC seeks to redistribute workforce funds to workforce areas that have achieved not only targeted expenditure levels but have also established performance targets. The redistribution of funds based solely on whether a workforce area achieves its expenditure target does

not address performance issues, such as whether the workforce area has met employers' needs for a highly skilled and job-ready workforce.

- **Improvement of administrative efficiencies:** Approval of this waiver will serve to minimize administrative processes and the costs of contracting by using similar redistribution procedures that support workforce system integration.

4. Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver

The statutory reallocation requirements can be fulfilled; however, the amount of funds available for reallocation may be so small that it is cost prohibitive. By using TWC's allocation rules for the redistribution of funds, the agency can ensure that federal funds will be more effectively and efficiently managed for maximum service provision and program performance. Approval of this waiver may not result in significantly higher performance outcomes, but it will provide the opportunity for recaptured funds to be redistributed to workforce areas where the greatest potential impact may be realized. This waiver will streamline administrative practices, allowing for greater efficiency in meeting the workforce development needs of employers and job seekers. Furthermore, it will enhance the quality of services in those workforce areas that have demonstrated consistent performance outcomes. Approval of this waiver will result in a reduction of unnecessary administrative processes.

5. Individuals, groups, or populations benefiting from the waiver

Workforce areas that provide quality services will have access to additional resources to meet the needs of employers, job seekers, and incumbent workers. Additionally, the waiver will allow TWC to continue to promote the cost benefits of improved administrative efficiencies, encouraging Boards to further leverage resources within the workforce areas. As a result, TWC will increase services provision for disadvantaged populations and individuals with multiple barriers to employment.

6. How the State plans to monitor waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information

Upon DOL's approval of this waiver request, TWC will communicate the waiver allowance to Boards and workforce system partner programs. TWC will monitor progress under this waiver by reviewing monthly performance reports submitted by the Boards, through regularly scheduled conference calls with Board executive directors, and through the agency's monitoring and performance accountability system. TWC will report waiver outcomes in the state's WIOA Annual Report. If the state requests renewal of this waiver, then TWC will provide the most recent outcomes data available.

7. Assurance of State's posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected Local Workforce Development Boards

TWC included this waiver request as part of the agency's 2024–2027 WIOA Combined State Plan when the plan was presented for public comment from December 14, 2023, to January 13, 2024.

Before posting the plan for public comment, TWC notified all Boards and sought their input regarding this waiver request.

No public comments related to this waiver were received during the 30-day comment period.

TITLE I-B ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of training services and individualized career services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients and basic skills deficient;	Yes
2. The State has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist;	Yes
3. The State established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce investment board members;	Yes
4. The State established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2);	Yes
5. Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership;	Yes
6. The State established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions;	Yes
7. The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7);	Yes
8. The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan;	Yes
9. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I;	Yes
10. The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report.	Yes
11. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3);	

ADULT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The State is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

Under normal circumstances, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth), the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act), Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program (authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA), the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program (authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA), must submit an expected level of performance for six WIOA common performance indicators, which are:

Indicator	Definition
1. Employment Rate - 2nd Quarter After Exit	The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit)
1-1. Title I Youth Education and Employment Rate - 2nd Quarter After Exit	The percentage of title I Youth program participants who are in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment, during the second quarter after exit from the program.
2. Employment Rate - 4th Quarter After Exit	The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit)
2-1. Title I Youth Education and Employment Rate - 4th Quarter After Exit	The percentage of program participants who are in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment, during the fourth quarter after exit from the program.
3. Median Earnings - 2nd Quarter After Exit	The median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program
4. Credential Attainment	The percentage of those participants enrolled in an education or training program (excluding those in on-the-job training (OJT) and customized training) who attain a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year after exit

Indicator	Definition
	from the program. A participant who has attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent is included in the percentage of participants who have attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent only if the participant also is employed or is enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year after exit from the program
5. Measurable Skill Gains	The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains, defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress, towards such a credential or employment. Depending on the type of education or training program, documented progress is defined as one of the following: 1. Documented achievement of at least one educational functioning level of a participant who is receiving instruction below the postsecondary education level; 2. Documented attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; 3. Secondary or postsecondary transcript or report card for a sufficient number of credit hours that shows a participant is meeting the State unit's academic standards; 4. Satisfactory or better progress report, towards established milestones, such as completion of OJT or completion of one year of an apprenticeship program or similar milestones, from an employer or training provider who is providing training; or 5. Successful passage of an exam that is required for a particular occupation or progress in attaining technical or occupational skills as evidenced by trade-related benchmarks such as knowledge-based exams.
6. Effectiveness in Serving Employers	The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit) with the same employer as during the second quarter after exit from the program.

However, per TEN 04-23, the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education have determined that it is appropriate and reasonable to assess performance for WIOA core programs for the following performance indicators as applicable: (1) Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit;

(2) Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit; (3) Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit; and (4) Credential Attainment Rate. In accordance with WIOA section 503(a), the Departments will delay the assessment of the remaining performance indicators as the available baseline data is not sufficient enough to produce reliable estimates using the required statistical adjustment model. Nevertheless, TWC will report an expected level for measurable skills gains (MSG).

When negotiating expected levels of performance, TWC will utilize Statistical Adjustment Models (SAM) as soon as they become available, as consistent with WIOA §116, which are key mechanisms for setting targets and accounting for differences in the characteristics of those served and the economic conditions. Baseline data gathered during prior PY's serve as the foundation for SAM recommendations and help inform national Government Performance and Results Act targets for WIOA measures, which are required when negotiating performance targets.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. These state indicators are identified under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	77.3%		77.3%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	76.4%		76.4%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$8,468		$8,468	
Credential Attainment Rate	72.9%		72.9%	
Measurable Skill Gains	74.7%		74.7%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	NA	NA	NA	NA

DISLOCATED PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The State is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

Under normal circumstances, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth), the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act), Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program (authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA), the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program (authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA), must submit an expected level of performance for six WIOA common performance indicators, which are:

Indicator	Definition
1. Employment Rate - 2nd Quarter After Exit	The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit)
1-1. Title I Youth Education and Employment Rate - 2nd Quarter After Exit	The percentage of title I Youth program participants who are in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment, during the second quarter after exit from the program.
2. Employment Rate - 4th Quarter After Exit	The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit)
2-1. Title I Youth Education and Employment Rate - 4th Quarter After Exit	The percentage of program participants who are in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment, during the fourth quarter after exit from the program.
3. Median Earnings - 2nd Quarter After Exit	The median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program
4. Credential Attainment	The percentage of those participants enrolled in an education or training program (excluding those in on-the-job training (OJT) and customized training) who attain a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year after exit from the program. A participant who has attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent is included in the percentage of participants who have attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent only if the participant also is employed or is enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year after exit from the program
5. Measurable Skill Gains	The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains, defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress, towards such a credential or employment. Depending on the type of education or training program, documented progress is defined as one of the following:

Indicator	Definition
	1. Documented achievement of at least one educational functioning level of a participant who is receiving instruction below the postsecondary education level; 2. Documented attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; 3. Secondary or postsecondary transcript or report card for a sufficient number of credit hours that shows a participant is meeting the State unit's academic standards; 4. Satisfactory or better progress report, towards established milestones, such as completion of OJT or completion of one year of an apprenticeship program or similar milestones, from an employer or training provider who is providing training; or 5. Successful passage of an exam that is required for a particular occupation or progress in attaining technical or occupational skills as evidenced by trade-related benchmarks such as knowledge-based exams.
6. Effectiveness in Serving Employers	The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit) with the same employer as during the second quarter after exit from the program.

However, per TEN 04-23, the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education have determined that it is appropriate and reasonable to assess performance for WIOA core programs for the following performance indicators as applicable: (1) Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit; (2) Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit; (3) Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit; and (4) Credential Attainment Rate. In accordance with WIOA section 503(a), the Departments will delay the assessment of the remaining performance indicators as the available baseline data is not sufficient enough to produce reliable estimates using the required statistical adjustment model. Nevertheless, TWC will report an expected level for measurable skills gains (MSG).

As consistent with WIOA §116, when negotiating expected levels of performance, TWC will utilize Statistical Adjustment Models (SAM) as soon as they become available. SAMs are key mechanisms for target setting and accounting for the differences in the characteristics of the customers served and state economic conditions. Baseline data gathered during prior PY's serve as the foundation for SAM recommendations and help inform national Government Performance and Results Act targets for WIOA measures, which are required when negotiating performance targets.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. These state indicators are identified under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	77.6%		77.6%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	79.0%		79.0%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$10,801		$10,801	
Credential Attainment Rate	80.3%		80.3%	
Measurable Skill Gains	78.7%		78.7%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	NA	NA	NA	NA

YOUTH PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The State is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

Under normal circumstances, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth), the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act), Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program (authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA), the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program (authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA), must submit an expected level of performance for six WIOA common performance indicators, which are:

Indicator	Definition
1. Employment Rate - 2nd Quarter After Exit	The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit)
1-1. Title I Youth Education and	The percentage of title I Youth program participants who are in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment, during the second quarter after exit from the program.

Indicator	Definition
Employment Rate - 2nd Quarter After Exit	
2. Employment Rate - 4th Quarter After Exit	The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit)
2-1. Title I Youth Education and Employment Rate - 4th Quarter After Exit	The percentage of program participants who are in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment, during the fourth quarter after exit from the program.
3. Median Earnings - 2nd Quarter After Exit	The median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program
4. Credential Attainment	The percentage of those participants enrolled in an education or training program (excluding those in on-the-job training (OJT) and customized training) who attain a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year after exit from the program. A participant who has attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent is included in the percentage of participants who have attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent only if the participant also is employed or is enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year after exit from the program
5. Measurable Skill Gains	The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains, defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress, towards such a credential or employment. Depending on the type of education or training program, documented progress is defined as one of the following: 1. Documented achievement of at least one educational functioning level of a participant who is receiving instruction below the postsecondary education level; 2. Documented attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; 3. Secondary or postsecondary transcript or report card for a sufficient number of credit hours that shows a participant is meeting the State unit's academic standards; 4. Satisfactory or better progress report, towards established milestones, such as completion of OJT or

Indicator	Definition
	completion of one year of an apprenticeship program or similar milestones, from an employer or training provider who is providing training; or 5. Successful passage of an exam that is required for a particular occupation or progress in attaining technical or occupational skills as evidenced by trade-related benchmarks such as knowledge-based exams.
6. Effectiveness in Serving Employers	The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit) with the same employer as during the second quarter after exit from the program.

However, per TEN 04-23, the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education have determined that it is appropriate and reasonable to assess performance for WIOA core programs for the following performance indicators as applicable: (1) Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit; (2) Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit; (3) Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit; and (4) Credential Attainment Rate. In accordance with WIOA section 503(a), the Departments will delay the assessment of the remaining performance indicators as the available baseline data is not sufficient enough to produce reliable estimates using the required statistical adjustment model. Nevertheless, TWC will report an expected level for measurable skills gains (MSG).

As consistent with WIOA §116, when negotiating expected levels of performance, TWC will utilize Statistical Adjustment Models (SAM) as soon as they become available. SAMs are key mechanisms for target setting and accounting for the differences in the characteristics of the customers served and state economic conditions. Baseline data gathered during prior PY's serve as the foundation for SAM recommendations and help inform national Government Performance and Results Act targets for WIOA measures, which are required when negotiating performance targets.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. These state indicators are identified under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	73.7%		73.7%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	75.2%		75.2%	

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$4,649		$4,649	
Credential Attainment Rate	56.1%		56.1%	
Measurable Skill Gains	63.5%		63.5%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	NA	NA	NA	NA

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR WAGNER-PEYSER PROGRAM (EMPLOYMENT SERVICES)

All Program-Specific Requirements provided for the WIOA core programs in this section must be addressed for either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

A. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL STAFF THE PROVISION OF LABOR EXCHANGE SERVICES UNDER THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT, SUCH AS THROUGH STATE EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO STATE MERIT STAFF EMPLOYEES, STAFF OF A SUBRECIPIENT, OR SOME COMBINATION THEREOF.

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) appreciates the US Department of Labor's (DOL's) decision to provide states with increased flexibility in the administration of Employment Service (ES) activities funded under the Wagner-Peyser Act. The flexibility created by the final rule removes unnecessary restrictions, thereby allowing TWC to manage the administration of the ES program in the most efficient and effective manner possible. TWC agrees that having the flexibility at the state level to use a staffing model that best fits our needs is beneficial to all customers of the Texas Workforce system, whether the staffing model consists of state staff members who comply with federal criteria for merit personnel systems, local area staff, contracted services staff, other alternatives, or all of these options. TWC is considering the options available in the final rule in order to make policy decisions that will generate the best results in employment service delivery.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF TO ENSURE STAFF IS ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS

Wagner-Peyser-funded Employment Service (ES) staff members receive professional development training during new employee orientation, at biannual and annual continuing education classes, and on an as-needed basis to ensure that ES staff members are prepared and able to provide high-quality services to both job seekers and employers. ES staff members receive training on how to conduct a job search, provide quality customer service, and use the automated state labor exchange, WorkInTexas.com. Performance is monitored closely. As needs arise, Boards also may provide staff development activities, such as classroom instruction, webinars, and one-on-one training.

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) implemented the "Texas Model" for the delivery of ES functions, which restructured oversight requirements and responsibilities for ES state merit staff. Under the Texas Model, Boards and their Workforce Solutions Offices are fully responsible for overseeing the day-to-day guidance of state ES staff. TWC still maintains administrative responsibility, but Workforce Solutions Office managers share responsibility for directing daily work assignments, assigning individual performance goals, coordinating hiring, initiating disciplinary action, and evaluating staff performance.

Placing responsibility for ES staff on Workforce Solutions Offices supports an integrated workforce system. Many of the services provided by ES and WIOA are similar. The Texas Model gives Boards and their contractors the opportunity and flexibility to design integrated services, regardless of the program from which they are funded. All direction and guidance given to ES employees must be consistent with the provisions of state and federal laws, rules, and regulations governing the administration and delivery of the ES program. TWC provides technical support and quality assurance to Boards and contracted service providers through local Integrated Service Area Managers (ISAMs).. ISAMs coordinate all Texas Model staff-related personnel actions with Boards and their contractors.

3. DESCRIBE STRATEGIES DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS AND THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) PROGRAM AND THE TRAINING PROVIDED FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND WIOA STAFF ON IDENTIFICATION OF UI ELIGIBILITY ISSUES AND REFERRAL TO UI STAFF FOR ADJUDICATION

Wagner-Peyser-funded Employment Services (ES) staff members receive professional development training during new employee orientation, at biannual and annual continuing education classes, and on an as-needed basis to ensure that ES staff members are prepared and able to provide high-quality services to both job seekers and employers. ES staff members receive training on how to conduct a job search, provide quality customer service, and use the automated state labor exchange, WorkInTexas.com. Performance is monitored closely. As needs arise, Boards also may provide staff development activities, such as classroom instruction, webinars, and one-on-one training.

Staff members promptly assist claimants and employers who wish to use Workforce Solutions Office resources to transmit materials to TWC for claims and appeals adjudication purposes. Customers are given access to the space and telecommunications equipment necessary to participate in unemployment compensation hearings. Additionally, staff members support customers with dedicated resources—computers, phones, and printed materials about claim filing and claimants' rights and responsibilities. Occasionally, staff members encounter situations in which they must speak with a claims specialist on behalf of a claimant. Each Board has a dedicated phone number that staff members may use in these situations. These dedicated phone numbers are available only to Workforce Solutions Office staff to assist unemployment benefits claimants in special circumstances.

TWC's Employment Service (ES) Guide:

- provides information on recognizing potential unemployment benefits eligibility issues;

- provides procedures for referring issues to UI staff for adjudication;

- outlines claimants' responsibility to be able and available to accept suitable work; and

- establishes work search requirements that claimants must meet;

- provides guidance to staff regarding the services they must enter in the WorkInTexas.com job matching system, so that the job contact outcomes can be transmitted to the Unemployment Benefits System;

- lists the specific participation and work search activity outcomes that are automatically reviewed by the Unemployment Benefits System and specifies other potential issues that require communication with UI staff.

TWC uses the Potential Unemployment Benefits Eligibility Issue reporting form, which provides examples of issues that could affect a claim and serves as a vehicle for reporting potential issues. The ES Guide and the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Program Guide also outlines the activities that staff must complete when assisting unemployment benefits customers.

In addition to the ES Guide, TWC provides training on unemployment claim investigations and eligibility issues as part of the UI Starter Kit. This tool kit provides information on the Workforce and UI partnership, including the services that ES staff must provide to unemployment claimants, claimant responsibilities, and the process for identifying and reporting potential issues.

B. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE WILL PROVIDE INFORMATION AND MEANINGFUL ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUALS REQUESTING ASSISTANCE IN FILING A CLAIM FOR UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION THROUGH ONE-STOP CENTERS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA AS A CAREER SERVICE

Unemployment claimants are priority customers at Workforce Solutions Offices. Staff members promptly assist claimants who need access to Workforce Solutions Office resources to transmit materials to TWC for claims and appeals adjudication purposes. Claimants are provided access to resources, such as workspace, computers, phones, and printed materials, so that they can participate in unemployment benefits hearings, file unemployment claims, and learn about claimants' rights and responsibilities.

Occasionally, staff members encounter situations that require them to speak with a claims specialist on behalf of a claimant with urgent and/or time-sensitive claim-related issues. Each Board has a dedicated phone number for staff to use in these situations. The dedicated phone numbers are available only to Workforce Solutions Office staff to assist unemployment benefits claimants in special circumstances.

C. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S STRATEGY FOR PROVIDING REEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE TO UI CLAIMANTS AND OTHER UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

Wagner-Peyser-funded Employment Services (ES) staff members within the Workforce Solutions Offices serve all customers. However, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) has made unemployment claimants a priority population and staff members have been charged with providing claimants with a wide array of resources and employment services that support reemployment as quickly as possible.

Among those services is the RESEA program, which incorporates the DOLETA-approved statistical model based on the nationally recognized Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services (WPRS) system. This statistical model is used to analyze claimant characteristics and Board-level economic indicators as well as to assess the likelihood of a claimant exhausting their unemployment benefits before returning to work. Each week, TWC identifies claimants who are most likely to exhaust their unemployment benefits and who have received their first payment of unemployment benefits. Claimants who have likely-to-exhaust scores that are at or above the Board's cutoff score are outreached for and are provided appropriate reemployment services. At a minimum, claimants outreached under RESEA must receive the following core services; an RESEA orientation, the provision of customized labor market information that is tailored to the claimant's individual needs, a one-on-one meeting to develop a reemployment plan, and an unemployment benefits eligibility assessment.

To expand access to services, TWC is developing a Subsequent Meetings Pilot Program within the RESEA program. In addition to the required services, RESEA subsequent meetings will provide participants with services such as personalized career coaching, résumé review and development, job matching services, job application reviews and submissions, prescribed work search activities, and referral to additional subsequent meetings or other reemployment services based on the participant's needs.

D. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE W-P FUNDS TO SUPPORT UI CLAIMANTS, AND THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN W-P AND UI, AS APPROPRIATE INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

1. COORDINATION OF AND PROVISION OF LABOR EXCHANGE SERVICES FOR UI CLAIMANTS AS REQUIRED BY THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT;

Texas benefits from the joint administration of the unemployment compensation program and workforce services by TWC, which allows efficient coordination between programs. Computer linkages coordinate and provide services between WorkInTexas.com and the Unemployment Benefits System. These links ensure that unemployment claimants who are required to register have done so and that claimants comply with their work search requirements.

TWC also administers the work test requirement through the link between WorkInTexas.com and the Unemployment Benefits System. This linkage confirms that proper notification is provided when unemployment claimants fail to register for work or comply with their work search requirements, including negative referral results or failure to report for an orientation or to employment. Unemployment claimants who fail the work test may be held ineligible for unemployment benefits until they meet the requirement. TWC's rules regarding unemployment claimants' work search requirements set a minimum weekly search effort, although each Board may raise or lower the number depending upon the local labor market.

The Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (DOLETA) defines "long-term unemployed" as an individual who has been jobless for twenty-seven weeks or longer. It is TWC's goal to assist and place individuals in jobs before they reach that point. TWC has developed a performance measure that tracks a Board's success in placing job seekers in employment within fifteen weeks of their initial monetary eligibility. Boards

achieve this measure by providing quality job postings and job development activities along with increased outreach to participants to ensure better job applications and quality job referrals.

TWC employs the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program to help claimants attain new employment as quickly as possible. As mentioned above, all claimants who are outreached are required to attend an orientation and receive staff assistance in developing an individualized employment plan. Claimants are offered other staff-assisted services, including job referrals and job development activities to help in the work search. By contacting their Workforce Solutions Offices or searching TWC's Training and Education web page, claimants have access to educational opportunities, occupational or vocational training, and other resources to help develop their skills.[1]

[1] https://twc.texas.gov/jobseekers/training-education

2. REGISTRATION OF UI CLAIMANTS WITH THE STATE'S EMPLOYMENT SERVICE IF REQUIRED BY STATE LAW;

TWC's joint administration of the unemployment insurance (UI) program and workforce services allows for efficient communication and coordination between programs. WorkInTexas.com and the Unemployment Benefits System are linked through interfaces, which improves program coordination and the provision of services between programs. Computer system interconnections ensure that unemployment claimants who are required to register have done so and that unemployment claimants comply with their work search requirements.

TWC also administers the UI work test requirement through the network between WorkInTexas.com and the Unemployment Benefits System. The linkage confirms that proper notification is provided when unemployment claimants fail to register for work or to comply with the work search requirements, including failure to respond to an outreach request or failure to report for employment. Unemployment claimants who fail the UI work test may be ineligible for benefits until they meet that requirement. TWC's rules regarding claimants' work search requirements set a minimum number of weekly search efforts while allowing each Board to raise or lower the number according to the local labor market.

3. ADMINISTRATION OF THE WORK TEST FOR THE STATE UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION SYSTEM, INCLUDING MAKING ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENTS (FOR REFERRAL TO UI ADJUDICATION, IF NEEDED), AND PROVIDING JOB FINDING AND PLACEMENT SERVICES FOR UI CLAIMANTS; AND

TWC strives to assist and place individuals in jobs quickly. Boards achieve this by providing high-quality job-posting and job-development activities along with increased outreach that leads to quality referrals and helps participants develop better applications. Additionally, Texas promotes the effective and efficient coordination of the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and workforce services through collaborative program administration and computer system linkages that share information and allow staff to coordinate activities and provide services to unemployment claimants. These program and system links ensure that claimants who are required to register in WorkInTexas.com have done so and that claimants comply with work search requirements.

The link between WorkInTexas.com and the Unemployment Benefits System also provides a seamless method for administering the UI work test requirement. This linkage confirms that proper notification is provided when UI claimants fail to register for work or comply with the work search requirements, including negative referral results, failure to respond to outreach requests, or failure to report to employment. UI claimants who fail the UI work test may be ineligible for benefits until they meet that requirement.

[1] https://twc.texas.gov/jobseekers/training-education

4. PROVISION OF REFERRALS TO AND APPLICATION ASSISTANCE FOR TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES.

TWC promotes the full integration of its workforce system across all programs, which benefits unemployment claimants by making a wide range of publicly- and privately-funded education, employment, and training programs readily available and easily accessible. By working with staff in their Workforce Solutions Offices or searching TWC's web page to explore career and training opportunities, claimants can find educational opportunities, occupational or vocational training, and other resources to help develop their skills.

TWC also assists claimants by helping them, when appropriate, develop a reemployment plan—with education and training goals when appropriate—that includes referrals to appropriate programs and resources as well as application assistance for entry into these programs. Boards also prioritize services for claimants, ensuring prompt assistance through outreach, orientations, and staff-assisted services that include developing individualized reemployment plans and evaluating labor market information to ensure that the claimant is seeking employment or training in a career field that offers potential for economic growth and financial prosperity.

E. AGRICULTURAL OUTREACH PLAN (AOP). EACH STATE AGENCY MUST DEVELOP AN AOP EVERY FOUR YEARS AS PART OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN REQUIRED UNDER SECTIONS 102 OR 103 OF WIOA. THE AOP MUST INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF NEED.

1. ASSESSMENT OF NEED. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE AREA BASED ON PAST AND PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL AND FARMWORKER ACTIVITY IN THE STATE. SUCH NEEDS MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND HOUSING.

In Texas, one of every seven working Texans (14 percent) is in an agriculture-related job. The average age of Texas farmers and ranchers is 59 years of age (1.7 years older than the national average). Additionally, Texas has more farm operations owned by women and minorities than any other state. The needs of migrant and seasonal farmworkers (MSFWs) are best understood by considering Texas' agricultural industry.

Texas agriculture significantly impacts the national economy. As of 2021, Texas ranks fourth in the nation with respect to national agricultural production with $24.9 billion in cash receipts, which is roughly 5.7 percent of the United States' total production. Texas leads the nation in the number and the real estate value of farms and ranches, with 247,0000 farm operations covering approximately 126 million acres. Ranches make up 70 percent of the

state's farmland. Ninety-eight and a half percent of all Texas farms and ranches are family farms, partnerships, or family-held corporations. The history of family-based ranching in Texas spans more than 200 years.

Rural lands, including privately owned forests, totaling 144 million acres or 86 percent of the state's land area. Twelve percent of Texas' population lives in rural areas.

According to the National Agricultural Statistics services, the US Department of Agriculture; the Texas Department of Agriculture; and the Center for North American Studies, and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, the top 10 sources of cash receipts from the sale of US-produced farm commodities are cattle and calves, broilers, dairy products, cotton, greenhouse and nursery products, corn, chicken eggs, grain sorghum, wheat, and hay. The food and fiber sector totals more than $100 billion annually. Additionally, during 2021, Texas sold $7.27 billion in agricultural exports to foreign countries. In 2021, Texas saw a $1.32 billion increase in exports over the prior year.
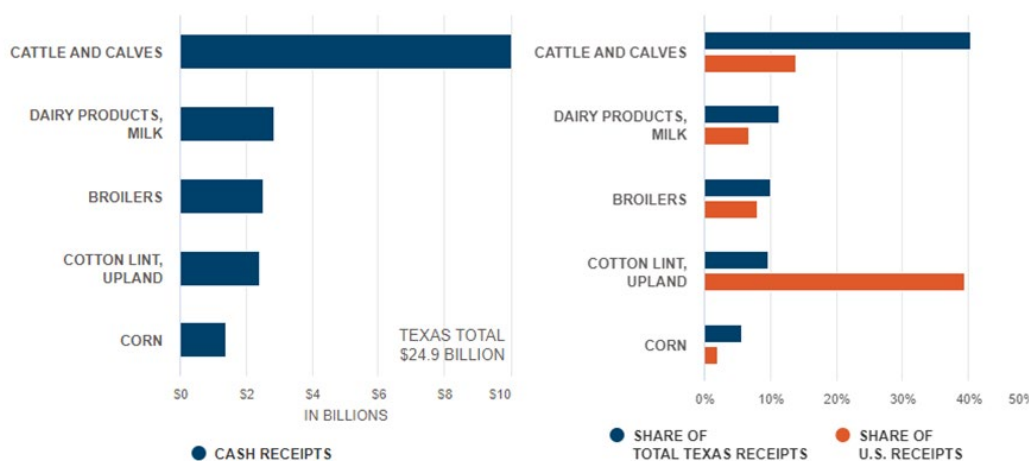
Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service

Texas Agriculture National Rankings, 2021

National Rank	Commodity	Value (Millions of Dollars)
6	*Total Agriculture Exports*	7,267.3
1	Cotton	1,969.6
2	Beef and Veal	1,451.9
3	Other Cattle and Livestock Products	302.9
4	Dairy Products	516.5
4	Hides and Skins	120.6
5	Other Oilseeds and Products	108.9
5	Broiled Meat	300.2
5	Rice	115.0
6	Tree Nuts	77.0
7	Wheat	291.2
7	Other Plant Products	686.7

National Rank	Commodity	Value (Millions of Dollars)
8	Grain Products, Processed	141.1
10	Feeds and Other Feed Grains	390.1
10	Other Poultry Products	104.1
12	Corn	366.4
13	Fruits, Fresh	25.5
13	Fruits, Processed	22.3
13	Vegetables, Processed	89.6
13	Vegetables, Fresh	44.4
14	Pork	104.3

Source: Economic Research Services, USDA/ERS

Assessment of the Farmworker

Much of the planting, harvesting, packing, and transporting of Texas agricultural products is accomplished through MSFWs. Based on the most recent available National Agricultural Workers Survey (2017), 91 percent of Texas farmworkers are from Hispanic/Latino origins. Family characteristics indicate that 36 percent are married with children. The average income is under $24,999, and 40 percent of farmworkers live in poverty. The same data source indicated that 74 percent of MSFWs had no high school diploma and 56 percent had limited English proficiency. Despite the significance of their hard work in our daily lives and their role in our fundamental sustenance (see designation of essential critical infrastructure workers by the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) at https://www.cisa.gov/publication/guidance-essential-critical-infrastructure-workforce), MSFWs are considered one of the most vulnerable groups in the United States.

Several factors contribute to MSFW vulnerability, including the nature of their work: seasonality, extreme weather conditions, and a changing industry increasingly sensitive to regional and worldwide markets. TWC, together with our workforce partners, work to address the specific barriers MSFW face, such as education and training (English proficiency, ranked at 39 percent; reading below grade level, ranked at 56 percent), employment opportunities (long-term agricultural employment, ranked at 72 percent), access to increased wages and benefits (wages ranked below poverty level). Additionally, together with our workforce partners, TWC is working to address access to healthcare, housing, and sanitary conditions.

2. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN THE STATE MEANS: 1) IDENTIFYING THE TOP FIVE LABOR-INTENSIVE CROPS, THE MONTHS OF HEAVY ACTIVITY, AND THE GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF PRIME ACTIVITY; 2) SUMMARIZE THE AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS' NEEDS IN THE STATE (I.E. ARE THEY PREDOMINANTLY HIRING LOCAL OR FOREIGN WORKERS, ARE THEY EXPRESSING THAT THERE IS A SCARCITY IN THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE); AND 3) IDENTIFYING ANY ECONOMIC, NATURAL, OR OTHER FACTORS THAT ARE AFFECTING AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE OR ANY PROJECTED FACTORS THAT WILL AFFECT AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE

Texas Agricultural Regions

In 2021, Texas was ranked sixth nationally in the value of agricultural exports and 14th in fresh vegetable production, accounting for about 2 percent of US vegetable production. The leading counties for acres harvested for vegetable production included Hidalgo, Starr, and Cameron. Other important counties include Frio, Uvalde, Duval, Webb, Hale, Yoakum, and Zavala. Texas has ranked ninth in fruit production and fifth in tree nut production, with combined fruit and nut production values at $148 million.

Land preparation, planting, irrigating, and harvesting are ongoing activities; therefore, agricultural employment occurs year-round at numerous locations. Usually, employment for MSFWs begins in the Lower Rio Grande Valley region, served by the Lower Rio Grande Valley and Cameron County Workforce Development Boards, and the Winter Garden and South/Central regions served by the Middle Rio Grande Board. As the agricultural season progresses, MSFWs employment rates increase northward into the Texas Panhandle served by the South Plains Board. Workers who follow this crop pattern may migrate to other states as well.

Review of Previous Agricultural Activity in Texas

For the Program Year 2022 (PY'22) Agricultural Outreach Plan's modification, TWC used the most recent available data. Although Texas regions support a wide variety of agricultural activities, data is not collected by a single entity using consistent time frames and methods. Data is limited for agricultural activities such as producing wheat, grain, and other labor-intensive crops and for labor-intensive production such as cotton ginning. Furthermore, available data sources do not collect production or forecast data based on the federal program year. For the purposes of this plan, calendar years are used when no other data is available. TWC is working with agricultural associations and other sources to improve the data available for planning.

The table below summarizes the state's agronomic crop production statistics for Calendar Years 2020–2022. Cotton, corn, sorghum, and wheat are Texas' main crops. Cotton and wheat are mainly produced in the Texas Plains (northwest of the state) with about 70 percent of Texas' total cotton and wheat being produced in the region. Approximately 46 percent of Texas' corn is produced in the eastern region of the state, a region that also produces most of the rice and oats. Agronomic crops are typically less labor-intensive because more technology and machinery are used in planting and harvesting compared to most horticultural crops.

Commodity	Area Planted (in acres) 2020	Area Planted (in acres) 2021	Area Planted (in acres) 2022	Area Harvested (in acres) 2020	Area Harvested (in acres) 2021	Area Harvested (in acres) 2022
Cotton	6,838,000	6,367,000	7,883,000	2,926,090	5,630,520	2,018,470
Corn	2,250,000	2,150,000	2,150,000	1,810,000	1,850,000	1,610,000
Sorghum	1,800,000	2,150,000	1,450,000	1,500,000	1,870,000	1,450,000
Wheat	4,900,000	5,500,000	5,300,000	2,050,000	2,000,000	1,300,000

Commodity	Area Planted (in acres) 2020	Area Planted (in acres) 2021	Area Planted (in acres) 2022	Area Harvested (in acres) 2020	Area Harvested (in acres) 2021	Area Harvested (in acres) 2022
Rice	184,000	190,000	195,000	179,000	181,000	186,000
Peanuts	190,000	180,000	160,000	170,000	162,000	120,000
Soybeans	120,000	110,000	155,000	110,000	100,000	85,000
Oats	470,000	460,000	450,000	60,000	35,000	35,000
Texas Total	**16,752,000**	**17,107,000**	**17,743,000**	**8,805,000**	**11,828,520**	**6,804,470**

Source: QuickStats Lite, NASS/USDA and Center for North American Studies, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

Review of the Previous Year's Agricultural Worker Activity in Texas

The Lower Rio Grande Valley has the most labor-intensive production, accounting for most of the horticultural crops in Texas, followed by the Winter Garden and South/Central regions. However, horticultural crops are grown throughout the state. Regional and updated production statistics for horticultural crops are currently unavailable, however, it is estimated that, in 2022, around 82,000 acres were used for planting and harvesting horticultural crops. The most labor-intensive crops are citrus (around 7,000 acres), cucumbers (around 5,000 acres), chili peppers (around 2,500 acres), onions (around 12,000 acres), watermelons (around 23,000 acres), potatoes (around 16,000 acres), pumpkins (around 3,500 acres), squash (around 1,500 acres), cabbage (around 5,000 acres) and tomatoes (around 800 acres). Other labor-intensive horticultural crops include peaches, pecans, carrots, strawberries and cantaloups.

**Projected Level of Agricultural Activity in Texas for the Coming Year**

As seen across the country, some areas that have historically had high concentrations of agricultural work have experienced industry reduction relative to other types of work, such as employment in the oil and gas, construction, and retail industries. With this industry reduction, there has been a shift in the labor market. While some workers and their families who have long performed agricultural work are now being employed in nonagricultural industries, other farm workers struggle to identify transferable skills that will allow them to obtain nonagricultural jobs. For example, the Eagle Ford Shale in the Winter Garden region and the Cline Shale in West Texas have numerous employers in the oil and gas industry that have experienced a relatively large demand for qualified employees, yet they have not been able to find the qualified applicants that they are looking for, in part because the local MSFW population lacks the relevant transferable skills and training. This industrial shift has created a challenge for agricultural employers as well. While Texas is designated as an agricultural supply state, many agricultural employers do not have the number of laborers needed to meet demand. More workers seek nonagricultural jobs that are less physically taxing and present opportunity for higher wages involves fewer immigration controls.

Despite Texas being considered an agricultural supply state, the factors mentioned above continue to result in agricultural employers having fewer MSFW laborers to meet their needs. Major citrus growers' associations in Texas have indicated that labor shortages are one of their most critical concerns.

The USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NAAS), Southern Plains Regional Office, published their forecast of Texas' main agricultural crops for 2023 on August 1, 2023.

Texas is forecasted to produce 4.2 million bales of upland cotton in 2023, which is a 37 percent increase from 2022. The statewide yield average is 517 pounds per acre, as opposed to 734 pounds from last year. Approximately 3.9 million acres were harvested, which is a 95 percent increase from the previous year.

Texas is forecasted to produce 293 million bushels of corn in 2023, which is a 91 percent increase from the previous year. Statewide yields averaged 133 bushels per acre, which is 38 bushels per acre higher than in 2022. The average number of acres harvested for grain, at 2.2 million, is up 37 percent from the previous year.
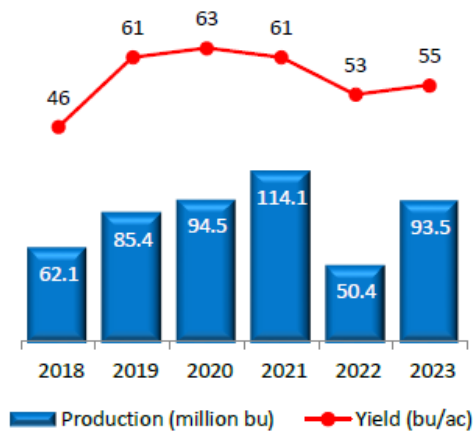
Texas is forecasted to produce 93.5 bushels of sorghum in 2023, which is up 86 percent from last year. 2023 saw an average yield of 55 bushels per acre, which is an increase of 2 bushels per acre from the previous year. The average number of acres harvested, at 1.7 million acres, is 79 percent higher than in 2022.
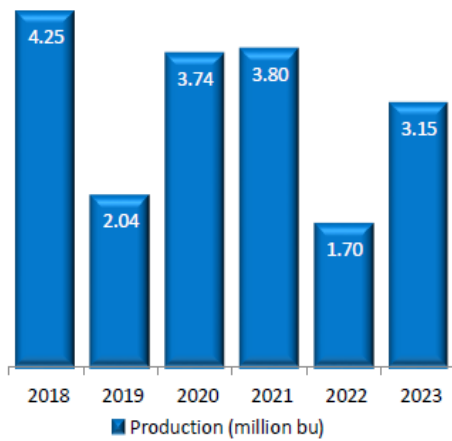
Texas is forecasted to produce 3.15 million bushels of soybeans in 2023, which is an 85 percent increase from last year. Average yield is expected to be 35 bushels per acre, compared to 20 bushels per acre in 2022. The average number of harvested acres, at 90 thousand acres, is 6 percent higher than last year.
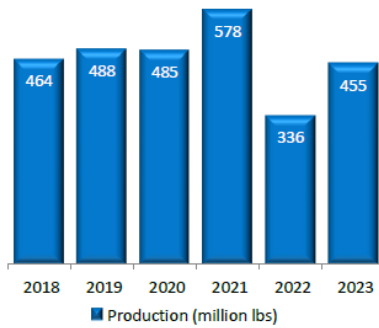
Texas is forecasted to produce 455 million pounds of peanuts, which is 35 percent higher than last year. Yield is forecasted at 3,250 pounds per acre, which is an increase of 450 pounds per acre from 2022. Harvested acres increased 17 percent from last year for a total of 140 thousand acres.
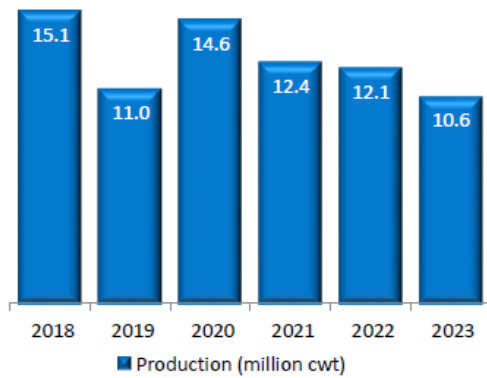
Texas is forecasted to produce 10.6 million cwt of rice in 2023, which is a 12 percent decrease from 2022. Average yield is expected to average 7,700 pounds per acre, which is an increase of 1,190 pounds per acre from last year. Harvested acreage is forecast at 138 thousand acres, which is a 26 percent decrease from last year.

Agricultural workers in Texas

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in May of 2022 (latest)[1], Texas employed 13,460 agricultural workers in the Farming, Fishing and Forestry Occupation sector. In 2021, there were approximately 9,876 active agricultural employers in Texas, based on the North American Industry Classification System codes reported for each employer's UI tax accounts. The Texas farmworker workforce is diverse and includes permanent based, migrant, seasonal, and H2-A visa workers.

[1]Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (bls.gov)

Agricultural Employers

(H-2A Job Orders Only)	PY'19	PY'20	PY'21	PY' 22
H-2A Job Orders Received	739	938	1163	1048
H-2A Job Orders Certified	703	827	1088	1019

PY'19 data measures October 1, 2019–September 30, 2020; PY'20 measures October 1, 2020–September 30, 2021; and PY'21 measures October 1, 2021–September 30, 2022. PY'22 measures October 1, 2022– June 30, 2023, which indicates that the number of certified H-2As will likely continue to increase at the same rate each year. Data is from the USDOL/OFLC Disclosure Data page. Based on data for the last reporting period, 9,939 agricultural workers were certified to work in Texas under an H2-A work order.

According to PY'22 program statistics, Texas is now listed, for the second consecutive year, in the top 10 states for H-2A filings (9th place). This statistic reflects the growing need of Texas employers in the agricultural sector to source their workforce with H2-A workers.

Several economic, natural, and other factors affect agricultural production in Texas. The following list does not assign these factors an order of importance, as more than one issue may exist at any time:

- The increase of H-2A workers

- MSFWs choosing to seek employment locally due to health or safety concerns fear associated with the pandemic and/or other matters related to family income, social economic issues, and other factors

- A lack of affordable worker housing and other risk factors related to shared housing

- The cost of fuel

- Secondary sources of income related to energy production

- Varied weather patterns, which affect agricultural production (Because of the size of Texas—268,820 square miles (171,891,725 acres)—weather varies dramatically by geography)

- Environmental policies enforced by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

- Immigration law and enforcement, particularly as it affects the availability of labor for fruit and vegetable production but also in other agricultural sectors

- Invasive species coming from other parts of the United States or from other countries, which can negatively affect the agricultural production

- The conversion of agricultural land to developed land for housing and commercial use

- Water availability affected by weather, the increased need for urban water, and issues related to the 1944 US-Mexico Water Treaty ("Treaty Utilization of Waters of the Colorado and Tijuana Rivers and of the Rio Grande")

- Uncertainty of trade agreements with Mexico and the global economic impact of tariffs that affect agricultural imports and exports

Economic Impact of Import-Export Activities with Mexico

Mexico and Texas have a long agricultural history matched by the long border that we share. The Mexican farmworker has been working on both sides of the border for centuries as a key contributor to the US recovery during and after World War II. Their knowledge of similar farmlands and agricultural practices as well as their work ethics are praised by Texas' farm owners to this day, more so over other nationalities of MSFWs. The United States and Mexico have negotiated several international treaties and conventions designed to improve the economy and wealth distribution, including commercial trade[1]. Throughout the past 50 years, Mexico has become the United States' main source of produce imports.

