



## Strategic Plan 2021-2024

*February 2021*

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

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

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

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

#### **Board Response:**

Based upon Central Texas' economic strengths, opportunities, and employment needs, the Board of Directors for Workforce Solutions of Central Texas defined the following strategic components. The Board's strategic vision supports regional economic growth and self-sufficiency by setting and achieving high-level goals and strategies that cascade into operational goals, deliverables, and priority service segments. To accomplish the vision of the Board, the following vision, mission, purpose, values, goals, priorities, and commitments were developed.

Funding for services is received as a formula-based allocation from the U.S. Department of Labor and passed through the Texas Workforce Commission. Workforce Solutions of Central Texas staff provide services that:

- Connect businesses with skilled employees, and
- Assist job seekers by ensuring they have the skills and abilities necessary to be competitive in the global job market.

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas is under the leadership of a local Workforce Board. The 27-member Board includes representatives from local businesses, education agencies and community-based organizations. The Board is made up of 51% business representation including local large, medium and small business members.

#### **Vision:**

- Workforce Solutions of Central Texas represents a regional partnership of business, education, labor and community organizations that provides high-quality information and labor market services to local employers and residents.
- We are the system of choice – we bring people and jobs together for a better regional economy.
- All of our customers have access to the same high-quality labor market information and services regardless of where they are located in the region or how they come in contact with the workforce system.
- Individuals are able to learn and work in their home, in school and on the job to realize their greatest economic potential and individual wellbeing.

- The system is highly valued by both employers and job seekers. It is well known, has a positive image throughout the region, and is widely recognized as the premier local workforce system in Texas.
- The system enjoys a growing and increasingly diversified funding base and is not dependent upon any one source of revenue for its survival.
- By using our services, employers gain the competitive advantage that comes with an adequate supply of educated and highly productive workers, and job seekers of the region find jobs and earn incomes that make them economically self-sufficient, lifelong learners.
- The system creates a well-educated, highly skilled workforce that attracts high-wage employers to the region.

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas creates futures by bringing people and jobs together. The mission of Workforce Solutions of Central Texas is to provide quality education, training, and labor market services that give employers and job seekers of the region a competitive advantage in the global economy.

Values:

In all our actions and decisions, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas values:

- **Accountability.** We act efficiently, respectfully, and ethically to produce positive results for Central Texas' businesses and job seekers. We are accountable to the system's owners — the taxpayers and our communities. As stewards of the public trust, we take responsibility for accomplishing our organization's mission, vision, and goals.
- **Customer Focus.** We concentrate our efforts on exceeding customer expectations. Recognizing that such a focus is essential to our success, we listen to our customers and work diligently to develop realistic customer-driven solutions. Our systems foster an environment supporting continuous improvement. We are innovators – inspiring rather than limiting those we serve.
- **Integrity.** We choose to operate openly, honestly, and ethically. While representing Workforce Solutions of Central Texas, we do not compromise the principles of the organization. We do what is right in all circumstances, take pride in what we do, and set an example for others. We earn the trust of those we serve. We are trustworthy.
- **Quality.** In everything we do, we strive for excellence. We provide high-quality, customer-driven workforce services that assist businesses and job seekers in their efforts to be competitive in a global economy. We empower staff to act appropriately and consistently, exceeding customer expectations. We are committed to systematically evaluate our efforts to ensure opportunities for improvement and innovation are identified and implemented.
- **Teamwork.** We work in teams to achieve common goals. We promote communication, networking and collaboration as the chosen method for problem solving. Working together in cohesive units, we work hand-in-hand to create solutions and implement customer-driven strategies. Common goals and desires are elevated above that of individual team members.

Commitments

- We choose to operate openly, honestly, and ethically and expect our customers, partners, contractors, and employees to do the same.
- We believe innovation is essential to our survival and recognize the risks that come with it.

- We reward success and foster an environment supporting innovation and continuous improvement.
- We know that only by providing high-quality workforce services can we build and maintain relationships of mutual trust and respect with our customers, partners, and contractors. We recognize Central Texas businesses as our primary customers and believe that job seekers' workforce needs can best be met by first meeting businesses' needs.
- We act efficiently, prudently, and ethically to produce results that make a difference for businesses and job seekers of Central Texas. We are accountable to the system's owners — the taxpayers and their representatives, the elected officials who appointed us — and to the entities that help fund our efforts. As stewards of the public trust, we expect the same level of accountability from all of those with which we associate.
- We expect and maintain an integrated workforce system that:
  - Ensures equal access to quality information and workforce services throughout the seven- county region we serve,
  - Promotes investments in education, training, and productive employment as critical to the self-sufficiency of individuals and families as well as to the economic vitality of the region as a whole,
  - Creates and maintains strategic alliances with its partners and contractors to ensure the high quality of the workforce services we make available,
  - Recognizes and rewards performance at all levels, and
  - Continuously improves itself and the services it offers.