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[1] United States-Mexico-Canada *Agreement* (*USMCA*) signed on July 1, 2020, replaced the North America Free Trade Act (NAFTA).)

Refer to "[Economic Impacts of U.S. Imports of Fresh Produce from Mexico by 2030](#)" for more information.

Imports from Mexico

Produce imports from Mexico have become a major source of economic activity in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Imports of produce and products from Mexico to the United States during 2022, including fresh, frozen, and processed fruits, vegetables, and nuts totaled $18.7 billion. More than 98 percent of these imports entered the United States by land ports between Mexico and Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. Fresh fruits and vegetables, which are nearly 89 percent of the total imports, totaled $16.6 billion. These imports were shipped in 590,906 forty-thousand-pound truckloads. Approximately 55 percent of United States' fresh fruit and vegetable imports from Mexico entered through Texas land ports, arriving in 325,467 truckloads valued at $11.6 billion. The report projects that, "Over the next 7 years, produce imports from Mexico are expected to grow, much of this growth coming into the United States via Texas. In an effort to quantify how much United States produce imports from Mexico are expected to grow by 2030, a linear trend forecasting approach was used to estimate the volume and flow of imports based upon trends that were present from 2007 to 2022. Linear trend analysis was conducted to develop a baseline estimate. This is a conservative approach because no significant changes are considered; therefore, it represents a baseline for growth in imports from Mexico and assumes that the future will be reflective of the past. Further it is assumed that the mix of imports will remain relatively stable over the same time period."

"Based upon the assumptions above, it is estimated the United States fresh produce imports from Mexico via truck will increase to 763,416 truckloads by 2030, a 29.2 percent increase above 2022 levels (Figure 1 below). Most of this growth will occur through Texas ports with imports expected to grow by 32.4 percent to 430,772 truckloads. By 2030, Texas is estimated to account for 56.4 percent of all United States produce imports from Mexico as compared to 55 percent in 2022. Arizona, the second leading state for these shipments, is forecast to have 201,427 truckloads of fresh produce in 2030, a 28.4 percent increase from 156,878 trucks in 2022. New Mexico is also anticipated to have a notable increase of 67.1 percent to a total of 16,295 trucks from the 9,754 trucks in 2022. The projected growth in imports will contribute to the border economy in general and to the Texas economy in particular."

Figure 1. U.S. Imports of Fresh Produce from Mexico by Truck, 2012-2030F
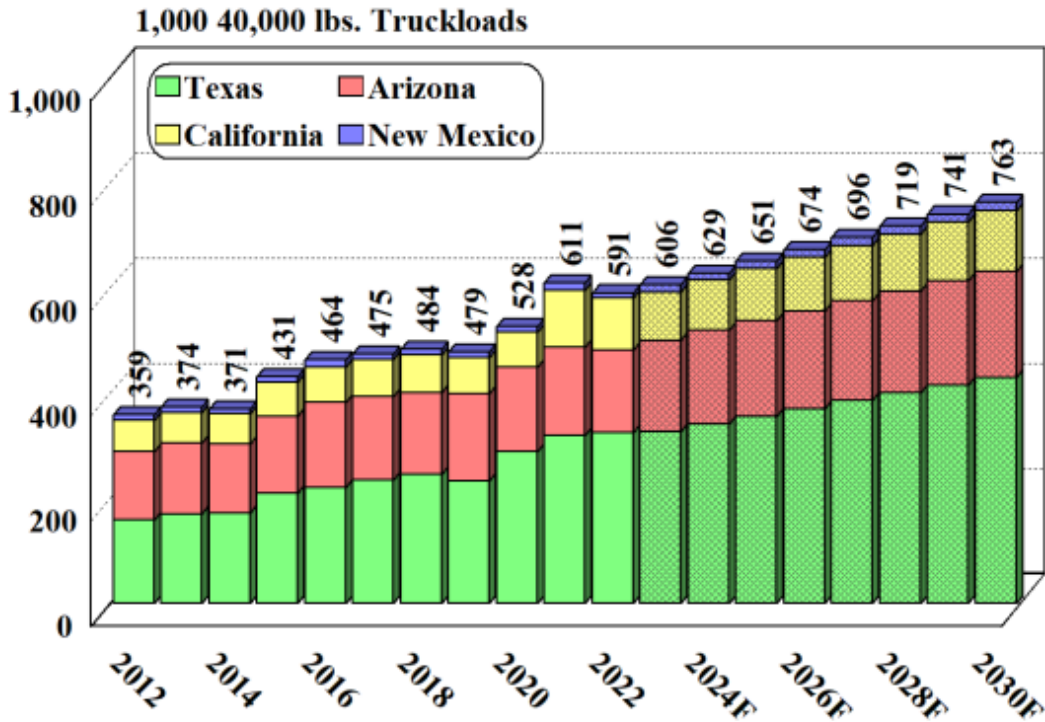
Source: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA and Department of Agricultural Economics, Texas A&M University; 2023-2030 forecast based on 2007-2022 model

Estimated Economic Impact

The economic impact of produce imports from Mexico through Texas demand important considerations. Direct economic activity attributed to the produce import industry was $9.27 billion during 2022, requiring an additional $16.21 billion in economic activity from supporting industries for a total economic impact of $25.48 billion. By 2030, this is expected to grow to $12.27 billion in direct activity and $21.86 billion in supporting activity for a total of $34.13 billion in economic activity throughout the Texas and United States economy. The report concludes, "For produce imports going through Texas alone, the total economic activity to support the additional imports will be $34.13 billion, along with 204,519 jobs."

Summary of Economic Activity from United States Produce Imports from Mexico over Texas Land Borders, 2022 and 2030 Forecast

Economic Activity Indicators	2022 (in millions)	2030 Forecast (in millions)
Retail	$4,822	$6,377
Wholesale	$3,322	$4,397
Truck Transportation	$902	$1,194
Other	$223	$301

Economic Activity Indicators	2022 (in millions)	2030 Forecast (in millions)
Total Truck Loads	325,467	430,772
Total Direct Economic Output	$9,269	$12,269
Total Supporting Economic Output	$16,208	$21,861
Total Economic Output	$25,478	$34,130
Total Jobs Supporting Produce Imports	168,196	204,519

Source: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA and Center for North American Studies, Department of Agricultural Economics, Texas A&M University/Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service/Texas A&M AgriLife Research

Exports from Texas to Mexico

The latest data is from the Center for North American Studies at Texas A&M University via their publication: Economic Impacts of U.S. and Texas Agricultural Exports to Canada and Mexico CNAS Issue Brief 2019-01, July 8, 2019. According to this study, in 2018, Texas agricultural exports to Mexico totaled $863.3 million ($344.1 million in animal products and $519.2 million in plant products). The top two agricultural exports from Texas to Mexico in 2018 were cotton ($139.4 million) and beef and veal ($97.7 million). In 2018, because of Texas' agricultural exports to Mexico, an estimated 4,072 direct farmwork jobs were created with an additional 7,134 jobs created in other sectors of Texas' economy (such as transportation, healthcare, and others).

Overall, the Texas agricultural sector has a significant impact on its GDP. AgriLife estimated that in 2019 the Texas food and fiber system contributed $159.3 billion, about 8.6 percent of the state's total GDP, which is higher than the United States average in which the agricultural sector represents a 5.2 percent share of the national GDP. [2]

3. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS MEANS SUMMARIZING MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARM WORKER (MSFW) CHARACTERISTICS (INCLUDING IF THEY ARE PREDOMINANTLY FROM CERTAIN COUNTRIES, WHAT LANGUAGE(S) THEY SPEAK, THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF MSFWS IN THE STATE DURING PEAK SEASON AND DURING LOW SEASON, AND WHETHER THEY TEND TO BE MIGRANT, SEASONAL, OR YEAR-ROUND FARMWORKERS). THIS INFORMATION MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT DATA SUPPLIED BY WIOA SECTION 167 NATIONAL FARMWORKER JOBS PROGRAM (NFJP) GRANTEES, OTHER MSFW ORGANIZATIONS, EMPLOYER ORGANIZATIONS, AND STATE AND/OR FEDERAL AGENCY DATA SOURCES SUCH AS THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (DOL) EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION

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[2] See Agrilife's report "The Food and Fiber System and Production, Agriculture's Contributions to the Texas Economy", January, 2023

MSFW Characteristics

Characteristics of MSFWs include the following:

- Education: The educational level among MSFWs tends to be low, many do not have a high school education or HSE.

- Language: MSFWs generally lack the ability to speak and read English and sometimes lack the ability to read Spanish.

- Economic Status: The income level of MSFWs frequently falls well below the poverty level.

- Certain parts of Texas tend to have a larger number of undocumented farmworkers.

- Citizenship: Large percentages of MSFWs are citizens of Mexico or of a Central American country or are of Mexican or Central American ancestry.

- Communication: In addition to Spanish speaking MSFWs, other workers may include H-2A workers from Eastern Europe and South Africa. These workers often use a variety of spoken dialects.

Challenges to providing employment services and addressing barriers to employment for MSFWs include:

- The migrative nature of their work, which often means that they do not remain in one location long enough to receive social services, education, or skills development training.

- The majority of farmworkers do not have medical insurance or ready access to medical services, making them extremely vulnerable to serious illnesses.

- Because of the unpredictability of inclement weather and natural disasters affecting crop production, workers are sometimes displaced and lose income. Most MSFWs have limited English proficiency and are unable to communicate effectively with social services counselors and other individuals involved in delivering much-needed services.

- Public transportation is not available in most rural communities.

TWC, Boards, and Workforce Solutions Office staff are developing and sharing strategies to meet the following needs:

- Low skills in education/literacy/computers—Workforce Solutions Office staff is trained to identify signs and behaviors that indicate a job seeker with education, literacy, and language barriers. Staff provides one-on-one assistance to those needing individual service.

- Providing resources and workforce solutions training programs and services.

- Workers may lack transportation to the work sites—Board and Workforce Solutions Office staffs work with local community- and faith-based organizations and other entities to provide temporary transportation services during peak production seasons.

- Childcare for field workers—Workforce Solutions Office staff works with local community- and faith-based organizations and other entities to provide temporary childcare during peak production seasons.

- Limited knowledge of social and workforce services available—Workforce Solutions Office staff shares information with MSFWs regarding the workforce services available and support services available from community-based organizations.

- Access to services provided by social service agencies and changes in local service delivery systems—Social service organizations sponsor fairs and events where Workforce Solutions Office staff provides information regarding local services available to MSFWs and their families. Fairs include attractions such as entertainment, door prizes, and refreshments donated by participating and sponsoring entities. Other sponsored events include employer job fairs, all of which encourage trust and relationship building between MSFWs and outreach staff.

Other resources for overcoming employment barriers include:

- Spanish-language brochures—Workforce Solutions Offices designated as MSFW significant and bilingual offices provide Spanish-language brochures regarding available services. Such services include adult education and literacy programs, which provide English language, math, reading, and writing instruction that is designed to help individuals succeed in the workplace, earn a high school equivalency diploma, and/or enter postsecondary education or career training.

- Workforce Border Alliance—Boards along the Texas-Mexico border collaborate to overcome MSFW literacy and language barriers. This collaboration has contributed to resulted in creative and effective progress toward meeting the employment and public assistance needs of MSFWs.

- Regional Community Partnership Network Groups—MSFW significant Workforce Solutions Offices are working to establish community network groups to strengthen community resources that are made available to MSFWs, including working with the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantee, MET, Inc.

- Community partnerships—Board and Workforce Solutions Office staff simultaneously engage in the development of partnerships with educational, housing, and support services, and other community- and faith-based assistance providers.

- Access to technology—Boards provide computers in public locations (usually county courthouses or libraries) and encourage community- and faith-based organizations to refer MSFWs to the resources. MSFWs can also call Workforce Solutions Offices toll-free to inquire about or access services.

- Electronic service delivery—Boards promote up-to-date information to agribusinesses, rural areas, and colonias through online systems such their local website, TWC's website and WorkInTexas.com. These systems ensure easy access to information, user-friendly data, and allow communication through public access automation points.

4. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The local offices outreach activities must be designed to meet the needs of MSFWs in the State and to locate and contact MSFWs who are not being reached through normal intake activities. Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

A. CONTACTING FARMWORKERS WHO ARE NOT BEING REACHED BY THE NORMAL INTAKE ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE OFFICES

Outreach Activities

The MSFW outreach program takes the full range of employment services directly to MSFWs where they live, work and gather. The MSFW outreach program provides the framework necessary for Workforce Solutions Office staff to locate, contact, and enhance the employability of MSFWs in Texas. Outreach specialists may provide other assistance at the point of contact or at the Workforce Solutions Office. If needed services are not available through the Workforce Solutions Office, outreach specialists then make referrals to other agencies and community- and faith-based organizations that provide appropriate assistance.

TWC and Workforce Solutions Offices' goals are to ensure that MSFWs are offered employment and training referral services, benefits, and protections, including counseling, testing, and job training referral services that are qualitatively equivalent and proportionate to services provided to non-MSFWs. Outreach specialists help with work registration and job leads, information about the complaint system, and the submission of complaints and referrals for support services. Outreach specialists in certain Workforce Solutions Offices have iPads and laptops and thus are equipped to provide live job searches and job posting referrals on site.

Year-round outreach activities are conducted in MSFW-significant Workforce Solutions Offices. MSFW outreach staff members work to maintain familiarity with the labor market and needs of local MSFWs. To be most effective, outreach specialists must understand the issues unique to MSFWs and be able to speak English and Spanish.

Outreach specialists are responsible for the following preliminary referral to employment and training, state and federal agency information, community resources, and job-placement functions:

- Contact MSFWs to explain the services available at Workforce Solutions Offices

- Solicit jobs, training opportunities, and employment-related services for MSFWs

- Notify MSFWs of job openings and of their rights and benefits under state and federal employment-related laws. Provide information on the Employment Service and Employment-Related Law Complaint System, including sexual harassment and human trafficking

- Assist MSFWs in completing their registration in the Work in Texas (WIT) system, filing work registrations, completing employment applications, facilitating access to skills development and training, preparing worker complaints, scheduling appointments, and arranging for transportation

- Provide information about services available through electronic means and how to access this information

- Identify qualified MSFWs seeking employment, according to guidelines of the federal regulations. The initial and follow-up outreach contacts are made to assist MSFWs in becoming employed or improving their employability

Outreach specialists also perform the following partnership activities:

- Outreach agricultural and nonagricultural employers, program operators, community- and faith-based organizations, and education and training providers on behalf of MSFWs

- Attend staff trainings, either virtually or in person, that are conducted by the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the DOLETA Wage and Hour Division that focus on agricultural employment and other similar topics

- Present information to school students about migrant education programs in the state available both virtually or in person

- Outreach, virtually or in person, to local public and private community agencies and MSFW organizations to establish and enhance community referral networks

- Provide advocacy group presentations in person or virtually

- Coordinate with other office partners in serving MSFWs

- Distribute MSFW-assistance brochures, including the farmworker rights brochure

- Perform joint outreach and recruitment in cooperation with Texas' National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantee, Motivation, Education and Training (MET, Inc.)

Outreach specialists refer MSFWs to their nearest Workforce Solutions Office (one-stop centers) and to ES staff who perform the following job placement activities:

- Provide agricultural and nonagricultural employers with information, services, and assistance related to labor issues and needs

- Help employers with entering job postings in the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) and in WorkInTexas.com

- Refer qualified MSFWs from the MSFW Outreach Log and from previous contacts through follow-up activities, when there is a job or jobs available for referral or any other follow-up activity needed

B. PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO OUTREACH STAFF. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MUST INCLUDE TRAININGS, CONFERENCES, ADDITIONAL RESOURCES, AND INCREASED COLLABORATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS ON TOPICS SUCH AS ONE-STOP CENTER SERVICES (I.E. AVAILABILITY OF REFERRALS TO TRAINING, SUPPORTIVE SERVICES, AND CAREER SERVICES, AS WELL AS SPECIFIC EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES), THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE AND EMPLOYMENT-RELATED LAW COMPLAINT

SYSTEM ("COMPLAINT SYSTEM" DESCRIBED AT 20 CFR 658 SUBPART E), INFORMATION ON THE OTHER ORGANIZATIONS SERVING MSFWS IN THE AREA, AND A BASIC SUMMARY OF FARMWORKER RIGHTS, INCLUDING THEIR RIGHTS WITH RESPECT TO THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT.

To ensure that Outreach staff and Workforce Solutions Office staff members receive technical assistance and professional development to improve services to MSFWs, training and technical assistance is provided and includes the following areas:

- MSFW equity ratio and minimum service-level performance indicators—proper identification and coding of MSFW customers

- Setting up local benchmark or baseline targets for Equity Indicators and Minimum Service Levels

- Technical assistance on MSFW regulations, participants enrolled under the Wagner-Peyser Act, MSFW accountability performance measures, and recommendations for related enhancements to services, including outreach, engagement and career pathways

- Strategies in strengthening collaboration with Workforce Solutions partners

- Workforce Solutions Office coordination and intake procedures

- Data collection requirements for reportable ES services, Equity Ratio Indicators, and accountability measures

- MSFW carryover applicants (WorkInTexas.com active file) and the impact on Equity performance measures

- Annual staff training conducted by the following:

    o US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

    o Texas Attorney General, Human Trafficking section

    o Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid, Inc., which provides legal services to MSFWs

    o DOLETA Wage and Hour Division

    o US Department of Justice, Immigrant/Employee Rights section

- Provide continual statewide in-person or virtual WIT Web Based Training on MSFW enrollments and entering participant services conducted by TWC's Workforce Automation staff or State Monitor Advocate.

- Attend virtual migrant coalition and service-provider meetings throughout the state

- Provide virtual TA and Training to Business Services Unit (BSU) representatives and key staff on services to agricultural employers as outlined in the WIOA/AOP with emphasis on the supply and demand areas of the state

- Annual training on the Employment Service and Employment-Related Law Complaint System

- Agricultural employer seminars throughout the local workforce development areas

- Yearly staff training conducted by the State Monitor Advocate (SMA)

- Employment Service Guide, which includes provisions pertinent to MSFW in general, ES and Employment Related Law Complaint system, and the National Job Registry for H-2A Temporary Agricultural Job Posting requirements

- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program: Service Delivery, Outreach and Reporting

- Complaint procedures related to MSFWs to include informal resolution, apparent violations, and the submission of a complaint on the appropriate forms and timely reporting

- Program integration strategies for MSFW

- Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) procedures and consequences

- Establishing local community partnerships (for example, bringing community groups together, formalizing the traditional migrant subcommittee groups, and forming coalition meeting groups)

- Identifying opportunities to coenroll and integrate program design with Motivation Education and Training, Inc. (MET), WIOA §167, and National Farm Worker Jobs Program Grantee with other center services

- TWC efforts to develop local, regional, and state planning strategies in the agricultural industry with emphasis on supply and demand areas of the state for workers

- Coordinate agricultural business forums. The intended focus of these forums would be relative to pertinent issues that affect both agricultural employers and workers to include laws that affect the agricultural industry sector.

- Coordinate a pre-harvest forum for MSFWs to include migrant education, workforce services, community-based organizations, and farmworker organizations

- Facilitate and coordinate the engagement of the agricultural industry into the workforce system, assist in the creation of jobs within the agricultural industry (permanent year-round), and determine the viable need for a skilled workforce

- Develop strategies to increase opportunities for the MSFW summer youth programs to implement goals and objectives that include a tracking system, coenrollment, and coordination with YouthBuild programs

C. PROVIDING OUTREACH STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES TO ENSURE THEY ARE ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS

To ensure that Board and Workforce Solutions Office outreach staff members receive technical assistance and professional development to improve services to MSFWs and

employers, training and technical assistance is provided virtually and in person to include the following areas:

- MSFW equity ratio and service-level performance indicators—proper identification and coding of MSFW customers under the Wagner-Peyser Act program

- Establishing local benchmark or baseline targets for Equity Indicators and Minimum Service Levels performance measures

- Strategies for strengthening collaboration with Texas Workforce Solutions partners and other organizations serving MSFWs in their workforce areas

- Summary of farmworker rights; OSHA's Water, Rest, and Shade initiatives; migrant education programs; and other support service programs throughout Texas and the nation

- Workforce Solutions Office coordination and intake procedures

- MSFW carryover applicants (active file in WorkInTexas.com) and the impact on Equity performance measures

- MSFW Program: service delivery, outreach, and reporting

- Complaint procedures related to MSFWs to include informal resolution, apparent violations, and the submission of complaints on proper forms timely reporting

- Program integration strategies for MSFWs

- Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) procedures and consequences

- Establishing community partnerships (for example, bringing community groups together to formalize the traditional migrant subcommittee groups and coalition meeting groups)

- Identifying opportunities to coenroll and integrate program services with MET, Inc., Texas' NFJP grantee, and other career services programs

- Initiatives to develop local, regional, and state planning strategies for workers in the agricultural industry, with emphasis on supply and demand areas of the state

- Coordinate agricultural business forums and compliance seminars. The focus of these forums relates to pertinent issues that affect agricultural employers and workers, including laws that affect the agricultural industry sector.

- Texas workforce system and MET participation in joint outreach and recruitment efforts designed to identify additional MSFWs and immediately expand the range of available services.

- Coordinate a pre-harvest forum for MSFWs through community-based migrant education, workforce support, and farmworker organizations

- Facilitate and coordinate the engagement of the agricultural industry into the workforce system, assist in the creation of jobs within the agricultural industry (permanent year-round), and determine the need for a skilled workforce

- Develop strategies to increase opportunities for the MSFW summer youth programs to implement goals and objectives that include a tracking system, coenrollment, and coordination with YouthBuild programs

D. COORDINATING OUTREACH EFFORTS WITH NFJP GRANTEES AS WELL AS WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMMUNITY SERVICE AGENCIES AND MSFW GROUPS

The State's Strategy

TWC will continue to coordinate efforts with the US Department of Labor's National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantees and other agencies and groups.

TWC entered a statewide memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the NFJP grantee in Texas, METs, Inc., effective January 31, 2014. This MOU was updated in February 2023 and will expire on February 29, 2028. As the DOLETA designated grantee, MET, Inc., operates the NFJP program in Texas. This MOU helps to establish and demonstrate effective outreach coordination coupled with increasing registration activities by MET, Inc. staff and ES staff. The MOU was revised to reflect WIOA language, to support and improve coordination, support and improve joint outreach responsibilities, expand on core programs, and describe performance accountability measures.

TWC and the NFJP grantee in Texas maintain an effective working relationship by coordinating outreach efforts with Boards and community service providers through quarterly meetings.

The referral and placement of MSFW customers remains a challenge for state workforce systems. The capacity to share responsibility for this constituency and efficiently coordinate available resources to leverage workforce areas' effectiveness and improve the customer service experience. Texas encourages the coenrollment of MSFW customers in services provided by TWC, Boards, and the NFJP grantee in Texas. The SMA examines coenrollment activity during the annual review of each MSFW-significant Workforce Solutions Office.

The advantages of TWC's statewide MOU with the NFJP grantee in Texas include the following:

- A streamlined information exchange process, which improves the currency and accuracy of shared information

- Coordinated activity among organizations, including immediate access to services

- Planned participation in joint outreach and recruitment efforts designed to increase customer identification and expand services for MSFWs

- Increased staff awareness about emerging issues within the MSFW community

- A vehicle for periodic review and assessment of the quality of services provided to MSFWs

TWC's SMA meets quarterly virtually or in person with the NFJP grantee in Texas to discuss improving the coordination and administration of the employment and training services offered to MSFWs. Additionally, the SMA meets regularly with the local MET Regional Coordinators and staff during the MSFW monitoring reviews at the local level to identify opportunities to improve shared responsibility.

This streamlined approach allows new and improved client programs to receive immediate intervention and fully integrate all programs with the Boards and contract managers. It also allows TWC to:

- provide Board oversight to fully implement WIOA-required changes with our NFJP partner; and

- provide technical assistance and training on the Employment Service and Employment-Related Law Complaint System to local Workforce Solutions Office staff.

Outreach Plan for MSFW in Texas

Outreach efforts to the MSFW population is coordinated between TWC outreach staff and the state's NFJP grantee staff. Coordination efforts include, but are not limited to:

- providing required information regarding partner's programs and/or services during outreach;
- conducting joint outreach; and
- reporting outreach activities and contacts to the other party.

Outreach plans are shared and compared to identify efforts that can be combined and identify areas where outreach and/or service delivery is inadequate.

Strategies are developed to ensure that service delivery collaboration exists for MSFWs in areas where no TWC MSFW outreach staff members are present. This may include the use of technology and other outreach protocols, as well as collaborative partnerships with other state, regional, or local social service agencies.

The state's NFJP grantee responsibilities are as follows:

- Encourage direct service providers throughout the state to enter into MOUs with the local Workforce Solutions Offices. These MOUs should describe the specific types and levels of shared responsibilities, participant processes, and joint outreach and case management strategies.

- Ensure that all NFJP participants are registered in WorkInTexas.com and, when appropriate, recorded in the TWC's case management system for reporting purposes as needed for their career development.

- Work with the TWC MSFW outreach staff in the development of joint outreach strategies, coordination of participant data files, and coenrollment processes; professional development opportunities for NFJP partner and TWC outreach staff; and the exploration of ways to better serve out-of-school MSFW youth.

- Ensure that data for federal reporting is shared in a timely fashion.

5. SERVICES PROVIDED TO FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM

Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

A. PROVIDING THE FULL RANGE OF EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICES TO THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY, BOTH FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS, THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM. THIS INCLUDES:

I. HOW CAREER AND TRAINING SERVICES REQUIRED UNDER WIOA TITLE I WILL BE PROVIDED TO MSFWS THROUGH THE ONE-STOP CENTERS

II. HOW THE STATE SERVES AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH SERVICES

Services for MSFWs and Agricultural Employers

To meet agricultural employers' needs, Texas Workforce Solutions outreach staff will continue to promote the Agricultural Recruitment System to improve the agricultural referral process by performing the tasks in person or virtually, that include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Integrating services for MSFWs, agricultural employers and workers.

- Identifying workers who are job-ready when arriving at the work site.

- Providing employers with industry information, farmworkers' rights, and support services.

- Engaging agricultural employers to determine short- and long-term employment and training needs.

- Serving agricultural employers by creating local and regional economic employment opportunities for MSFWs.

- Developing strategies to:

    o facilitate and coordinate the engagement of the agricultural industry into the workforce system;

    o assist in the creation of permanent year-round jobs within the agricultural industry; and

    o determine the need for a skilled and sustained agricultural workforce.

- Helping employers analyze state and local data on peak production seasons and recruiting an adequate labor supply through the Agricultural Recruitment System.

- Promoting the usage of the ARS with Boards' demand and supply areas, as well as encouraging state-to-state coordination.

- Collaborating and coordinating with the Texas Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, to increase viability and sustainability in agricultural areas of Texas.

TWC has created communication resources to support Texas Workforce Solutions partners in providing meaningful services to agricultural employers and MSFWs. These resources are intended to help find solutions to their employment and training needs. TWC provides these resources by means of the following:

- Electronic service

- Media and printed information

- Organizational coordination and outreach

Additionally, TWC's Foreign Labor Certification (FLC) unit, in coordination with the Office of the State Monitor Advocate (SMA), and the Boards partner with agricultural associations to provide educational seminars for employers and to distribute information on various employment topics and services.

Additionally, FLC updates and publishes the Texas Directory of Farm and Ranch Associations. This publication lists contact information for state organizations with agricultural business interests. This directory and other resources are included on TWC's Agricultural Services web page[3], which provides links to numerous agriculture-related reports.

Agricultural employer and MSFW services are based on each Board's local service delivery plan. Each plan details the programs that the Board provides through the Workforce Solutions Offices under its direction. Additionally, Boards have established Business Services Units (BSUs) to reach out to employers. The goal of BSUs is to understand the needs of their business communities, including agricultural employers, by collaborating with MSFW outreach workers, community partners, chambers of commerce, and industry associations.

BSUs are charged with helping businesses recruit qualified MSFWs and helping job seekers find employment suited to their skills. The Boards Business Services Unit staff address the following issues:

- Lack of transportation to work sites—Board and Workforce Solutions Office staffs work with community- and faith-based organizations and other entities to provide temporary transportation services during peak agricultural seasons.

- Limited knowledge of state and federal employment laws and regulations— Workforce Solutions Office staff hosts forums to educate employers and agricultural crew leaders on state and federal laws and regulations.

- Workforce Solutions Office staff facilitates communication between growers, such as cooperatives, about MSFWs' specific needs and community-based organizations that provide support services.

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[3] Agricultural Services | Texas Workforce Commission

- Lack of skilled workers—Workforce Solutions Office staff coordinates short-term training to support local crops and farming (for example, forklift certification, food safety, and how to obtain a commercial driver's license (CDL)).

- Lack of facilities and/or staff to screen and interview potential MSFWs— Workforce Solutions Office staff provides space in the Workforce Solutions Office for agricultural employers to interview workers. Workforce Solutions Office staff also provides intake and referral activities at the employers' locations.

- Limited administration of farm labor contractors—Workforce Solutions Office staff provides forms and instructions for completing crew leader registration, ensures that farm labor contractors' registration cards are current, and maintains crew leader logs in the offices.

- Limited or inadequate housing—The Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) requires employers to provide no-cost housing to workers who cannot reasonably return to their place of residence after work each day. This is one of the challenges employers face when using ARS, especially in providing suitable housing to families. TWC participates in MET's Regional Farmworker Housing Summit. (MET is the housing grant coordinator for the NFJP grantee under the WIOA §167 housing grant for Texas.) This regional summit illustrates the valuable collaboration between housing authority municipalities and nonprofits throughout Texas.

B. MARKETING THE COMPLAINT SYSTEM TO FARMWORKERS AND OTHER FARMWORKER ADVOCACY GROUPS

TWC partners with agricultural associations to provide educational seminars for employers and distributes information on various employment topics, such as the ES and Employment-Related Law Complaint System. Through these seminars and other interactions with agricultural employers, TWC strives to expand and improve services.

In collaboration with other TWC areas, these special units are a resource to help Boards implement strategies that increase coordination among federal and state agencies and private organizations. FLC and SMA continue their efforts to encourage the use of the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) to link employers that need agricultural labor in Texas with the areas of the state that can potentially supply MSFWs. TWC continues to encourage Boards to think of new and innovative ways to serve agricultural employers and engage communities in rural development.

Workforce Solutions Offices and the Office of the State Monitor Advocate continue to provide information on the ES and Employment-Related Law Complaint System at community-agency partnership meetings in areas of Texas that have significant MSFW populations, at training sessions and conferences conducted by the Human Trafficking Task Force, and at meetings and training sessions held by legal advocacy, state, and federal agencies, and community- and faith-based organizations.

Outreach specialists assist with work registration and job leads. They also ensure that information about the ES and Employment-Related Law Complaint System, such as

farmworker rights brochures, are available in both English and Spanish, and assist MSFWs in submitting complaints and make referrals for necessary support services. Outreach specialists in certain Workforce Solutions Offices have iPads and laptops and thus are equipped to provide live job searches and job posting referrals on site.

Year-round outreach activities are conducted in MSFW-significant Workforce Solutions Offices. Workforce Solutions Office staff responsible for outreach maintains familiarity with the labor market information and the needs of local MSFWs. To serve this population effectively, outreach specialists must understand the issues unique to MSFWs and be able to speak English and Spanish.

Outreach specialists are responsible for taking the following actions:

- Contacting MSFWs to provide information and explain the services available through local Workforce Solutions Offices

- Notifying MSFWs of job openings and of their rights and benefits under state and federal employment-related laws.

- Identifying qualified MSFWs seeking employment, according to guidelines of the federal regulations at 20 CFR Parts 651 and 653 (The initial and follow-up outreach contacts are made to assist MSFWs in becoming employed or improving their employability.)

- Providing information on the ES and Employment-Related Law Complaint System, including sexual harassment

- Helping MSFWs complete work registrations and applications, preparing worker complaints, and arranging appointments and transportation

- Providing information about services available through electronic means and how to access this information

- Presenting information to students about migrant education programs in the state

- Outreaching with local public and private community agencies and MSFW organizations to establish community referral networks

- Providing advocacy group presentations

- Coordinating with other office partners in serving MSFWs

- Distributing MSFW-assistance brochures

- Performing joint outreach and recruitment activities with Texas' National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantee, MET Inc.

- Attending staff training conducted by US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and DOLETA Wage and Hour Division and TWC

- Providing agricultural and nonagricultural employers with information, services, and assistance related to labor issues and needs

- Accepting employer job postings while performing outreach activities in the field

- Referring MSFWs to the nearest Workforce Solutions Office to receive services

- Referring qualified MSFWs from the MSFW Outreach Log and from previous contacts through follow-up activities, when there is a job or jobs available for referral

To meet agricultural employers' needs, Texas Workforce Solutions will continue to improve the agricultural referral process, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Integrating services for farmworkers and agricultural employers and workers

- Identifying workers who are job-ready when arriving at the work site.

- Providing employers with industry information, farmworkers' rights, and support services

- Engaging agricultural employers to determine short- and long-term employment and training needs

- Helping employers analyze state and local peak production seasons and recruit an adequate labor supply

- Collaborating and coordinating with the Texas Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, to increase viability and sustainability in agricultural areas of the state

- Using the job-matching process for temporary agricultural work on an intrastate and/or interstate basis through ARS*

*Texas is primarily a labor supply state for ARS.

TWC has created a variety of communication resources to support Texas Workforce Solutions partners in providing meaningful services to agricultural employers and farmworkers. These resources are intended to help find solutions to their employment and training needs. TWC provides these resources by means of the following:

- Electronic service

- Media and printed information

- Social Media

- Organizational coordination

Additionally, TWC, in partnership with agricultural associations, provide educational seminars for employers. FLC and/or the SMA distributes information on various employment topics such as the Employment Services and Employment-Related Law Complaint System. Through these seminars and other interactions with agricultural employers, TWC is able to expand and improve workforce services and supports.

FLC also updates and publishes the *Texas Directory of Farm and Ranch Associations*. This publication lists contact information for state organizations with agricultural business interests. This and other resources are available on TWC Agricultural Services web page, which links to numerous agriculture-related reports.

Agricultural employer and farmworker services are based on each Board's local service delivery plan. These plans provide details regarding the programs that the Boards provide through Workforce Solutions Offices under their direction. Additionally, Boards have established Business Service Units (BSUs) to reach out to employers. BSUs, in collaboration with MSFW outreach workers, strive to understand the needs of their business communities, including agricultural employers, community partners, chambers of commerce, and industry associations.

BSUs are charged with helping businesses recruit qualified MSFWs and help job seekers find employment suited to their skills. The Boards Business Services Unit staff address the following issues:

- Lack of transportation to work sites—Board and Workforce Solutions Office staff work with community- and faith-based organizations and other entities to provide temporary transportation services during peak agricultural seasons.

- Limited knowledge of state and federal employment laws and regulations— Workforce Solutions Office staff hosts forums to educate employers and agricultural crew leaders on state and federal laws and regulations.

- Workforce Solutions Office staff facilitates communication between growers, such as cooperatives, regarding MSFWs' specific needs and community-based organizations that provide support services.

- Lack of skilled workers—Workforce Solutions Office staff coordinate the provision of short-term trainings (including forklift certifications, food safety, and commercial driver's license (CDL)) to support local crops and farming operations.

- Lack of facilities and/or staff to screen and interview potential MSFWs— Workforce Solutions Office staff provides space in the Workforce Solutions Office for agricultural employers to interview workers. Workforce Solutions Office staff also provides intake and referral activities at the employers' locations.

- Limited administration of farm labor contractors—Workforce Solutions Office staff provide forms and instructions for completing crew leader registration, ensures that farm labor contractors' registration cards are current, and maintains crew leader logs in the offices.

- Limited or inadequate housing—The Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) requires employers to provide no-cost housing to workers who cannot reasonably return to their place of residence after work each day. This is one of the challenges employers face when using ARS, especially in providing suitable housing to families. TWC participates in MET's Regional Farmworker Housing Summit. (MET is the housing grant coordinator for the NFJP grantee under the WIOA §167 housing grant for Texas.) This regional summit illustrates the valuable collaboration undertaken with housing authority municipalities and nonprofits throughout Texas.

MSFWs in Texas often face poverty, low academic achievement, limited English proficiency, and inadequate job training and readiness, as well as various social problems. The Texas workforce system's approach focuses on assisting MSFWs to overcome these barriers to

acquire and retain productive employment. To this end, Workforce Solutions Offices reaffirm existing community partnerships and continuously establish new community partnerships to meet the needs of local businesses and MSFWs, while providing job seekers with job search workshops, job placement services, referrals, and support services.

C. MARKETING THE AGRICULTURAL RECRUITMENT SYSTEM FOR U.S. WORKERS (ARS) TO AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH PUBLICITY.

To meet agricultural employers' needs, Texas Workforce Solutions outreach staff coordinates with the Business Services staff to ensure that the agricultural referral process is successful by performing activities in person or virtually, that include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Integrating services for farmworkers and agricultural employers and workers

- Identifying workers who are job-ready when arriving at the worksite

- Providing employers with industry information, guidance on farmworkers' rights, and support services

- Engaging agricultural employers to determine short- and long-term employment and training needs

- Helping employers analyze state and local peak production seasons and recruit an adequate labor supply

- Using the job-matching process for temporary agricultural work on an intrastate and/or interstate basis through ARS*

*Texas is primarily a labor supply state for ARS.

TWC has created a variety of communication resources to support Texas Workforce Solutions partners in providing meaningful service to agricultural employers and farmworkers. These communication resources are intended to help find solutions to their employment and training needs. TWC provides these resources by means of the following:

- Electronic service

- Media and printed information

- Social Media

- Organizational coordination

Additionally, TWC, in partnership with agricultural associations, provides educational seminars for employers. FLC and/or the SMA distributes information on various employment topics such as the Employment Service and Employment-Related Law Complaint System. Through these seminars and other interactions with agricultural employers, TWC strives to expand and improve workforce services and supports.

FLC also updates and publishes the *Texas Directory of Farm and Ranch Associations*. This publication lists contact information for state organizations with agricultural business interests. This and other resources are available on TWC Agricultural Services web page, which links to numerous agriculture-related reports.

Agricultural employer and farmworker services are based on each Board's local service delivery plan. These plans detail programs that the Boards provide through Workforce Solutions Offices under their direction. Additionally, Boards have established Business Service Units (BSUs) to reach out to employers. BSUs, in collaboration with MSFW outreach workers, strive to understand the needs of their business communities, including agricultural employers, community partners, chambers of commerce, and industry associations.

Boards receive assistance from TWC in implementing strategies that address these issues through coordination among federal and state agencies and private organizations. TWC's efforts encourage the use of ARS to link employers needing agricultural labor in Texas. Using ARS enables employers to recruit workers without the use of foreign labor.

TWC also collaborates with Boards to develop innovative ways to serve agricultural employers and engage communities in economic and rural development. To these ends, TWC coordinates and facilitates Agricultural Employer Forums in conjunction with multiple partners in agriculturally significant areas of the state, including the Lower Rio Grande Valley, Middle Rio Grande, Upper Rio Grande, and South Plains Board areas. The Forums are a cooperative effort between federal and state governments, community-based organizations, and the private sector to keep the public informed about issues that impact agricultural employers and workers. The Forums cover laws that affect the agricultural sector. They also provide education, outreach, and information on regulations. The results from these forums include improved compliance by employers, better coordination of services, and better working conditions for agricultural workers. Depending on the needs of agricultural associations and employers, the following agencies may participate:

- Texas Department of Agriculture

- Internal Revenue Service

- US Social Security Administration

- US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

- US Department of Justice/Office of Special Counsel

- Texas Health and Human Services Commission

- TWC's Tax Department

- DOL, Wage and Hour Division

- DOLETA

- US Department of Homeland Security

- US Immigration and Customs Enforcement

- MET, Inc.

- Agricultural institutions of higher education

- Local and regional water allotment and irrigation districts

6. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

A. COLLABORATION

Describe any collaborative agreements the state workforce agency (SWA) has with other MSFW service providers including NFJP grantees and other service providers. Describe how the SWA intends to build upon/increase collaboration with existing partners and in establishing new partners over the next four years (including any approximate timelines for establishing agreements or building upon existing agreements).

Organizational Coordination

TWC along with the 28 Local Workforce Development Boards work collaboratively to provide services to agricultural employers and employees. TWC has grant agreements with each Board that provide funding and establish minimum service delivery expectations.

Boards enter MOUs with their required workforce partners to improve service delivery and service referrals for employers and workers. Additionally, TWC maintains an MOU with MET Inc., Texas' NFJP grantee, to provide coordinated services that helps both agricultural employers and workers.

B. REVIEW AND PUBLIC COMMENT

In developing the AOP, the SWA must solicit information and suggestions from NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations. In addition, at least 45 calendar days before submitting its final AOP, the SWA must provide a proposed plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must: 1) Consider any comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP; 2) Inform all commenting parties in writing whether their comments have been incorporated and, if not, the reasons; therefore, and 3) Transmit the comments and recommendations received and its responses with the submission of the AOP.

The AOP must include a statement confirming NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP. Include the list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.

Transmission of the Combined State Plan (Plan) includes assurances that interested parties were given an opportunity to review and provide public comment on the Plan; such parties include, but are not limited to, WIOA §167 National Farmworker Jobs Program grantees,

other appropriate farmworker groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested employer organizations.

This agricultural outreach plan was posted for public comment from December 14, 2023, through January 13, 2024. No public comments pertaining to the agricultural outreach plan were received during the 30-day comment period.

<h2 style="text-align:center">C. DATA ASSESSMENT</h2>

Review the previous four years Wagner-Peyser data reports on performance. Note whether the State has been meeting its goals to provide MSFWs quantitatively proportionate services as compared to non-MSFWs. If it has not met these goals, explain why the State believes such goals were not met and how the State intends to improve its provision of services in order to meet such goals.

Performance Indicators

TWC continues working with Boards to maintain and improve performance for the equity-ratio indicators and minimum service-level indicators. For the past several years, to ensure that optimal performance is being adequately measured, Texas has worked to meet established equity-ratio and minimal service level indicators. Enhancements to WorkInTexas.com (web-based data entry and reporting), paired with staff training, is anticipated to improve reporting efforts. During the SMA's visits in PY'21, the SMA discussed performance for the equity ratio and minimum service-level indicators with Board management, Workforce Solutions Office management, and MSFW outreach staff. Monitoring efforts during PY'21 focused on changes in performance.

Meeting minimum service level indicators for PY'23 continues to present challenges for TWC. The following conditions contribute to outreach and engagement challenges:

- Mobility of MSFWs—many workers move to take jobs in other states—the measurable outcome, assuming UI wage data matches with TWC's data, out-of-state farmworkers augment performance accountability measures.

- MSFWs often reside in areas that experience high rates of unemployment.

- Many states do not require UI claimants who file interstate claims to register in the local job matching system or to participate in the UI availability-for-work requirement.

- Wages are often lower in areas with high unemployment, which contributes to the increase of migration of local workers to other parts of the state and to other states.

- Work performed by MSFWs may be paid on a piece-rate basis.

Texas is a supply state, and MSFW labor is provided to other states. Performance accountability standards are based on rolling quarter UI data, which contributes to the accuracy of measuring accountability measures. Historically, placements were measured at an hourly rate, thus excluding placements paid by piece rate. Therefore, reported performance does not accurately reflect all activity in the wages at placement category. Workforce Solutions Office staff may increase placements and meet the minimum service level indicators by developing strategies to serve MSFWs by:

- emphasizing services that will result in more MSFWs being placed in agricultural and nonagricultural jobs;

- providing local agricultural peak-season plans to help agricultural employers and to engage in the agricultural sector while creating job placement initiatives for MSFWs;

- referring MSFWs to Workforce Solutions Office services;

- promoting the use of electronic, self-service systems to encourage MSFWs take an active role in their job search;

- coordinating with Workforce Solutions Office partners to foster an effective outreach program—including maintenance of the MOU with MET and other farmworker organizations and community partners; and

- promoting economically self-sustaining, year-round jobs through skills development under the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP), MET Inc., and curriculum development with local community colleges.

D. ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

The plan must include an explanation of what was achieved based on the previous AOP, what was not achieved and an explanation as to why the State believes the goals were not achieved, and how the State intends to remedy the gaps of achievement in the coming year.

An assessment of progress is noted throughout this AOP section.

E. STATE MONITOR ADVOCATE

The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

The Texas SMA has had the opportunity to review and comment on the agricultural outreach plan and has approved the plan as submitted. The SMA contributed to the design, scope, and priorities of this plan as a method of continuing to serve and meet the needs of Texas agricultural employers, workers, and industry.

WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time (sec 121(e)(3));	Yes
2. If the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers, the State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111, State Workforce Agency staffing requirements;	Yes
3. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department,	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser Act services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and	

4. SWA officials:
    1) Initiate the discontinuation of services;
    2) Make the determination that services need to be discontinued;
    3) Make the determination to reinstate services after the services have been discontinued;
    4) Approve corrective action plans;
    5) Approve the removal of an employer's clearance orders from interstate or intrastate clearance if the employer was granted conditional access to ARS and did not come into compliance within 5 calendar days;
    6) Enter into agreements with State and Federal enforcement agencies for enforcement-agency staff to conduct field checks on the SWAs' behalf (if the SWA so chooses); and
    7) Decide whether to consent to the withdrawal of complaints if a party who requested a hearing wishes to withdraw its request for hearing in writing before the hearing.
	Yes

5. The SWA has established and maintains a self-appraisal system for ES operations to determine success in reaching goals and to correct deficiencies in performance (20 CFR 658.601).	Yes

WAGNER PEYSER PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The State is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

Under normal circumstances, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth), the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act), Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program (authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA), the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program (authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA), must submit an expected level of performance for six WIOA common performance indicators, which are:

Indicator	Definition
1. Employment Rate - 2nd Quarter After Exit	The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit)

Indicator	Definition
1-1. Title I Youth Education and Employment Rate - 2nd Quarter After Exit	The percentage of title I Youth program participants who are in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment, during the second quarter after exit from the program.
2. Employment Rate - 4th Quarter After Exit	The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit)
2-1. Title I Youth Education and Employment Rate - 4th Quarter After Exit	The percentage of program participants who are in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment, during the fourth quarter after exit from the program.
3. Median Earnings - 2nd Quarter After Exit	The median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program
4. Credential Attainment	The percentage of those participants enrolled in an education or training program (excluding those in on-the-job training (OJT) and customized training) who attain a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year after exit from the program. A participant who has attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent is included in the percentage of participants who have attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent only if the participant also is employed or is enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year after exit from the program
5. Measurable Skill Gains	The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains, defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress, towards such a credential or employment. Depending on the type of education or training program, documented progress is defined as one of the following: 6. Documented achievement of at least one educational functioning level of a participant who is receiving instruction below the postsecondary education level; 7. Documented attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; 8. Secondary or postsecondary transcript or report card for a sufficient number of credit hours that shows a participant is meeting the State unit's academic standards; 9. Satisfactory or better progress report, towards established milestones, such as completion of OJT or completion of one year of an apprenticeship program or

Indicator	Definition
	similar milestones, from an employer or training provider who is providing training; or 10. Successful passage of an exam that is required for a particular occupation or progress in attaining technical or occupational skills as evidenced by trade-related benchmarks such as knowledge-based exams.
6. Effectiveness in Serving Employers	The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit) with the same employer as during the second quarter after exit from the program.

However, per TEN 04-23, the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education have determined that it is appropriate and reasonable to assess performance for WIOA core programs for the following performance indicators as applicable: (1) Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit; (2) Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit; (3) Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit; and (4) Credential Attainment Rate. In accordance with WIOA section 503(a), the Departments will delay the assessment of the remaining performance indicators as the available baseline data is not sufficient enough to produce reliable estimates using the required statistical adjustment model. Nevertheless, TWC will report an expected level for measurable skills gains (MSG).

As consistent with WIOA §116, when negotiating expected levels of performance, TWC will utilize Statistical Adjustment Models (SAM) as soon as they become available. SAMs are key mechanisms for target setting and accounting for the differences in the characteristics of the customers served and state economic conditions. Baseline data gathered during prior PY's serve as the foundation for SAM recommendations and help inform national Government Performance and Results Act targets for WIOA measures, which are required when negotiating performance targets.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. These state indicators are identified under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	67.8%		67.8%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	68.1%		68.1%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$7,481		$7,481	

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Credential Attainment Rate	NA		NA	
Measurable Skill Gains	NA		NA	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	NA	NA	NA	NA

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAMS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the following as it pertains to adult education and literacy programs and activities under title II of WIOA, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA).

A. ALIGNING OF CONTENT STANDARDS

Describe how the eligible agency has aligned its content standards for adult education with State-adopted challenging academic content standards, as adopted under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(1)).

A standards-based approach helps students learn the most relevant skills, rather than allowing textbooks to dictate classroom practice. Multiple standards and expectations are integrated in instructional activities to promote college and career readiness and the development of a skilled workforce. The use of technology in the classroom prepares adult education students for the demands of a digital work environment. State efforts support an ongoing commitment to ensure that content standards are relevant and meet the needs of today's students.

All TWC Adult Education and Literacy–funded (AEL) providers' curriculum must align with TWC AEL Content Standards. Developed in 2016, the Content Standards increase the rigor and relevance of adult education through alignment with the following established assessments and standards:

- Texas College and Career Readiness Standards (TCCRS)

- State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

- Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)

- Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency (TxCHSE)

- Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA)

The Content Standards are reviewed and revised approximately every two years to ensure that Texas has been responsive to the changing educational needs of adult learners seeking employment and postsecondary education opportunities. Revisions are as follows:

2016: Texas Adult Education and Literacy Content Standards (new academic standards)

2019: Texas Adult Education and Literacy Content Standards 2.0 (Standards 2.0), Alignment with Industry Clusters: Advanced Manufacturing; Construction and Extraction; Healthcare Sciences; and Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics

2021: Texas Adult Education and Literacy Content Standards v. 3, Standards for Parent/Family and Citizen/Community Member

2023 (underway): Texas AEL Content Standards v. 4, Standards for Digital Literacy

Each iteration of the Content Standards undergoes rigorous professional development and training rollout to AEL providers to ensure proper implementation.

B. LOCAL ACTIVITIES

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund each eligible provider to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following adult education and literacy activities identified in section 203 of WIOA, including programs that provide such activities concurrently. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include at a minimum the scope, content, and organization of these local activities.

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY ACTIVITIES (SECTION 203 OF WIOA)

- Adult education;

- Literacy;

- Workplace adult education and literacy activities;

- Family literacy activities;

- English language acquisition activities;

- Integrated English literacy and civics education;

- Workforce preparation activities; or

- Integrated education and training that:

  1. provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster; and

  2. is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

Special Rule: Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and

services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

Texas state law establishes adult education as a department within the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), and TWC serves as the administrative entity for AEL programs (Texas Labor Code, §315). Under WIOA, TWC is the eligible agency with sole responsibility for administering and supervising policy for adult education and literacy activities in the state.

Texas' vision for AEL is to deliver education, workforce, and postsecondary education and training outcomes for students through innovative service delivery and partnerships that result in statewide alignment, efficiency, and accountability. The AEL program aligns its strategy with the state's workforce goals to support increases in employment, postsecondary education and training transition, skills, and secondary school credential attainment through demonstrated approaches that integrate workforce system services and leverage local and state partnerships.

TWC AEL solicits RFAs from eligible providers with demonstrated effectiveness, as defined in WIOA, to serve eligible individuals in the adult education population who:

- have attained 16 years of age;

- are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under state law; and

- meet one of the following criteria:

    o Are basic skills deficient

    o Do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent and have not achieved an equivalent level of education

    o Meet the definition of an English language learner (ELL).

The eligible entities that are selected will provide academic instruction and education services below the postsecondary level, with the goal of increasing an individual's ability to:

- read, write, and speak the English language and perform mathematics or other activities necessary for the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent;
- transition to postsecondary education and training; and
- obtain sustainable employment.

Eligible entities may include, but are not limited to, the following, provided that the entity has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education and literacy services:

1. Local education agencies

2. Community-based or faith-based organizations

3. Volunteer literacy organizations

4. Institutions of higher education/learning

5. Public or private nonprofit agencies

6. Libraries

7. Public housing authorities

8. Nonprofit institutions that are not described in (1) through (7) and are able to provide literacy services to adults

9. Consortiums of the agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described in (1) through (8)

TWC's commitment to innovative and cost-effective programming is apparent in its RFA. In the 2018 RFA, Texas incorporated and specifically indicated the considerations specified in WIOA §231(e) as grant award requirements that eligible providers must meet. The considerations were scored as narrative questions in the RFA, and offerors were required to provide a detailed narrative to demonstrate how they planned to meet each consideration. The same process will be continued in the upcoming 2023 RFA.

TWC is committed to making long-term investments that enhance the capacity of providers to implement research-based models—including programs that support accelerated options, such as integrated education and training, Workplace AEL, and distance learning—and service models that support the career advancement of ELLs, including IEL/CE. To these ends, TWC promotes innovative career pathways programs and opportunities for students to gain incremental marketable skills and reach their goals. The use of innovative strategies, which often leverage interagency collaborations, allows programs to generate positive employment and workforce training outcomes while simultaneously serving more students at a full range of functional levels. Each program year, TWC negotiates enrollment targets with grantees for Basic, Integrated Education and Training (IET), and Intensive Services (as defined below), requiring that a portion of funds be dedicated to the creation and implementation of career pathway models.

TWC encourages activities that uphold the following priorities, including priorities that leverage workforce development opportunities and efficiencies that are offered through concurrent enrollment:

- Expand integration with Boards and Workforce Solutions Offices (one-stop centers), including concurrent enrollment in workforce system programs including WIOA, TANF, the state child care program, Trade Act, vocational rehabilitation, and other services provided at Workforce Solutions Offices

- Establish or expand partnerships with community colleges and other training organizations that create greater opportunities for adult learners to transition to postsecondary education and workforce training programs, including concurrent enrollment in IET services

- Develop innovative strategies to meet the needs of adult learners based on local resources, including strategies that:
  - enhance, support, and use educational delivery mechanisms that facilitate the immediate delivery of services to students; and

o facilitate student progress from standard AEL programs toward a service-delivery activity that results in employment, a training certificate or certification, or a college degree

All grant recipients are required to implement the following AEL activities.

Adult Education activities, including activities based on the state's AEL Content Standards and the statutory definition in WIOA, include academic instruction and education services below the postsecondary level that increase an individual's ability to:

- read, write, and speak in English and perform mathematics or other activities necessary for the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent;

- transition to postsecondary education and training; and

- obtain employment.

Literacy activities, including services for individuals with low levels of literacy, are aligned with the statutory definition in WIOA. Literacy activities support an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English and to compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual, and in society.

English Language Acquisition (ELA) activities, as defined in WIOA, include programs of instruction that are designed to help eligible individuals who are ELLs achieve competency in reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension of the English language. ELA activities address transition requirements outlined in WIOA §463.31 and appropriately lead to:

- the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; and

- transition to postsecondary education and training; or

- employment.

ELA activities include proven or evidence-based instructional techniques and learning strategies that support oral skills development for ELLs. AEL grant recipients meet the requirements of §463.31 through a variety of strategies, including, but not limited to:

- offering educational and career counseling services through the Career Pathways Navigator that is offered by each grant recipient and enables ELLs to transition to postsecondary education and training or employment;

- alignment of curricula with the state Content Standards and alignment with the reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension needs of ELLs; and

- enrollment in Career Pathways programs, including IET and IEL/CE.

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education activities, as defined in WIOA, are aligned with education services that are provided to ELLs who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials obtained in their native countries, and enable such adults to be successful in the English language and acquire basic as well as advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States. Such services include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on

the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation and may include workforce training.

AEL Letter 04-16, Change 2, issued July 21, 2021, and titled "Implementing Integrated Education and Training English Literacy and Civics Education—Update," provides revised policy guidance on this issue and states that AEL grantees must use funds allocated under WIOA §243 to provide IEL/CE services in combination with IET. IEL/CE funds must be used to support the IET service approach, including the provision of Workforce Training and Workforce Preparation Activities, as outlined in AEL Letter 02-16, Change 1, issued October 13, 2016, and titled "Implementing the Integrated Education and Training Service Approach—Update." IEL/CE must:

- include instruction in literacy and English as a second language (ESL);

- include instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation;

- be provided in combination with IET, including AEL activities, Workforce Preparation Activities, and Workforce Training outlined in AEL Letter 02-16, Change 1;

- be designed to prepare adult ELLs for and place them in unsubsidized employment in high-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency; and

- be integrated with Boards and Workforce Solutions Office functions to carry out the activities of the program.

Integrated Education and Training (IET), as defined in WIOA, provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for educational and career advancement. AEL grant recipients have been implementing and expanding IET programs as an option under the required Career Pathways components and will continue these services. Projects are being implemented with the required elements of contextualized and concurrent AEL, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training.

Workforce Preparation Activities, as defined in WIOA, are activities, programs, and services that are designed to help an individual acquire a combination of basic academic skills, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self-management skills, including competencies in using resources, using information, working with others, understanding systems, and obtaining the skills necessary for a successful transition into and completion of postsecondary education, training, or employment.

AEL grant recipients implement workforce preparation activities as part of contracted WIOA §243, IEL/CE Services, and through IET.

Family Literacy Activities, as defined in WIOA, are activities that are of sufficient intensity and quality to make sustainable improvements in the economic prospects for a family and better enable parents or family members to support their children's learning needs and that integrate each of the following activities:

- Parent or family adult education and literacy activities that lead to readiness for postsecondary education or training, career advancement, and economic self-sufficiency

- Interactive literacy activities between parents or family members and their children

- Training for parents or family members regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and how to be full partners in the education of their children

- An age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences

Family literacy activities are required under Texas law and are integrated into AEL grants across the state.

Note: TWC AEL does not use funds made available under Title II for adult education and literacy activities to support or provide programs, services, or activities to individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under state law. However, TWC AEL may use such funds if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under Title II, AEL aims to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under Title II prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under Title II for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

Grant recipients are required to implement one of the following three services models, referred to as Intensive Services models:

Workplace Adult Education and Literacy (Workplace AEL), as defined in WIOA, are adult education and literacy activities that are offered by an eligible provider in collaboration with an employer or employee organization at a workplace or an off-site location that is designed to improve the productivity of the workforce.

Services for Internationally Trained Professionals include, but are not limited to:

- basic skills preparation for professional credentialing exams;

- specialized career advising;

- ESL services contextualized for targeted occupations; and/or

- professional opportunities.

ESL services contextualized for targeted populations provide enough intensity to allow for rapid progress and use the appropriate English language assessment to determine whether a participant's academic or professional English skills are sufficient for academic coursework.

Transition to Reentry and Post-Release Services, as defined in WIOA, are educational programs for transition to reentry initiatives and other post-release services with the goal of reducing recidivism. Grantees may provide services under this category that include educational counseling or casework to support individuals' transitions to reentry and other post-release services.

Funding for initial grants and continued grant renewals is outlined in TWC General Administration rule §800.68, which refers to a needs-based formula for all AEFLA funds; however, due to a recent OCTAE review and comments to the upcoming RFA as well as legislation passed by the 88th Texas Legislature, TWC is currently amending §800.68 prior to the new grants scheduled to begin on July 1, 2024.

The state feels the rule changes are needed in order to comply with OCTAE's interpretation of WIOA Sec. 231(c). The rule amendments will permit the state to allow applicants to apply for unique federal funding streams separately in the next statewide competition, essentially creating a new section of rule specific to Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) programs. The proposed rules allow the state greater flexibility to determine how IELCE funds will be made available in the state's Request for Application (RFA). The state is also proposing rule changes to implement passed bills from the 88th Texas Legislative Session (Regular), such as House Bill 1602, which requires the state to establish a performance-based funding model focused on credential attainment.

TWC published its latest RFA in October 2023 and is currently in an open procurement.

The competitive RFA process ensures that the following components are incorporated:

Direct and Equitable Access: TWC is committed to conducting a competitive RFA process that ensures direct and equitable access to eligible providers competing for Title II grants. Information regarding the process and application is made available via a public website and partner networks. Applicants are allowed an adequate amount of time to complete the application, based on best practices as determined by TWC's Grants Administration (GA) department, and applications are submitted in a manner that allows equitable access to all individuals, including individuals with disabilities.

Fair and Equitable Evaluation: Applications are evaluated based on a scoring rubric as described in the application and based on the required WIOA evaluation considerations and other factors as determined by TWC. The evaluation team members include diverse professionals, including members who are not affiliated with TWC AEL. Award amounts are determined by evaluation results and area demographic and needs analyses, to ensure that addressing the purpose of WIOA is the basis for funding decisions.

Coordination with Local Board: The RFA process includes a procedure to ensure that the applicable Board reviews the applications and provides comments and/or recommendations regarding the application's alignment with the strategies and goals of the local plan under WIOA §108.

General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) Statement: Each applicant requesting funds must include a description of the steps that the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, its federally assisted program for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs. Section 427 of the GEPA highlights six types of barriers that can impede equitable access or participation: gender, race, national origin, color, disability, and age. Based on local circumstances, applicants must determine whether these or other barriers may prevent participation in the program or activities, and the steps to be taken to overcome identified barriers must be included in the application.

C. CORRECTIONS EDUCATION AND OTHER EDUCATION OF INSTITUTIONALIZED INDIVIDUALS

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund eligible providers to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following correctional educational programs identified in section 225 of WIOA: Adult education and literacy activities;

- **Special education, as determined by the eligible agency;**

- **Secondary school credit;**

- **Integrated education and training;**

- **Career pathways;**

- **Concurrent enrollment;**

- **Peer tutoring; and**

- **Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.**

Each eligible agency using funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution must give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program.

TWC's AEL grant recipients use funds, as allowable, to provide educational programs for individuals in correctional institutions and other institutionalized individuals. Academic programs include the following:

- Basic education

- Special education programs as determined by the Texas Education Agency

- English literacy programs

- Secondary school credit programs

- IET

- Concurrent enrollment

- Peer tutoring

- Transition to reentry initiatives and other post-release services with the goal of reducing recidivism

As required under WIOA §225, TWC AEL provides corrections education services and services for other institutionalized individuals. To provide these services and administer related activities, TWC AEL will not use more than 20 percent of the overall 82.5 percent or greater, as described in §231. Corrections is an optional activity for grantees, and the

solicitation of WIOA §225 funds is combined with the overall grant application for activities described in §231, with grantees proposing corrections activities and associated funding.

TWC continuously works to implement IET in correctional facilities (where permitted) to support the successful transition of individuals from incarceration to employment. In the spring of 2021, OCTAE selected TWC AEL to participate in a national technical assistance initiative to develop and incorporate IET into corrections models that support the expansion of such models in Texas. In July 2022, through a contract with Windham School District (the statewide school district serving incarcerated individuals), TWC began a state leadership–funded initiative to support the expansion of IET models in correctional facilities. Implementation of the initiative will develop and expand IET models for an estimated 500 incarcerated individuals who are within two years of release, provide reentry and post-release services to those individuals, and disseminate best practices on developing such models for AEL and workforce system stakeholders. Both the national technical assistance project and the IET in corrections initiative will enable state staff members to provide enhanced technical assistance to AEL programs on WIOA §225–funded corrections programs.

D. INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund eligible providers to establish or operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) programs under section 243 of WIOA. Describe how adult English language learners, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, are served in IELCE programs.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be offered in combination with integrated education and training activities found in 34 CFR section 463.36.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

Note: Due to OCTAE's July 2022 review of the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) unpublished Request for Applications (RFA), Texas is making changes to the statewide Adult Education and Learning (AEL) competition. Until 2023, TWC required the implementation of Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IEL/CE) programs into all its statewide grants. This meant that an applicant applying for AEFLA funds must perform all outlined

services under both WIOA §§231 and 243 and was not permitted to choose which funds they wanted to apply for. However, they could create consortia to ensure the proper implementation of program services under each section. TWC AEL believes that by requiring applicants to be prepared and responsive to how they will leverage resources and coenroll ELLs across funding streams, programs will be better able to support the vast number of internationally trained professionals in Texas. OCTAE's interpretation of WIOA federal statutory language on fair and equitable access requires applicants to be able to apply for funds separately. As such, TWC AEL will revise rule language to support a more robust and targeted approach to serving ELLs, especially internationally trained professionals, based on applications that can demonstrate a need for funding instead of a county-level allocation methodology, as applied to WIOA §231 funds and outlined in this combined state plan.

TWC AEL will establish and operate IEL/CE programs through a competitive, multi-year RFA process for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education funds per OCTAE guidance. Funding will be competed and distributed according to the process described in the RFA that is scheduled for publication in the fall of 2023. In Texas, IEL/CE programs must include the IEL/CE educational services (described above in Allowable Activities and in WIOA §463.33) and must be delivered in combination with IET activities (described above in Allowable Activities and in WIOA §463.36).

In the fall of 2023, TWC will award WIOA §243 grant funds using the same RFA competitive process and timeline described above in B. Local Activities. TWC will release one solicitation with two separate applications to ensure that each funding stream is distinguished to applicants. By releasing one solicitation with two applications, TWC strives to reduce the burden on applicants who historically have only had to submit one application while making it clear to new and previous applicants that options exist with separate funding opportunities. The same criteria used to determine eligibility of an applicant for WIOA §231 is used for WIOA §243, and successful applicants are subject to the same funding cycle. Applicants applying to provide services under WIOA §243 must also answer narrative questions and provide information that is specific to the provision of IEL/CE program requirements. All applications are evaluated based on the same rubric and scoring criteria for each application based on outlined federal and state considerations. All applicants must provide narrative details and information to demonstrate how they will meet the requirements.

The new grants that are scheduled to start on July 1, 2024, will deliver IEL/CE programs for the purpose of preparing adult ELLs for, and placing such ELLs in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency. Program design and implementation must include:

- the integration of civics engagement skills into career pathways and workforce preparation activities that are targeted to ELLs, especially professionals who hold degrees and credentials in their native countries;

- the integration of educational technology and hybrid learning models that consist of both synchronous and asynchronous learning options;

- the use of technology to support digital literacy that is appropriate for preparation in a digital workforce and responsible online civic engagement; and

- collaborative alignment with local area workforce system entities, including Boards, libraries, postsecondary institutions, and employers.

IEL/CE program services must include:

- English Language Acquisition instruction;
- Civics Education instruction that emphasizes the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedures, civic participation, and American history and government to help students acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to become active and informed parents, workers, and community members;
- Integrated Education and Training (IET) in specific occupations or occupational clusters that provide workforce training opportunities in order to prepare and place eligible participants in unsubsidized employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency; and
- collaboration with Boards to carry out the activities of the program.

Grantees are required to enter participants who receive IEL/CE services, including those receiving IEL/CE services in combination with IET, into the statewide data system using a specific code to track these participants.

Since 2014, Texas has worked to create career pathways for internationally trained professionals, using and leveraging both WIOA §§231 and 243 funding under one program design to expedite the population into the workforce. Texas has served thousands of ELLs in IET programs that have led to recognized post-secondary credentials. It is hard to predict the impact of required changes to the RFA and service delivery processes at this time, but AEL anticipates that there will be a reduction in the number of individuals who will benefit from IET services that are funded by WIOA §243.

E. STATE LEADERSHIP

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT THE REQUIRED STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA

TWC continues to use State Leadership funds to support activities that put the statewide system in a strategic position for continuous improvement across program outcomes and for innovation in new directions related to full system integration with core programs and postsecondary education and training.

TWC will continue to focus the allowable grant funds that are made available under WIOA §222(a)(2) to carry out state leadership activities that enhance the quality and compliance of the AEL system and support the development of innovative service delivery models. Updates provided in this Combined State Plan include initiatives that have been approved by TWC's three-member Commission (Commission).

Required projects under WIOA §223 for which TWC has designated State Leadership funds and projects that will be continued or designated for development and implementation are described below.

Sec. 223(a)(1)(A) for the alignment of AEL activities with other core programs

Both the Career Pathways Professional Development Center (CPPDC), previously known as the Career Pathways Expansion grant, and the Accelerate Texas initiatives aid in the continued development of content and delivery models that support career pathways, as required under Section 223(a)(1)(A), while supporting alignment with other core programs. The CPPDC, originally approved by the Commission in June 2021 with funding being renewed annually, supports professional development (PD) through the cross training of stakeholder groups such as AEL grantees, Boards, Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs), and Career and Technical educational providers to improve AEL integration across WIOA programs and better serve priority populations. The CPPDC provides evidence-based professional development to stakeholders on:

- quality career pathways models;

- coenrollment across WIOA Titles; and

- strategies that support student success, system alignment, and improved performance outcomes.

Similarly, the Accelerate Texas initiative supports the expansion of IET models and other postsecondary transition models.

In fall 2021, as part of TWC's response to closing the middle skills gap in Texas, the Commission approved funds for a pre-apprenticeship bridge training program that would further expand career pathways foundations in the state. The initiative provides remediated instruction in reading and math to applicants who are transitioning into their first year of a building trades–related Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP). In addition to providing support in reading and math, grant activities include workforce preparation activities and digital literacy services to ensure that participants are prepared for the rigor of the RAP.

These initiatives increase the capacity to expand, develop, and implement IET models that focus on career pathways service approaches that include workforce training, development, and integration efforts with Texas Workforce Solutions, Texas community colleges, employers, and other system stakeholders.

Sec. 223(a)(1)(B) for the establishment or operation of high-quality professional development programs

Due to Texas' extensive provider system and the nuanced differences in Title II services, TWC created a three-pronged approach to the delivery of PD and Technical Assistance (TA) statewide. The approach creates a triangulation of instructional, distance education/digital literacy, and career pathway content that supports Texas' collective approach to AEL services.

The Statewide Professional Development Center (SWPDC) supports the provision of high-quality PD to AEL providers and other system stakeholders by providing:

- data-driven professional planning services and implementation that is delivered through a structure of professional development institutes of routine and concentrated support to AEL providers;

- maintenance of the Texas AEL contract trainer database;

- event planning for statewide, regional, and local conference or business events;

- research activities to evaluate professional development effectiveness; and

- informational resources (including an AEL professional development web page, toll-free AEL hotline, and a resource library collection of curricula and other materials).

The SWPDC supports providers with administrative and instructional leadership content through the Leadership Excellence Academy (LEA), along with ongoing approved enhancements to the Texas Content Standards to help facilitate the publication of, and training on, any content standards revisions. During 2023, the SWPDC trained AEL administrators and instructors on the Standards 4.0 updates, which include the addition of Digital Literacy Standards.

The Distance Education Professional Development Center (DEPDC) provides comprehensive, statewide PD and TA support to students and instructors through a call center for technical support, which provides:

- live chat and video services with screen sharing for one-on-one AEL instructor counseling on Remote Learning and Distance Learning instruction; and
- live chat and video service with screen sharing for one-on-one counseling for eligible student participation in Remote Learning and Distance Learning in AEL programs.

The Distance Learning and Technology Integration (DLTI) Symposium, which is hosted by the DEPDC, showcases local and national presenters who are recognized as leading technology trainers. Through the Symposium, participants are exposed to technical training tools and may immediately apply what they learn. The Symposium is held each year in late spring and has expanded to reach more than 200 AEL instructors and staff in both an in-person and virtual setting.

The CPPDC supports PD to improve AEL integration across WIOA programs and better serve priority populations through the cross training of stakeholder groups such as AEL grantees, Boards, Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs), and Career and Technical educational providers. The CPPDC provides evidence-based PD to stakeholders on:

- quality career pathways models;

- coenrollment across WIOA Titles; and

- strategies that support student success, system alignment, and improved performance outcomes.

The CPPDC will develop PD modules for instructors and stakeholders, host yearly statewide institutes and academies, expand the statewide trainer database of on-call subject matter experts, host train-the-trainer events, and develop a research-based project each year.

Professional Development for Nonprofit Adult Literacy Organizations provide PD services for tutors, instructors, program administrative staff, and trainers of nonprofit adult literacy organizations that are collaborating partners within Texas' network of TWC-funded and non-TWC-funded literacy organizations. Services provided by these organizations include:

- training on literacy volunteer management, which includes topics such as volunteer recruitment, training, placement, monitoring, and retention;

- literacy instruction and tutoring for native English or nonnative English speakers;

- development of collaborative partnerships and data sharing relationships with AEL grant recipients, libraries, Boards, and VR;

- data sharing relationships with collaborating entities; and

other services based on the results of a statewide needs assessment that is conducted in collaboration with TWC.

Sec. 223(a)(1)(C) for the provision of technical assistance to eligible AEL providers

All three of TWC's professional development centers also provide technical assistance as part of their scope of work. Each entity works closely with state staff to ensure that information being disseminated aligns to the state's interpretation of policy. The statewide PD system supports the following:

- The development and dissemination of instructional programmatic practices and related technical assistance, as required under §223(a)(1)(C)(i), that is based on the most rigorous and/or scientifically valid research available and supports eligible providers in implementing reading, writing, mathematics, career pathways, ELA, and distance learning practices

- The provision of training to providers relating to content standards

- The development of Leadership Excellence Academies for instructors and administrators

- The coordination of CPPDC and DEPDC activities

- Distance learning and technology development, deployment, and support, as required under §223(a)(1)(C)(iii), including increased distance learning PD and a statewide learning management system to provide online PD for staff training

- Data-driven PD planning, services, and implementation

- Routine and concentrated support to AEL grantees and providers

- The management and development of TWC's Learning Management System (LMS) called the Texas AEL PD Portal, which includes information on vetted contract trainers who are trained by the PD center

Event planning for statewide, regional, and local conference or business events

- Research activities to evaluate PD effectiveness among other topics that have been approved by TWC

- The provision of information resources to the public, educators, and students

- The development of virtual learning resources relating to basic education, digital literacy, workforce preparation, and job search assistance

Sec. 223(a)(1)(D) to support the monitoring and evaluation of the quality and improvement of services and innovation expansion

The evaluation of local provider services is a priority for the AEL program. TWC staff has worked to develop a strategic evaluation and monitoring process that draws from best practices. Each of the PD center grants has a research and evaluation criteria built into the scope and grant requirements.

In July 2022, the Commission approved a $500,000 evaluation project. However, it was decided that the project's scope would be determined following the development of the statewide competition for AEL providers RFA. This decision was made in large part due to the August 2022 review of the state's RFA by OCTAE and the significant changes that were requested by OCTAE that would potentially impact the original evaluation scope preferences. TWC AEL staff have regrouped to consider the state's adult education advisory committee's recommendation to conduct a needs assessment before moving forward on the evaluation study.

Career Pathways Evaluation Study

As we continue to monitor and evaluate the current status of workforce integration across WIOA Titles I, II, and IV programs, TWC AEL seeks to gain insight into local service delivery by facilitating regional discussions with workforce system partners in an effort to identify ways to improve integration through:

- providing state-level and evidence-based recommendations to further support a "One Workforce" system (as promoted by DOL in TEN 13-20) in Texas; and
- developing resources related to regional career pathways ladders.

Once the new AEL providers are selected from the upcoming RFA, TWC AEL will revisit launching this important initiative.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT PERMISSIBLE STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA, IF APPLICABLE

The Commission may designate other activities of statewide significance that promote the purpose of WIOA, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Providing assistance to local providers in developing and implementing programs that achieve WIOA's objectives, and in measuring the progress of those programs in achieving objectives and meeting state performance

- The promotion of workplace AEL activities

- The continued development and dissemination of curriculum frameworks

- The continued rollout and professional development of content standards updates

- Outreaching, developing, and piloting strategies for improving teacher quality and retention

- The development and implementation of programs and services that meet the needs of adults with learning disabilities or limited English-language proficiency

- Providing performance enhancement mentor initiatives to support performance accountability

- Providing performance follow-up and case management activities

- Supporting and promoting integration efforts between workforce system partners

- Supporting the provision of AEL services to special populations

- The expansion of family literacy activities

- The provision of other activities of statewide significance that promote or support AEL activities

The following descriptions provide more detail on allowable state leadership activities for which the Commission has approved and designated Section 223 funds and may continue to provide funds and develop new initiatives. As with all AEFLA-funded grant activities, staff present initiatives for Commission consideration and approval.

AEL Performance Quality Improvement Awards

Performance Quality Improvement Awards support AEL grant recipients' project performance and innovation through the dissemination of information about models and proven or promising practices in the state. These awards recognize AEL grant recipients' overall program performance and coenrollment efforts with WIOA Title I programs.

Pell Grant Ability to Benefit Capacity Expansion (potential initiative)

The Ability-to-Benefit initiative provides funding to support colleges in developing services for students who lack a high school diploma or high school equivalency and qualify for Pell Grants under federal Ability-to-Benefit provisions in federal financial aid regulations. The Commission has previously approved funds for Ability-to-Benefit program models and the most recent grants ended in fall 2021.

The Math Assistance Call Center

The Math Assistance Call Center (MACC) provides just-in-time math assistance to students enrolled in AEL programs who are preparing for the mathematics portion of the Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency (TxCHSE) exam or who otherwise lack sufficient skills in mathematics to participate effectively in employment, community, and/or home settings. The MACC provides 20–30–minute sessions of one-on-one math support to AEL participants via phone calls, screen sharing, and virtual whiteboards.

Learning Management System

The Learning Management System (LMS) is a cloud-based, full-featured, off-the-shelf secure system with course registration and management for in-person, hybrid, and online training events. Funds support access to a cloud-based course library and interactive resources, a web conferencing integrated add-in, and training fees to sufficiently accommodate instructors,

administrators, and software content to provide a full array of professional development services across Texas. The LMS:

- enables the statewide professional development center to deliver training through a variety of methods, including online, face-to-face, and hybrid;

- allows for content authoring, training materials storage, and content import/export;

- centralizes and automates the registration, management, and tracking of both external and internal professional development trainings and certifications at individual, subrecipient, grant recipient, and statewide levels;

- provides transcripts for staff trained through the AEL system; and

- provides a 24/7 option for PD which enables AEL staff and stakeholders to increase their skills, knowledge, and abilities.

Texas AEL Content Standards Update

Texas regularly reviews and updates AEL Content Standards, as needed, to ensure that students are being held to standards that align with the state's mission to create career pathways for all students. The Commission may approve enhancements to the AEL Content Standards to include additional competencies in the future.

Performance Enhancement Mentor Initiative

The Performance Enhancement Mentor Initiative supports poor-performing providers through intensive program support and mentoring that is delivered in coordination with high-performing peer providers. This RFA received no applicants, although the Commission may consider future funding opportunities to address this initiative's purpose.

Potential Initiatives for Special Populations

The Commission may consider creating special initiatives that support efforts to reach special populations in receiving AEL services, such as, but not limited to, serving opportunity youth and skilled immigrants, expanding reentry and post-release service models, and providing capacity-building activities for workplace AEL models.

Employer Engagement Initiatives

As part of TWC's response to closing the middle skills gap in Texas, the Commission approved funds for an employer engagement initiative to further workplace literacy models in the state. Through this grant, grantees offer workplace literacy activities, workplace literacy activities with employer-provided training, and workplace literacy activities with integrated education and training, leading to industry-recognized credentials. As a deliverable, grantees are required to develop curricula for workplace programs, which are disseminated to workforce system stakeholders as educational resources for job readiness and progression within the industry sector. This is currently being piloted and there may be further iterations of this grant.

Statewide Virtual HSE Pilot

The Statewide Virtual HSE Pilot program supports TWC AEL's goal of increasing the number of adults in Texas with a high school diploma or its equivalent. The initiative provides an option for adults in Texas to connect to educational services virtually to attain such credentials.

F. ASSESSING QUALITY

Describe how the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities under title II. Describe how the eligible agency will take actions to improve such quality, including providing the activities described in section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA. Describe how the eligible agency will use evaluations, data analysis, program monitoring, or other methods to improve the quality of adult education activities in the State.

Ongoing Program Monitoring and Oversight

Texas is in the process of implementing a program quality model to support student success that links the evaluation of monthly program performance, information, and findings from the agency's monitoring department to just-in-time technical assistance and the deployment of targeted PD to support continuous program improvement.

The AEL department provides a Monthly Performance Report (MPR), also known as the report card, to local programs. The MPR includes a snapshot of both fiscal and programmatic performance of the grant. This is only one of nine non-NRS reports generated by the state's Division of Information, Innovation, and Insight (I|3). The reports provide data sets for all state and federal imposed performance indicators, also referred to as contracted measures in the Texas RFA. The current contracted measures are as follows:

- Enrollment Targets, which include the following:
  - Total enrollment
  - Integrated Education and Training
  - Intensive Services (Workplace Literacy, Services for Internationally Trained Professionals, and Transition to Post-Release Services)
  - English Literacy and Civics—Total
  - English Literacy and Civics—Integrated Education and Training
- Measurable Skills Gains (MSGs)
- Credentials
- Employed/Enrolled Quarter 2 After Exit
- Employed/Enrolled Quarter 2–4 After Exit

The MPR shows a monthly snapshot of the above indicators and their corresponding targets by individual grantee. The MPR uses timely data that is gathered from the Texas Educating Adults Management System (TEAMS) to measure program performance against contract deliverables as well as state and federal performance targets. TEAMS is Texas' state-of- the-art, web-enabled system that maintains student-level data, including demographic, assessment, and outcome data, as well as class, site, program, and provider information. Aside from the state-generated reports, TEAMS users may analyze class, site, or program information by using the system- generated standard reports , which are often referred to as

canned reports. TEAMS provides a wide range of information about adult education, including snapshots of student and program performance, personnel qualifications, and staff development activities.

Additionally, AEL program staff members meet to evaluate the overall effectiveness of each program, which is measured against contract deliverables, progress toward measures, state performance measures, and expenditures. Program staff members discuss trends in data and issues of concern and develop support plans to address such issues. This provides a structure under which staff may engage TWC's Statewide Professional Development Center and other Section 223–funded PD and technical assistance support projects to address concerns.

Responsive PD efforts that are funded under section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA is a central component of the quality model. AEL assesses the quality and responsiveness of PD through multiple approaches, including the review of local program improvement and the remediation of deficiencies that may occur due to PD and technical assistance efforts.

For example, through the quality model, a provider that consistently shows poor performance in reading or oral language scores will be advised by their AEL program support specialist or an assigned PD specialist to schedule PD in these areas. Once the program receives PD services, the AEL department monitors program improvement, which is reported in the MPR. PD is only one remedy to address program improvement and is used along with other forms of technical assistance.

Adverse Actions

If a program misses required performance levels in any one area for four consecutive months, the program is placed on a Technical Assistance Plan (TAP). TAPs use a timeline of deliverables to improve and support program function. TAP actions may include additional targeted professional development support, one-on-one training in specific areas of weakness or concern, and technical assistance visits by TWC staff to meet and address issues. Members must meet specific benchmarks to have a TAP lifted. Programs that consistently fail to meet contract deliverables once placed on a TAP are elevated to a Corrective Action Plan (CAP). Programs that fail to meet objectives beyond this point are subject to sanctions and the deobligation of program funds. TWC Chapter 800 General Administration rules on the deobligation and reallocation of AEL funds outline the deobligation criteria and the time frame in which TWC may deobligate funds from an AEL grantee that is not expending their funds or meeting performance requirements, as well as the criteria grantees must meet in order to receive reallocated funds.

Subrecipient Monitoring

TWC's Subrecipient Monitoring (SRM) department works with AEL staff to ensure that all thirty-seven grantees are compliant and serve as good stewards of federal funds.

TWC monitors for compliance with federal and state requirements related to fiscal and programmatic accountability through the following methods:

- Desk Monitoring—Regular review and analysis of data that is submitted and validated monthly through the state's data system, TEAMS

- On-site Monitoring—Field based fiscal and programmatic audits that are based on agency risk assessment results
- Data Validation—Virtual reviews of source documents that are used to support performance accountability, per OCTAE Memo 19-1

On-Site Reviews

SRM hosts a preplanning meeting with TWC AEL staff to discuss any potential issues before the on-site visit, which gives SRM the opportunity to ask questions about specific items of interest identified during the desk review. It also provides SRM with any technical assistance items that AEL staff have reviewed and discussed with the grantee, including performance issues. The process ensures that SRM obtains an accurate review of program and financial activity and any ongoing issues. Before a review, SRM requests that the grantee submit documents for review and analysis to determine each area will be tested during on-site reviews.

Several grantees are selected annually for on-site reviews based on a risk analysis that includes both objective criteria and input from AEL. All grantees are monitored either in person or through a desk review, with all programs receiving on-site monitoring once every three or four years. Data validation is conducted with each grantee at least once during the grant cycle.

While on-site, SRM reviews expenditures that include, but are not limited to disbursements, cash management, financial reporting, and records management (including eligibility and assessment documentation). To ensure that the grantee has adequate internal controls, staff conducts interviews with key staff to confirm that internal processes for participant intake, screening, and placement comply with TWC's AEL policies. Testing samples are identified using TEAMS and are compared to on-site records. Testing includes the review of student test scores, credentials, and MSGs.

At the end of each on-site review, SRM conducts an exit conference with the grantee, in which staff identifies any findings or areas of concern that will be identified later in an official report. The results of the SRM reviews improve the technical assistance targeted at local projects.

Data Validation

Additionally, SRM conducts an annual data validation of select grantees, as coordinated with AEL staff and required by OCTAE PM 19-1. Such data validation enables the joint reporting requirements, as established in OCTAE Memo 17-2, to be addressed. SRM also monitors other WIOA titles, which allows for consistent processes and implementation of requirements across WIOA partner programs. This coordinated effort ensures that reported performance maintains TWC's integrity standards.

Deobligation of Funds

TWC focuses on performance to ensure that funds are used effectively when serving customers to produce positive results. Contracted performance benchmarks and performance standards highlight TWC's expectation that grantees maintain or exceed performance standards through effective service delivery and innovation. Section 800.78 allows funds to

be deobiligated if they are not being used effectively and at expected levels during specified time frames to serve individuals in need of AEL services. However, TWC staff works diligently with grantees to provide technical support and assistance in developing strategies to ensure that funds are used to serve customers efficiently and effectively, thereby mitigating risks. TWC reviews these rules and considers amendments that may provide the agency with greater flexibility to ensure that AEFLA funds are being used efficiently during the statewide grant cycle.

Self-Evaluation and Monitoring of Local Programs

As part of their deliverables, all TWC grant recipients (sole providers and lead grant recipients for consortia of providers) are required to:

- submit a detailed project plan and expenditure projections for AEL-funded activities;

- submit a detailed local professional development plan;

- develop and maintain a procedure that outlines a process for continuous monitoring of subrecipients; and

- if applicable, use TEAMS to regularly monitor program performance across all providers.

Programs use the detailed project plan as an opportunity to analyze their performance, determine the cause of areas of weakness or concern, and develop strategies for improvement in the coming year. Programs are required to tie their professional development activities to this plan to ensure adequate training and support for program improvements.

TWC AEL staff members also hold regular conference calls and biannual meetings for program members to share challenges and best practices. These forums build on what is working in the field and provide peer-mentoring opportunities.

Additionally, programs are required to regularly solicit student evaluations to assess satisfaction with curricula, instructors, and institutions.

 ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;	Yes
2. The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;	Yes
3. The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;	Yes
4. All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;	Yes
5. A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan;	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
6. The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;	Yes
7. The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and	Yes
8. The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program;	Yes

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding the supplement-not-supplant requirement);	Yes
2. The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA;	Yes
3. The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not "eligible individuals" within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA;	Yes
4. Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.	Yes
5. The eligible agency agrees that in expending funds made available under Title II of WIOA, the eligible agency will comply with sections 8301 through 8303 of the Buy American Act (41 U.S.C. 8301-8303).	Yes

AUTHORIZING OR CERTIFYING REPRESENTATIVE

CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements

The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative

agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for
influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an
officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,00 0 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

Statement for Loan Guarantees and Loan Insurance

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

Please download and sign the forms below. Please scan and return the forms to wioa@ed.gov at the same time you submit your State Plan via the portal.

1. SF424B - Assurances – Non-Construction Programs (http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html)

2. Grants.gov - Certification Regarding Lobbying (http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html)

3. SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (required, only if applicable) (http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html)

APPLICANT'S ORGANIZATION	Enter information in this column
Applicant's Organization	Texas Workforce Commission
PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE	Enter information in this column
First Name	Edward
Last Name	Serna
Title	Executive Director
Email	Edward.serna@twc.texas.gov

SECTION 427 OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS ACT (GEPA)

In the text box below, describe the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally-assisted program for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs provide the information to meet the requirements of Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA), consistent with the following instructions posted at https://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/gepa427.doc.

TWC grants for AEFLA-funded activities, including the 2017 AEL statewide grants, which began July 1, 2018, adhere to §231(c) and ensure that eligible providers have equitable access to apply and compete for grants and contracts. To ensure that providers have equal access to application information, TWC AELFA-funded grants and contract opportunities are published in two locations: TWC's Procurement Portal, which was developed by Bonfire, and the Texas.gov eGrants Application.

Furthermore, TWC provides notifications to public parties that wish to be notified of these grant and procurement opportunities via GovDelivery, which they may register for on the TWC website.

TWC also ensures equitable access to and participation in all projects and activities conducted with federal adult education funds. The 2017 statewide AEFLA grant required offerors to describe how they effectively met the 13 considerations under WIOA, which includes how responsive the offeror was to serving individuals with barriers who need AEL services and their ability to serve individuals with disabilities. Before awarding AEL statewide grant contracts, which went into effect July 1, 2018, TWC required AEFLA grantees to describe the steps that would be taken to address the needs of students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries to overcome barriers to equitable participation. Barriers addressed were those based on gender, race, color, national origin, disability, and age. The grants associated with this RFA procurement will end June 30, 2024.

In Fall 2023, TWC conducted a Request for Application (RFA) procurement to select AEL providers for the coming years. The grants used the above process and were awarded with start dates of July 1.

The 2023 RFA included requirements that applicants demonstrate their ability to comprehensively assess participants to identify any barriers and disabilities; provide accessible, safe, and convenient instructional facilities; and ensure that individuals, especially those with barriers or disabilities, have equitable access to services.

Additionally, general contract terms for AEL contractors, including those funded under AEFLA §223 (state leadership activities) and §231, are required to comply with the nondiscrimination provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act. General contract terms for AEFLA-funded contracts require grantees not to discriminate against any employee, applicant for employment, or beneficiary based on their race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, temporary medical condition, political affiliation or belief, or citizenship, and to ensure that the treatment of employees and applicants are free of discrimination.

TWC's equal opportunity policy conforms to all applicable federal and state laws to provide equal opportunity in employment and maintains processes to ensure nondiscriminatory practices are enforced within the agency's hiring practices. AEFLA-funded staff and TWC staff are required to take training on diversity, equal opportunity employment, and discrimination prevention.

Programs must address the special challenges that students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries face in overcoming barriers to participation and are required to describe how individuals will benefit from equitable access to services, including access in the areas of facilities, assessment, orientation, and overall service delivery.

TWC ensures equal opportunities for all eligible students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries to participate in any project or activity carried out under the applicable programs, including AEL, and promotes the ability of such students, teachers, and beneficiaries to meet high standards.

TWC ensures that local providers give equal access to, and afford equitable participation in, all such projects and activities through the monitoring and technical assistance process, and that they follow the applicable laws.

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a state plan, whether unified or combined, is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach an agreement with the US Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the US Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

Under normal circumstances, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth), the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act), the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program (authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by Title

III of WIOA), the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program (authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA Title IV), must submit an expected level of performance for six WIOA common performance indicators, which are described in the following table.

Indicator	Definition
1. Employment Rate—2nd Quarter After Exit	The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program. Note: For Title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities or in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.
1-1. Title I Youth Education and Employment Rate—2nd Quarter After Exit	The percentage of Title I Youth program participants who are in education or training activities or in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.
2. Employment Rate—4th Quarter After Exit	The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program. Note: For Title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities or in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program.
2-1. Title I Youth Education and Employment Rate—4th Quarter After Exit	The percentage of program participants who are in education or training activities or in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program.
3. Median Earnings—2nd Quarter After Exit	The median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.
4. Credential Attainment	The percentage of participants enrolled in an education or training program (excluding participants in on-the-job training (OJT) and customized training) who attain a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma (or its recognized equivalent) while a participant in or within one year after exit from the program. A participant who has attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent is included in the percentage of participants who have attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent only if the participant also is employed or is enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year after exit from the program.
5. Measurable Skill Gains	The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains, defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress,

Indicator	Definition

	toward such a credential or employment. Depending on the type of education or training program, documented progress is defined as one of the following:
	  1. Documented achievement of at least one educational functioning level of a participant who is receiving instruction below the postsecondary education level.
	  2. Documented attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent.
	  3. Secondary or postsecondary transcript or report card for a sufficient number of credit hours that shows that a participant is meeting the state unit's academic standards.
	  4. Satisfactory or better progress report toward established milestones, such as completion of OJT or completion of one year of an apprenticeship program or similar milestones, from an employer or training provider that is providing training.
	  5. Successful passage of an exam that is required for a particular occupation or progress in attaining technical or occupational skills as evidenced by trade-related benchmarks such as knowledge-based exams.

6. Effectiveness in Serving Employers	The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program. Note: For Title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities or in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit, and if employment has been with the same employer as during the second quarter after exit from the program.

However, per TEN 04-23, the US Departments of Labor and Education have determined that it is appropriate and reasonable to assess performance for WIOA core programs for the following performance indicators, as applicable: (1) Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit, (2) Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit, (3) Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit, and (4) Credential Attainment Rate. In accordance with WIOA §503(a), the Departments will delay the assessment of the remaining performance indicators, as the available baseline data is not sufficient to produce reliable estimates using the required statistical adjustment model. Nevertheless, TWC will report an expected level for MSGs.

As consistent with WIOA §116, when negotiating expected levels of performance, TWC will use Statistical Adjustment Models (SAMs) as soon as they become available. SAMs are key mechanisms for target setting and accounting for the differences in the characteristics of the customers served and state economic conditions. Baseline data gathered during prior program years serves as the foundation for SAM recommendations and help inform national Government Performance and Results Act targets for WIOA measures, which are required when negotiating performance targets.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. These state indicators are identified under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	42.9%		42.9%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	43.8%		43.8%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$6,320		$6,320	
Credential Attainment Rate	42.2%		42.2%	
Measurable Skill Gains	42.7%		42.7%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	NA	NA	NA	NA

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL)

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan [13] must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA:

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[13] Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(iii) of WIOA

A. STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

All VR agencies, except for those that have an independent consumer-controlled commission, must have a State Rehabilitation Council (Council or SRC) that meets the criteria in section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable, has:

- ☐ [check box] (A) is an independent State commission.
- ☑ [check box] (B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council.

In accordance with Assurance 3(b), please provide information on the current composition of the Council by representative type, including the term number of the

representative, as applicable, and any vacancies, as well as the beginning dates of each representative's term.

Council Representative	Current Term Number/ Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)	1/0	10/2023
Parent Training and Information Center	2/0	11/2021
Client Assistance Program	2/0	11/2022
Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor (Ex Officio if Employed by the VR Agency)	1/0	11/2021
Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider	1/0	11/2022
Business, Industry, and Labor	2/0	10/2023
Business, Industry, and Labor	2/0	10/2023
Business, Industry, and Labor	1/0	10/2023
Business, Industry, and Labor	1/0	11/2022
Disability Advocacy Groups	1/0	10/2023
Current or Former Applicants for, or Recipients of, VR services	1/0	11/2021
Section 121 Project Directors in the State (as applicable)	NA	NA
State Educational Agency Responsible for Students with Disabilities Eligible to Receive Services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	2/0	10/2023
State Workforce Development Board	1/0	10/2023
VR Agency Director (Ex Officio)	2/0	8/2019
Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor (Ex Officio if Employed by the VR Agency)	1/0	11/2021
Disability Advocacy Groups	2/0	11/2021
Disability Advocacy Groups	1/0	10/2023

If the SRC is not meeting the composition requirements in section 105(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and/or is not meeting quarterly as required in section 105(f) of the Rehabilitation Act, provide the steps that the VR agency is taking to ensure it meets those requirements.

Not applicable. The council meets quarterly.

In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(21)(A)(ii)(III) of the Rehabilitation Act, include a summary of the Council's input (including how it was obtained) into the State Plan and any State Plan revisions, including recommendations from the Council's annual reports, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction and other Council reports.

The Rehabilitation Council of Texas (RCT) meets quarterly with TWC-VR leadership as part of the RCT's quarterly meetings. During RCT quarterly meetings, TWC-VR provided

updates to the RCT, including measured progress in achieving State Plan goals; the RCT provided input and recommendations regarding VR services and program matters.

RCT uses a committee structure to review and provide comments to TWC-VR. These committees are:
- the executive committee;
- the program planning and review committee, which is composed of all RCT members;
- the policy, procedures, and personnel development committee;
- the customer satisfaction and needs assessment committee; and
- the membership and education committee.

To gather the RCT's input on the State Plan, TWC-VR facilitated two feedback sessions with the RCT in August 2023 to review and discuss each section of the VR portion of the State Plan. These sessions also included collaboration on goals and priorities. The RCT submitted written recommendations to TWC-VR in September 2023. Below are the RCT's recommendations and TWC-VR's responses.

Provide the VR agency's response to the Council's input and recommendations, including an explanation for the rejection of any input and recommendations.

Recommendation 1;
The RCT recommends TWC-VR request more state general revenue funds to pull down our federal funds which will allow more clients to be served.

Response:
Due to the recent and projected growth in client service expenditures, TWC-VR is working with TWC's Finance Division to evaluate expenditures and participants served and prepare an exceptional item proposal for inclusion in the agency's next legislative appropriations request.

Recommendation 2;
The RCT wrote a letter to Texas Workforce Commission-Vocational Rehabilitation, (TWC-VR), requesting that the income level requirement for customers and families be raised and provided the example from Pennsylvania raising the income level to $100,000 before a customer or family would be required to participate in the cost of services. The RCT recommends TWC-VR proceed with the request from the council and as recommended from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and raise the financial income level for a customer or family before they would be asked to participate in services.

Response:
Current cost participation requirements are based on 300 percent of the federal poverty level. TWC-VR is nearing completion of a review of the impact of cost participation policies, including the impact of eliminating such requirements. TWC-VR anticipates developing a proposal for revising current policy and rules in FY 2024.

Recommendation 3;
Table 2: Racial and Ethnic Distribution
Recommendation: The current breakdown of the table showing the racial and ethnicity of the Texas Workforce Commission/Vocational Rehabilitation, TWC-VR staff is categorized as

either Hispanic or racial minority. Recommend breaking the racial minority section down further as captured by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) data, such as by African American, Asian, etc.

Response:
As recommended, TWC-VR has included updated information that expands the breakdown of other minorities for TWC-VR Staff including Black, Asian, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Not specified, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and two or more races.

Recommendation 4;
(b) Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). Section 101(a)(15), (17), and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to provide an assessment of:
(A)   Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;
Table 2: Racial and Ethnic Distribution
The Rehabilitation Council of Texas (RCT) recommends TWC-VR further define the racial minorities in the table beyond Hispanic and racial minorities and include the breakdown of racial minorities, such as African American, Asian, and other categories that are captured for RSA data. Also recommend further identifying the severity of disability in the categories as well.

Response:
As recommended, TWC-VR has included updated information that expands the breakdown of minorities to include Black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, some other race, and two or more races. The information also breaks down each minority listed above and the severity of the disability categories.

Recommendation 5;
Goal one of the priorities focuses on the recruiting and retention of staff. RCT encourages the agency to increase the knowledge of counselors to be able to help customers. This includes the areas of disability training, and working with employers and training they will need in the future.

Response:
TWC-VR will review current training available to counselors to identify additional training opportunities and other strategies to increase counselor knowledge in the areas of disability and working with employers.

Recommendation 6;
Much of the new counselor training is computer-based training (CBT) and has lost the person to person feedback and discussion. Recommend the agency obtain feedback from the counselors and managers to determine the effectiveness of this training method.

Response:
New counselor training was redesigned based upon feedback solicited from VR counselors and managers. Both counselors and managers requested training be provided sooner in the new counselor's tenure, allowing new counselors to begin training closer to their start date, and asking that training content be available to them as an ongoing resource after they

complete the courses the first time. TWC-VR also agrees that in-person training provides an important learning environment that supports interaction and collaboration.

Based on this feedback, TWC-VR worked closely with TWC's Training & Development department to create a hybrid new counselor training, in which certain components are available online and certain courses are conducted in-person. There are six courses in the hybrid new counselor training: three courses are computer-based training (CBT) classes for a total of 3.5 hours. Three courses are classroom training courses (in-person) for a total of 60 hours. TWC-VR believes that this new format is effective. The CBT courses allow new counselors to begin training much faster, are self-paced, and make foundational content easily accessible as an ongoing reference. These classroom-based courses comprise 94% of the total 63.5 hours of required training.

Recommendation 7;
Goal 2 Improve provider recruitment, retention, and support. RCT is appreciative of the efforts made in the past year to streamline processes and would like to continue to address this goal during the next year with TWC-VR. One area of interest is to revisit the community rehabilitation program (CRP) credentialing and recertification process. We would like to work together to make this system more beneficial for the providers as well as the customers. This may include the re-certifying process looking different than it does now, which is to watch the same content videos that have already been viewed. We would also like to recommend other timing and options to view the recorded videos.

Response:
TWC-VR, in collaboration with the University of North Texas Workplace Inclusion and Sustainable Employment (UNT WISE), is reviewing options for streamlining the credentialing and recertification process, including but not limited to decreasing the required number of Continued Education Units and updating materials to decrease assignments without compromising essential curriculum. In addition, TWC-VR is reviewing certain courses to ensure content is updated regularly to align with changes in policy and processes. TWC-VR looks forward to receiving feedback and suggestions from RCT on current and future revisions.

Recommendation 8;
Goal 3**:** Streamline VR policy, processes, and procedure to improve workflow processes and provide tools to facilitate timely service delivery.

Recommendation; The RCT recommends that the approval processes for service delivery be reduced. While the RCT understands the goal and importance of guidance to TWC-VR counselors, the processes that exist in policy appear to actually delay the provision of services. The RCT is willing and able to assist in achieving this request.

Response:
TWC-VR has implemented an annual review of approval processes to identify opportunities to reduce or streamline approvals while also ensuring appropriate internal controls. TWC-VR looks forward to RCT feedback on approvals that may create unnecessary delays while not contributing to a balanced system of internal controls.

Recommendation 9;

Goal 4: Improve and develop additional user-friendly resources to maximize customer choice.
Recommendation to add information available in the provider locator tool, or other avenue of the availability and ratings of service providers.

Response:
TWC-VR shares RCT's interest in continued enhancement of the provider locator tool to include additional information that will support customer informed choice in providers. TWC-VR will confer with TWC's Division of Information, Innovation, and Insight (I|3) to determine enhancements that can be implemented with currently available data, as well as enhancements that may require collection of additional data (such as ratings).

Recommendation 10;
Goal 6**:** Increase and enhance partnerships with employers to 1) better understand employer needs when hiring people with disabilities and working with VR collaboratively, and to 2) build awareness about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities to increase employment opportunities for VR customers.

Recommendation is to add as a strategy reporting the increase of the number of employers the business relations department has made contact/communicated during the year, and the number of employers who have hired people with disabilities that were closed during the year.

Response:
TWC-VR will confer with TWC's I|3 Division to determine how to use available data to measure the number of employers, statewide and by region, hiring VR participants, such as a cumulative measure on the number of unique employers (based on FEIN) served year-to-date. This measure will reflect the work of both the business relations team and counselors and other VR staff who regularly engage employers. Additionally, consistent with the WIOA accountability measure for evaluating the workforce system's effectiveness in serving employers, TWC-VR will work with I|3 to evaluate retention with the same employer, in which a VR participant who exits with employment is employed with the same employer in both the second and fourth quarters post-exit.

Recommendation 11;
3) Supported employment services
Extended services, known in Texas as long-term support and services, can be publicly funded, "natural" or "in-kind," or paid by the customer through Social Security Insurance (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), or another Social Security Administration Title II work incentive program.
Recommendation: Please clarify or be more specific with what was intended with the statement that services would be paid for through Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or another Social Security Administration Title II work incentive program.

Response:
TWC-VR has added additional content to clarify the purpose of this statement and included additional resources that could potentially provide extended services.

Recommendation 12;
(f) Annual Estimates
Recommendation: The estimates for the next federal year appear to be lower than expected. The numbers provided to the RCT for the annual report as served for 2022 were 81,722 for general Vocational Rehabilitation alone. Recommend reviewing this category again.

Response:
Annual estimates listed in section (f), Annual Estimates, were calculated from the number of customers that were determined eligible in FY2022. The number of customers listed as served in FY 2022 in the annual report for RCT included customers from the point of their initial contact with VR, which occurs prior to the determination of eligibility and includes provision of information about VR, making a case assignment, and completing the application. This difference in methodology accounts for the variation in number identified by RCT.

Recommendation 13;
The VR agency's plan for recruitment, preparation and retention of qualified personnel….
Recommendation: The salaries of jobs have increased after the pandemic as more and more fields are experiencing difficulties in finding staff. Increasing salary has been one method used by employers to attract staff. It has been reported that a great number of counselor positions have been offered to individuals who have turned down the position due to the pay. It is recommended that TWC-VR make every effort to advocate for an increase in salary for counselors and field staff in an effort to increase hiring of staff. It will also make the position and the agency more desirable to come to work.

Response:
TWC-VR continues to review its salary structure and processes to enable increases in pay for VR staff, including those available through career ladder or other promotions and for meritorious performance. TWC-VR also established salary guidelines for all VR hiring managers to follow, ensuring that starting salaries are consistent and competitive with similar positions in the agency. These guidelines are reviewed each year to ensure they remain current. In addition, the 88th Texas Legislature passed a cost-of-living adjustment for all State of Texas employees, resulting in all employees receiving a 5% salary increase effective July 1, 2023, and an additional 5% increase that will be effective on September 1, 2024. TWC-VR continues to confer with VR Division managers and supervisors to determine where and how frequently potential candidates are turning down employment offers due to salary, and will consult with TWC Human Resources (HR) to identify additional strategies to reduce that frequency.

Recommendation 14;
The RCT has been in discussion with TWC-VR regarding VR Counselors who do not meet Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) requirements. RCT recommends a consideration for a specific strategy to award merits or promotions to VRCs who are at least one year on the job, meet performance measures (which can be defined in this strategy) but the employee does not meet the educational requirement/CSPD (by being enrolled in a Master's program) to be promoted to a VRC II and receive the compensation which accompanies the promotion. Potential alternatives that can be considered include;
a. Remove the requirement for a VRC to be enrolled in a Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (QVRC) Master's program if they do not meet CSPD from the criteria for

advancement from a VRC I to a VRCII. (the education requirement can be added to the criteria to promote from a VRCII to a VRC III).

b. Allow the VRC I to promote to a VRC II but can only receive ½ of the 7 percent raise until they meet the educational requirement by being enrolled in a QVRC Master's program. (Or only receive ½ of the 7 percent raise and remain a VRCI until enrolled in a QVRC program then the promotion to a VRC II can occur and the additional 3.5 raise can be earned.

c. Enable the VRCI to be eligible for a one-time 5 percent merit which in many cases may provide the financial boost and motivation needed to be able to enroll in a QVRC Master's program. (REASON for suggestion) Many VRCs have life circumstances which prevent them from entering the QVRC program timely but they do outstanding work in a very hard job and they deserve compensation for their hard work. (short version)

Response:
TWC-VR will review RCT's recommendations regarding opportunities for a merit increase for those classified as a VRC 1 and will provide an update to RCT following completion of the review.

Recommendation 15;
(i)   Comprehensive System of Personnel Development.
The projection of the number of Transition Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (TVRC) in the next five years is 177. RCT recommends the agency review this again as it is reported from Texas Education Agency (TEA) that there are 358,000 students in special education in the State of Texas. Based on the number of students in the state, it is a challenge to be able to serve all of the students that would potentially benefit from TWS-VRS services. Recommend the agency review the data and determine if this number should be increased.

Response:
Based on data reviewed by TWC-VR and I|3, current projections reflect a continued increase in the number of students receiving pre-employment transition services and other VR services. Given the significant growth since FY 2017 in both the array and availability of pre-employment transitions services, TWC-VR is reviewing these services to identify where services can be enhanced, revised or expanded to serve more students, and what organizational and staff capacity changes may be necessary to meet anticipated growth. Updates to the projected number of TVRCs and VR counselors will be included in the mid-point modification of the Combined State Plan for Program Years 2024-2027, which will be developed in 2025.

Recommendation 16;
RCT recommends that applicants for vocational counselor positions who have experience as a VRC from this state or other states, with a master's degree, be allowed to be hired in at a level above a VRC I and be able to be paid at a higher rate taking into account their education and experience. It is felt this can increase the ability to hire people with experience in the field if they don't have to start at the lowest level when they have shown the experience and ability to perform at a higher level.

Response:
Current TWC-VR salary guidelines ensure a competitive starting salary based on education and experience. A counselor with prior education and experience can be hired as a VRC II – V as appropriate, however, starting as a VRC I gives counselors who are new to TWC VR an opportunity to both acclimate to agency policies and processes and provides additional

opportunities for promotion and associated salary increases as the counselor moves up the VRC career ladder.

Recommendation 17;
RCT recommends in an effort to improve the number of providers in the state a position in each region be created to address this need or designate a position other than the counselor to address this need. The lack of providers and the time to seek out a provider is also a source of delay for customers. Having a system or designated staff to address this deficit can benefit the customer and counselor and allow timelier services.

Response:
Increasing the number of providers in specific geographic areas and statewide for certain VR services remains a priority for TWC-VR. A process is currently underway to determine the most effective and efficient strategies for provider recruitment, including both systems and staffing.

Recommendation 18;
Purchasing for customers is a challenge due to limited providers and lack of flexibility in being able to work with businesses to obtain services for customers. RCT recommends TWS-VRS look at means to purchase services through other methods than requiring the business to become a vendor with the agency.

Response:
State of Texas purchasing requirements include ensuring that every entity receiving payment from the State be set up as a vendor and in a manner that enables required reporting to and connection with systems maintained by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. In addition, federal regulations in 2 CFR 200.317, with which VR programs must comply, require VR to follow state requirements: "When procuring property and services under a Federal award, a State must follow the same policies and procedures it uses for procurements from its non-Federal funds." TWC-VR will continue to review and improve internal processes for collaboration and communication with TWC's vendor-set up department.

B. COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT (CSNA)

Section 101(A)(15), (17), and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to provide an assessment of:

1. THE VR SERVICE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, INCLUDING:

A. INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES AND THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT;

Having a most significant disability means that the VR customer must have serious limitations in three or more functional areas (for example, mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) and require multiple VR services over an extended period. Additionally, if an individual is an SSI or SSDI

recipient, then he or she is presumed eligible and considered to have at least one significant disability.

As shown in Table 1, Employment Rate for program year (PY) 2020–2022 by Severity of Disability, individuals with significant and most significant disabilities have less success in achieving employment with VR services. Formulating strategies aimed at mitigating the impact of disability significance will prove helpful for the next triennium. For the purposes of the below table, to be considered as having a significant disability, a VR customer must have serious limitations in one or more functional areas and require multiple VR services over an extended period.

Table 1. Employment Rate for PY2020–2022 by Severity of Disability
Source: I|3, ReHabWorks Closure Aggregates

Disability Significance	Closures	Successful	Employment Rate
No Significant Disability	6,398	5,112	79.90%
Significant Disability	39,186	19,378	49.45%
Most Significant Disability	19,507	7,196	36.89%

Individuals with the most significant disabilities often require Supported Employment (SE) services to achieve and maintain competitive integrated employment. SE services may be used for customers with any type of disability, but a customer must:

- have a most significant disability (three or more functional limitations);
- require individualized assistance in finding an appropriate job match;
- require ongoing supports to learn the job and establish accommodations; and
- require extended services (long-term supports) to maintain the employment after VR closes the case.

In Texas, SE services are based on a "Place, Then Train" model, designed to provide customers with the most significant disabilities the supports they need to achieve competitive integrated employment. SE is an all-inclusive service. SE services include individualized job development and placement services, ongoing supports such as intensive job skills training, and arrangement of extended services (funded, paid, and/or natural supports) to help customers sustain meaningful long-term employment.

TWC-VR can provide extended services to VR customers who are "youth with a disability." Services can be provided for a period not to exceed four years or until the youth reaches the age of 25 and no longer meets the definition of a "youth with a disability," whichever occurs first.

B. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES AND INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;

When data collection for the 2023 CSNA began in April 2023, there were about 3,247,000 Texans with disabilities [1], representing approximately 11 percent of the state's population. Of that number, 49 percent were male, 51 percent were female, 33 percent identified as Hispanic or Latino, and 33 percent identified as belonging to a minority racial group. While 32 percent of the approximately 195,000 VR participants [2] served during PY'20–'22 were Hispanic and/or Latino, 31 percent belonged to a minority racial group and only 45 percent identified as female.

[1] Source: Texas American Community Survey Table S1810 (2021, 5-Year Estimates),

[2] Rounded sum of annual PY participant counts (65,102 in PY'20, 65,025 in PY'21, and 64,857 in PY'22)

Table 2: Racial Distribution, Texas Disability Population and VR Participants by Disability Significance

Racial Group	Texas Disability Population	VR Participants with Significant Disability	VR Participants with Most Significant Disability
White	67.3%	69.3%	67.3%
Black or African American	13.7%	23.7%	23.6%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.7%	0.5%	0.6%
Asian	2.6%	1.4%	2.6%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%
Some other race	5.9%	3.3%	3.6%
Two or more races	9.7%	1.6%	2.1%

Source: Texas American Community Survey Table S1810 (2021, 5-Year Estimates), ReHabWorks Tables (aggregate counts for PY'20-22)

Based on preliminary data in the 2023 CSNA, likely underserved populations and unmet needs include:

- individuals who are eligible for VR services and who have been clinically diagnosed with a substance use disorder;
- individuals with most significant disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or an intellectual developmental disorder (IDD) and need access to specially trained staff, providers, and employers;
- individuals who are stroke survivors or who have traumatic brain injuries and need access to specialized service providers;
- students who live in rural or disadvantaged school districts and need preemployment and other transition services;
- foster youth, who may not be aware of the Texas VR program;
- veterans who have disabilities, need information about TWC services, and may not be aware of the Texas VR program; and

- individuals with blindness or visual impairments (BVI) who need expanded access to providers of BVI and independent living services to support vocational goals.

Because individuals with the most significant disabilities have almost one-half less success in employment, more strategic attention dedicated to this population should deliver specific strategies to improve employment rates.

During PY'20–'22, the number of VR participants declined by 0.4 percent, from 65,102 to 64,857, whereas the program's employment rate increased by 3.3 percentage points, from 47.6 percent to 50.9 percent. In PY'21, the VR program's employment rate was 47.2 percent. It is important to note that PY'20-'21 coincides with the pandemic, which explains the relatively lower employment numbers during those program years. The positive trend in the employment rate during PY'22 indicates signs of recovery from the challenging pandemic period.

Table 3: Racial and Ethnic Distribution

Population	Hispanic Ethnicity	Racial Minorities
TWC-VR Staff	29%	35%
VR Participants	33%	31%
Texas Disability Population	33%	33%

Source: Texas American Community Survey Table S1810 (2021, 5-Year Estimates), ReHabWorks Tables (aggregate counts for PY'22), TWC HR data as of June 30, 2023

Below is a breakdown of race and ethnicity of TWC-VR Staff as of June 30, 2023:

Ethnicity Code	Description	Total	Percent
1	White	539	34.91%
2	Black	421	27.27%
3	Hispanic	444	28.76%
4	Asian	25	1.62%
5	American Indian/Alaska Native	9	0.58%
6	Not Specified	25	1.62%
7	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	4	0.26%
8	Two or More Races	77	4.99%
Grand Total		1,544	100.00%

TWC-VR encourages the hiring of qualified individuals with disabilities and strives to ensure equal opportunity employment so that its staff can represent the ethnic diversity of its customer base. During the 2023 CSNA key informant interviews, there were mentions of the need to expand outreach and services to more customers of the Hispanic population. Key informants highlighted that individuals in this demographic group encounter challenges related to disability and impediment to employment, compounded by additional obstacles due to language barriers and limited resources for learning English as a second language.

C. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

TWC-VR has worked to increase collaboration and coordination with Boards, employers, state and local education leaders, and other stakeholders to increase competitive integrated employment outcomes and work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after-school opportunities such as internships, volunteer positions, and summer and year-round work experience programs.

In December 2019, the Commission approved $2 million to Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) grantees to build greater capacity for referrals to Boards and VR services, supporting both a referral pipeline to and from TWC programs and follow-up with former AEL participants to track the outcomes of enrollment in TWC programs. This initiative, called the Workforce Integration Initiative, required AEL programs to support participant registrations in the new WorkInTexas.com job-seeker website, develop data-sharing agreements with postsecondary education and training institutions, and create referral pipelines with Boards, VR, and community workforce stakeholders. With these funds, AEL grantees could pay for staff time dedicated to the intensive case management often necessary to track participants after they leave the AEL program. As a response to AEL program needs to provide efficient services, the Commission broadened the scope of these initiative funds in April 2020, allowing for programs to use funds for distance learning licenses and computer hardware and related costs to ensure that AEL students and instructors had the resources needed to transition to remote learning.

TWC AEL grants in Texas are required to acquire and maintain a Career Navigator, who supports participant registrations in the WorkInTexas.com job-seeker website, develops data-sharing agreements with postsecondary education and training institutions, and creates referral pipelines with Boards, VR, and community workforce stakeholders so that AEL students can transition to post-secondary education and work. TWC continues to cross train state staff on the many programs available to enhance services to all customers and ensure that referral pipelines are established. The state also continues to expand its reach and provide more accessible options for AEL services. By offering 100 percent virtual high school diploma and equivalency coursework, more individuals across the state who need services now have another option to connect to services.

TWC's System Partnership and Service Coordination work group aims to improve customer referral and service coordination processes among Texas Workforce Solutions partners, including Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) and their contractors. In 2022, the 35-member work group convened with representatives from eight Boards and/or contractors, six VR regions, and five TWC divisions: Workforce Development; Vocational Rehabilitation; Child Care and Early Learning; Customer Care; and Information, Innovation, and Insight.

The work group made eight recommendations to improve the customer experience, facilitate service coordination, and develop a team approach to serving employers. The following recommendations were prioritized for 2023 implementation:

- develop tools to help employers understand the full range of services the workforce system offers.

- create professional development opportunities for staff to build consistency in quality of services to employers; and
- develop a common customer intake/referral form that Workforce Solutions and VR local offices can use and improve the customer experience during initial contact and application for services.

The remaining five recommendations will be prioritized for implementation in 2024 and 2025. The implementation of these recommendations will provide additional guidance to system partners to facilitate ongoing coordination and collaboration. In addition, TWC has data agreements with other federal and state agencies, including the Department of Veterans Affairs and the State Wage Interchange System. These agreements help forge the way for collaboration and coordination of services and resources.

The Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL) program is offered in each of the twenty-eight Board areas. TWC-VR contracts with each Board to contract out employability skills training, work site identification, placement, and monitoring and to pay student wages and associated costs for SEAL participants. Local TWC-VR staff works in partnership with each Board to identify students who might benefit from the program, to conduct outreach and recruitment activities, to identify work sites, and to provide any additional services needed for students to complete the program.

TWC-VR is also an active partner in Project SEARCH, a school-to-work program that offers classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through work site rotations. Project SEARCH is a one-year business-led pre-employment training program that serves transition-age students and youth with disabilities, including those with significant intellectual and developmental impairments, with the aim of achieving competitive integrated employment. SEARCH sites represent partnerships between TWC-VR, host businesses, independent school districts (ISDs), employment service providers, local IDD Authorities, and Boards and their Workforce Solutions contractors. As of the end of federal fiscal year (FFY) 2023, Texas had 30 Project SEARCH sites that were within various industries across the state. Each site typically serves eight to twelve participants per school year.

The results of a TWC's Analytics and Evaluation team evaluation of Project SEARCH outcomes from FFY'15–'19 illustrate the positive impact of participation in Project SEARCH on VR program outcomes. During that period, Project SEARCH participants had a higher success rate of 87.4 percent, versus 60.4 percent for nonparticipants. Additionally, Project Search exiters had a retention rate of 70.4 percent, versus 63.3 percent for the comparison group. The differences in both success and employment retention rates were significant at over the 95 percent level of confidence. Project SEARCH participants were 45 percent more likely to have a successful case closure and 11 percent more likely to be employed calendar year second quarter (Q2) through fourth quarter (Q4) after exiting the VR program compared to other VR participants with similar demographic characteristics. TWC's Analytics and Evaluation team also examined median earning difference between the SEARCH participants and comparison group in the second quarter after exit. While there was not a statistically significant difference in Q2 post-exit earnings between the groups, more people in the SEARCH group appeared to be earning more after exit. Over the course of 16 quarters, including eight quarters before and after exit, the median wage for the Project SEARCH participants grew by about $2,600, versus around $2,100 for the comparison group.

The study included 452 Project SEARCH participants and a standard comparison group of 452 VR participants, all of whom exited the VR program during FFY'15-'19. The comparison group was sampled from the same management units and counties where their counterparts received Project SEARCH services. All customers in the SEARCH and comparison groups were between the ages of 18 and 24 at exit and had a primary intellectual or learning impairment that was not resolved prior to exit.

TWC-VR aims to leverage new and existing business partnerships to identify additional opportunities to better prepare students and adults for the workplace and help them obtain jobs. In addition to the State office team, each of TWC-VR's six regions has a Business Relations team consisting of two Business Relations Coordinators, two Employment Assistance Specialists who specialize in BVI (except for the East Texas region, which only has one), and other staff at the management unit level identified as part of the Outreach and Service Coordination regional teams. Together, these staff members and their board/contractor partners work with local employers to learn about their open positions as well as to help employers understand and see the value in hiring individuals with disabilities. With many of these partnerships, special hiring and/or training programs have been developed with the intent of helping ensure that VR customers have not only the skills for the open positions but also access to positions within the companies.

Other collaboration with local education agencies (LEAs), higher education entities, and Boards aims to expand customer access to postsecondary opportunities that provide training and employment in meaningful higher-paying jobs. TWC-VR will continue to focus on developing and enhancing partnerships and broad collaboration, not only because they are emphasized in WIOA, but also cultivate a more responsive and effective service delivery system that will benefit customers.

The full 2023 CSNA report will be published in June of 2024. The VR service needs identified by the report are guiding TWC-VR in programmatic improvements and enhancements for meaningful employment outcomes for customers as well as strategies to better leverage relationships with employers and collaboration with partners.

D. YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES. INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER IDEA.

The VR program aims to expand and improve vocational rehabilitation services, including pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) for students with disabilities who are transitioning from high school to postsecondary education and/or employment, and to improve coordination with state and local secondary and postsecondary educational entities.

The need for Pre-ETS in the state continues to expand. According to data provided to TWC by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the number of transition aged students (14-21) receiving Special Education and 504 Plan services under IDEA in School Year (SY) 2022-

2023 was over 351,200, compared to around 309,400 in SY 2020-2021 – an increase of 13.5% for the three year period.

The VR program has expanded total students served to meet this growing need. The annual number of Students with Disabilities (SWD) increased from almost 22,200 in PY'20 to over 27,200 in PY'22, reflecting growth of 22.5% over the three year period. The total number of required five Pre-ETS services provided by VR also grew substantially, from nearly 36,000 in PY'20 to over 67,000 in PY'22. In PY'22, over a quarter of the services provided were Workplace Readiness Training (25.9%), followed by Job Exploration Counseling (20.3%), Work-Based Learning Experiences (19.9%), Instruction in Self-Advocacy (17.4%) and Counseling on Enrollment Opportunities (16.5%).

To address the expanding need for Pre-ETS, VR has taken steps to increase the accessibility of transition career services and Pre-ETS. This has been achieved by increasing the number of Pre-ETS contracted providers and expanding the Pre-ETS offered through Statewide Initiatives such as Embedded Pre-ETS, Explore STEM, Explore Apprenticeship, Group Skills Trainings, Summer Earn and Learn, and Year-Round Work Experience.

In addition, VR has partnered with the Texas A&M Center on Disability and Development on the Capacity Building Statewide Initiative. The primary objective of this initiative is to provide more effective and comprehensive services to students with disabilities, ensuring a smoother transition from school to postsecondary education and employment opportunities. This collaboration has resulted in the provision of comprehensive training to both VR and ISD staff, significantly improving their ability to deliver transition services under IDEA.

As part of this partnership, six regional conferences have been held over the past year which have promoted collaboration to support students with disabilities of all ages. Important information has been disseminated at these conferences about both the VR and ISD school systems. These conferences have not only facilitated the successful strategies for effectively working with younger students aged 14 to 16 but have also been important in the development of shared strategies and enhancing collaboration among all the stakeholders. A Statewide Capacity Building Conference is planned for October 24-25, 2023.

2. INDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE.

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Division of the Texas Workforce Commission operates as the designated State unit in Texas. Due to circumstances within the State and consistent with the requirements of 34 CFR 361.29(a)(1)(ii), the VR Division has determined it necessary to engage in activities to establish, develop, or improve facilities for community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) (hereinafter "establishment projects") in the State for the purpose of providing vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to applicants and eligible individuals, as well as pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for the VR program. In assessing the need for establishment projects in the State, the VR Division has determined it may be necessary to incur capital expenditures to acquire equipment or improve the field offices of the VR

Division, which satisfy the definition of a CRP at 34 CFR 361.5(c)(7), to ensure the continuity of quality service delivery to individuals with disabilities seeking to receive services under the VR program. The State assures it will submit requests for prior written approval to RSA for those costs that exceed the capital expenditure threshold applicable to the State, or for any capital improvements necessary to ready the space for its intended use under the VR program, consistent with requirements set forth in 2 CFR part 200.

Based on the results of the 2023 CSNA, the VR Division will exercise the establishment authority provisions outlined in Section 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended and 34 CFR 361.49(a)(1). The Texas VR establishment authority policy will allow for the establishment, development, or improvement of community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) as described above. Improving services to groups of VR customers identified in the CSNA as underserved will also be permitted through the purchase of equipment, supplies, certifications and the provision of technical assistance and training, including training costs to improve the skills of the CRP provider base. Construction or acquisition of a facility for a public or non-profit CRP outside of the Designated State Unit and the payment of staffing costs, including salaries and benefits will not be permissible.

C. GOALS, PRIORITIES, AND STRATEGIES.

Section 101(a)(15) and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe the goals and priorities of the State in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs. The goals and priorities are based on (1) the most recent CSNA, including any updates; (2) the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and (3) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the SRC and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act. VR agencies must—

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE SRC AND THE VR AGENCY JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES AND REVISIONS; AND

TWC-VR and RCT collaborated to establish goals and priorities to advance the continued provision of high-quality VR services to customers. With the input and data expertise of TWC's Analytics and Evaluation Team, both TWC-VR and RCT jointly developed and agreed to the state goals and priorities outlined in section (c)(2).

Information obtained from the following sources was used to establish TWC-VR's goals and priorities:
- WIOA Joint Rule for Unified and Combined State Plans, Performance Accountability, and the One-Stop System Joint Provisions Final Rule published August 19, 2016;
- data from the FFY 2023 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA);
- RCT Annual Report;
- Workforce System Strategic Plan, facilitated by the Texas Workforce Investment Council (State Workforce Development Board);

- State Legislative Budget Board measures;
- reports to RCT on the DSU's progress in implementing strategies and priorities in the VR state plan, etc.; and
- input from customers and advocacy organizations, such as Disability Rights Texas.

The preliminary results of the CSNA identified opportunities for improvement that informed the new and continuing goals for the PY 24-27 state plan. The RCT Annual report and TWC-VR's quarterly reports to RCT on the implementation of current state plan goals and strategies show progress on current goals and strategies and confirmed areas in which TWC-VR will continue to focus. Input from customers and advocacy organizations as well as the rehabilitation council also provided helpful feedback on areas for additional focus and improvement. This feedback was also used to help develop new or revised goals and strategies.

2. IDENTIFY MEASURABLE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS AND THE BASIS FOR SELECTING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES (E.G., CSNA, PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABLITLITY MEASURES, SRC RECOMMENDATIONS, MONITORING, OTHER INFORMATION0. AS REQUIRED IN SECTION 101(A)(15)(D), (18), AND (23), DESCRIBE UNDER EACH GOAL OR PRIORITY, THE STRATEGIES OR METHODS USED TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL OR PRIORITY, INCLUDING AS APPLICABLE, DESCRIPTION OF STRATEGIES OR METHODS THAT—

A. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES;

B. OVERCOME BARRIERS TO ACCESSING VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

C. IMPROVE AND EXPAND VR SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILTITIES, INCLUDING THE COORIDNATION OF SERVICES DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF SUCH STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY LIFE (INCLUDING THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, POST SECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES); AND

D. IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES TO ACHIEVE QUALITY EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES.

Goal 1: Recruit and retain VR staff.

The basis for Goal 1 is to create team capacity to serve Texans with disabilities by recruiting, retaining, and engaging VR staff. A career with TWC-VR offers meaningful work that helps change lives for the better. TWC-VR will continue to provide career growth, advancement, and opportunities for staff to specialize in areas of interest. TWC-VR is committed to making team engagement a priority. TWC-VR will work diligently to provide the necessary training and resources for continuous improvement.

Strategies:

1.1   Identify and implement strategies to improve staff recruitment and retention, including continued options for hybrid work, opportunities for professional development and advancement, staff recognition, and other activities that promote a positive, engaging work environment.

1.2   Redesign training and resources for new rehabilitation assistants as well as continue to increase the knowledge of current counselors and rehabilitation assistants in the areas of disability training, working with employers, and training they will need in the future.

1.3   Continue management development training, specific to VR program management, for new, current, and aspiring VR managers.

1.4   Implement a workforce planning strategy that enhances use of career ladders and career pathways to promote opportunities for professional development and career advancement within the VR program.

1.5   Assess and improve strategies to recruit and hire candidates for VR positions.

1.6   Continue and expand use of communities of practice and peer support to increase informal learning, promote information sharing, and facilitate collaborative problem solving.

Success will be measured by:
- a decrease in annual (SFY) turnover rate; and
- an annual (SFY) increase in the proportion of Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (QVRCs).

Goal 2: Improve provider recruitment, retention, and support.

The basis for Goal 2 is to recruit and retain a robust network of providers, including providers of supported employment services, to ensure that customers have access to the full array of services they need no matter where they reside in the state.

Strategies:

2.1   Enhance provider support and training.

2.2   Strengthen provider recruiting efforts.

2.3   Ensure that payment rates are competitive and equitable.

2.4   Ensure that a process is established for regular rate review and updates.

Success will be measured by:

- an increase (accounting for seasonality) in the percentage of active VR service providers and total number of available providers:
- statewide;
- by integrated service area (VR region);
- by RSA service type category; and
- an increase in customers served by providers with the specialized skills associated with premium payment policy (increased qualifications and training to serve customers).

Goal 3: Streamline VR policy, processes, and procedure to improve workflow processes and provide tools to facilitate timely service delivery.

The basis for Goal 3 is to help more Texans with disabilities achieve better employment outcomes through an efficient and easily accessible service delivery system that maximizes the use of available resources. To achieve this priority, TWC-VR will focus on streamlining procedures and approval processes to remove unnecessary administrative tasks for staff, providers, and customers. TWC-VR is also redesigning the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual to improve ease of use by including policy, procedures, and tools in one manual.

Strategies:

3.1   Streamline or redesign policy, procedure, forms, and approval processes to improve ease of navigation and application for VR staff.

3.2   Improve workflow processes and business systems to improve timeliness, efficiency, and consistency of VR service provision.

Success will be measured by:
- a decrease (accounting for seasonality) in median time from initial contact to participant status in the VR program; and
- an increase (accounting for seasonality) in the percentage of those determined eligible who move into an individualized plan for employment (IPE).

Goal 4: Improve and develop additional user-friendly resources to maximize customer choice.

The basis for Goal 4 is to create simple, accessible information to help customers make informed decisions about how to explore their local labor market, how employment may affect their benefits, and the availability of service providers.

Strategies:

4.1   Provide training and resources for VR staff on labor market information and tools.

4.2   Update training, tools, and policies related to work incentive programs and benefits counseling and provide user-friendly resources and/or fact sheets to help customers make decisions.

4.3   Continue workforce collaboration and service coordination, including necessary infrastructure support, that leads to more customer choice, a better customer experience, and improved employment outcomes.

Success will be measured by:
- an increase in the proportion of SSI or SSDI customers who receive benefits counseling or counseling on work incentives; and
- an increase in the percentage of customers indicating they agree (that is, respond "yes") that they have input in choosing service providers in the quarterly customer satisfaction survey (Westat).

Goal 5: Improve VR staff with knowledge and system capacity to enhance service delivery to customers.

The basis for Goal 5 is to increase opportunities for staff to specialize in areas of interest, such as neurodevelopmental disorders, blindness and visual impairments, deaf and hard of hearing, brain injury, transition students, veterans, behavioral health, and others. TWC-VR will also continue to enhance and expand training serving individuals with multiple disabilities. Providing tools, such as desk aids, and increasing staff capacity through process improvement and innovative service delivery approaches will also assist counselors to serve customers effectively and efficiently.

Strategies:

5.1   Provide additional training and resources for VR staff to strengthen and increase expertise and specialization in serving customers with specific disabilities and those with multiple disabilities, as well as those with additional barriers to employment, such as foster youth and Second Chance youth and adults.

5.2   Develop, pilot, and replicate innovative approaches to implementing the VR process, including standardized workflow and new methods for deploying staff and resources that maximize staff capacity and expertise.

5.3   Enhance and increase training for Transition VR Counselors (TVRC) and other VR Counselors with school assignments regarding services to students with disabilities, including pre-employment transition services.

5.4   Review TVRC and VRC capacity and structure and adjust as necessary to strengthen capacity to serve students with disabilities.

Success will be measured by:
- an increase in the percentage of customer's indicating they are satisfied (that is, responding "satisfied", or "very satisfied") with the information they receive about VR services that may help them achieve their career goals (Westat);

- an increase in the percentage of customer's indicating they are satisfied (that is, responding "satisfied", or "very satisfied") with the amount of time it takes for VR staff to respond to their emails, calls or other contacts (Westat); and
- an increase (accounting for seasonality) in VR engagement rate (that is, arranged, provided, or purchased VR/Pre-ETS/Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center services; counseling and guidance; started or amended plan; employment (90-day clock); successful closure; or enrollment in education/training.

Goal 6: Increase and enhance partnerships with employers to 1) better understand employer needs when hiring people with disabilities and working with VR collaboratively, and 2) build awareness about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities to increase employment opportunities for VR customers.

The basis for Goal 6 is to partner with employers and continue to build system capacity to promote and support hiring, retention, and advancement of individuals with disabilities across industries. Additionally, TWC-VR will collaborate with its Texas workforce system partners to participate in joint strategies that address employers' workforce needs.

Strategies:

6.1   Continue and expand efforts to raise awareness among employers of the benefits of hiring people with disabilities and the services available through TWC-VR to support them.

6.2   Increase collaboration between VR Business Relations Coordinators and Board Business Services Units.

6.3   Provide professional development training opportunities to the VR Business Relations team to expand and enhance their skills and ability to work with employers.

6.4   Implement and expand employer partnerships that increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities through training and work-based learning opportunities for students and adults with disabilities.

6.5   Diversify and increase the number of employers who hire and retain individuals with disabilities who have exited the VR program.

Success will be measured by:
- obtaining reports regarding the number of unique employers hiring VR participants second quarter after exit as well as the number of employers who have retained VR participants during the second through fourth quarter after exit.

D. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS. FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR, PROVIDE AN EVALUATION AND REPORT OF PROGRESS FOR THE GOALS OR PRIORITIES, INCLUDING PROGRESS ON THE STRATEGIES UNDER EACH GOAL OR PRIORITY, APPLICABLE TO THAT PROGRAM YEAR. SECTIONS

101(A)(15) AND 101(A)(23) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRE VR AGENCIES TO DESCRIBE—

1. PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED FOR THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS;

Goal 1: Improve provider recruitment, retention, and support.

One of TWC-VR's priorities is to recruit and retain a robust network of providers, including providers of supported employment services, to ensure that our customers have access to a full array of VR services.

To improve provider recruitment, retention, and support, TWC-VR launched a business transformation project. After extensive root cause analysis, five strategies were identified to improve the attraction, retention, and availability of VR goods and service providers. Multiple projects were completed within the five strategies, with initial strategic focus placed on reducing vendor requirements and ensuring that payment rates are competitive and equitable.

Strategies:

1.1   Streamline vendor requirements, processes, procedures, and documentation.

1.2   Ensure that payment rates are competitive and equitable.

1.3   Ensure that a process is established for regular rate review and updates.

1.4   Strengthen provider recruiting efforts.

1.5   Enhance provider support and training.

1.6   Ensure that internal systems for provider identification by a VR counselor are useful, current, and accurate.

To reduce vendor requirements, during the last program year, TWC-VR conducted a comprehensive review of the basic standards outlined in the VR Standards for Providers (SFP) Manual, Chapter 3. After soliciting feedback from TWC-VR staff, providers, and the SRC, the basic standards were revised in February 2023 to reduce burdensome requirements, clarify requirements, and streamline chapter content. As part of this effort, TWC-VR posted quickinars (brief training videos) to its website about the chapter revisions, incident reporting, and the Form VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request. Additionally, TWC-VR continued to train staff on using the streamlined Supported Employment policy, procedures, and forms and is developing further training on extended supports.

In addition, numerous resources were developed to support providers in serving VR customers. These resources included improvements to the orientation for new providers, a frequently asked questions resource for potential providers, updated TWC-VR contact information, a renovated providers' resources webpage, and the creation of an on-demand webinar library for providers.

To ensure payment rates are competitive and equitable, TWC-VR contracted with a vendor to comprehensively review and provide recommendations for VR service rates. In November 2022, the vendor began an analysis that included a review of the geographic distribution of VR service providers statewide, market research, a cost survey to capture provider financial health, a time study to measure the amount of time spent performing direct service and administrative activities, and a process study to gain a broader perspective of the current fee structures and payment rates and the effect they had on doing business with TWC-VR. The vendor gathered data from numerous sources, including providers and VR staff, and accounted for both rural and urban areas. The vendor is recommending an approach for increasing the number of providers and/or the range of available services in underserved areas. As a result of the vendor's analysis and recommendations, TWC-VR is implementing a recurring review schedule to ensure that rates remain competitive and equitable.

To assist with recruiting more providers to meet customer needs, in late 2022, TWC-VR added a Blind Premium for employment services. The objective of the premium is to increase the number of contracted providers who possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and competencies to work with customers who are blind or visually impaired. The provider requirements for the premium include completion of specialized training and then obtaining a credential. In November 2022, TWC-VR added policy for the premium within its VR Standards for Providers Manual.

In November 2022, TWC-VR collaborated with TWC Finance to improve the instructions on Form 1020, TWC Substitute W-9 and Direct Deposit. The goal was to minimize the number of times the form is returned for correction, thereby streamlining the process for both TWC-VR and providers.

To further support providers, TWC-VR continued quarterly virtual provider meetings, facilitated in collaboration with the SRC member representing Community Rehabilitation Programs. TWC-VR also identified regional provider representatives that conduct meetings with providers in their regions, identify common issues and challenges, and work collaboratively to find resolutions. Finally, TWC-VR implemented a process for providers to submit feedback on issues and concerns that are not resolved at the local level.

To measure the success of Goal 1, TWC-VR tracked the number of active contracted providers out of the total number of providers available. To account for seasonality, provider data was provided to the SRC on a quarterly basis. Active providers were active with an open contract during the quarter. Available providers have been onboarded and are linked to the ReHabWorks case management system. The provider activity rate is the number of active providers divided by the number of available providers.

Accounting for seasonality, the quarterly number of active contracted providers has increased steadily from PY'20 to PY'22, reflecting progress along this goal. As of Q4 PY'22, TWC-VR was actively using 597 contracted providers, a 10% increase compared to the baseline of 543 in Q4 PY 20. In PY'22, there was a more accurate count of available providers in 2022 because of TWC-VR's systematic removal of inactive provider records from ReHabWorks. As a result, the provider activity rate increased from 51% in Q4 PY'20 (meaning TWC-VR used around half of available contracted providers during the quarter) to nearly 65% in Q4 PY'22 (meaning TWC-VR used roughly two-thirds of available contracted providers that quarter).

While progress has been made in the past program year, TWC-VR acknowledges that there is still room for improvement and further progress is required to fully achieve this targeted goal. Therefore, this goal will continue into the next program year.

Goal 2: Streamline VR policy, process, and procedure and improve workflow processes and tools to facilitate timely services delivery.

TWC-VR's priority is to assist more Texans with disabilities to achieve better employment outcomes, and to have a service delivery system that is efficient, easily accessible, and that maximizes use of available resources. To achieve this priority, TWC-VR streamlined procedures and approval processes to remove unnecessary administrative tasks for staff, providers, and customers. During the last program year, several projects were completed for Goal 2.

Strategies:

2.1   Streamline or redesign policy, procedure, forms and approval processes to improve ease of navigation and application for TWC-VR staff.

2.2   Facilitate coordination of services with providers and improve responsiveness to customers.

2.3   Improve workflow processes and business systems to improve timeliness, efficiency and consistency of VR service provision.

In October 2022, TWC-VR conducted the third annual review of approvals with a work group of VR staff. The work group included field staff engaged in approval processes, including VR Managers, VR Supervisors, and VR Counselors. Their recommendations were published in February 2023, along with a quickinar to explain the changes to staff.

TWC-VR also continues to streamline forms and reduce paperwork for VR staff and providers. Since efforts to streamline forms began in February 2021, TWC-VR has reduced a total of 98 pages of forms. In June 2023, based on input from two teams of VR Counselors and Rehabilitation Assistants, TWC-VR launched a universal referral form, VR5000, Referral for Provider Services. This form led to a reduction of thirteen referral forms into a single form that is auto populated by TWC-VR's case management system, increasing staff capacity, and improving time to delivery of VR services.

TWC-VR is actively engaged in a project to redesign the VRSM (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual) and enlisted the help of a vendor to assist with research, conceptual design, and conversion. The goal is to redesign the VRSM, remove duplicative information, reformat and reorganize content, and reduce the number of forms. The project includes a review of the VR Standards for Providers (SFP) Manual and how to align it with the VRSM. For the new conceptual design of the VRSM, TWC-VR selected a full kit solution with an integrated approach that includes policy, procedures, and tools in one manual. This conceptual design was favored by staff and offers a one-stop shop approach for finding information.

In September 2022, the original staff and provider work groups for the Supported Employment redesign met for a work group reunion to discuss their experiences using the new model and to identify any support needs. The work group commented positively on their experiences with the streamlined Supported Employment policy and forms; they also

identified the importance of establishing good systems for issuing service authorizations and scheduling meetings throughout the process.

Additionally, TWC-VR implemented SARA, an automated attendant system that facilitates ongoing communication between counselors and customers. SARA allows VR counselors to engage with customers and help to facilitate the provision of information such as appointment reminders, training activities, and job opportunities without requiring additional time to document their efforts.

TWC-VR partnered with TWC's Information Technology (IT) Division on a project called Renovate ReHabWorks. This project aims to redesign, update, and enhance the current ReHabWorks case management system and integrate the functionality of two other systems, Texas Review, Oversight, and Coaching System and SARA, into ReHabWorks. The project strategy is to use reliable, modern technology to provide timely services using a flexible and adaptable system that captures accurate data and effectively supports TWC-VR in providing services to VR customers.

To measure progress in streamlining procedures and improving workflow processes, TWC-VR tracks quarterly measures of the median time from initial contact to participant status and the percentage of new participants out of the total number of previously eligible customers. A decrease in the median time from initial contact to participant status indicates that efforts to streamline procedures are resulting in more timely service delivery. An increase in the quarterly participation creation rate suggests that process improvement efforts are increasing the number of eligibility determinations that result in actual VR program participation.

Success in achieving this goal is measured by the quarterly participant creation rate. Accounting for seasonality, this rate has stabilized between 89 percent and 90 percent in PY 2022, which is an improvement compared to a range of 80 percent to 85 percent prior to PY 2020. This indicates that process improvement efforts are resulting in more eligibility determinations leading to actual VR program participation. Furthermore, the number of newly signed Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs) per program year has increased by 33 percent to 23,311 in PY 2022 compared to PY 2020.

This goal will continue into the next program year. While progress has been made in the past program year, TWC-VR acknowledges that there is still room for improvement and further progress is required to fully achieve the targeted goal.

Goal 3: Recruit and retain VR staff.

TWC-VR is committed to recruiting, retaining, and engaging VR staff to serve Texans with disabilities. A career with TWC-VR must offer meaningful work that helps change lives for the better. TWC-VR will continue to provide career growth, advancement, and opportunities for staff to specialize in areas of interest.

Strategies:

3.1   Identify and implement strategies to improve staff recruitment and retention, including options for remote work, professional development, staff recognition, and other activities that promote a positive, engaging work environment.

3.2   Redesign training and resources for new counselors and new rehabilitation assistants.

3.3   Establish management development training for new, current, and aspiring VR managers.

Several projects were completed for Goal 3. TWC-VR implemented a merit recognition plan to reward staff members who exceed the requirements of their positions. New salary guidelines were introduced to determine competitive starting salaries for VR counselors and rehabilitation assistants based on their previous experience and education. These guidelines also established a career ladder promotion standard and included a salary adjustment for advancing education levels.

In the fall of 2022, TWC's Training and Development department revised the new counselor training program. Based on feedback from staff, courses are now a combination of computer-based training and classroom training led by an instructor. Additionally, TWC-VR contracted with YesLMS to provide over 100 computer-based trainings as a supplement to in-house training initiatives. In August 2022, LEAD (Supervisor Leadership Academy) and Pathways (Leadership Academy for nonsupervisory staff) held their first classes, covering topics such as Personal Values in Rehabilitation Organizations, Group Coaching, and Building a Rehabilitation Team.

In the fall of 2022, TWC-VR launched the Priority Project: Recruitment and Candidate Selection Process to assess the effectiveness of current strategies for recruiting and selecting employee candidates. This project assessed the effectiveness of current strategies to recruit and select employee candidates. TWC-VR also participated in the Texas Internship Challenge, which provides an excellent opportunity to find candidates for VR counselor and rehabilitation assistant positions. Eight paid interns worked during the fall 2022 semester and six in the spring 2023 semester. Lastly, TWC-VR developed a division-wide employee recognition program that was implemented in 2023. The goal of the retention strategy is to provide formal and informal ways through which TWC-VR staff members are recognized for their individual and team contributions to TWC-VR's mission and values, to enable peer recognition, and to share success stories that illustrate positive results achieved by customers. They have also contracted with the University of Arkansas CURRENTS to conduct two leadership academies, LEAD and Pathways.

To measure progress in recruiting, retaining, and engaging staff, TWC-VR tracks annual measures of the staff turnover rate and the percentage of counselors that meet TWC-VR standards for Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (QVRCs). A decrease in the annual turnover rate indicates improvement in staff retention, while an increase in the annual proportion of QVRC indicates progress in helping staff advance and specialize by meeting specific qualifications and competencies. Success in achieving this goal is measured by comparing the turnover rate and the percentage of QVRC counselors.

This goal will continue into the next program year. Despite the efforts made, TWC-VR acknowledges that there is still a significant challenge in addressing turnover. TWC-VR remains committed to seeking feedback and reviewing additional strategies to effectively address this issue.

Goal 4: Improve and develop additional user-friendly resources to maximize customer choice.

TWC-VR staff need simple, accessible information to help customers make informed decisions concerning their local labor market, how employment may affect their benefits, and the availability of service providers.

Strategies:

4.1   Provide training and resources for VR staff on labor market information and tools.

4.2   Develop and enhance tools to aid VR staff and customers in identifying available providers.

4.3   Update training, tools, and policies related to work incentive programs and benefits counseling and provide user-friendly resources and/or fact sheets to help customers make decisions.

Several projects were completed for Goal 4. In April 2022, TWC-VR partnered with TWC's Analytics and Evaluation team to launch a Vocational Rehabilitation Provider Locator. They also created a demonstration video on how to use the locator, which assists VR staff and customers in searching for providers who offer specific services. VR staff can search, and filter providers based on location and services. Staff can offer the filtered information to VR customers to enhance their informed choice experience.

In January 2023, TWC-VR developed a two-page overview of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Act Title II disability benefits. In June 2023, TWC-VR redesigned the social security section of the financial screen in ReHabWorks. The redesign helps staff better understand the data entry process for this complex topic.

Currently, TWC-VR staff continue to receive training on how to use TWC's Texas Labor Market Information website and access relevant information. Staff can access the recorded training via TWC-VR's intranet. The training is supplemented by TWC's other training course for new VR counselors, "VR Process Fundamentals," which also addresses labor market information.

TWC-VR also continues to distribute the "Work Incentive of the Month" alert to VR staff. This alert provides information about Social Security Administration (SSA) disability benefits. TWC-VR holds monthly webinars for TWS-VRS staff trained in SSA benefits and select community partners that cover various subjects related to disability benefits, Medicaid and Medicare. Additionally, TWC-VR has established a Benefits Boosters unit, consisting of five program specialists who were previously in separate units. This unit focuses on tasks related to SSA benefits, the Ticket to Work program, and cost reimbursement. Finally, with the increased focus on the WIOA requirement that all VR customers who receive a SSA disability benefit be offered or provided benefits counseling services, there is an increased need for fee-for-service benefits counseling. Therefore, during the past program year, TWC-VR executed additional contracts for benefits counseling services.

To measure progress, TWC-VR monitors quarterly measures of the proportion of SSI or SSDI customers who receive benefits counseling or counseling on work incentives. TWC-VR also assesses the percentage of customers who indicate that they have input in choosing service providers in the customer satisfaction survey. An increase in the benefits counseling rate indicates that efforts to update training and resources related to work incentive programs and benefits counseling are helping more customers make informed decisions. Similarly, an

increase in customer satisfaction regarding service provider choices suggests that customers feel more empowered in selecting their services.

Success in achieving this goal is measured by the benefits counseling rate. In Q3 PY'21, the benefits counseling rate was 22.9 percent, with 2,571 out of 11,217 SSI/SSDI cases receiving benefits counseling during that quarter. By Q4 PY'22, this rate had significantly improved to 69.1 percent, with 7,620 cases receiving benefits counseling out of the 11,020 SSI/SSDI cases for that quarter. Customer satisfaction results from Westat in SFY 2022 also showed a slight increase in the percentage of customers indicating that they have input in choosing service providers for open cases.

This goal will continue into the next program year. While progress has been made in the past program year, TWC-VR acknowledges that there is still room for improvement. They recognize the need for further progress to fully meet their targeted goal.

Goal 5: Improve VR staff knowledge and system capacity to enhance service delivery to customers.

TWC-VR is committed to increasing opportunities for staff to specialize in areas of interest, such as neurodevelopmental disorders, blindness and visual impairments, deaf and hard of hearing, brain injury, transition students, veterans, behavioral health, and others. TWC-VR is continually enhancing and expanding the division's training on how to use labor market information and partner with employers.

Strategies:

5.1   Provide additional training and resources for VR staff to strengthen and increase expertise and specialization in serving customers with specific disabilities and those with multiple disabilities.

5.2   Develop, pilot, and replicate innovative approaches to implementing the VR process, including standardized workflow and new methods for deploying staff and resources that maximize staff capacity and expertise.

5.3   Enhance and increase training for transition and other VR counselors who have school assignments regarding services to students with disabilities, including pre-employment transition services.

5.4   Review capacity and structure of VR transition and other counselors and adjust as necessary to strengthen capacity to serve students with disabilities.

5.5   Provide training, tools, and resources to assist staff with implementing process improvements, including standardized workflow.

5.6   Enhance options for remote service delivery.

Several projects were completed for Goal 5. In October 2022, TWC-VR's Brain Injury Community of Practice (BICoP) organized a virtual training conference. BICoP is a group of VR counselors who meet with subject matter experts from TWC-VR's state office to enhance their skills, receive training, share expertise, and strengthen cross-agency referral and services coordination. BICoP worked with providers to admit, monitor, and discharge customers who received employment supports for brain injury (ESBI) in both day and residential programs.

BICoP is currently developing data sets that allow for review of the new model in place and for further evaluation after a year of operation. The goal of the BICoP's virtual training conference in October 2022 was to build local collaboration between VR staff and providers, address policy questions, and review relevant standards for providers related to planning, purchasing, and delivering services for VR customers with brain injury.

In March 2023, TWC-VR's Office of Blind Services hosted the Sharing the Vision - Expanding the Possibilities 2023 BVI Virtual Conference. VR staff who serve blind and visually impaired customers and many field managers received training during the conference.

VR Region 2: Dallas/Ft. Worth is collaborating with Specialty Courts for STAC (Successful Treatment of Addiction through Collaboration) to serve customers with substance use disorders. After consulting with the presiding Judge of the 283rd Judicial District Court in Dallas County and a Community Supervision Officer for Specialty Courts for Dallas County, TWC-VR estimated that between 2016 and 2022, approximately 150-200 probationers obtained or maintained employment with the direct assistance of TWC-VR. Notably, some of these individuals established successful businesses. Based on these outcomes, TWC-VR hopes to enhance and replicate the STAC courts collaboration statewide.

The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Training Work group, led by subject matter experts in TWC-VR state office, oversees teams of VR field staff who effectively serve customers who are deaf and hard of hearing. The teams drafted training that was reviewed by an external subject matter expert and that will be implemented in early 2024.

In July 2022, TWC-VR held a "Train the Trainer" session. Participants included assistive technology providers, employment assistant specialists, and assistive technology support specialists. The session focused on trends in assistive technology and adaptive equipment. The session also addressed policy improvements to the SFP Manual, Chapter 9: Assistive Technology Services for Customers with Visual Impairments.

Two pilot projects are currently being implemented, including one to improve staff capacity, coverage for vacant caseloads and customer retention, and another to improve the timeliness, efficiency, and accuracy of VR's purchasing and payment processes.

TWC VR has implemented numerous projects to refine, implement and replicate best and promising practices and services for students with disabilities. In the fall of 2022, TWC-VR partnered with Texas A&M's Center on Disability and Development to implement a statewide initiative called Building Capacity for Working with Younger Students, a strategy to build awareness, capacity building, relationships with school partners, and planning tools for working with students ages 14-16. In 2023, focus group meetings were held to gather feedback about needs for building capacity in each of the six TWC-VR regions, regional conferences were held, and a statewide building capacity conference was planned.

"Fostering Transition" is an ongoing statewide initiative to increase engagement and successful outcomes for youth in the foster care system. TWC-VR is partnered with two permanency court judges to unite individuals and groups who advocate for youth. These partnerships help TWC-VR increase the number of students in foster care who receive VR services. Through subject matter expert assignments in the VR regions, a group of VR counselors are receiving continuous training to build expertise regarding the foster care

system, how to work with youth who have experienced trauma, and how to coordinate with each other to ensure the VR program effectively tracks and maintains engagement with students who may relocate frequently. TWC-VR also helped fund the TWC Annual Foster Youth Conference, held April 6-7, 2023, in San Marcos. Attendees collaborated on improving outcomes for youth in foster care who have disabilities and building partnerships with foster youth stakeholders.

In 2022, to increase and improve collaboration and coordination of services between partner agencies, TWC-VR established a steering committee and an interagency work group. The steering committee and interagency work group are comprised of leaders and subject matter experts from TWC-VR, the Texas Education Agency (TEA), and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC). The purpose of the interagency collaboration is to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, especially those with the most significant disabilities. The three priorities for the interagency work group are to:

- improve referral systems and processes between partner agencies;
- establish structured systems for meaningful collaboration and coordination of service delivery; and
- implement data exchange systems for ongoing collaboration and reporting.

In January 2023, TWC-VR issued a survey to collect feedback from VR staff on desired improvements to the hybrid operations plan. Their feedback was incorporated in the updated plan, shared with staff in April 2023.

TWC-VR continues to establish and enhance systems that support timely and effective remote service delivery. In July 2021, TWC-VR established a small state office unit of contract staff to serve as intake specialists and to process calls for individuals interested in VR services. This group is known as the Rapid Engagement team (RET). They monitor the email mailbox for customers providing information electronically for follow-up and receive calls through a hotline number. These options for engaging with VR are posted on the agency website and in VR outreach materials to help customers connect with VR services. During SFY 2023, RET connected 3,536 people to the VR program to apply for services with 1,922 in quarter 1 and 1,614 in quarter 2.

In June 2021, TWC-VR launched Start My VR, an online self-referral option that allows prospective VR customers to inquire about services and be connected to a VR staff member. Through the end of the second quarter of SFY 2023, VR had processed 10,178 (485 per month) inquiries through Start My VR.

TWC-VR reviews quarterly measures of the percentage of customer's indicating they agreed that VR staff provided the guidance the customer needed and the percentage of customer's indicating they agreed that the counselor maintained communication with them regarding the process of their case in the customer satisfaction survey. Additionally, TWC-VR tracked the quarterly measure of the proportion of participants who are actively engaged with the VR program. Increases in customer satisfaction regarding staff guidance and counselor communication likely indicate progress in strengthening staff expertise and increasing system capacity. An increase in quarterly VR engagement rate indicates that process improvement efforts and innovative service delivery approaches are helping counselors serve customers more effectively.

In terms of success, TWC-VR observed a slight increase of about two percentage points for customers with open (active) cases indicating they agreed (i.e., responding 'yes') that VR staff provided the guidance they needed in the customer satisfaction survey. TWC-VR saw a gradual increase in the percentage of customers with open (active) cases indicating they agreed (i.e., responding 'yes') in the Westat customer satisfaction survey that the counselor maintained communication with them regarding the process of their case. Accounting for seasonality, the quarterly VR engagement rate has increased in PY'22 to a range of 70 – 74 percent, compared to a range of 65 – 72 percent in PY'20. This indicates that in PY'22 a higher percentage of VR participants are actively engaged with the VR program.

Goal 6: Increase and enhance partnerships with employers to 1) understand employer needs, and 2) build awareness about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.

TWC-VR values its partnerships with employers and wants to 1) better understand employer needs when hiring people with disabilities and working with VR collaboratively, and 2) build awareness about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities to increase employment opportunities for VR customers. TWC-VR continually promotes and supports hiring, retention, and advancement of individuals with disabilities across industries. TWC-VR collaborates with its Texas workforce system partners to participate in joint strategies that address employers' workforce needs.

Strategies:

6.1   Continue and expand efforts to raise awareness among employers of the benefits of hiring people with disabilities and the services available through TWC-VR to support them.

6.2   Implement and expand employer partnerships that increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities through training and work-based learning opportunities for students and adults with disabilities.

TWC-VR completed several projects for Goal 6. In December 2022, the Business Relations team attended the 25th TWC Annual Texas Workforce Conference and presented strategies on how TWC-VR can partner with local workforce development boards and employers. White Cane Day Austin was celebrated at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI) on October 12, 2022, with over 1,000 participants attending in-person and 526 views of the webcast. In Houston, White Cane Safety Day Houston was celebrated on October 14, 2022, with an estimated 200 participants. On October 6, 2022, TWC co-hosted the annual HireAbility Employer Forum and the Governor's Lex Frieden Employer Awards at Houston Community College, with approximately 150 in-person and 200 virtual participants. The event featured speakers well-known for their disability advocacy and helped to raise greater awareness of disability employment for Texans and VR services.

Currently, TWC-VR is involved in ongoing projects for Goal 6. TWC-VR partners with TWC's We Hire Ability Employer Recognition Program to honor employers whose workforce represents 10 percent or more individuals with disabilities. TWC-VR also collaborates with the Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities to support people with disabilities.

The Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL) program is the largest employer partnership administered by TWC-VR and its local Workforce Board partners. Students participating in the program complete work readiness training and are partnered with a local employer for a five-week minimum paid internship. Worksites include statewide employers and local businesses. Students gain valuable and transferrable work skills while the employer gets hands-on support and a chance to work closely with students. Each of the 28 Workforce Boards coordinate with TWC-VR to assist in recruiting employers and supporting the program. The current number of students confirmed as placed in paid work experience this summer is 2,959. In the spring of 2023, TWC-VR held SEAL forums to unite Boards' and VR staff and provide information and guidance for SEAL 2023. In summer 2022, 2,853 students completed work readiness training and a total of 2,516 were placed in a paid work experience. In fall 2022, a SEAL policy update was completed, with input from the Boards, to streamline policy and forms, improve communication, and provide clarification where needed.

TWC-VR has initiatives for adult customers that provide job skills training and paid work experience that has the potential of turning into permanent employment. The Skills Training to Employment Project (STEP) provides training focused on job readiness and acquisition of work skills needed to gain employment with the participating employers. The STEP model is currently in operation with Walgreens Distribution Center, McLane Corporation, Caterpillar, Enterprise Holdings, Harris Health Systems, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, University of Texas Health in Tyler, Toyotetsu, and Nacogdoches Memorial Hospital. Additional STEP sites are being developed, which include the City of San Antonio.

Project SEARCH is a long-standing and successful TWC-VR partnership with employers. The project promotes the successful long-term employment of students with disabilities in jobs that are stable, meaningful, integrated and competitively compensated. VR — partnering with independent school districts, employers, employment service providers and local authorities on intellectual and developmental disabilities — began the 2022-2023 school year with 29 active Project SEARCH sites and 216 VR participants across Texas.

Measures and data collection for success are still under development. This goal will continue into the next program year. While progress has been made in the past program year, TWC-VR acknowledges that there is still room for improvement and further progress is required to fully meet the targeted goal.

2. PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATIORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR, REFLECTING ACTUAL NEGOTIATED LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE. EXPLAIN ANY DISCREPANCIES IN THE ACTUAL AND NEGOTIATED LEVELS;

Performance Goals – Primary WIOA Indicators, PY 2022

Indicator*	PY2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2022 Actual Level**
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	57.8%	58.9%

Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	54.5%	56.7%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$5,500	$6,351
Credential Attainment Rate	44.0%	40.6%
Measurable Skill Gains	43.0%	51.6%

*Reporting Periods as follows: for Employment Rate Q2 and Median Earning Q2, 7/1/2021 to 6/30/2022; for Employment Rate Q4 and Credential Attainment Rate, 1/1/2021 to 12/31/2021; for Measurable Skill Gains, 7/1/2022 to 6/30/2023.

**Preliminary results, data current as of 8/1/2023.

3. THE USE OF FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES (SECTIONS 101(A)(18) AND 101(A)(23) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT) (E.G., SRC, SILC).

For TWC-VR, a portion of federal funds allocated were used for Innovation and Expansion (I&E) activities, including, but not limited to, the following strategic initiatives consistent with the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act.

TWC-VR sought new options to engage potential VR customers following the onset of the pandemic and in response to the increasing use of technology to support customer engagement and access throughout the public and private sectors. VR implemented and deployed its ServiceNow Customer Service Management tool. This tool enables prospective VR customers to initiate contact with the VR program via a link on the TWC website which facilitates the initial communication with the VR Division. Adapting the VR customer engagement model to incorporate self-referral allows potential customers to contact VR for more information any time and at their convenience.

TWC-VR also established a three-member Rapid Engagement Team (RET) to facilitate timely and direct communication with Texas individuals seeking services from TWC. They begin the intake process by providing information about VR and connecting the individual to the appropriate VR office for further information and application for VR services.

TWC-VR also contracted with a temporary employment agency to hire former experienced counselors and rehabilitation assistants to provide support functions for local VR offices experiencing vacancies. This caseload support has allowed TWC-VR to provide more timely goods and services to VR customers, as well as to receive and process documentation necessary for payments to vendors.

In response to the pandemic, the Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center transitioned to a remote training model to ensure the safety of its students and staff. The purchase of Google Classroom enabled the Center to provide asynchronous remote VR training. Students could access lessons, submit assignments, and complete assessments on their own schedule, making

it more convenient for them to participate. All lessons were saved to the students' Google Drives, where they could access them after graduation as a reference. Instructors could also more easily track student progress using a single learning management system. Using a single platform for all classes enabled us to create a universal accessible class template, which gave each class a similar navigation and layout for our students. In addition to improving the training CCRC students were receiving, they had the opportunity to practice using an online learning management system making them better prepared for post-secondary education opportunities that use similar systems. Finally, the Classroom allowed for a place that in-person students and remote students were able to network and share information despite the distance between their training locations.

TWC-VR has also invested in expanding technology for staff and customers by providing the necessary resources to more effectively and efficiently communicate and facilitate participation in VR services. Resources include:
- Apple Mac Pro Bundle – Video production and audio recordings for production, encoding and processing training videos;
- License Card TD Snap;
- EyeMobile Mini Bracket;
- AAC NovaChat – bilingual;
- Dragon NaturallySpeaking pro;
- SMA Plan for Fusion;
- TypeAbility 4 for Fusion licenses;
- J-Say Pro for JAWS and Dragon;
- JAWS Professional screen reader;
- Kurzweil 1000 v14 software for the Blind/VI;
- ZoomText SMA;
- CEYE 5 (including computer control and communicator); and
- Accent 1400-30 w/ Secure'n Easy Table Stand RehAdapt

VR provides many training opportunities to its staff to better serve VR customers. Training includes:
- VR Pathways Academy;
- YesLMS CBT;
- BVI conference;
- Brain Injury community of practice;
- Birkman Assessment; and

The Rehabilitation Council of Texas (RCT) partners with TWC-VR to fulfill the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act for the delivery of quality, customer-responsive VR services. Its stated mission is to partner with TWC to advocate for Texans with disabilities in the VR process. RCT is a valued and active partner in the development of VR goals, priorities, and strategies. Funds are allocated by TWC for the operation of RCT to meet its mandate and obligations. RCT advises TWC on policy, scope, and effectiveness of services. RCT also reviews findings from quarterly customer satisfaction surveys and assists with the TWC-VR state plan and the comprehensive statewide needs assessment.

E. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS, AND ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.

1. ACCEPTANCE OF TITLE VI FUNDS:

☑ VR agency requests to receive title VI funds.

☐ VR agency does NOT elect to receive title VI funds and understands that supported employment services must still be provided under title I.

2. IF THE VR AGENCY HAS ELECTED TO RECEIVE TITLE VI FUNDS, SECTION 606(B)(3) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRES VR AGENCIES TO INCLUDE SPECIFIC GOALS AND PRIORITIES WITH RESPECT TO THE DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION 603 OF TH REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES. DESCRIBE THE USE OF TITLE VI FUNDS AND HOW THEY WILL BE USED IN MEETING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES OF THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM.

TWC-VR provides Supported Employment (SE) services for customers with the most significant disabilities, including youth between ages 14–24.

TWC-VR has identified primary goals and priorities to carry out with title VI funds to help more Texans with disabilities achieve better employment outcomes. The primary focus will be to continue to evaluate and improve the new SE Model implemented in February 2022 and to initiate the introduction of Customized Employment (CE) services as an option in the SE service array. Below are five goals that address TWC-VR priorities:

Goal 1: Evaluate the effectiveness of the new Texas SE Model implemented February 2022 and improve or create policy, procedures, fees, and forms, as necessary, to facilitate quality SE services.

TWC-VR's priority is to help more Texans with Disabilities achieve better employment outcomes through an efficient SE service delivery system that maximizes the use of available resources and achieves long-term employment success for customers with most significant disabilities. Evaluating the effectiveness of the new SE model will allow for future improvements in policy, procedures, fees and forms to better meet the needs of employment service providers, VR staff, and most importantly, VR customers.

Goal 2: Implement training and resources for both employment service providers, potential extended service providers, and VR staff related to SE, ongoing supports, and extended services.

TWC-VR has worked with UNTWISE to update the SE credential training. TWC-VR staff, employment service providers and paid extended service providers have requested continued training and resources to assist them in the delivery of quality SE services.

Goal 3: Develop a vision and plan to implement CE services to include:

- provider recruitment;
- CE training for leadership and direct service personnel for providers and VR staff;

- development of CE policy, procedures, fees and forms necessary to facilitate Customized Employment services;
- use of a fidelity scale to ensure positive CE outcomes;
- technical assistance and mentoring on CE for TWC-VR providers and TWC-VR staff; and
- continued process improvement activities.

TWC-VR is introducing CE as a service for customers and plans to roll out the service statewide after demonstrating an effective CE model to include policy, procedures, and training for VR staff and Employment Services Providers.

Goal 4: Create new specialty endorsements for disability groups often served by SE and CE to compensate providers with premium payments to cover increased costs for staff training and service delivery when addressing complex employment barriers.

TWC-VR currently has endorsements and premium payments for disabilities such as autism, visual impairment/blindness, and deafness. The use of endorsements has proven to be effective in maintaining providers that expansion to other disability groups should assist in addressing employment barriers for customers participating in SE services.

3. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES MAY BE PROVIDED WITH TITLE I OR TITLE VI FUNDS FOLLOWING PLACEMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICAT DISABILITIES IN EMPLOYMENT. IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(22) AND SECTION 606(B)(3 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, DESCRIBE THE QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES; AND THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES.

TWC-VR is committed to providing quality services to customers with the most significant disabilities, for whom traditional VR approaches have not been effective. Although customers in SE can compete in the open job market, they require ongoing supports to learn how to interact with potential employers and perform job tasks and responsibilities. Extended services are necessary to provide long term support to the customer when faced with challenges and barriers related to their disability. Customers receiving TWC-VR SE services often have no or very limited work history in competitive integrated employment, have been excluded from community services through institutionalization, or have only participated in segregated work programs, such as enclaves, and day habilitation programs funded by Texas Health and Human Services (HHS).

TWC-VR SE services offer the best possible match between customer skills, interests, abilities, support needs, and an employer's unmet needs. TWC-VR uses the "place, then train" concept, a two-part process to describe SE services. The first step is to place customers with the most significant disabilities into a competitive integrated job based on their preferences, interests, assets, and abilities, as identified during a community-based assessment and a SE planning meeting. The second step is to provide training and support to the customer directly related to the job and then coordinate and train the designated extended

service providers, or natural supports, to ensure a smooth transition with no interruption in service delivery prior to TWC-VR case closure.

TWC-VR has partnered with the University of North Texas to develop training and maintain a credentialing system for employment services, including SE. TWC-VR has also partnered with the Center for Social Capital to develop the Certified Business Technical Assistance Consultant (CBTAC) credential and training, which must be obtained and maintained by vendors from whom VR purchases supported self-employment services.

TWC-VR ensures all employment opportunities for customers engaged in supported employment (SE) and supported self-employment services (SSE) meets the criteria of competitive integrated employment. Prior to a customer being referred for SE services, a Career Planning Assessment must be completed to identify the customer strengths, interests, potential extended service needs and resources. SE services are provided through an outcome-based service delivery model after the customer has secured an individualized placement that achieves all necessary employment conditions outlined in the customer's SE plan or for SSE once the customer has launched their business as described in their supported self-employment business plan.

Customers in SE require ongoing supports to learn their job and to meet the employer's expectations after the customer's employment has been secured. The ongoing supports and extended services can occur within the work, community, and/or home environment; and are necessary for the customer to maintain employment. A customer receives job retention services (ongoing supports) in twenty-eight day benchmarks. A customer can receive multiple job retention service benchmarks until the customer reaches job stability.

Job stability is defined as the customer:

- is satisfied with the employment;
- has competitive integrated employment;
- is meeting the preferences, interests, at least two potential job tasks, and all nonnegotiable employment conditions listed on SE Plan (VR1632);
- has reliable transportation to and from the jobsite with a backup plan;
- is meeting the employer's expectations regarding job performance;
- is meeting the physical and environmental demands of the job;
- has all necessary accommodations in place and working;
- has extended services in place to ensure continued employment with support; and
- has achieved all goals on SE training plan (VR1634) are achieved or will be addressed by an extended service provider.

Extended services, known in Texas as long-term support and services, can be publicly funded, "natural" or "in-kind," or paid by the customer through Social Security Insurance (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), or another Social Security Administration Title II work incentive program. VR is the payor of last resort for providing extended services for youth with disabilities. The vocational rehabilitation counselor works with the customer and the job skills trainer to research and seek other resources that the extended supports could be provided by. If the customer has a waiver or other public funding, this would be used prior to extended services from VR. Examples of other resources that could be utilized to provide extended services include:

- Medicaid HCBS Waivers;
- Medicaid State Plan Benefits and Block Grants;
- Other Community Resources (non-profits, neighborhood centers, local authorities);
- Natural Supports (coworkers, family, religious organizations);
- Ticket to Work Employment Networks;
- Private Job Coaching; and
- Technology (phone applications, software).

Examples of extended services include, but are not limited to:

- consulting with a customer's job supervisor regarding areas of concern or training needs;
- creating supports and strategies to improve work performance through job coaching;
- providing assistance with medication management or hygiene; and
- identifying and training on transportation options.

All Texas Health and Human Services (HHS) waivers include employment services. TWC-VR and HHS have a partnership focusing on training community providers and 1915(c) local authorities in employment services.

A customer must maintain employment 90 days after ongoing supports have ended and transferred to the extended service provider. Common resources that provide extended services for TWC-VR customers include family, friends, nonprofits, as well as other county, state, and federal programs. If the TWC-VR provider has to reestablish the delivery of ongoing supports during the 90 days of extended services, the case becomes unstable until the customer can demonstrate job stability and will be transferred back to the extended service provider. A new 90-day count of successful extended services must be completed prior to TWC-VR closing the VR case. In SSE, for a case to reach closure, a customer's business must operate for an additional 90-day period with no support from the SSE provider.

4. SECTIONS 101(A)(22) AND 606(B)(4) OF THE REHABILITIATION ACT REQUIRE THE VR AGENCY TO DESCRIBE EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY AND ARRANGE, INCLUDING ENTERING INTO COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS, WITH OTHER STATE AGENCIES AND OTHER APPROPRIATE ENTITIES IN ORDER TO PROVIDE SUPPORT EMPLOYMENT SERVICES. THE DESCRIPTION MUST INCLUDE EXTENDED SERVICES, AS APPLICABLE, TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE PROVISION OF EXTENDED SERVICES TO YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 CFR 363.4(A) AND 34 CFR 361.5(C)(19)(V).

A customer's extended services are identified and documented in the customer's Individualized Plan for Employment. As customers progress through the supported employment process, TWC-VR may use naturally occurring work supports as extended services. As appropriate, paid support is administered through other state agencies or community resources not funded by TWC-VR. When extended services are not available for youth with disabilities, TWC-VR provides extended supports, such as job skills training, for up to four years or until the individual turns 25 years of age. TWC-VR continually evaluates

the customer's need for extended services and seeks other resources to provide the necessary extended services.

To provide seamless service delivery to customers and ensure effective use of resources, TWC-VR maintains the following collaborations with community partners and other state agencies:

TWC-VR collaborates with the Texas Health and Human Services Medical and Social Service Divisions' Behavioral Health and IDD Service Department Special Projects Unit by:

- providing information and technical assistance when changes to VR employment services occur;
- ensuring the service definitions in the 1915(c) home-and community-based waivers accurately reflect Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and Rehabilitation Services Administration regulations. This partnership allows services that result in competitive integrated employment to be delivered efficiently and timely through the payer of first resort;
- providing cross training on the VR Long-Term Supports and Services System;
- providing information to mutually served customers in Supported Employment to assist in understanding how to navigate the long-term support and services system when the customers are receiving home and community-based services under a Medicaid waiver, Medicaid state plan amendment, or other authority related to a state Medicaid program; and
- recruiting Supported Employment (SE) providers already established with HHS to ensure a seamless transition from one program to another, when applicable.

TWC-VR works with HHS Medicaid/Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to resolve individual and system issues involving mutually served customers, particularly those transferring from Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to Title II Childhood Disability Beneficiaries to ensure continuation of Medicaid 1915(c) waiver services.

TWC-VR coordinates with the Social Security Administration (SSA) to encourage Employment Services Providers (ESPs) to become employment networks (ENs) under SSA's Ticket to Work Program.

TWC-VR partners with school districts that provide transition services to youth and considers all aspects of the cooperative agreements in place to ensure continuity and timeliness of services for those school districts that initiate supported employment services before or after a student graduates.

TWC-VR has representation in the following:

- The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities;
- Texas Statewide Behavioral Health Coordinating Council;
- Mental Health Coordination and Substance Use Disorder Party Workgroup, which is a subcommittee of the Behavioral Health Advisory Committee;
- Behavioral Health Advisory Committee;
- Texas Coordinating Council for Veteran Services;
- State Independent Living Council;

- Texas Council on Consumer Direction;
- The Promoting Independence Advisory Committee;
- HHS Cross Agency Liaison Initiatives;
- Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities; and
- Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)

F. ANNUAL ESTIMATES.

Sections 101(a)(15 and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require all VR agencies to annually conduct a full assessment of their resources and ability to serve all eligible individuals before the start of the federal fiscal year. In accordance with 34 CFR § 361.29(b), annual estimates must include the following projections:

1. ESTIMATES FOR NEXT FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR—

A. VR PROGRAM; AND

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under VR Program	Costs of Services using Title I Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
N/A	72,563	72,563	$194,402,678	N/A

B. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM.

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under Supported Employment Program	Costs of Services using Title I and Title VI Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
N/A	2,117	2,117	$8,176,551	N/A

G. ORDER OF SELECTION.

- ☑ The VR agency is **not** implementing an order of selection and all eligible individuals will be served.
- ☐ The VR agency is implementing an order of selection with one or more categories closed.

* VR agencies may maintain an order of selection policy and priority of eligible individuals without implementing or continuing to implement an order of selection.

Pursuant to section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act, this description must be amended when the VR agency determines, based on the annual estimates described in description (f), that VR services cannot be provided to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for and are determined eligible for services.

1. FOR VR AGENCIES THAT HAVE DEFINED PRIORITY CATEGORIES DESCRIBE—

A. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER;

B. THE ORDER (PRIORITY CATEGORIES) TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES ENSURING THAT INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES; AND

C. THE VR AGENCY'S GOALS FOR SERVING INDIVUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, INCLUDING HOW THE AGENCY WILL ASSIST ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS ASSIGNED TO CLOSED PRIORITY CATEGORIES WITH INFORMATION AND REFERRAL, THE METHOD IN WHICH THE VR AGENCY WILL MANAGE WAITING LISTS, AND THE PROJECTED TIMELINES FOR OPENING PRIORITY CATEGORIES. NOTE: PRIORITY CATEGORIES ARE CONSIDERED OPEN WHEN ALL INDIVIDUALS IN THE PRIORITY CATEGORY MAY BE SERVED.

2. HAS THE VR AGENCY ELECTED TO SERVE ELIBLE INDIVIDUALS OUTSIDE OF THE ORDER OF SELECTION WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT?

No, N/A

H. WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS.

The State plan shall be in effect in all political subdivisions of the State, however, the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (Commissioner) may waive compliance with this requirement in accordance with section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and the implementing regulations in 34 CFR 361.26. If the VR agency is requesting a waiver of statewideness or has a previously approved waiver of statewideness, describe the types of services and the local entities providing such services under the waiver of statewideness and how the agency has complied with the requirements in 34 CFR 361.26. if the VR agency is not requesting or does not have an approved waiver of statewideness, please indicate "not applicable."

Not Applicable.

I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT.

In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act, the VR agency must develop and maintain annually a description (consistent with the purposes of the Rehabilitation Act) of the VR agency's comprehensive system of personnel development, which shall include a description of the procedures and activities the VR agency will undertake to ensure it has an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals that provides the following:

1. ANALYSIS OF CURRENT PERSONNEL AND PROJECTED PERSONNEL NEEDS INCLUDING—

A. THE NUMBER AND TYPE OF PERSONNEL THAT ARE EMPLOYED BY THE VR AGENCY IN THE PROVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES, INCLUDING RATIOS OF QUALIFIED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELORS TO CLIENTS;

B. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE VR AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND

C. PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY, WHO WILL BE NEEDED BY THE VR AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES IN 5 YEARS BASED ON PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED, INCLUDING INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITITIES, THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL EXPECTED TO RETIRE OR LEAVE THE FIELD, AND OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS.

Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed	No. of Personnel Currently Needed	Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC)	462	525	554
Transitional Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (TVRC)	146	160	177
TOTAL	608	685	731

*Information in table pulled from June 30, 2023 report.

D. RATIO OF QUALIFIED VR COUNSELORS TO CLIENTS:

The ratio is 1 QVRC for every 102 customers. *

*Based on 55,396 open cases at the end of PY22 and 543 QVRCs.

E. PROJECTED NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED IN 5 YEARS:

Projected PY Annual Total Served in Five Years = 99,500*

*Total Served = All customers served during PY, including active and closed cases, from case assignment forward. Assumes medium to high growth.

2. DATA AND INFORMATION ON PERSONNEL PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT, RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION, AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

A. A LIST OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE THAT ARE PREPARING VR PROFESSIONALS, BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS, BROKEN DOWN BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; AND THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED DURING THE PRIOR YEAR FROM EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS WITH CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, OR WITH THE CREDENTIALS FOR CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, BROKEN DOWN BY THE PERSONNEL CATEGORY FOR WHICH THEY HAVE RECEIVED, OR HAVE THE CREDENTIALS TO RECEIVE, CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE.

Institute of Higher Education	Type of Program	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Prior Year Graduates
Texas Tech University	Masters of Rehabilitation Counseling	95	11
University of North Texas	Masters of Rehabilitation Counseling	159	19
University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley	Masters of Rehabilitation Counseling	308	50
University of Texas at El Paso	Masters of Rehabilitation Counseling	73	5

B. THE VR AGENCY'S PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL, WHICH ADDRESSES THE CURRENT AND PROJECTED NEEDS FOR QUALIFIED PERSONNEL; AND THE COORDINATION AND FACILITATION OF EFFORTS BETWEEN THE VR AGENCY AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS TO RECRUIT, PREPARE, AND RETAIN PERSONNEL WHO ARE

QUALIFIED, INCLUDING PERSONNEL FROM MINORITY BACKGROUNDS AND PERSONNEL WHO ARE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

TWC-VR has developed productive, proactive working relationships with Texas universities that train rehabilitation professionals. Involvement with Texas universities results in student requests for practicum and internship placements within TWC-VR. Internships have been offered since 1999 for students completing master's degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling, Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling or Rehabilitation. In PY'23, TWC-VR hosted eighteen internships (eight paid and ten unpaid). Evaluations of student interns come directly from certified, licensed, or Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (QVRC) internship supervisors and department advisors from the intern's university.

Job vacancy notices are routinely posted on WorkInTexas.com, TWC's statewide online job search website that also serves and the state labor exchange system. Hiring supervisors can also request a broader distribution of vacancy notices by having them posted to additional websites such as Indeed.com, Monster.com, and others.

Recruitment continues for bilingual Spanish- and English-speaking candidates to fill positions located in areas with high Spanish-speaking populations. Opportunities to promote employment to all community sectors are achieved by sharing job postings with universities.

TWC-VR encourages the hiring of qualified individuals with disabilities and strives to ensure that staff represents ethnic diversity and thereby reflects the population of Texas and the customers we serve. Racial and ethnic distribution of TWC-VR employees is included in description (b) Table 3.

A TWC recruiter was recently assigned to TWC-VR to help increase recruitment efforts. The main social media platform used is LinkedIn and VR positions are also posted there. Other platforms include WorkInTexas.com and Handshake to post and source from as well. In addition, various universities job boards outside of Handshake and organizations such as The American Council of the Blind, Deaf Network, the Sowell Center website (through Texas Tech University), and the National Association of Special Education Teachers are also used. VR positions have also been posted on both the Rehabilitative Services Administration and the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification platforms.

C. DESCRIPTION OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND ACTIVITIES THAT ENSURE ALL PERSONNEL EMPLOYED BY THE VR AGENCY RECEIVE APPROPRIATE AND ADEQUATE TRAINING AND CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR PROFESSIONAL AND PARAPROFESSIONALS:

I. PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ASSESSMENT, VOCATIONAL COUNSELING, JOB PLACEMENT, AND REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING TRAINING IMPLEMENTED IN COORDINATION WITH ENTITIES CARRYING OUT STATE PROGRAM UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1997; AND

II. PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH AND OTHER SOURCES TO VR AGENCY PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS AND FOR PROVIDING TRAINING REGARDING THE AMENDMENTS TO THE REHABILITATION ACT MADE BY THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT.

Growth and development for all levels of staff is essential. TWC-VR staff attend external trainings provided by such agencies as the American Association of Diabetes Educators, the Texas Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Assistive Technology Industry Association, the Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation, and the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind. Staff are encouraged to attend national, state, and local conferences related to VR, including the Association of People Supporting Employment First National Conference, Texas Association of Vocational Adjustment Coordinators, Southeast Regional Institute on Deafness training, Assistive Technology Industry Association International Conference, and the Capacity Building Institute regarding building capacity for postsecondary transition of students with disabilities. In so doing, they can receive training and network with other professionals.

Additionally, trainings are conducted within the regions by designated training staff, and within the field offices by senior counselors, unit program specialists, supervisors, managers, and others.

TWC-VR contracted with YesLMS for computer-based training courses. TWC-VR staff now have access to over 100 online courses that are pre-approved for CRC CEUs (certified rehabilitation counselors continuing education units). Course content is developed by the VR Development Group, who contracts with national VR subject matter experts to develop training in a variety of areas relevant to vocational rehabilitation.

A VR Pre-Conference training takes place on an annual basis, coinciding with the TWC annual conference. During the VR Pre-Conference training, TWC-VR staff can earn continuing education units while enhancing their knowledge.

Staff members also participate in training modules, such as vocational rehabilitation job-specific training, developed by the TWC Training and Development department's VR counselors. Training needs and priorities are identified on an ongoing basis. Past training has been in the areas of diabetes, substance abuse, caseload management, employment assistance, worker's compensation, criminal background checks, mental health first aid, counseling and adjustment to blindness, career choice counseling, autism, and self-employment. During their first year of employment, counselors attend internal training conducted by TWC Training and Development to enhance skills and develop a basic understanding of policy and how to implement caseload management processes.

3. DESCRIPTION OF VR AGENCY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF PERSONNEL STANDARDS CONSISTENT WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B) TO ENSURE THAT VR AGENCY PROFESSIONAL AND PARAPROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL ARE ADEQUATELY TRAINED AND PREPARED, INCLUDING—

A. STANDARDS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH ANY NATIONAL OR STATE-APPROVED OR -RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATION, LICENSING, REGISTRATION, OR OTHER COMPARABLE REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO THE PROFESSION OR DISCIPLINE IN WHICH SUCH PERSONNEL ARE PROVIDING VR SERVICES; AND

B. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, TO ENSURE THAT THE PERSONNEL HAVE A 21ST CENTURY UNDERSTANDING OF THE EVOLVING LABOR FORCE AND THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

Consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B), TWC-VR develops and maintains a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD). This system includes procedures to ensure TWC-VR maintains an adequate supply of qualified personnel, referred to as Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (QVRCs). TWC-VR has established personnel requirements for the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) position that provides vocational rehabilitation services. To classify as a QVRC, staff must meet specific state requirements related to education and experience. Standards for QVRCs serve as an internal control to ensure staff are sufficiently trained and prepared to effectively serve Texans with disabilities. TWC-VR monitors the number of counselors who meet qualified personnel standards.

TWC-VR considers VR counselors qualified to perform non-delegable duties based on minimum initial standards for hire and based on successful completion of required training and an initial six-month probationary period that allows demonstration of performance. The minimum initial standards for hire are aligned with 34 CFR 361.18(c)(1)(ii)(A) and the State of Texas VR Counselor Classification Schedule. The Texas State Auditor's Office (SAO) establishes and maintains the classification plan for State of Texas employees. The SAO classification plan includes a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor I to IV series. TWC-VR applies a career ladder structure to the SAO VR Counselor series, thereby providing promotion opportunities for VR counselors who meet the career ladder requirements for education, experience, and performance requirements associated with each level.

Applicants that possess the required education and experience are recruited for VR counselor positions. Prior to making a salary offer, the hiring manager must obtain educational documentation to submit for review and verification. For counselor candidates with a bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctoral degree, or a current CRC or LPC, the hiring manager must provide the transcript, certificate, or license to the CSPD coordinator for review and verification. The verification must be completed before the hiring manager makes a salary offer.

After hire, VR counselors complete required education and training, as applicable, to achieve and maintain QVRC standards. TWC-VR helps counselors advance as a QVRC and sets aside funding to financially assist counselors in fulfilling expert level standards. To support QVRC staff development, maintenance of education, and advance in personnel standard categories, TWC-VR may provide funding for a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling

except when unforeseen circumstances occur that may restrict or prohibit the funding or when management discontinues a VR counselor's participation in the program in the best interest of the VR program. To receive TWC-VR support for a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, the VR counselor applying for assistance must have completed the initial training year, be meeting or exceeding job performance expectations, obtain the appropriate approvals to pursue a graduate degree or prescribed coursework, apply for Rehabilitation Services administration scholarship and university stipend funding, if applicable, and be accepted by the appropriate institution of higher education. TWC-VR may also assist counselors with maintaining their CRC certification or LPC license. Additionally, counselors receive ongoing training and information on Labor Market Information, current research and evidence-based practices, caseload management training, and disability-related training to ensure a current understanding of the evolving labor force in Texas and the unique needs of individuals with disabilities.

Every newly hired counselor is classified as a QVRC Candidate and must complete a probationary period and new counselor training to demonstrate satisfactory performance. It takes a minimum of six months to complete probation during which time a QVRC supervisor or a QVRC designated by a supervisor approves the counselor's eligibility determinations and IPEs to ensure appropriate decision-making, documentation, and application of knowledge.

Once counselors successfully complete their probationary period and new counselor training, they become a regular status employee in the state's VRC classification and are considered a QVRC, identified as either a Category A QVRC or a Category B QVRC, depending on their education. A Category A QVRC has completed the probationary period and new counselor training and possesses the following: a bachelor's degree in a field of study reasonably related to vocational rehabilitation, such as vocational rehabilitation counseling, social work, psychology, disability studies, business administration, human resources, special education, supported employment, customized employment, economics, or another field that reasonably prepares individuals to work with customers and employers; and has demonstrated paid or unpaid experience, for not less than one year, consisting of direct work with individuals with disabilities in a setting such as an independent living center, direct service or advocacy activities that provide such individual with experience and skills in working with individuals with disabilities, or direct experience in competitive integrated employment environments as an employer, as a small business owner or operator, or in self-employment, or other experience in human resources or recruitment, or experience in supervising employees, training, or other activities. A Category B QVRC has completed the probationary period and new counselor training and possesses the following: a master's or doctoral degree in a field of study such as vocational rehabilitation counseling, law, social work, psychology, disability studies, business administration, human resources, special education, management, public administration, or another field that reasonably provides competence in the employment sector, in a disability field, or in both business-related and rehabilitation-related fields.

Applicants who meet the Category B QVRC CSPD standard are preferred for counselor positions. If a candidate is hired who does not meet the Category B QVRC CSPD standard, they must participate in the QVRC program and complete required coursework within seven years after completing the initial training year. Counselors are required to sign the QVRC Acknowledgment form within 30 days of hire. By signing this required form, the counselor

agrees that to hold a counselor position, they must meet the Category B QVRC CSPD standard at the time of employment or by completing the educational requirements within the established Category B QVRC CSPD standard. Counselors not achieving the Category B QVRC standard within the prescribed time are not allowed to continue functioning in this capacity.

4. METHOD(S) THE VR AGENCY USES TO ENSURE THAT PERSONNEL ARE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE IN APPROPRIATE MODES OF COMMUNICATION WITH OR IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE OF APPLICANTS OR ELIGIBLE INDIVIUDALS WHO HAVE LIMITED ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITY.

Many customers and staff members who are blind or visually impaired need alternative formats for printed communications. Staff in the Assistive Technology Unit prepare documents in braille, large print, or electronic format. Dedicated computers with braille translation software and braille embossers are available in each field office.

Additionally, TWC-VR employs Assistive Technology Specialists to support staff using assistive programs with standard agency software to complete their job duties.

The TWC Accessibility Team assists with making technology accessible to everyone, including people with visual, hearing, mobility, cognitive, and other disabilities. Their team is dedicated to helping the agency achieve this goal. The DeafBlind Unit serves customers who have a dual sensory loss affecting both hearing and vision. Specialists with knowledge related to both hearing loss and vision impairment consult with caseload-carrying staff, customers, and community resources to develop and implement plans and services. TWC-VR also purchases state-certified interpreter services as needed.

TWC-VR meets adaptive communication needs. For example, with the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Language Line, staff members can establish communication with customers in numerous languages, including those commonly found in Texas.

5. AS APPROPRIATE, DESCRIBE THE PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES TO COORDINATE THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT WITH PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT.

TWC-VR is committed to ensuring that its diverse workforce is highly skilled, professionally trained, and thoroughly prepared to provide the highest quality service to Texans who are blind or visually impaired and/or have other disabilities. Our training curriculum is designed to help staff gain a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities, and all procedures and activities related to personnel development described are responsive to WIOA and the amendments made to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. TWC-VR develops partnerships with high schools, education

service centers, and TEA to assist with professional development for personnel who work with students with disabilities.

TWC-VR has specialty transition VR counselors and general VR counselors who act as liaisons for high schools and partner with the educational system to serve transition-age students seeking assistance to access adult vocational services. Partnering with ISDs allows counselors to use office space on campus to ensure that student customers have access to resources available through the workforce investment system, community, businesses, and other partners necessary to build a network of support. The increase in the number of students with autism, physical and neurodevelopment disabilities, and psychiatric or dual diagnoses reinforces the need to continue best practices components of IDEA. Staff works closely with TEA, centers for independent living, communities, and businesses to achieve collaboration, effective programming, and customer satisfaction. As a result, these efforts improve the effectiveness of VR services for transition customers. Such collaborations take on many different forms in training TWC-VR and educational staff, as well as in impacting families. TWC-VR staff will continue to collaborate with ISDs in the provision of Pre-ETS as specified in WIOA. Additionally, counselors are often invited to education service centers to participate in educator training and to present training, particularly for more effective transition planning for students. TWC-VR staff works with schools in creating job fairs that allow students to meet with employers and gather information about the labor market. Family nights are hosted in some areas to invite interested members of the public to TWC-VR offices to share resource information, discuss service delivery issues, and give input regarding best practices that would better support students and their families.

In some areas, community partners such as churches, Workforce Solutions Offices, and community centers assist in providing training to school personnel on understanding cultural diversity in Texas. Training objectives that include sensitivity to cultural issues are integrated in the provision of the principles of ethics in service delivery. Given the cultural diversity within the expanse of Texas, this is an issue often addressed in external conferences with presentations to ensure that staff is sensitive to and aware of the way the VR process is applied.

TWC-VR continues to enhance partnerships with TEA, high schools, community colleges, stakeholders, and businesses to leverage relations that better prepare students to transition to postsecondary education and the workforce. Through TWC-VR's Employment First Expansion project and the interagency work group with TEA and HHSC, TWC-VR has been able to increase and improve collaboration among the agencies with the goal of:
- improving referral systems and processes between agencies;
- establishing structured systems for meaningful collaboration and coordination of service delivery; and
- implementing data exchange systems for ongoing collaboration and reporting.

COOPERATION, COLLABORATION, AND COORDINATION (SECTION 101(A)(11) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT)

J. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS.

In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(11)(D) of the Rehabilitation Act—

1. DESCRIBE PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATION BETWEEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATION OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PUBLIC EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, THAT ARE DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF THE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM THE RECEIPT OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES IN SCHOOL TO THE RECEIPT OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES.

The provision of quality VR services for Texas students with disabilities is a strategic priority for TWC-VR. TWC-VR policies and procedures have been updated to align with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) §413(B)(F), which sets forth that the individualized plan for employment (IPE) must be developed as soon as possible, but not later than a deadline of 90 days after the date of the determination of eligibility, unless the counselor and the eligible individual agree to an extension to a specific date.

Transition planning by VR counselors and school personnel facilitates the development and implementation of a student's individualized education program (IEP) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act §614(d). The goals developed in the IEP are considered in the development of the IPE. The development and approval of an IPE is initiated by a VR counselor. Planning includes conversations about informed choice and program information so that students understand the available options for additional education, training, service providers, and employment.

TWC-VR policy outlines the members of the student's transition services team, including the VR counselor and Local or State Education Agency staff, and outlines their roles in coordinating services.

Transition services are student-centered. Success relies on collaboration between the members of the transition team and other support systems. Students and youth with disabilities will soon be adults who need jobs, homes, friends and family, and community involvement. Transition services that are facilitated by VR staff coordinate resources so that an independent life and vocational goals can be achieved. The earlier the planning begins, the sooner supports and services can be coordinated to help the student achieve his or her employment goals.

The transition team plans and develops long-term vocational and independent living goals that are consistent with the interests, needs, and preferences of the student. The key members of the transition team should include professionals and nonprofessionals who are interested in the success of the student. The VR policy also includes information on coordination with IEP meetings and services (C:1303), records exchange in the interest of timely planning (C: 1303-1), and limitation on in-school services, such as not duplicating services already provided by the school (C: 1303-1).

TWC-VR maintains collaborative working relationships with public education entities in Texas. TWC-VR services emphasize and provide a coordinated set of age-appropriate activities that enable transition students, parents, education personnel, and others to actively plan for and assist the student to prepare for life after leaving high school, including proactively developing partnerships with communities, service providers, and businesses to create opportunities for students to obtain postsecondary education, training, and competitive integrated employment.

TWC-VR employs dedicated Transition Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (TVRCs) with caseloads that are made up entirely of students. They are assigned to multiple high schools and actively coordinate referrals and information sharing with their schools. In addition, there are some general caseload counselors who also have school assignments. They, too, are tasked with coordination of referrals and information sharing, generally in fewer or smaller schools than TVRCs.

In 2022, to increase and improve collaboration and coordination of services between partner agencies, TWC-VR established a steering committee and an interagency work group. The steering committee and interagency work group are comprised of leaders and subject matter experts from TWC-VR, TEA, and HHSC. The purpose of the interagency collaboration is to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, especially those with the most significant disabilities. The three priorities for the interagency work group are to:

- improve referral systems and processes between partner agencies;
- establish structured systems for meaningful collaboration and coordination of service delivery; and
- implement data exchange systems for ongoing collaboration and reporting.

TWC-VR also has an ongoing statewide initiative called Capacity Building. Its goal is to bring together VR and education partners for cross-training and creating strategies for working with youth and students with disabilities. In 2019, through a partnership with the Texas Education Agency and Texas A&M's Center on Disability and Development, eight focus group meetings and six regional conferences were planned across the state to assess needs and gather local feedback from stakeholders on the strengths and challenges of serving students. Later that year, there was a statewide Capacity Building conference with participation of over 500 educators and VR staff. Participating groups implemented the practices outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding between the Texas Workforce Commission and Texas Education Agency, effective 2017 (renewed 2022).

In 2022, a spinoff of the original Capacity Building began. It follows a similar model but is entirely focused on serving students ages 14-16. This initiative will be ongoing through 2024. To date, six focus group meetings and four regional conferences have taken place.

2. DESCRIBE THE CURRENT STATUS AND SCOPE OF THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY. CONSISTENT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT PURSUANT TO 34 CFR 361.22(B), PROVIDE, AT A MINIMUM, THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ABOUT THE AGREEMENT:

A. CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, WHICH MAY BE PROVIDED USING ALTERNATIVE MEANS FOR MEETING PARTICIPATION (SUCH AS VIDEO CONFERENCES AND CONFERENCE CALLS), TO ASSIST EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO POST-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES AND OTHER VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES;

B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY PERSONNEL FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVUDALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS (IEPS) UNDER SECTION 614(D) OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT;

C. THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES;

D. PROCEDURES FOR OUTREACH TO AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED TRANSITION SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES. OUTREACH TO THESE STUDENTS SHOULD OCCUR AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE DURING THE TRANSITION PLANNING PROCESS AND MUST INCLUDE, AT A MINIMUM, A DESCRIPTION OF THE PURPOSE OF THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM, ELGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS, APPLICATION PROCEDURES, AND SCOPE OF SERVICES THAT MAY BE PROVIDED TO ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS;

E. COORDINATION NECESSARY TO SATISFY DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS SET FORTH IN 34 CFR PART 397 REGARDING STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE SEEKING SUBMINIMUM WAGE EMPLOYMENT; AND

F. ASSURANCE THAT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 CFR 397.31, NEITHER THE SEA NOR THE LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY WILL ENTER INTO A CONTRACT OR OTHER ARRANGEMENT WITH AN ENTITY, AS DEFINED IN 34 CFR 397.5(D), FOR THE PURPOSE OF OEPRATING A PROGRAM UNDER WHICH YOUTH WITH A DISABILITY IS ENGAGED IN WORK COMPENSATED AT A SUBMINIMUM WAGE.

TWC-VR works closely with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to coordinate transition planning services for students between ages 14 to 22 who receive special education services in Texas. As required in 34 CFR §361.22(b), TWC-VR has collaborated with TEA to develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU), initially from August 31, 2017 to August 31, 2022,

and renewed in 2022 to go through 2027. The MOU outlines the responsibilities of TWC-VR for the provision of transition planning services as well as the fiscal responsibility of TEA for the provision of services as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

The MOU represents each agency's commitment to collaborate and cooperatively facilitate the successful transition of students with disabilities from high school to competitive integrated employment using VR services. The MOU includes the addition of pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) as defined in CFR §361.48, and other Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requirements, operationalizing a referral process for students with disabilities, and a process for inviting counselors to Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meetings.

Consultation and technical assistance, which may be provided using alternative means for meeting participation (such as video conferences and conference calls), to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including pre-employment transition services.

The MOU provides for consultation and technical assistance in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services; transition planning for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and completion of the IEP; clarification of the agencies' respective roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities for providing transition planning services to students with disabilities; and a description of procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who are in need of transition services.

Transition planning by personnel of the designated state agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs.

TWC-VR develops partnerships with schools and community organizations to help students with disabilities make a smooth transition to adulthood and work. TWC-VR's counselors throughout the state who are assigned to high schools have a role in preparing students with disabilities for entry into the workplace. VR counselors coordinate closely with high schools to ensure that appropriate students are referred to the VR program. They serve as information resources for teachers and other educational staff and provide resources and information about blindness and other disabilities to parents and transitioning students. They work closely with parents, education staff and community service providers to promote development of skills needed for students to become as independent as possible, as well as competitive in terms of integrated employment. Counselors work with schools to identify students receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) as early as possible in the process to address concerns regarding impact of employment on benefits and to provide resources for benefits counseling.

Pre-ETS are provided to students with disabilities. Required Pre-ETS activities are job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on opportunities for enrollment in postsecondary educational programs, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy.

TWC launched the Pathways to Careers Initiative (PCI), an initiative to expand Pre-ETS to Texas students with disabilities. The first strategy launched under PCI in summer 2017 was Summer Earn and Learn. TWC-VR partnered with each of the twenty-eight Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) and their employer partners to provide employability skills

training and work experience for students with disabilities. Summer Earn and Learn has continued in subsequent summers with the number of participants increasing each year. In 2021 there were 2,147 participants, in 2022 there were 2,516 participants, and in 2023 there were 2,959 participants. Explore STEM! is a PCI strategy that was implemented in summer 2018 and has been held in subsequent summers. Explore STEM! provides students the opportunity to explore STEM fields, hear from professionals working in those fields, and experience hands-on activities in various STEM fields. The objective is to encourage more students with disabilities to consider careers in STEM fields. In FY23, 195 students participated with 7 colleges hosting 19 camps total. From 2018-2023 14 colleges hosted camps for a total of 1,266 students participating.

Other PCI strategies include Capacity Building, Pre-ETS Tools for Students, and a Pre-ETS curriculum. Capacity Building is a strategy to operationalize the MOU between TWC and TEA by engaging VR and school personnel in a series of meetings designed to encourage and assist with relationship building, strategies for successful collaboration, and a better understanding of the VR and Special Education systems. A second initiative using the same model and focusing solely on working with younger students began in 2022. Pre-ETS Tools for Students started with the development of a Transition module to be added to the existing Texas OnCourse platform, an electronic tool focused on career and postsecondary exploration. The second phase of this strategy was the development of a resource for parents to provide information and guidance about topics related to the transition process. It aims to identify and address gaps in existing information and targets all parents, with a concerted effort to reach parents who may not be familiar with the process of transitioning to postsecondary school or work. The tool launched in March of 2022. TWC-VR has also partnered with Texas A&M University to develop a Pre-ETS curriculum that schools can adopt and use as a classroom resource. Texas A&M has field tested the curriculum in the classroom. The State office Pre-ETS team and a group of educators reviewed the curriculum and provided feedback that has been incorporated into the curriculum. The curriculum has not been published yet but is in the final stages of completion.

Fostering Transition is an initiative designed to increase VR staff knowledge of the foster care system and develop strategies for connecting students in foster care with VR services. It began in 2022 with a series of outreach activities and has continued with training for VR staff and the implementation of strategies in each region to receive referrals and ensure they are followed through the VR system. To date, approximately 150 new referrals have been received statewide.

In 2021, TWC-VR implemented a service called Embedded Pre-ETS. Through partnerships with the schools and contracted providers, providers can become embedded in the schools, which allows them to provide services that build on and enhance what students are already receiving in school. Using this service, students will gain a more in-depth understanding of work-related concepts and will have greater opportunities to practice these concepts in a protected environment.

As a result of a contract with Texas A&M, the Work-Based Learning initiative is supporting schools in developing work-based learning opportunities for students. The schools develop and implement work-based learning activities that range from school-based enterprises, for

example, coffee carts and greenhouses, to more traditional employer partnerships for work-based learning.

I Generate Rural Opportunities for Work (iGrow) is a partnership with Texas A&M to develop opportunities for Pre-ETS instruction and work-based learning for students in rural areas of Texas. The program started in the Fall of 2022 in Lee County (Giddings and Lexington) with 30 students participating. Of those, 25 participated in paid work experience in the first summer and 9 participated in the Youth Adventure Program (YAP), a summer leadership experience for high school students at Texas A&M. All students completed 21 Pre-ETS units of instruction. Additionally, the iGrow team recruited 37 employers to participate in current and future work-based learning for iGrow students. The iGrow team is working on replicating the model in East Texas soon.

Explore Apprenticeship 2.0 is the second generation of an initiative that was implemented in 2019. Partnerships with San Jacinto College (Houston) and Dallas College (Dallas) enable students to participate in on-campus activities to learn more about apprenticeship as a path to employment. The second phase of the initiative will involve students participating in work-based learning in jobs in which apprenticeship is a typical part of the career path. Currently, VR staff are working with interested parties from other colleges and universities to expand the available services in this initiative.

TWC-VR has partnered for many years with the Texas School for the Deaf (TSD) and the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI). In addition to collaboration to connect students with VR services, TWC-VR currently sponsors TSD students for multiple summer activities focused on different aspects of Pre-ETS that are provided, primarily during the summer, by TSD staff. With TSBVI, TWC-VR partners to provide the Summer Work Experience in Austin, Texas (SWEAT) and Working and Living in the Community (WALIC), both residential work-based learning programs. TWC-VR also provides training opportunities for deaf and hard-of-hearing customers at the Texas School for the Deaf. Additionally, TWC-VR collaborates with the Brazos Valley Center for Independent Living and Texas A&M Center on Disability and Development to hold the WACO (Work and College Opportunities) at Texas A&M summer work program. Participants receive development and instruction in professionalism, self-determination, and teamwork. They typically experience and learn about college opportunities and work in the community 16 to 20 hours a week while living on campus.

TWC-VR also contracts with providers to deliver Pre-ETS to students with disabilities. There are currently 135 fee-for-service contracts in place for Pre-ETS.

TWC-VR counselors work with the high schools to provide consultation and technical assistance regarding the VR process and appropriate services that may be available to customers, such as engaging in apprenticeships. Consultation and technical assistance are provided at ARDs, and attendance may be in person or through alternative means, including videoconferencing or conference calls (based on 34 CFR §361.22(b)(1)).

TWC has regional and state office transition specialists who provide support to VR counselors and TWC-VR field office managers in developing collaborative partnerships with and increasing cooperation between TWC-VR, local school districts, and other community organizations as resources for students with disabilities. These transition specialists assist

with the development of policy, training, and strategies that lead to effective provision of transition services.

The roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services and pre-employment transition services.

Local education agencies maintain fiscal responsibility for transition services that are also considered special education or related services, and that are necessary for ensuring a free, appropriate public education to children with disabilities within Texas, including those outlined in the IEP (34 CFR §361.22(c)).

Additionally, House Bill 617, 83rd Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2013), requires that each ISD have an individual identified as the Transition and Employment Designee (TED). The TED is responsible for providing information and resources about effective transition planning and services. TWC-VR has counselors throughout the state assigned to high schools to assist students with disabilities in preparing for entry into the workplace. Nothing related to TWC-VR's responsibilities and requirements under WIOA should be construed as a reduction in local education agencies' responsibility under IDEA to provide and pay for special education and related services as a part of a free and appropriate education to students with disabilities (WIOA §101(c)).

VR counselors (VRCs) coordinate closely with high schools to ensure appropriate students are referred to the VR program. Transition program specialists support the work of VR counselors and TWC-VR field office managers in developing collaborative partnerships with and increasing cooperation between TWC-VR, local school districts, and other community organizations as resources for students with disabilities. TWC-VR has transition VR counselors and general VR counselors who act as liaisons for high schools and partner with the educational system to more appropriately serve transition-age students seeking assistance to access adult vocational services.

TWC-VR partnered with other health and human services agencies to assist TEA in developing the Texas Transition and Employment Guide for parents and their children who are enrolled in special education programs. The guide provides information on statewide services and programs that help facilitate the transition to life outside of the public-school system.

Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

Texas Workforce Commission's current MOU with TEA includes the addition of Pre-ETS, as defined in 34 CFR §361.48, and other WIOA requirements, operationalizing a consistent referral process for students with disabilities, and a process for inviting counselors to attend ARD meetings.

TWC-VR has specialty transition VR counselors and general VR counselors who act as liaisons for high schools and partner with the educational system to more appropriately serve transition-age students seeking assistance to access adult VR services. Partnering with ISDs allows counselors to be available to students and school staff to discuss VR services, resources available through the Texas workforce system, community, businesses, and other

partners necessary to build a network of support. Additionally, it allows counselors to arrange or provide relevant seminars, workshops, camps, and summer work experiences throughout the state.

Additionally, TWC-VR has established procedures to serve students with disabilities who are designated as "potentially eligible" for services. To receive Pre-ETS and be considered potentially eligible for VR services, an individual must meet only the definition of a student with a disability. The individual is not required to apply for VR services but has the option to do so. Designating individuals as potentially eligible gives more students with disabilities the opportunity to participate in Pre-ETS.

Coordination necessary to satisfy documentation requirements set forth in 34 CFR Part 397 regarding students and youth with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment.

When necessary, TWC-VR counselors and school personnel coordinate to satisfy documentation requirements for students and youth with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment, as set forth in 34 CFR §397.4(c). TWC-VR does not pursue subminimum wage employment for customers. When a customer chooses to pursue subminimum wage employment, counseling on other employment options is provided. When, after counseling, subminimum wage employment is still the customer's choice, the VR case is closed. Those customers who choose subminimum wage employment receive counseling, guidance, and referral services within the first six months of employment and annually thereafter.

Assurance that, in accordance with 34 CFR 394.31, neither the state education agency nor the local educational agency will enter into a contract or other arrangement with an entity, as defined in 34 CFR 391.5(d), for the purpose of operating a program under which youth with a disability is engaged in work compensated at subminimum wage.

In section 6.3 of the MOU, it states:

"Neither TEA nor LEAs will, in accordance with 34 CFR § 397.31 and 361.22(b)(6) enter into a contract or other arrangement with an entity, as defined in 34 CFR § 397.5(d), for the purpose of operating a program under which a youth with a disability is engaged in work compensated at a subminimum wage."

K. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS.

In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(11)(E) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe how the VR agency will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of VR services; and transition services for youth and students with disabilities, including pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities.

Through partnerships with the twenty-eight Workforce Development Boards in Texas, TWC-VR established the Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL) program in 2017. Students participate in paid work experiences throughout the summer with a targeted minimum length of five weeks. Currently in its sixth year, SEAL has served over 2,000 students per summer; note that 2020

program year was cancelled due to the pandemic. For 2023, 2,959 students have been confirmed as being placed to participate in SEAL.

Throughout the year, students also have the option to participation in year-round paid work experience. This service, also in partnership with the Workforce Development Boards and a TWC-VR provider, allows for students to participate in paid work experiences throughout the year.

TWC-VR also has thirty Project SEARCH sites across the state, with sites located in all 6 VR regions. Through this partnership with a host business and LEA, students get valuable work-based learning opportunities that lead to many successful placements in professional environments with competitive wages and benefits. In the next calendar year, TWC-VR anticipates an additional 4 sites.

TWC-VR is also committed to supporting students in connecting with employers and providing a diverse range of employment services tailored to their individual needs. These services can be accessed either through our contracted providers or through our dedicated business relations team. Examples of these services include:

- job placement services;
- supported employment; and
- apprenticeship opportunities.

L. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES.

In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(11)(C) and (K), describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are NOT carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system to develop opportunities for community-based employment in integrated settings, to the greatest extent practicable for the following:

1. STATE PROGRAMS (DESIGNATED LEAD AGENCY(IES) AND IMPLEMENTING ENTITY(IES)) CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

TWC-VR works with organizations across the state to ensure that it meets customers' assistive technology needs, including transition services for students and youth with disabilities and pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities. The organizations include contracted assistive technology evaluation sites across the state and TWC-VR's own Assistive Technology Unit.

Contract providers are required to participate in a thorough testing program to ensure that they meet minimal standards of proficiency to become approved assistive technology providers. TWC-VR uses programs such as the Computer/Electronics Accommodations Program when a customer is interested in employment with the federal government.

Every Texas Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation Services management unit has trained assistive technology staff that are responsible for sharing knowledge and resources so

that updated technology purchases can address the needs of customers with various disabilities, including those who are blind or visually impaired.

TWC-VR has a MOU with the Texas Technology Access Program (TTAP), the implementing entity designated by the governor under the Assistive Technology Act of 1998 (29 U.S.C. 3003) §4 whom TWC-VR works cooperatively to coordinate activities, including the referral of individuals with disabilities. Currently, TWC-VR refers customers to TTAP demonstration centers located throughout the state to ensure that they have an informed choice of assistive technology and that equipment purchased by TWC-VR meets each customers' needs.

TWC-VR is represented on the TTAP Advisory Council, participates in annual joint presentations with TTAP at Ability Expo in Houston, Ability Expo in Dallas/Ft. Worth, and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) statewide conference, which provide opportunities for customers and counselors to learn about new adaptive equipment and assistive technology that can assist in maintaining competitive, integrated employment.

2. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECTRARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

TWC-VR coordinates with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Texas AgrAbility to assist customers with modifications of agricultural equipment and tools, allowing for agricultural producers with disabilities to continue with farming and ranching. TWC-VR refers customers to Texas AgrAbility for evaluation of a variety of topics related to agricultural work including farm or ranch assessment, technical assistance, agribusiness assessment or agricultural self-employment such as lawn care or maintenance.

3. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH;

TWC-VR works with the following:

- Community Resource Coordination Groups (CRCGs), which are local interagency groups composed of public and private providers that come together to develop individualized service plans for children, youth, and adults whose needs can be met only through interagency coordination and cooperation; and
- Local Workforce Development Boards that provide services to out-of-school youth.

4. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS;

TWC-VR contracts with WorkQuest, and the Texas State Use Program, known as the Purchasing from People with Disabilities (PPD) program, to provide services in support of agency and divisional operations. WorkQuest connects State agencies to providers of various services as negotiated prices. The program is dedicated to furthering the state's policy of encouraging and assisting persons with disabilities to achieve maximum personal independence by engaging in useful, productive employment activities. Under the program, individuals with varying levels of disabilities produce products or perform services through a

Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP). TWC-VR purchases goods and services through CRPs participating in the PPD program, including temporary personnel services. This program helps individuals with disabilities during their transition toward independence and provides them with direct benefits by offering stable, vocational rehabilitation in their own communities. TWC-VR administers the program and pays a contracted rate to WorkQuest, the Central Non-Profit Agency, who manages the administrative processes to hire and pay the provider of the needed services. Additionally, TWC-VR contracts with WorkQuest for paid work experience services through PPD CRPs providing temporary personnel services.

5. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTERING THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT (42 U.S.C. 1396 ET SEQ.);

TWC-VR collaborates with the Texas Health and Human Services (HHS), the state agency responsible for administering the state Medicaid plan under Title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.).

Collaboration occurs in the delivery of VR services, including extended services, for individuals with the most significant disabilities who have been determined to be eligible for home and community-based services under a Medicaid State Plan amendment. VR counselors provide information to mutually served customers to assist them in understanding how to navigate the long-term support and services system and TWC-VR program specialists work HHS policy specialists to develop accurate tools and resource to assist providers and customers in this process. TWC-VR continues to collaborate with HHS's Office of Disability Services Coordination to recruit Supported Employment (SE) providers already established with HHS to ensure a seamless transition from one program to another, when applicable.

Additionally, TWC-VR works with HHS Medicaid/CHIP to resolve individual and system issues involving mutually served customers, particularly those transferring from Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to Title II Childhood Disability Beneficiaries to ensure continuation of Medicaid services.

TWC-VR coordinates with the Social Security Administration (SSA) to encourage Employment Services Providers (ESPs) to become employment networks (ENs) under SSA's Ticket to Work Program. TWC-VR offers incentive payments to ESP-ENs that provide:

- supported employment or job placement services during the provision of VR services; and
- extended supports to Ticket to Work customers after VR case closure in order to advance employment and/or increase customer earnings.

Another area of interagency coordination is the training TWC-VR program specialists provide on the following topics to staff working with mutually served customers eligible or receiving Medicaid State Plan programs;

- Annual training on TWC-VR programs to service coordinators and case managers, as well as provider organizations, community centers staff, including customer benefits officers, and other statewide groups and committees;

- Training on TWC-VR services and benefits and work incentives to HHS Managed Care Organization service coordinators and management, other service providers including Medicaid State Plan case managers and service coordinators;
- Training on benefits and work incentives every six months for HHS providers and program staff; and
- Overview of TWC-VR services and best practices for mutually served customers for HHS service coordinators, case managers, private providers, and other staff members.

6. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES;

TWC-VR collaborates with HHS, the state agency responsible for providing services to individuals with developmental disabilities.

Collaboration occurs in the delivery of VR services, including extended services, for individuals with the most significant disabilities who have been determined to be eligible for home and community-based services under a Medicaid waiver, Medicaid state plan amendment, or other authorities related to a state Medicaid program. VR counselors provide information to mutually served customers to assist them in understanding how to navigate the long-term support and services system and TWC-VR program specialists work HHS policy specialists to develop accurate tools and resource to assist providers and customers in this process.

SSA and HHS have a data exchange agreement that allows HHS to access SSA data. Through a third-party agreement (State Verification and Exchange System), TWC-VR can obtain SSA data regarding cost reimbursement from HHS.

TWC-VR is working in collaboration with HHS on the implementation of Senate Bill 50, 2021 87th Legislative Session and the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Settings Rule issued by Centers for Medicaid and Medicare services in 2014.

Texas Senate Bill 50 (SB50) directed HHS to establish rules and processes that comply with Texas' Employment First Policy, which states that employment is the first and preferred option for individuals with disabilities who receive public benefits. The law's goal is to ensure that Medicaid waiver participants who want competitive and integrated employment can achieve that goal. The law requires HHS to develop strategies to increase the number of individuals who receive employment services from TWC or through the waiver program in which they are enrolled.

The HCBS settings rule established standards for community integration, choice and rights regarding services funded by Medicaid to individuals in HCBS programs, including Medicaid waiver programs and state plan services. Requirements around supporting an individual to pursue competitive integrated employment were included in this rule.

As part of the implementation of SB50 and in response to the effective date of the HCBS settings requirements, TWC-VR has initiated a project titled the Employment First Expansion which employs several strategies to increase services to individuals with the most significant disabilities and to improve partnerships with HHS and TEA to provide a seamless service delivery system. Together a strategic framework to carry out the requirements of the HCBS

Settings Rule and the implementation of SB50 has been developed. The strategic framework involves cross-agency collaborations to improve referral and data exchange systems, development of ongoing training for agency staff, and evaluation of system progress on joint service provision to individuals with the most significant disabilities.

In addition to improvements in collaboration, TWC-VR will provide data addressing the components of SB50 including aggregate numbers of individuals served who obtained employment and are also receiving services through one of the HHS programs listed in the law. TWC-VR worked with HHS to develop a framework for the data collection. TWC-VR and HHS executed a Memorandum of Agreement/Data Sharing on January 31, 2023. Representatives from TWC-VR and HHS have outlined the finder file specifications needed to exchange the requested data through a secure HHS portal. The data exchange will occur quarterly, with the first exchange occurring in August of 2023.

Another area of interagency coordination is the training provided by TWC-VR program specialists to other state agency staff and external providers who mutually serve customers with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Trainings include:

- Annual training on TWC-VR programs to Home and Community-Based Services waiver providers, service coordinators and case managers, as well as provider organizations, community centers staff, including customer benefits officers, and other statewide groups and committees;
- TWC-VR services and benefits and work incentives, which is presented to HHS Managed Care Organization service coordinators and management, other service providers and Medicaid waiver case managers;
- Benefits and work incentives every six months for HHS providers, and IDD program staff; and
- Overview of TWC-VR services and best practices for mutually served customers, which is presented to HHS service coordinators, case managers, private providers, and other staff members.

7. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES;

TWC-VR collaborates with HHS, the state agency responsible for providing mental health services, to support customers with mental health needs. TWC-VR promotes mental health evidence-based practices and other evidence-informed models of service that will improve competitive integrated employment outcome strategies for customers. As part of this, TWC-VR purchases the psychological services psychotherapy and outpatient psychiatric treatment. TWC-VR refers customers who need inpatient treatment to local mental health authorities, who contract with HHS to provide these services.

Other examples of collaboration include:

- increasing coordination and developing new partnerships with other state and community organizations including mental health organizations, local mental health authorities, and universities serving individuals with mental health disorders to develop resources, increase knowledge, and implement best practices;

- working with the HHS Office of Mental Health Coordination to identify and implement best practices, engage potential community partners, and facilitate service coordination;
- participating in the Mental Health First Aid training conducted by local mental health authorities, which teaches VR counselors and other professionals how to assist someone experiencing a mental health crisis;
- training of HHS staff and other providers of mental health services conducted by TWC-VR policy specialists on the following:
  - Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) for community partners. WRAP is an evidence-based system that is used worldwide by individuals who are experiencing mental health and other kinds of wellness challenges. It is a unique form of mental health support that is peer-led and self-directed;
  - TWC-VR employment services, benefits, and work incentives to members of the seven-statewide mental health peer-operated support groups; and
  - Benefits and work incentives every six months for TWC-VR staff, ESPs, HHS providers, and IDD and mental health staff.

8. OTHER FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS OUTSIDE THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

To ensure that individuals with disabilities receive appropriate services, TWC-VR has the following cooperative arrangements with various federal, state, and local agencies and programs to use their services and facilities:

- collaboration with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHS) to provide VR services to individuals eligible for home and community-based services under a Medicaid waiver or Medicaid State Plan Amendment. HHS is the state agency that provides services to individuals with developmental disabilities;
- coordination with HHS in referral processes between VR and the Blind Children's Program, the Comprehensive Rehabilitation Services Program, and the Independent Living Services Program;
- coordination with HHS in implementation of legislation passed by the 86th Texas Legislature;
- MOUs with TEA and independent school districts (ISDs) to enhance coordination of services provided through programs like Project SEARCH and other community programs and support available to improve and expand services for transition-age students with disabilities;
- coordination with the Texas School for the Blind or Visually Impaired to provide specialized programs that prepare students for the transition to postsecondary life and the workplace;
- coordination with the Texas School for the Deaf (TSD) to provide specialized programs that prepare students on the transition to postsecondary life and the workplace;
- Interagency Contracts (IAC's) with public colleges and universities to provide effective communication access services for VR students to share the cost for provision of these services;

- IAC with HHS Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (ODHHS) to purchase communication access services;
- MOU with the Texas Department of Insurance's Division of Workers' Compensation to enhance referrals for return-to-work efforts;
- coordination with the Social Security Administration (SSA) on employment incentives and support to maximize Social Security Administration/Vocational Rehabilitation (SSA/VR) reimbursement activity through the Ticket to Work Program;
- MOU with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to maximize case service funds through better access to comparable benefits, and to enhance the case management process while avoiding duplication of services;
- coordination with the Texas Veterans Commission to help identify veterans who need additional support in securing benefits, gaining employment, and accessing advocacy services;
- coordination with the Texas Coordinating Council for Veteran Services to help identify trends that have an adverse effect on the veteran population and create strategies to address and resolve those issues at the state level;
- coordination with the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs to create statewide symposiums and job fairs to meet the federal regulation that requires federal contractors to ensure that no less than 7 percent of their workforce includes individuals with disabilities;
- coordination with the Purchasing for People with Disabilities program in providing training to CRPs;
- coordination with the Texas Center for Justice and Equity for juveniles and adults to assist and strengthen supports and employment goals by exploring career opportunities; and
- coordination with the Texas Department of Transportation on addressing the issue of inadequate transportation, often a major factor in a customer's ability to maintain employment.

Additionally, TWC-VR uses TWC's internal structure to:

- verify for Texas businesses that job applicants under the Work Opportunity Tax Credit program are receiving, or have received, VR services under an individualized plan for employment;
- access electronic wage data to verify employment history and income for customers for closure data and SSA/VR reimbursement submission; and
- collaborate with Workforce Solutions Offices regarding customer training and support for employment goals, including participation in symposiums, job fairs, and providing disability awareness training.

9. OTHER PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

Private nonprofit providers of rehabilitation services are an important part of the VR service delivery process for many customers. TWC-VR routinely works with national organizations, in addition to local private nonprofits to purchase and arrange services that help customers prepare for, obtain, maintain, or advance in employment. For the provision of extended

services in Supported Employment, TWC-VR establishes contractual relationships with public and nonprofit agencies or organizations within the state, employers, natural supports, and other entities who provider VR services.

Examples of services include:

- orientation and mobility;
- assistive technology training;
- diabetes education;
- communication access;
- durable medical equipment (DME);
- employment supports for brain injury;
- environmental work assessment;
- hearing aids and related accessories;
- independent living services for older individuals who are blind;
- job placement;
- job skills training;
- personal social adjustment training;
- Pre-Employment Transition Services;
- Project SEARCH;
- supervised residential services for individuals in recovery;
- self-employment, including supported self-employment;
- supported employment services;
- vehicle modifications;
- vocational adjustment training;
- vocational evaluation and assessment;
- wellness recovery action plans (WRAP);
- work adjustment training; and
- work experience.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL) CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1.	The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by title IV of WIOA,[4] and its State Plan supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act;
2.	In the event the designated State agency is not primarily concerned with vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities, the designated State agency must include a designated State unit for the VR program (Section 101(a)(2)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act). As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the TWC Vocational Rehabilitation Division agrees to operate and is responsible for the administration of the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the

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[4] Public Law 113-128.

	Unified or Combined State Plan[5], the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.13(b) and (c), and all applicable regulations[6], policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available to States under section 111(a) of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;
3.	As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated State agency or the designated State unit when the designated State agency has a designated State unit, agrees to operate and is responsible for the administration of the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan[7], the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations[8], policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;
4.	The designated State unit, or if not applicable, the designated State agency has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, and is responsible for the administration of the VR program in accordance with 34 CFR 361.13(b) and (c);
5.	The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement.
6.	All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law.
7.	The Vocational Rehabilitation Division Director, Cheryl Fuller, has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement;
8.	The Vocational Rehabilitation Division Director has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services;
9.	The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.

Required Signature of VR agency director: Cheryl Fuller

ASSURANCES

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized

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[5] No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[6] Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations at 34 CFR part 361.

[7] No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[8] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 4, as well as Supported Employment program regulations at 34 CFR part 363.

individual, assures the Commissioner, that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances:

The State Plan must provide assurances that:

1.	**Public Comment on Policies and Procedures:** The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
2.	**Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement:** The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a Unified State plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 C.F.R. 76.140.
3.	**Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:** The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to: (a) the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act. (b) either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. (c) consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act. (d) the financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3). (e) as applicable, the local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. (f) as applicable, the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. (g) statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. (h) the requirements for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act. (i) all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act. (j) the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act. (k) the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress

	reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
	(l) the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities as set forth in section 101(a)(18)(A).
	the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.

4.	**Administration of the Provision of VR Services:** The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:
	 (a) comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(E) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.
	 (b) impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act.
	 (c) provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act, as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services or, if implementing an order of selection, in accordance with criteria established by the State for the order of selection as set out in section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act.
	 (d) determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
	 (e) comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
	 (f) comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act.
	 (g) provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act.
	 (h) comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by sections 101(a)(14) and 511 of the Rehabilitation Act.
	 (i) meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs.
	 (j) with respect to students with disabilities, the State:
	     (i) has developed and will implement,
	       (A) strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and
	       (B) strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and

	(ii) has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15),101(a)(25), and 113). (m) (iii) shall reserve not less than 15 percent of the allocated funds for the provision of pre-employment transition services; such funds shall not be used to pay for the administrative costs of providing pre-employment transition services.
5.	**Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement to the State plan:** (a) The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.
6.	**Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program (Title VI):** (a) The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(H) and (I) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.
7.	**Provision of Supported Employment Services**: (a) The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act. (b) The designated State agency assures that the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation

| | Act , which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(7)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act. |

Do you attest that these Assurances will be met?

☑ Yes
☐ No

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as "baseline" indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A "baseline" indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, "baseline" indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as "baseline" based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);

- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);

- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);

- Credential Attainment Rate; and

- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);

- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and

- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as "baseline" for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);

- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);

- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and

- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as "baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA." The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as "baseline" for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as "baseline" for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as "baseline." Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state's plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	57.8%	57.8%	58.2%	58.2%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	54.4%	54.5%	54.9%	55.5%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$5500	$5500	$5600	$5600
Credential Attainment Rate	44.0%	44.0%	45.0%	45.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	43.0%	43.0%	44.0%	44.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]	Not Applicable [1]

[1] *"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2022 State Plan modifications.*

VII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS

States choosing to submit a Combined State Plan must provide information concerning the six core programs—the Adult program, Dislocated Worker program, Youth program, Wagner-Peyser Act program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program, and the Vocational Rehabilitation program— and also submit relevant information for any of the eleven partner programs it elects to include in its Combined State Plan.   When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program. 24 If included, Combined State Plan partner programs are subject to the "common planning elements" in Sections II-IV of this document, where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program.

[24] States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) under a Combined State Plan would submit all other required elements of a complete CSBG State Plan directly to the Federal agency that administers the program. Similarly, States that elect to include employment and training activities carried by the Department of Housing and Urban Development would submit all other required elements of a complete State Plan for those programs directly to the Federal agency that administers the program.

SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (SCSEP)

(OMB Control No. 1205-0040)

A. ECONOMIC PROJECTIONS AND IMPACT

1. DISCUSS LONG-TERM PROJECTIONS FOR JOBS IN INDUSTRIES AND OCCUPATIONS IN THE STATE THAT MAY PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER WORKERS. (20 CFR 641.302(D)) (MAY

ALTERNATIVELY BE DISCUSSED IN THE ECONOMIC ANALYSIS SECTION OF STRATEGIC PLAN.)

Employment Opportunities for Older Workers

Projections from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicate that from 2020 to 2030, the working population ages 16 to 24 is projected to decrease by 7.5 percent. It is anticipated that this will create challenges for employers. However, among individuals age 75 and older, the labor force is expected to grow by 96.5 percent. This phenomenon is caused by increases in life expectancy, improvements in educational attainment and physical health, declines in the prevalence of physically demanding jobs, and increases in the Social Security retirement age. As the percentage of workers over age 55 is projected to increase, older workers will subsequently make up a larger percentage of the workforce in the future. It is important for employers to understand the implications of the projected decrease in the younger workforce, along with the benefits of hiring and retaining a mature labor force.

Employment opportunities for older workers (individuals age 55 and older) in Texas are closely tied to the long-term projections for jobs in industries and occupations that have been previously discussed in the Plan's section on economic, workforce, and workforce development activities. Based on 10-year projections determined by Texas Labor Market Information (LMI), participant placement efforts will focus on the Educational Services, Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food Services, and Administrative and Support Services industries, as they have shown to have increased employment in at least one Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) and the average required educational attainment, skills, and physical demands for these industries align with the characteristics of the typical participant in the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC's) Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). According to long-term industry projections, between 2020 to 2030, Health Care and Social Assistance employment is expected to grow by 23.4 percent. Between 2017 and 2022, the Education industry added 45,605 jobs and is expected to increase by another 13.6 percent from 2020 to 2030. From 2017 to 2022, the Retail Trade industry saw a change rate of 4.6 percent and is expected to add nearly 165,263 jobs by 2030.

2. DISCUSS HOW THE LONG-TERM JOB PROJECTIONS DISCUSSED IN THE ECONOMIC ANALYSIS SECTION OF STRATEGIC PLAN RELATE TO THE TYPES OF UNSUBSIDIZED JOBS FOR WHICH SCSEP PARTICIPANTS WILL BE TRAINED AND THE TYPES OF SKILL TRAINING TO BE PROVIDED. (20 CFR 641.302(D))

Long-term projections derived from LMI data show an increased demand for service-sector jobs in Texas, primarily in the fields of Accommodation and Food Services, Education, Retail Trade, and Health Care and Social Assistance. Between 2020 and 2030, these four industries are projected to add 1,058,326 jobs. When determining SCSEP participant placements, consideration is placed on growing industries, as determined through LMI projection, as well as the specific characteristics of the program participants, including age and poverty level. Based on the 2019 American Community Survey, nearly 60 percent of low-income older workers have educational attainment at or below a high school diploma. Educational attainment and physical limitations are considered when placing participants in training to

ensure that participants are receiving training in an area that has attainable unsubsidized employment opportunities.

SCSEP provides older workers with opportunities to learn the technological skills required for targeted industries in which they are often lacking. The rapid pace of technological change may contribute to employers' discriminatory behavior against older workers by reinforcing perceptions that older adults lack digital skills and have more difficulty acquiring them than younger individuals. Along with profession-specific hard skills learned through on-the-job experiences, technological skills allow mature workers a chance for long-term employment in industries that will continue to grow.

SCSEP participants may be trained in Microsoft Office, accounting, cash management, general administrative skills, customer service, time management, custodial responsibilities, and safety. Training assignments are tailored to specific employment opportunities, thus providing SCSEP participants with the skills required to fill unsubsidized positions in high-demand industries, such as customer service representatives, general office clerks, accounting clerks, personal care attendants, medical assistants, home health aides, food preparation workers, and custodians.

3. DISCUSS CURRENT AND PROJECTED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE STATE (SUCH AS BY PROVIDING INFORMATION AVAILABLE UNDER §15 OF THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT (29 U.S.C. 491-2) BY OCCUPATION), AND THE TYPES OF SKILLS POSSESSED BY ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS. (20 CFR 641.325(C))

According to BLS data, in 2022, workers age 55 and older composed 19.9 percent of the Texas workforce. The proportion of the Texas population age 55 and older is projected to continue to increase and account for a greater percentage of the workforce. The trend reflects workers' decisions to postpone retirement due to employment in fulfilling careers, longer lives, changing retirement plans and resources, and shrinking retiree health benefits. This trend has the potential to affect the workforce and the overall economy in numerous ways. The following industries, among others, are being targeted for SCSEP participant placements: Health Care and Social Assistance, Educational Services, Accommodation and Food Services, Retail Trade, and Administrative and Support Services. These industries include many occupations that are projected to grow and be of interest to SCSEP participants, including Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations, Healthcare Support Occupations, Personal Care and Service Occupations, Community and Social Service Occupations, Sales and Related Occupations, and Office and Administrative Support Occupations. These occupations are targeted based on projected growth and alignment with general educational attainment trends of older workers. Based on 2021 census data, 26 percent of Texans over the age of 60 have a high school diploma, GED, or alternative as their highest educational attainment, 27 percent have some college or an associate's degree, and 29 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher. Training programs aligned with these occupations ensure that SCSEP participants in Texas have the necessary skill sets for available positions.

B. SERVICE DELIVERY AND COORDINATION

1. A DESCRIPTION OF ACTIONS TO COORDINATE SCSEP WITH OTHER PROGRAMS. THIS MAY ALTERNATIVELY BE DISCUSSED IN THE STATE

STRATEGIES SECTION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN, BUT REGARDLESS OF PLACEMENT IN DOCUMENT, MUST INCLUDE:

A. PLANNED ACTIONS TO COORDINATE ACTIVITIES OF SCSEP GRANTEES WITH WIOA TITLE I PROGRAMS, INCLUDING PLANS FOR USING THE WIOA ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM AND ITS PARTNERS TO SERVE INDIVIDUALS AGED 55 AND OLDER. (20 CFR 641.302(G), 641.325(E))

Coordination with Other Programs, Initiatives, and Entities

Grantees pursue both state- and local-level strategies to strengthen partnerships and working relationships in each of the categories below. TWC:

- seeks Boards' cooperation in generating Older Worker Reports from WorkInTexas.com to facilitate participant recruitment by grantees' field coordinators; and

- encourages grantees and Boards to refine memoranda of understanding (MOUs) to specify roles and responsibilities for:

    o outreach to employers;

    o workforce services to seniors;

    o case management services for coenrolled participants; and

    o other joint efforts as appropriate;

- encourages Boards to:

    o coenroll seniors seeking full-time work under Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and/or other workforce programs, as appropriate;
    o provide for the location of participant assistants at Workforce Solutions Offices when feasible, and train participant assistants as job developers to assist older job seekers; and
    o propose sessions on older worker issues and best practices at TWC's Annual Workforce Forum.

Grantees and Boards will:

- provide information on and referrals to the services available at Workforce Solutions Offices;

- negotiate community service assignments for senior participants at Workforce Solutions Offices, when feasible; and

- negotiate for colocation of grantee staff at Workforce Solutions Offices when funding and office space is available.

Grantees will:

- list participant openings and staff openings in WorkInTexas.com;

- assist job-ready participants in registering online in WorkInTexas.com;

- promote job seeker workshops and job clubs at Workforce Solutions Offices and prepare Individual Employment Plans (IEPs) for participants; and

- provide updates to Boards on SCSEP activities and successes in the local workforce development area (workforce area).

Boards will:

- provide core workforce services to SCSEP participants and other older job seekers; and

- provide current and future labor market information on industries, occupations, and required skill sets to older job seekers.

B. PLANNED ACTIONS TO COORDINATE ACTIVITIES OF SCSEP GRANTEES WITH THE ACTIVITIES BEING CARRIED OUT IN THE STATE UNDER THE OTHER TITLES OF THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT (OAA). (20 CFR 641.302(H))

Activities Carried Out under Other Titles of the Older Americans Act

Grantees will employ the following strategies to promote an ongoing dialogue and coordination with other providers serving seniors:

- Share information and resources relevant to senior health, support services, and older job seekers at Aging Texas Well Advisory Committee meetings

- Explore opportunities for improving the quality of training and access to training for community-based direct service workers caring for individuals with disabilities

- Attend the quarterly Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) training meeting when feasible

- Contact regional specialists to schedule interpreters and other communication access services if assistance is needed for training and employment services with the deaf and hard of hearing.

C. PLANNED ACTIONS TO COORDINATE SCSEP WITH OTHER PRIVATE AND PUBLIC ENTITIES AND PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE SERVICES TO OLDER AMERICANS, SUCH AS COMMUNITY AND FAITH- BASED ORGANIZATIONS, TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS, AND PROGRAMS FOR THOSE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS OR DISABILITIES. (20 CFR 641.302(I))

Public and Private Entities and Programs Serving Older Americans

TWC will share with grantees items of interest that relate to the employment of individuals with disabilities and the provision of accessible technology. Grantees will:

- use 2-1-1 Texas Referral and Information Network (TIRN) and other directories of service and support organizations to identify entities and programs in the community that can support seniors;

- coordinate with local service providers, AAAs, and community stakeholders to assess needs and develop solutions for local transportation services;

- participate in meetings, as appropriate, with senior service providers, both public and private; and

- communicate and coordinate with members of the local disability community on activities, resources, and services for seniors with disabilities in the workforce area.

Grantees will:

- continue to use computer, adult basic education (ABE), high school equivalency, continuing education, and other targeted training courses at community colleges, while taking advantage of course discounts for individuals age 55 to 64 and no-cost classes for individuals 65 years of age and older;

- work with Boards to encourage community colleges to create short-term education and training programs that are relevant for local targeted industries and high-priority occupations;

- encourage community colleges to develop education and training programs that adhere to older individuals' learning styles and paces;

- continue two-way referrals to local vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs;

- develop partnerships with nonprofits and government agencies through community events, job fairs, and partner meetings;

- partner with local senior community centers to provide vital trainings and support services to SCSEP participants; and

- connect with community action agencies, community colleges, food pantries, local social services offices, and/or organizations that provide housing assistance to refer participants to relevant organizations for supportive services.

D. PLANNED ACTIONS TO COORDINATE SCSEP WITH OTHER LABOR MARKET AND JOB TRAINING INITIATIVES. (20 CFR 641.302(J))

SCSEP grantees in Texas routinely use Workforce Solution Offices, labor market publications, and analytics software to stay informed on current market trends and conditions. Such information ensures that training programs for SCSEP participants are relevant to available opportunities. SCSEP field coordinators network with for-profit employers at job fairs and other employment-related events and work closely with nonprofit organizations to provide appropriate training to participants based on current labor market information. Additionally, participants are provided financial, employment, and entrepreneurial coaching services.

SCSEP grantees in Texas also network with local industry leaders to identify job training and job placement opportunities for older job seekers throughout Texas. The Center for Workforce Inclusion (CWI) started a multiyear effort to change how Labor Market Information (LMI) data is used to support SCSEP. CWI is training its staff on the collection and use of LMI data to justify which host agencies are recruited and how the data is used to create community service assignments that match LMI data to the greatest extent possible.

E. ACTIONS TO ENSURE THAT SCSEP IS AN ACTIVE PARTNER IN THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM AND THE STEPS THE STATE WILL TAKE TO ENCOURAGE AND IMPROVE COORDINATION WITH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM. (20 CFR 641.335)

Coordination with Workforce Solutions Offices

SCSEP providers pursue and maintain memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with Workforce Solutions Offices in their service areas to allow for referrals and the use of Workforce Solutions Office resources for SCSEP participants. SCSEP field staff uses WorkinTexas.com to identify current open positions for participants and also attend United Way and Workforce Solutions meetings to present SCSEP information and connect with partners for interagency referrals.

Improve and Expand Grantee Communications

To encourage communication among SCSEP providers in Texas, TWC continues to facilitate quarterly grantee conference calls in order to gather information and share best practices. Grantee field staff members connect with their counterparts in the same workforce area and coordinate efforts that strengthen partnerships with Boards and other local entities.

Other Education and Training Providers

SCSEP providers promote the American Association of Community Colleges' Plus 50 Initiative through the CWI SCSEP subgrantee network. The initiative is designed to help low-income, older job seekers with workforce training and making career changes into high-demand fields through programs offered at community colleges. TWC seeks to enhance these efforts by:

- sharing information with grantees on literacy, English as a Second Language (ESL), and high school equivalency resources developed by TWC's Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) program; and

- attending relevant meetings and conferences to identify training and VR resources for seniors.

F. EFFORTS TO WORK WITH LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICES IN RURAL LOCATIONS.

Rural Local Economic Development Offices

The governor has designated TWC as the administrator of the state's portion of SCSEP in rural communities. Along with providing oversight and technical assistance, TWC manages statewide planning and coordination of the state's grant application and performance reporting. TWC also supports SCSEP outreach efforts, including efforts that engage local economic development offices. The State works to help rural communities and small businesses create and retain jobs through business development and community strategic planning. The following organizations are also committed to promoting rural development initiatives in Texas:

- The Texas Rural Funders a nonprofit corporation established to raise money in order to finance health, community development, and economic development programs in rural Texas; and

- The Association of Rural Communities in Texas (ARCIT), a resource that promotes best practices in the delivery of public services to enhance the quality of life for all rural Texans.

2. THE STATE'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR ENGAGING EMPLOYERS TO DEVELOP AND PROMOTE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PLACEMENT OF SCSEP PARTICIPANTS IN UNSUBSIDIZED EMPLOYMENT. (20 CFR 641.302(E)) (MAY ALTERNATIVELY BE DISCUSSED IN THE STATE STRATEGIES SECTION OF STRATEGIC PLAN.)

Grantee Staffing

Texas' SCSEP grantees network with employers, businesses, and community organizations through local project directors. Grantees staff their projects with state and regional-level directors and field staff, to lead large scale projects that advance community-level workforce development efforts. By employing these program staffing methods, grantees are able to provide for more successful participant placements, as they are based on the needs of employers. AARP (formerly the American Association of Retired Persons) fosters job matching and senior-friendly work environments for its members through employment specialists at 10 project offices located across Texas. AARP manages internal systems to ensure that staff has adequate time to devote to participant and community development. Service, Employment, and Redevelopment (SER) National appoints a national workforce development coordinator and regional coordinators to encourage the employment of older workers. The Institute of Indian Development provide staff that operate out of Workforce Solutions Offices and are actively involved in partner agency meetings.

Employers as Customers

Grantees commit to assisting both job seekers and employers by helping to determine an individual's aptitude and fitness for specific job responsibilities. As part of this process, grantees identify the following qualities that employers seek:

- Commitment to doing quality work

- Strong customer service orientation

- Getting along with other employees

- Dependability in times of crisis

- Ability to pass a drug test

- Consistent, reliable performance

Once employers' needs are defined, staff promotes the skills and competence of participants as trained workers who will add value to the business.

Grantees:

- pursue partnerships with employers that:

  o are developing job openings that require the same or similar skill requirements that older participants have;

  o have successfully employed SCSEP participants previously;

  o are listed on AARP's National Employer Team, which is committed to hiring seniors;

  o are seeking older participants, based on the local wisdom of Boards, business organizations, and others in the community; and/or

  o are identified in online labor market information as major employers in local industries with the greatest employment potential for participants;

- publicize the success stories of former participants and their employers, thereby attracting other employers to consider hiring older job seekers; and

- attend chamber of commerce and Board meetings and other economic development organizations to:

  o expand employer networks;

  o learn about job opportunities from employers; and

  o contact employers to determine the skills and qualities needed to be successful in these jobs.

3. THE STATE'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR SERVING MINORITY OLDER INDIVIDUALS UNDER SCSEP. (20 CFR 641.302 (C))

In Texas, service to minority older workers at the local levels is based on a long-term strategy. Grantees will:

- monitor and share statewide and grantee-specific minority enrollment data and factors/barriers impacting minority recruitment;

- use Texas grantees' conference calls to share statewide and grantee-specific factors impacting minority recruitment, share best practices, and brainstorm solutions to address recruitment/enrollment challenges;

- ensure that field staff members are aware of the increasing proportion of Hispanic and Asian seniors in Texas;

- analyze enrollment targets and geographic areas where performance is strong and where improvement is needed;

- identify factors contributing to minority enrollment strengths and factors impeding minority enrollments;

- share best practices for minority recruitment and provide technical assistance to grantee's Texas field staff;

- target outreach to specific underserved minority groups in counties where there is a larger proportion of SCSEP-eligible individuals in the grantee's service area;

- where Hispanic enrollments are low, ensure that recruitment materials are in Spanish and consider hiring bilingual, Spanish-speaking participant staff; and

- partner with companies that can provide in-language (Chinese/Vietnamese) vocational training for in-demand occupations, such as certified nursing assistants (CNA), phlebotomy, and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC).

4. A LIST OF COMMUNITY SERVICES THAT ARE NEEDED AND THE PLACES WHERE THESE SERVICES ARE MOST NEEDED. SPECIFICALLY, THE PLAN MUST ADDRESS THE NEEDS AND LOCATION OF THOSE INDIVIDUALS MOST IN NEED OF COMMUNITY SERVICES AND THE GROUPS WORKING TO MEET THEIR NEEDS. (20 CFR 641.330)

Of the 28 Boards in Texas, 20 include at least one county that is experiencing persistent levels of unemployment. Such levels of unemployment lead to a reliance on support services by the most-in-need SCSEP participants residing in these areas.

The areas experiencing persistent unemployment and a greater level of support services needs are heavily concentrated in the Board areas along the Texas-Louisiana border, the Gulf Coast, South Texas, and the Rio Grande Valley. The eastern portion of the state fares better in terms of poverty levels, averaging 15.8 percent among the Northeast, East, Deep East, Southeast, and Gulf Coast Board areas, while the Coastal Bend, Cameron, Middle Rio Grande, and Lower Rio Grande Board areas experience a much higher poverty rate of 24.7 percent. Lower Rio Grande has been especially hard hit, as 100 percent of its geographic area is experiencing persistent unemployment, along with a poverty rate of 31.6 percent. Pockets of persistent unemployment and poverty exist throughout the state, including Presidio County in West Texas, with a poverty level of 21.3 percent. Mitchell County, located in the South Plains region of the state, experiences poverty levels of 19.2 percent, while Hall and Floyd Counties in the Panhandle average poverty levels of 24.1 percent and 18.2 percent, respectively. Jones County, an outlier in the West Central Board area, has a poverty rate of 19.7 percent.

Texas develops statewide data on priority community needs from data collected by the following two state agencies:

- The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)—Needs requested by callers to the Texas Referral and Information Network (TIRN) system for each of the 25 Area Information Centers

- The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA)—Priority needs identified by 35 Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) entities as part of their annual plans.

The table below summarizes the needs most commonly requested of the 2-1-1 TIRN system, which includes assistance with paying utility bills and rent; food assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), food pantries, and organizations operating food voucher systems; and Medicaid assistance. Priority needs will vary with the workforce area. The data below was compiled from September 1, 2021, to May 31, 2023.

Priority Needs Based on Requests Received by 2-1-1 TIRN Area Information Centers (AICs)

Type of Need	No. of AICs Listing as Priority 1-5 Need	No. of AICs Listing as Priority 6-10 Need
Rent Payment Assistance	23	0
Electric Service Payment Assistance	23	0
Food Pantries	22	1
COVID-19 Diagnostic Tests	1	12
COVID-19 Immunization Clinic	15	10
Water Service Payment Assistance	10	12
Housing Authorities	9	14
Area Agencies on Aging	6	10
Food Stamps/SNAP Applications	3	7
Medicaid Applications	2	0
Vaccine Information	1	18
Tax Preparation	1	0
Low Income/Subsidized Private Rental Housing	8	14
Gas Service Payment Assistance	1	13
Child Care Expense Assistance	0	4
Homeless Shelters	4	13
Transitional Housing/Shelter	0	6
Aging and Disability Resource Centers	1	4
VITA Program Sites	1	0
Housing Related Coordinated Entry	1	0
Food Vouchers	0	1
Adult Protective Services	0	2
School Closure–Related Breakfast/Lunch Services	0	1
State Medicaid Managed Care Enrollment Programs	0	1

CSBG priorities are listed in the following table. These include housing, employment assistance, health care, utility bill assistance, adult education and training, transportation, and food assistance. Housing authorities, Workforce Solutions Offices, public and nonprofit clinics, high school equivalency and job training programs, food pantries and food voucher programs, and organizations providing assistance with paying utility bills and providing low- or no-cost transportation help provide needed community services. Each entity provides additional priority needs that vary from area to area.

Community Priority Need 2023 Survey Rank

Need	Rank
Lack of Affordable Housing	1
Lack of Affordable Healthcare and Dental Care	2
Assistance with Food	2
Lack of Employment	3
Lack of Affordable Mental Health Care, Including Substance Abuse Treatment	4
Lack of Living Wages	5
Assistance for Persons on Fixed Income	6
Utility Assistance	7
Transportation Assistance	8
Barriers to Earning Living Wage/Lack of Job Skills/Employment Supports	9
Lack of Affordable Child Care	9
Education Support	9
Advocacy/Infrastructure/Community Engagement	10
Rental Assistance	11
Emergency Assistance	12
Financial Literacy/Debt Negotiation	13

AAAs have identified a list of priority needs for seniors (see below). Additional host agencies are recruited from public and nonprofit entities that provide these services or are seeking human resources to provide these services.

TWC shares with each grantee the needs identified by the 2-1-1 TIRN entities, Community Services Block Grants (CSBGs), and AAAs in the grantee's service area. Grantees will continue to gather input from local government officials and informal networks with colleagues in local organizations and agencies.

Priority Needs of Seniors Identified by Area Agencies on Aging

Type of Need 2023 Texas CSBG Survey Ranking

Need	Ranking
Transportation	1
Computer Classes	2
Medical and Dental and Vision Care	3
Food	4
Basic Literacy Classes	5
Equipment for Work	6
Clothing	7
English as a Second Language Classes	8
GED Classes	9

Identifying Organizations and Entities Addressing Priority Needs

Community resource guides and the 2-1-1 TIRN website are a starting point for grantees to identify agencies and organizations that address priority needs. One promising online resource, Texas Connector, is a statewide online database developed by the OneStar Foundation. The database includes 2-1-1 TIRN resources and GuideStar, USA, Inc., information on nonprofit organizations in Texas. Texas Connector is unique because its mapping tool allows users to:

- outline an area on an online map—a neighborhood, a county, or cluster of counties;

- map all the entities and organizations providing services in the outlined area;

- access basic demographic information about the area;

- map where specific resources such as food banks or health clinics are located; and

- print a report with the selected information.

Texas Connector locates support resources and identifies potential host agencies that address the community's priority needs and may assist with recruiting participants.

5. THE STATE'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY TO IMPROVE SCSEP SERVICES, INCLUDING PLANNED LONG-TERM CHANGES TO THE DESIGN OF THE PROGRAM WITHIN THE STATE, AND PLANNED CHANGES IN THE USE OF SCSEP GRANTEES AND PROGRAM OPERATORS TO BETTER ACHIEVE THE GOALS OF THE PROGRAM. THIS MAY INCLUDE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT AS APPROPRIATE. (20 CFR 641.302(K))

In Texas, the goal of SCSEP is to serve eligible participants through training opportunities that improve or build skill levels for available jobs in local communities. The program also strives to ensure that job matching is appropriate for both the employer and the older worker so that the relationship will be retained and benefit the employer, the older worker, and the state's economy. Partnerships for integrating services are crucial to these strategies. A SCSEP service provider's success is measured by its attainment of negotiated goals for serving the older worker population, increases in services within the network of nonprofits and public agencies within communities, and the cultivation of skilled workers for employers. TWC reviews performance results and offers assistance and training in areas needing improvement.

The state is committed to serving all eligible participants, including minorities. SCSEP will strive to improve outreach efforts and services for this population. Recommendations include the following:

- Help SCSEP participants attain the skills to better fill employment needs

- Work with and expand nonprofit agencies' efforts to provide meaningful community service

- Promote collaboration among Texas grantees to:

    o Problem-solve and evaluate alternative solutions to issues;

    o share best practices and performance progress;

    o plan and coordinate collaborative activities; and

    o explore areas for collaboration that is likely to improve or enhance SCSEP services in the state;

- Work with businesses and nonprofit agencies to develop training assignments in which today's skills are learned on-the-job, resulting in unsubsidized employment

- Assist the business community in attracting, employing, and retaining older workers

- Continue to actively partner with Boards

- Expand referrals to HHSC

- Emphasize creative partnerships with groups that advocate and provide services to veterans and individuals with disabilities

- Expand relationships with chambers of commerce

- Before placement in training, have participants meet and "interview" with potential host agencies to ensure that they will both benefit from the training placement

6. THE STATE'S STRATEGY FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN THE LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE FOR SCSEP PARTICIPANTS' ENTRY INTO UNSUBSIDIZED EMPLOYMENT, AND TO ACHIEVE, AT A MINIMUM, THE LEVELS SPECIFIED IN OAA SECTION 513(A)(2)(E)(II). (20 CFR 641.302(F))

The state's strategy for continuous improvement in the level of SCSEP participants' placements into unsubsidized employment focuses on developing and maintaining host agency and employer partnerships, identifying local workforce needs, and aligning participant skill sets with available opportunities.

The technical and occupational skills of many SCSEP participants often lag behind today's employment requirements. Qualities offered by the older worker, such as work ethic and reliability, are valued by employers, but the need for technical skills is also a concern. Training for SCSEP participants is designed to help increase their employability.

SCSEP service providers seek input from business communities, community leaders, host agency supervisors, program participants, and local government officials relating to the job skill needs required by local organizations and communities. This effort includes networking at chamber of commerce events and other business organizations' functions. The information gathered assists in the development of meaningful training opportunities for older workers and the placement of program participants in suitable unsubsidized work.

Recommendations include the following:

- Place SCSEP "graduates" in industries and occupations with high growth or substantial employment need

- Research labor market information and consult with Boards and their contractors, economic development agencies, chambers of commerce, and local business partners to identify targeted industries and high-growth occupations appropriate for seniors, local employers that are hiring, and skills and qualities needed to be successful in these jobs

- Strengthen initial assessments of participant skills, knowledge, interests, aptitudes, and qualities, and define career objectives that are relevant for the participant's interests and abilities and local business needs

- Assess the participant's barriers and skills gaps to create IEPs with timelines for On-the-Job Education (OJE), specialized training, and support services

- Ensure that host agency assignments provide skills training that is relevant for participant career objectives and employer needs

- Develop effective relationships with participants and monitor their training progress so grantees can gauge when participants are ready to begin looking for employment and when it is necessary to intervene or revise an IEP

- Promote a motivated attitude by counseling and monitoring participants

- Coordinate with Workforce Solutions Offices to provide effective job search preparation and support

- Require participants to register with a Workforce Solutions Office and with WorkInTexas.com

- Follow up frequently with participants engaging in an on-the-job experience to ensure that the participants are obtaining the skills, confidence, and qualities required for success in the job

- Intervene early, as needed, to resolve any obstacles to successful employment

- Respect participants' right of refusal of a job when they feel unprepared or unsuited for the job

Grantees will implement the following strategies:

- Continue to remind participants and host agencies during initial orientations and throughout participants' SCSEP tenure that SCSEP is a temporary training program, not an employment program.

- Encourage participants to take advantage of online advice to older job seekers, such as AARP.org and online job boards such as Indeed.com and Monster.com.

- Provide support services to help participants retain unsubsidized employment

- Connect SCSEP participants, especially those reaching their final year of training, with dedicated job developers to work with participants on developing preemployment skills and conducting an effective job search

- Build national employer partnerships that lead to career pathways for SCSEP job seekers to receive both soft and hard skills training that coincides with the employment needs of the national employer partners

Additionally, TWC provides online resources developed by its Labor Market Information Department:

- [Texas Career Check](#)

Specialized Training Plans

- Pursue low- or no-cost computer training for participants before they report to their community service assignments or early in their assignments. Free or low-cost training is often available at libraries, Workforce Solutions Offices, school districts' community education programs, Goodwill, and community colleges. AARP uses Northstar Digital Literacy to conduct assessments and provide skills and knowledge training for a variety of occupations, software training that applies to most industries, and testing and certification for skills learned.

- Pursue agreements with local employers for on-the-job experiences.

- Pursue specialized training opportunities in which a job opening is not required by employers. Participants attend training for potential placement.

- Pursue certificate training opportunities for high-growth occupations and industries. For example, a teacher assistant classroom training followed by a six-week internship that leads to a certificate and employment offer from a local school district.

- Identify relevant curricula for short-term training that are low-cost or no-cost and that encourage local training providers, such as community colleges, to offer training in these areas.

- Pursue or provide transferable workplace skills training. For example, SER National provides 30 hours of training for participants who are close to being job ready but who need more self-assurance and motivation. Community colleges and Workforce Solutions Offices will be encouraged to offer more transferable workplace skills courses.

6. Support a Workforce System that allows employers and workers to achieve and sustain economic prosperity.
   a. Expand workforce training, recruiting, and hiring services for employers to ensure that a skilled and ready workforce is available to meet the diverse needs of Texas businesses.
   b. Enhance workforce services and resources to help job seekers access information about in-demand occupations, gain the skills needed by Texas employers, and find and retain employment.
7. Promote employers' access to the talents and abilities of individuals with disabilities. Accommodate such workers in the workplace and assist with maintaining and advancing their careers successfully.
   a. Continue to integrate the state's vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities within Texas Workforce Solutions so that local service delivery is able to work in concert with other workforce services, and so resources can be shared to better serve the needs of job seekers and workers with disabilities.
   b. Expand the network of employers that recruit, train, and employ the talents and skills of individuals with disabilities through Texas Workforce Solutions business service representatives, Vocational Rehabilitation Services business relations staff, and Board partnerships with economic development and industry groups.
8. Prepare individuals for employment by supporting education and training that equips individuals with in-demand skills as identified by employers.
   a. Continue to support education programs for students in Texas that inform them of and prepare them for high-skill, high-demand jobs through the identification and allocation of available state and federal programs and resources.
   b. Address the workforce training needs of employers by leveraging Skills Development Fund grants and other available resources to support in-demand job training. Continue to support work-based learning opportunities through internships, mentorships, apprenticeships and job shadowing.
   c. Continue to coordinate and collaborate with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to

support and develop objectives for increasing the percentage of Texans with postsecondary degrees or certifications.

9. Accelerate employment pathways for veterans, service members, and their spouses as they transition to civilian occupations in Texas.

   a. Provide an accelerated pathway and demonstrate new approaches for transitioning military service members to gain acknowledgement of their military training and quickly transition to employment in Texas through ongoing expansion of programs such as Texas Operation Welcome Home, College Credit for Heroes, veterans training, and the Texas Veterans Leadership peer mentorship.

   b. Identify gaps in service to Texas veterans and advance strategies to enhance their education and employment opportunities to ensure seamless transition into the Texas workforce for veterans and their spouses.

10. Maintain the highest levels of integrity, accountability, and efficiency in all workforce systems and TWC programs. Through continuous improvements, develop a system that minimizes fraud, waste, and abuse within TWC and all the programs it administers.

    a. Monitor and evaluate compliance of local area service delivery for fiscal accountability and program effectiveness.

    b. Make technology and system improvements to leverage current resources and improve the oversight and monitoring of programs.

    c. Investigate and resolve findings or questioned costs and track each resolution and recovery of disallowed costs.

C. LOCATION AND POPULATION SERVED, INCLUDING EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION

1. A DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCALITIES AND POPULATIONS FOR WHICH PROJECTS OF THE TYPE AUTHORIZED BY TITLE V ARE MOST NEEDED. (20 CFR 641.325 (D))

An estimated 16.2 percent of the state's SCSEP-eligible population reside in rural areas. SCSEP uses Rural Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) codes, defined at the census track level, to determine which areas are considered to be rural. Eight local workforce development areas (workforce areas) (Northeast Texas, Deep East Texas, Golden Crescent, Brazos Valley, East Texas, Heart of Texas, North Texas, and Texoma) are more than 50 percent rural.

A total of 77 counties, or almost one-third of the state's counties, have a rural population of 75 percent or more, and 58 counties have a rural population of 100 percent. At the opposite end of the spectrum, two one-county workforce areas (Tarrant County and Greater Dallas) are more than 95 percent urban.

Strategies to Address Rural Service Delivery Challenges

Due to the state's large size (268,581 square miles), serving customers in rural communities presents a significant challenge to service providers. The state's widest east-west expanse is 801 miles, and the longest north-south distance is 773 miles. The extent of the state's rural areas is also underscored by the fact that 95.7 percent of the state's land area is rural.

In rural areas, grantees' face obstacles, such as shortages in resources, services, and available jobs, to providing SCSEP services and assisting participants in finding unsubsidized employment.

Urban/Rural Distribution of SCSEP-Eligible Population in Workforce Areas

Workforce Area	Urban	Rural	Total	% Rural
Alamo	112,982	34,729	147,711	23.5%
Borderplex	58,771	5,126	63,897	8%
Brazos Valley	10,935	11,777	22,712	51.9%
Cameron County	24,413	5,276	29,689	17.8%
Capital Area	62,678	14,608	77,286	18.9%
Central Texas	27,493	20,044	47,537	42.2%
Coastal Bend	35,555	11,002	46,577	23.6%
Concho Valley	8,980	5,704	14,684	38.8%
Greater Dallas	108,789	2,032	110,821	1.8%
Deep East Texas	10,083	24,806	34,889	71.1%
East Texas	25,481	37,716	63,197	59.7%
Golden Crescent	6,676	9,835	16,511	59.6%
Gulf Coast	276,067	38,534	314,601	12.2%
Heart of Texas	11,929	12,442	24,371	51.1%
Lower Rio Grande Valley	65,090	12,017	77,107	15.6%
Middle Rio Grande	9,993	2,966	12,959	22.9%
North Central Texas	94,447	43,186	137,633	31.4%
Northeast Texas	11,211	9,521	17,939	53.1%
North Texas	8,418	14,557	25,768	56.5%
Panhandle	16,255	7,148	23,403	30.5%
Permian Basin	20,952	10,195	31,147	32.7%
Rural Capital Area	50,572	34,182	84,754	40.3%
South Plains	17,021	5,771	22,792	25.3%
South Texas	20,160	5,152	25,312	20.4%

Workforce Area	Urban	Rural	Total	% Rural
Southeast Texas	19,185	5,148	24,333	21.2%
Tarrant County	85,662	4,696	90,358	5.2%
Texoma	6,352	7,834	14,186	55.2%
West Central Texas	9,676	9,437	19,113	49.4%

Lack of Adequate Transportation

The lack of adequate transportation significantly hinders SCSEP service delivery in rural areas. In its annual plan, Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) identified transportation as the number-one priority need for seniors. The minimal transportation available in small towns is on-demand assistance that is geared toward individuals with disabilities and transporting individuals to medical appointments. Most SCSEP participants drive their own cars, but participants who do not have cars or are no longer able to drive face a significant barrier to SCSEP participation and to finding and retaining unsubsidized employment due to the lack of transportation.

To address rural transportation needs, grantees:

- seek to place participants and rotate participants in community service assignments as close as possible to their residences;

- seek host agency assignments that have transportation resources (faith–based organizations providing community services may be able to serve as host agencies and provide transportation);

- contact school districts and child care networks/facilities to determine in which rural areas the school bus is a feasible transportation alternative for SCSEP participants;

- become more knowledgeable about state and local transportation planning processes and how to quantify and accurately characterize transportation needs of older individuals, including older job seekers and older workers; and

- work with Boards to identify existing collaborations with rural community transportation providers and planners to address local transportation needs.

Limited Access to Computers

Many rural SCSEP participants also lack access to computers and the internet. Improving access to computers in rural areas will increase the amount of computer and online trainings that would be available to SCSEP participants. To address rural technological needs, grantees use the Federal Communications Commission's Affordable Connectivity Program. The program ensures that households are able to afford the broadband needed for work, school, and health care by providing discounts on internet services, laptops, desktops, and tablets.

Due in part to the lack of access to computers, low-income older job seekers often have limited or no computer skills. Such skills are not only required by employers but are also

important for participants to access the internet, register in WorkInTexas.com and other online job search databases, and develop internet search skills. Digital literacy training for older workers became an even higher priority during the pandemic, when lockdown measures required grantees to provide training through digital platforms. Digital literacy training for older workers was and continues to be a high priority for seniors, as employers have maintained digital services and remote positions. AARP Foundation uses Northstar Digital Literacy curricula and assessments to enable participants to learn important digital literacy skills. Grantees' field staff members, including participant staff, use computers for collecting data, transmitting communications, and supporting participants who live in rural areas.

Limited Host Agencies

Many rural areas have few nonprofit organizations and governmental agencies to serve as host agencies for participants. Limited rural transportation options compound the challenges of identifying a sufficient number of host agencies and organizations with diverse skills training opportunities. More host agencies are needed that can provide general office skills training, computer skills training, and job-specific skills training.

To increase the number of available rural host agencies and skills training opportunities for participants, grantees:

- contact chambers of commerce and faith-based and community-based organizations to identify more potential host agencies;

- use Texas Connector to identify nonprofit organizations and agencies that are actively addressing priority community needs and might be able to serve as host agencies; and

- work with local agencies and seek community partners to address local transportation solutions to increase the mobility of participants and their access to host agencies.

Lack of Specialized Skills Training

Rural communities often lack opportunities for skills training to supplement participants' On-the-Job Experience (OJE) service assignments. Increasing access to laptops, desktop computers, and tablets, along with online training, is a priority for most SCSEP grantees in rural areas of Texas.

Service, Employment, and Redevelopment (SER) National has used several contractors to provide participants with specialized skills training and certificates of completion on a variety of topics and skill areas, including financial literacy in English and Spanish, entrepreneurship, food service, clerical skills, customer service, vocational English, intensive job search, assessing career options, and job-readiness training.

Additionally, a SER National contractor has provided rural participants with mobile computer training.

To expand participants' access to specialized training, grantees:

- explore the availability of different technologies to provide additional low-cost training in important skills areas as identified by local employers;

- work with local community colleges and Workforce Solutions Offices to expand low- or no-cost skills training that is tailored to local employers' skill needs when appropriate; and

- seek opportunities with local employers to access low- or no-cost, short-term skills training that is appropriate for seniors and the local job market.

When an employer does not have an immediate job opening, participants can attend specialized training for high-growth occupations so that when the opportunity arises, participants will have the requisite skills. For example, AARP Foundation has trained participants in maintaining health records and currently pilots a dual-occupation certification program with MedCerts for participant placement as a Certified Medical Administrative Assistant and Pharmacy Technician. AARP Foundation's Edinburg office has established a specialized skills training partnership with Holiday Inn Express that includes customer hospitality and front desk clerk experience. The goal is to identify and employ participants at the Edinburg and McAllen Holiday Inn Express locations.

Lack of Basic Skills Training

An additional resource that is lacking in most rural areas is basic skills training. Many rural seniors have less than a ninth-grade education and need to improve their language and mathematics skills.

To develop more opportunities for basic skills training, grantees:

- contact Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) providers to identify existing basic skills training opportunities in their workforce areas; and

- use software and online sources to access basic skills training.

Lack of Employment Opportunities

The lack of employment opportunities in rural areas makes it difficult for grantees to help participants—even those who are "job ready"—obtain unsubsidized jobs.

To expand rural participants' access to job opportunities, grantees:

- explore the feasibility of self-employment with participants and consult with Workforce Solutions Offices, the Small Business Administration, the Senior Corps of Retired Executives, and other organizations regarding the most promising types of microenterprise businesses in the workforce area, assessment of an individual's suitability for self-employment, available local and online resources—including mentoring support—and other feasibility considerations; and

- share results, challenges, ideas, and opportunities during grantee conference calls.

Special Populations

Grantees work with local agencies to target recruitment activities in underserved areas and in areas of higher concentrations of minorities and most-in-need populations. Targeted recruitment efforts are based on census data, local and state demographic data, and Texas population and aging statistics.

Grantees monitor enrollment levels of the most-in-need populations on a quarterly basis. Field staff members are trained to profile and manage their territories so that they can track and plan for exits, plan for adequate recruitment activity to fill vacancies quickly, and seek to ensure that special populations are adequately served.

Recruitment Methods for Special Population Groups

Grantees often need to go beyond traditional recruitment methods to connect with and enroll individuals from special population groups. The special population groups receive priority of service as defined in the Older Americans Act §518(b)(1)–(2) and in the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011.

Individuals with priority:

- are individuals covered under the VOW act;
- are age 65 or older;
- have a disability;
- have limited English proficiency;
- have low literacy skills;
- reside in a rural area;
- have low employment prospects;
- have failed to find employment after utilizing services provided under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA);
- are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of experiencing homelessness; or
- are formerly incarcerated or on supervised release from prison or jail within five years of the date of initial eligibility determination.

General outreach strategies for special populations include:

- networking with and providing recruitment brochures to community- and faith-based organizations that serve and advocate for these special population groups; and
- visiting locations and displaying recruitment brochures and flyers where priority populations may congregate, such as laundries, senior centers, nutrition centers, health clinics, and other health care providers.

In addition to general outreach methods for special populations, grantees use the following recruitment methods to reach specific populations:

- Veterans and qualified spouses

    o Networking with local veteran representatives at Workforce Solutions Offices, county judges, senior centers, Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)

    o Contacting and presenting to local veterans' organizations, veteran medical clinics, and other veteran-related organizations in the community

- Individuals with disabilities

    o Networking with TWC, HHSC, Social Security Administration (SSA), and AAAs

- Contacting current and former disability navigators at Workforce Solutions Offices to identify local disability advocates and relevant community organizations serving or supporting individuals with disabilities

- Contacting TWC Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Centers for Independent Living (located in 27 Texas cities)

- Individuals who are age-eligible but not receiving benefits under SSA Title II—Contacting SSA, HHSC, and Workforce Solutions Offices to identify such individuals

- Individuals in areas with persistent unemployment and limited employment prospects—Conducting outreach in counties classified as having persistent unemployment: Willacy, Hidalgo, Starr, Maverick, Zavala, and Presidio, along the Rio Grande; Jasper, Newton, and Sabine in southeast Texas; Matagorda on the Gulf Coast; and Morris in northeast Texas.

- Individuals who are English- language learners (ELLs)

  - Advertising through local media, including Spanish-language newspapers and radio stations

  - Networking with local churches, Hispanic/Latino chambers of commerce, restaurants and other businesses that cater to the Hispanic/Latino community, and other Hispanic/Latino or ethnic community organizations

  - Hiring staff members who speak Spanish or Asian languages to conduct outreach directly

  - Translating recruitment materials into Spanish or Asian languages

- Individuals with low literacy skills—Networking with adult literacy providers, community leaders, churches, and other community organizations

- Individuals who live in rural areas—Using word of mouth through community leaders and community networks, including current and former participants and host agencies

- Individuals with low employment prospects

  - Contacting Workforce Solutions Offices, veterans' organizations, and other community organizations

  - Visiting community centers

  - Networking with safety net organizations such as food banks

- Individuals who have used WIOA services but failed to find jobs—Contacting Workforce Solutions Offices to identify and reach out to these individuals

- Individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness—Networking with local homeless shelters, homeless coalitions, housing authorities, food banks, churches, and Workforce Solutions Offices

- Individuals with incomes at or below poverty

- o Networking with SSA, HHSC, Workforce Solutions Offices, and AAAs

- o Contacting churches, food banks, thrift shops, and local housing authorities

- Individuals who are socially, geographically, linguistically, or culturally isolated and at risk of not being able to live

    - o Seeking referrals through HHSC, TWC, SSA, and Workforce Solutions Offices

    - o Networking with Meals on Wheels programs, churches, and local community organizations to identify and connect with these individuals

    - o Talking with roadside business owners in geographically isolated areas to identify where potentially eligible seniors live

- Individuals who are minorities

    - o Using recruitment methods listed for individuals who are ELLs

    - o Networking with ministers and leaders at churches with predominantly minority congregations

    - o Making presentations at minority agencies, community centers, and chambers of commerce serving minority communities

    - o Visiting food banks, restaurants, senior centers, and other organizations in minority neighborhoods

    - o Networking with HHSC, SSA, AAAs, and Workforce Solutions Offices

2. LIST THE CITIES AND COUNTIES WHERE THE PROJECT WILL BE CONDUCTED. INCLUDE THE NUMBER OF SCSEP AUTHORIZED POSITIONS AND INDICATE WHERE THE POSITIONS CHANGED FROM THE PRIOR YEAR.

The chart below identifies the counties in which SCSEP is administered by TWC and includes the number of SCSEP authorized positions and changes from the prior year.

Texas SCSEP PY'23 List of Counties and Authorized Positions

Texas	County	Authorized Positions	Current Enrollments	Authorized Positions +/- Change from Previous Year (PY22)
48007	Aransas	4	4	0
48005	Angelina	9	12	0
48013	Atascosa	5	4	0
48015	Austin	3	0	0
48019	Bandera	3	0	0
48025	Bee	3	5	0
48027	Bell	22	35	0
48035	Bosque	2	0	0
48037	Bowie	9	11	0

Texas	County	Authorized Positions	Current Enrollments	Authorized Positions +/- Change from Previous Year (PY22)
48039	Brazoria	20	12	0
48041	Brazos	11	16	0
48047	Brooks	2	4	0
48049	Brown	4	14	0
48057	Calhoun	2	1	0
48073	Cherokee	5	11	0
48077	Clay	2	0	0
48089	Colorado	2	0	0
48091	Comal	9	4	0
48123	DeWitt	3	0	0
48131	Duval	2	3	0
48135	Ector	10	18	0
48157	Fort Bend	31	36	0
48163	Frio	2	0	0
48171	Gillespie	3	0	0
48175	Goliad	0	0	0
48177	Gonzales	2	2	0
48183	Gregg	12	9	0
48185	Grimes	3	0	0
48187	Guadalupe	11	5	0
48203	Harrison	8	5	0
48221	Hood	5	2	0
48229	Hudspeth	0	0	0
48237	Jack	0	0	0
48239	Jackson	2	4	0
48247	Jim Hogg	1	0	0
48249	Jim Wells	6	6	0
48255	Karnes	2	1	0
48259	Kendall	3	0	0
48265	Kerr	6	0	0
48273	Kleberg	3	1	0
48283	La Salle	1	0	0
48285	Lavaca	2	0	0
48289	Leon	2	0	0
48293	Limestone	3	1	0
48297	Live Oak	2	1	0
48309	McLennan	20	34	0
48313	Madison	2	1	+1
48315	Marion	2	0	0
48321	Matagorda	6	4	0
48323	Maverick	10	7	0
48325	Medina	6	5	0
48329	Midland	9	3	0

Texas	County	Authorized Positions	Current Enrollments	Authorized Positions +/- Change from Previous Year (PY22)
48347	Nacogdoches	5	8	0
48365	Panola	2	0	0
48371	Pecos	2	0	0
48377	Presidio	2	2	0
48379	Rains	2	0	0
48385	Real	1	0	0
48389	Reeves	2	0	0
48391	Refugio	1	0	0
48395	Robertson	2	0	0
48401	Rusk	5	2	0
48409	San Patricio	6	3	0
48419	Shelby	3	5	0
48423	Smith	22	21	0
48427	Starr	11	9	0
48457	Tyler	3	1	0
48459	Upshur	5	2	0
48463	Uvalde	4	12	0
48467	Van Zandt	7	3	0
48469	Victoria	9	22	0
48473	Waller	4	0	0
48475	Ward	2	0	0
48477	Washington	3	1	0
48481	Wharton	5	7	0
48485	Wichita	13	10	0
48487	Wilbarger	2	0	0
48489	Willacy	4	9	0
48491	Williamson	19	5	0
48493	Wilson	3	0	0
48495	Winkler	1	0	0
48499	Wood	6	1	0
48505	Zapata	2	10	0
48507	Zavala	2	5	0
TOTAL		457	393	+1

*Some counties were transferred to another SCSEP Department of Labor (DOL) National provider.

Equitable Distribution

The number of DOL-authorized SCSEP positions by county is based on the ratio of eligible individuals in each county to the total eligible population in the state. This information is based on the PY'22 Equitable Distribution Report and will be amended when the PY'23 report becomes available.

Current Distribution

The following table provides the number of counties that are underserved and overserved, both statewide and for each county. Texas defines significant variance as both over +/– 10 percent variance and more than +/– three positions variance.

Summary of Counties with Variances in PY'22 Quarter 3

Grantee	Number of Counties	Percent of All Counties with Authorized Positions (205)	Average Percentage of Variance
Underserved Statewide	200	97.6%	89.9%
AARP Foundation	21	100%	2.1%
Institute for Indian Development	4	100%	7.4%
SER–Jobs for Progress National, Inc.	7	100%	2.1%
Center for Workforce Inclusion	89	97.8%	23.1%
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging	1	100%	1.8%
State Grantee	78	96.3%	17.3%
Overserved Statewide	2	1%	66.7%
AARP Foundation	0	0%	0%
Institute for Indian Development	0	0%	0%
SER–Jobs for Progress National, Inc.	0	0%	0%
Center for Workforce Inclusion	1	1.1%	0%
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging	0	0%	0%
State Grantee	1	1.2%	0%

Combined Total Underserved and Overserved Counties in PY'22 Quarter 3

Grantee	Number of Counties	Percent of All Counties with Authorized Positions (232)	Average Percentage of Variance
Underserved and Overserved Statewide	202	98.5%	89.8%
AARP Foundation	21	100%	89%

Grantee	Number of Counties	Percent of All Counties with Authorized Positions (232)	Average Percentage of Variance
Institute for Indian Development	4	100%	100%
SER–Jobs for Progress National, Inc.	7	100%	94.9%
Center for Workforce Inclusion	90	98.9%	94.1%
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging	1	100%	81.8%
State Grantee	79	97.5%	82.9%

3. DESCRIBE CURRENT SLOT IMBALANCES AND PROPOSED STEPS TO CORRECT INEQUITIES TO ACHIEVE EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION.

Statewide SCSEP grantees have identified the following issues when carrying out the SCSEP program. This information will be updated when the Program Year 2023 (PY'23) report becomes available.

AARP Foundation

An examination of results from trend analyses completed by subgrantee, AARP, revealed that there was insufficient program awareness in many Texas counties. To address this issue and improve underenrollment variances, state grantees develop awareness campaigns that incorporate activities that are tailored to address the varying needs of each county served.

Over the past few years, program enrollment has decreased due to increased voluntary exits and decreased enrollment activity. Currently, Texas has a total variance of 25.7 percent based on Quarter 4 (Q4) data. This is a significant increase of 14.6 percent from Q4 PY'19. Bexar, Dallas, El Paso, Harris, Hidalgo, and Travis Counties have experienced a 25 percent or more decrease in enrollment. These trends are attributed to normal enrollment fluctuations along with recruitment challenges in Hidalgo and Travis Counties. To address underenrollment variances, AARP will increase its variety of marketing campaigns and increase boots-on-the-ground campaigns in underenrolled counties.

SER–Jobs for Progress, Inc.

Various governmental and official public health restrictions during the pandemic led to a lack of participants and host agencies. SER is addressing current underenrollments by informing local residents of the availability of the program, potential virtual trainings, and remote community-service assignments. Virtual trainings are a response to the many governmental and public health restrictions that were put in place due to the pandemic. Additionally, SER will increase the variety of marketing techniques to reach potential participants in underenrolled counties, such as advertising with Workforce Solutions Offices, partnering with food banks to distribute flyers, and advertising on cable television and radio.

Center for Workforce Inclusion

In its PY'20 equitable distribution report for Q4 to the DOL, the Center for Workforce Inclusion reported that 45 of the 69 counties served were underenrolled. Although Andrews, Archer, Baylor, Camp, Castro, Cochran, Coleman, Dickens, Fisher, Franklin, Gray, Hall, Hardeman, Haskell, Jones, Lynn, Newton, Parmer, Scurry, Somervell, Stephens, and Yoakum Counties show a significant variance percentage, the actual participant slot variance is collectively negligible. The Center for Workforce Inclusion attributes underenrollments to impacts from the pandemic. To reduce the variance in underenrolled counties, the Center for Workforce Inclusion will seek to partner with new host agencies, with a specific focus on improving connections with TWC and other WIOA partner programs to increase referrals.

Institute for Indian Development

Significant variance of under-service in PY'20 was due to pandemic effects experienced in the second half of PY'19. To address underenrollment variances, the Institute for Indian Development (IID) will enroll participants from waiting lists in overserved areas and will use a gradual approach to redistribute the slots through attrition to Indian/Native American eligible participants. Additionally, IID will employ more strategic placement of its field offices and schedule regular outreach times and community networking in each underserved county.

County	# of Participants Served Since July 1	% of Slots Served	Variance B/S # Served for Year and # of Slots
Eastland	1	25%	-3
Kaufman	6	67%	-2
Liberty	6	67%	-2
Wise	2	20%	-3

SCSEP grantees in Texas overserved counties for the following reasons:

- A previous subgrantee, Experience Works, used overenrollment to compensate for counties in which recruitment of income-eligible individuals was difficult. Under the administration of the current grantee, AARP Foundation, overenrollment is steadily decreasing as participants transition to unsubsidized employment.

- SER–Jobs for Progress, Inc.—During the pandemic, many host agencies closed down permanently or incorporated drastic reductions in the number of training positions available. The closures and reductions impacted a participant's ability to gain skills and transition to unsubsidized employment.

- Center for Workforce Inclusion—Based on the difficulties experienced when recruiting difficult-to-serve counties, subgrantee staff members enrolled applicants who were available and willing to work to keep overall service levels up. To reduce variance in overenrolled counties, primary efforts focus on increasing enrollments and reducing variance in underenrolled counties. Over time, this strategy will reduce the need to enroll extra participants in overserved areas to boost overall service levels.

Texas recently reported that 141 counties were experiencing enrollment deficiencies and 49 counties had service levels that exceeded current equitable distribution allocations. SCSEP grantees continue to improve equitable distribution levels by researching local job markets, aligning participant skills and training with employer needs, and recruiting host agencies that offer training assignments that lead to unsubsidized employment opportunities.

4. THE STATE'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR ACHIEVING AN EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF SCSEP POSITIONS WITHIN THE STATE THAT:

A. MOVES POSITIONS FROM OVER-SERVED TO UNDERSERVED LOCATIONS WITHIN THE STATE IN COMPLIANCE WITH 20 CFR 641.365.

To address underenrollment, grantees:

- focus on and schedule time for community networking and recruitment in underserved counties;

- locate participant staff in rural areas where recruitment is more challenging;

- strive to enroll new participants more promptly after participants exit; and

- work more closely with Workforce Solutions Offices to recruit and enroll participants.

To address overenrollment, grantees:

- train subgrantee staff on the importance of achieving a "zero balance" in the number of authorized positions;

- focus on placing participants in overserved counties in unsubsidized jobs; and

- freeze enrollments in significantly overserved counties.

B. EQUITABLY SERVES RURAL AND URBAN AREAS.

On a quarterly basis, Texas SCSEP grantees review the latest equitable distributions, reinforce the strategies used, and share ideas to support achieving a zero balance in particularly challenging counties.

C. SERVES INDIVIDUALS AFFORDED PRIORITY FOR SERVICE UNDER 20 CFR 641.520. (20 CFR 641.302(A), 641.365, 641.520)

One of SCSEP's primary goals is to provide services to eligible individuals who need additional training and employment support services in an effort to help them overcome significant barriers and obtain unsubsidized jobs.

In accordance with 20 CFR §641.520(c), grant recipients apply priority of service for enrollment in the following order:

- Veterans or qualified spouses who have at least one of the other priority characteristics

- Veterans or qualified spouses who do not have one of the other priority characteristics

- Individuals who do not qualify as veterans or qualified spouses and who have at least one of the other priority characteristics

As specified in 20 CFR §641.520(a), the other priority characteristics include the following:

- Being 65 years of age or older

- Having a disability

- Having limited English proficiency

- Having low literacy skills

- Residing in a rural area

- Being a veteran or a spouse of a veteran

- Having low employment prospects

- Having failed to find employment after using services provided under WIOA Title I

- Experiencing homelessness or being at risk of experiencing homelessness

- Being formerly incarcerated or on supervised release from prison or jail within five years of the date of initial eligibility determination

5. THE RATIO OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS IN EACH SERVICE AREA TO THE TOTAL ELIGIBLE POPULATION IN THE STATE. (20 CFR 641.325(A))

Workforce Area	Urban SCSEP-Eligible Population	Rural SCSEP-Eligible Population	Total SCSEP-Eligible Population	% Rural Population
Statewide	1,128,273	217,827	1,346,100	16.2%
Alamo	112,982	34,729	147,711	23.5%
Borderplex	58,771	5,126	63,897	8%
Brazos Valley	10,935	11,777	22,712	51.9%
Cameron County	24,413	5,276	29,689	17.8%
Capital Area	62,678	14,608	77,286	18.9%
Central Texas	27,493	20,044	47,537	42.2%
Coastal Bend	35,555	11,002	46,557	23.6%
Concho Valley	8,980	5,704	14,684	38.8%
Greater Dallas	108,789	2,032	110,821	1.8%
Deep East Texas	10,083	24,806	34,889	71.1%
East Texas	25,481	37,716	63,197	59.7%
Golden Crescent	6,676	9,835	16,511	59.6%
Gulf Coast	276,067	38,534	314,601	12.2%
Heart of Texas	11,929	12,442	24,371	51.1%
Lower Rio Grande Valley	65,090	12,017	77,107	15.6%
Middle Rio Grande	9,993	2,966	12,959	22.9%
North Central Texas	94,447	43,186	137,633	31.4%

Workforce Area	Urban SCSEP-Eligible Population	Rural SCSEP-Eligible Population	Total SCSEP-Eligible Population	% Rural Population
Northeast Texas	8,418	9,521	17,939	53.1%
North Texas	11,211	14,557	25,768	56.5%
Panhandle	16,255	7,148	23,403	30.5%
Permian Basin	20,952	10,195	31,147	32.7%
Rural Capital Area	50,572	34,182	84,754	40.3%
South Plains	17,021	5,771	22,792	25.3%
South Texas	20,160	5,152	25,312	20.4%
Southeast Texas	19,185	5,148	24,333	21.2%
Tarrant County	85,662	4,696	90,358	5.2%
Texoma	6,352	7,834	14,186	55.2%
West Central Texas	9,676	9,437	19,113	49.4%

Sources: Ratios created for each workforce area using zip code populations from 2010 SF1 100% Census File through American Fact Finder.

6. THE RELATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO:

A. RESIDE IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS WITHIN THE STATE

According to current census data, 1,346,100 individuals in Texas are eligible for SCSEP. Of this number, 84 percent of the statewide SCSEP-eligible population reside in urban areas, whereas 16.2 percent reside in rural areas.

Urban and rural distribution data is identified by county in the Strategies to Address Rural Service Delivery Challenges of this report.

B. HAVE THE GREATEST ECONOMIC NEED

Of the total SCSEP-eligible Texans, 79 percent have been identified as having the greatest economic need, with incomes at or below the federal poverty level.

C. ARE MINORITIES

Based on current census data, the statewide SCSEP-eligible population consists of the following minority groups:

Minority Group Percent of Eligible Population

Minority Group	Eligible Population
Hispanic / Latino	34.32% of eligible population
Black / African American	15.15% of eligible population
Asian	3.45% of eligible population

Minority Group	Eligible Population
Pacific Islander	10% of eligible population
American Indian	2.24% of eligible population

D. ARE LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT

A total of 22 percent of the statewide SCSEP-eligible population is identified as having limited English proficiency.

E. HAVE THE GREATEST SOCIAL NEED. (20 CFR 641.325(B))

A special population, as identified in the Older Americans Act Amendments of 2006, are SCSEP-eligible individuals who have the "greatest social need" caused by noneconomic factors, including physical and mental disabilities; language barriers; and cultural, social, or geographic isolation. Although there are no statistics available for those with the greatest social need, the estimates for the proportion of subset categories include SCSEP-eligible individuals:

- with disabilities—44.7 percent;
- with limited English proficiency—22 percent; and
- experiencing geographic isolation—2.4 percent residing in 64 frontier counties averaging fewer than seven individuals per square mile.

F. Formerly incarcerated individuals, as defined in TEGL 17-20

The 2020 reauthorization of the Older Americans Act added a new category to the SCSEP priority of service requirements. Eligible individuals who have been incarcerated within the last five years or are under supervision following release from prison or jail within the last five years are now a priority population for enrollment and an additional category for the most-in-need characteristics. The Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020 made changes to SCSEP that took effect on March 25, 2021.

SCSEP grantees in Texas have updated policies to include formerly incarcerated individuals as a priority population and to accurately track this most-in-need characteristic for enrolled participants. As of Quarter 3, data for PY'22 shows the following distribution of formerly incarcerated individuals among Texas SCSEP grantees:

- The Center for Workforce Inclusion (CWI) has served 16 formerly incarcerated participants (2.86% of total enrollments)
- The Institute for Indian Development (IID) and the National Asian Pacific Center on Aging (NAPCA) have served zero formerly incarcerated participants (0% of total enrollments)
- AARP Foundation has served 32 formerly incarcerated participants (2.79% of total enrollments)
- TWC has served 22 formerly incarcerated participants (4.08% of total enrollments)

7. A DESCRIPTION OF THE STEPS TAKEN TO AVOID DISRUPTIONS TO THEGREATEST EXTENT POSSIBLE, WHEN POSITIONS ARE REDISTRIBUTED, AS PROVIDED IN 20 CFR 641.365; WHEN NEW CENSUS OR OTHER RELIABLE DATA BECOME AVAILABLE; OR WHEN THERE IS OVER-ENROLLMENT FOR ANY OTHER REASON. (20 CFR 641.325(I), 641.302(B))

Strategies to Avoid Participant Disruption

When there is a change in grantee and/or grantee service area, TWC hosts a meeting or conference call to develop a transition plan and timetable for:

- informing participants and host agencies in advance;

- transferring records;

- holding orientations for participants and host agencies; and

- supporting continuity in administrative and programmatic functions.

When positions need to be shifted from overserved to underserved counties, grantees:

- use a gradual approach to redistribute the slots through attrition; and

- encourage and work intensively to assist job-ready participants in overserved counties find unsubsidized employment.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR APPENDIX

ALL WIOA CORE PROGRAMS

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers.

All WIOA Core Programs

Title I – Adult Program

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	77.3%		77.3%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	76.4%		76.4%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$8,468		$8,468	

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Credential Attainment Rate	72.9%		72.9%	
Measurable Skill Gains	74.7%		74.7%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	NA	NA	NA	NA

Title I – Dislocated Worker Program

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	77.6%		77.6%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	79.0%		79.0%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$10,801		$10,801	
Credential Attainment Rate	80.3%		80.3%	
Measurable Skill Gains	78.7%		78.7%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	NA	NA	NA	NA

Title I – Youth Program

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	73.7%		73.7%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	75.2%		75.2%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$4,649		$4,649	
Credential Attainment Rate	56.1%		56.1%	
Measurable Skill Gains	63.5%		63.5%	

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	NA	NA	NA	NA

Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service Program

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	67.8%		67.8%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	68.1%		68.1%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$7,481		$7,481	
Credential Attainment Rate	NA		NA	
Measurable Skill Gains	NA		NA	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	NA	NA	NA	NA

Title II – Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	42.9%		42.9%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	43.8%		43.8%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$6,320		$6,320	
Credential Attainment Rate	42.2%		42.2%	
Measurable Skill Gains	42.7%		42.7%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	NA	NA	NA	NA

Vocational Rehabilitation Program

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	58.9%		58.9%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	60.8%		60.8%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	$6,351		$6,351	
Credential Attainment Rate	40.6%		40.6%	
Measurable Skill Gains	42.7%		42.7%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	NA	NA	NA	NA

ADDITIONAL INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Additional Indicators of Performance
Active Job Seeker New Employment Connection Rate
Child Care Parent Reemployment
Maintaining Employment Connection Rate
Earnings Increase and Earnings Replacement
Claimant Reemployment within 10 Weeks

OTHER APPENDICES