In Central Texas, targeted populations are those with barriers that require additional assistance to prepare for employment, find a job, advance in a career, and/or retain employment. Central Texas provides coordinated service options for the following targeted populations:

- Veterans and Military Spouses (service priority),
- Low Income Adults,
- Dislocated Workers,
- Disadvantaged Youth,
- Unemployment Insurance Claimants,
- Individuals on Public Assistance,
- Individuals with Disabilities, and
- Individuals with Low Literacy and Limited English Proficiency.

#### Priority Business Segments

- New businesses,
- High volume businesses (hire large numbers of employees),
- High-skill, high-wage businesses,
- Job growth businesses, and
- Community/Economic priority businesses.

#### Deliverables

- Funding from Non-Allocated Sources,

- Exceptional Services and Products,
- Work-Ready Job Seekers, and
- Service Coordination Resulting from Collaborative Relationships.

Primary Work Systems and Measures. WSCT receives proposed targets from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). Targets are generally (a) based on past performance, or (b) set exactly the same for every Workforce Area in Texas. Central Texas is a high-performing, award-winning Workforce Area. Therefore, when targets vary, Central Texas' targets tend to be higher than many other Workforce Areas in Texas. These measures are:

- Job Matching/Job Seeker Development – Entered Employment, Employment Retention (Q2 and Q4 Post Exit), Credential Rate, Median Earnings (Q2 Post Exit), Employed/Enrolled (Youth), Staff Guided Entered Employment, Employment Retention, Educational Achievement, Children in Care, Choices Full Work Rate;
- Business Services – Claimant Reemployment, Job Postings Filled, and Employer Workforce Assistance;
- Information technology – refresh to plan, network traffic, IT staff response rate to “Tech Support” requests; and
- Admin, project management, research – audit, monitoring, project management timelines, employee satisfaction and engagement.

#### High Level System Goals:

- Business Goal – Meet the human resource needs of Central Texas businesses
- Job Seeker Goal – Connect qualified people to jobs in a timely manner
- Public/Stakeholder Goal – Increase public awareness and support of Workforce Solutions of Central Texas and its services
- Partner/Employee Goal – Expand and maintain a diversified funding base

#### Operational Goals

- Increase Skills,
- Grow Jobs,
- Reduce Unemployment,
- Increase Service Options and Strategies for Priority Businesses,
- Increase Service Options and Strategies for Targeted Job Seekers, and
- Exceptional Performance.

#### Early Education Services Goals

- Increase the number of Texas Raising Stars Child Care Facilities
- Increase the number of NYAEC Certified Facilities
- Improve the providers quality through training and conferences

#### Youth Program Goals

- Work Experience Program expansion to include additional worksites and permanent job placement

- Improvement of Soft-Skills
- Increase ISY enrollments to the 40% threshold
- Career Center Program Development
- Increased enrollments

#### Individuals with Barriers to Employment Goals

- Ensures equal access to quality information and workforce services throughout the seven-county region we serve
- Promotes investments in education, training, and productive employment as critical to the self-sufficiency of individuals and families as well as to the economic vitality of the region as a whole,
- Creates and maintains strategic alliances with its partners and contractors to ensure the high quality of the workforce services we make available,
- Recognizes and rewards performance at all levels, and
- Continuously improves itself and the services it offers.

Partnership in the community and state is an important part of WSCT commitment to the customers that we serve. WSCT is constantly looking at improving our partnerships that are focused on the related vision and strategic goals of the board. WSCT is partnered with local Economic Development Boards, Chamber of Commerce, Department of Labor, Texas Workforce Commission, and regional post-secondary institutions to provide the best services to the businesses and customers we serve. WSCT will continue these partnerships and actively seek out organizations that are committed to the service of the communities.

# WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS OF CENTRAL TEXAS STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

## Target Customer Group and Related Goal

### Business Goal

Meet the Human Resource needs of Central Texas businesses

### Job Seeker Goal

Connect qualified people to jobs in a timely manner

### Public/Stakeholder Goal

Increase public awareness and support of the Central Texas Workforce System and its services

### Partner/Employee Goal

Expand and maintain a diversified funding base

## Strategies to Attain Goals

- ☆ Identify the labor market needs of businesses and job seekers.
- ☆ Develop and market high-quality services to meet customer needs.
- ☆ Recognize that businesses are our primary customers and the employment and training needs of job seekers can best be met by first meeting employer needs.
- ☆ Recognize that competitive advantage in the global economy lies in the ability of people to think, to identify and analyze problems and to work cooperatively to solve them.
- ☆ Ensure systems support an integrated service delivery model with the ability to leverage funds across programs
- ☆ Ensure access to information and workforce services for rural and urban Central Texas customers.
- ☆ Ensure Workforce Solutions of Central Texas staff are supported by appropriate telecommunication and computer-based resources as necessary to respond to customer needs and program requirements.
- ☆ Make investments in education and training that will make Central Texas students and job seekers more productive and the employers they work for more competitive.
- ☆ Provide staff training and cross-program employee orientations to help Workforce Solutions of Central Texas staff members and partners understand basic program requirements and service opportunities for business and job seeker customers.

- ☆ Develop and maintain strategic alliances with our:
  - ★ Workforce partners,
  - ★ Customers,
  - ★ Service providers, and
  - ★ Community and other stakeholders.
- ☆ Seek ways to improve the local workforce
- ☆ System and the quality of services offered including but not limited to alternative funding.
- ☆ Create an environment that promotes the
- ☆ Development and rewards the performance of all employees in the regional workforce system.
- ☆ Accept the challenges and take the risks associated with carrying out our mission.

## Success Measures

- ☆ Repeat usage of standard and customized services.
- ☆ Use of technology, including: Central Texas Website, [www.workforcesolutionsctx.com](http://www.workforcesolutionsctx.com) and Work in Texas.
- ☆ Service use by target market-segments most in need and eligible for enrolled program services.
- ☆ Employment of registered job seekers.
- ☆ Customers co-enrolled in multiple Central Texas Workforce programs.
- ☆ Adult and youth job seeker customers achieving
- ☆ Educational gain, credential, career advancement, or earnings gains.
- ☆ Job seekers on career pathway or trained in high-skill, high-wage occupations and/or transportable skills.
- ☆ Available apprenticeship training programs.
- ☆ Availability of employer driven training opportunities
- ☆ Completion of career exploration activities.
- ☆ Availability of highly skilled, dedicated, and engaged Workforce Solutions of Central Texas employees.

- ☆ Completed and executed Memorandums of Understanding.
- ☆ Awareness/coordination of workforce programs through plan sharing and development.
- ☆ Availability of funding from non-allocated sources.
- ☆ Community leaders and partners participating in Workforce sponsored activities.
- ☆ No findings in audit and monitoring reports.
- ☆ Efficiencies as demonstrated through service coordination and reduced duplication.
- ☆ Availability of timely, accurate labor market information confirmed by local wisdom.
- ☆ Youth partnerships promoting and supporting career pathways or post-secondary education.
- ☆ Loyal, engaged, and dedicated Workforce
- ☆ Solutions of Central Texas employees focused on customers and continuous improvement.

## **1.B Board Strategies**

Boards must include a description of the Board's strategy to work with the entities carrying out the core programs and with the required partners to align resources available to the local workforce development area (workforce area) to achieve the vision and goals.

### **Board Response:**

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas has extensive experience coordinating and working with internal workforce program and external program partners. Internal core workforce programs include:

- WIOA Title I Adult,
- WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker,
- WIOA Title I Youth, and
- Wagner-Peyser Act.

Other internal workforce programs provided by Workforce Solutions of Central Texas include:

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adults, Youth, and Dislocated Workers (including Rapid Response activities),
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) – Choices,
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T),
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA),
- Wagner-Peyser Employment Services,
- Non-Custodial Parent (NCP),
- Child Care Services,
- Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA),
- Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL) and Student Hireability,
- Business Services Assistance,
- National Dislocated Worker (NDW) and Military Families Grants and,
- Registered Apprenticeship Programs

For new and existing external core programs, agreements demonstrate partnership strategies as defined through Memorandums of Understanding /Agreement. External core programs include the:

- Senior Employment Services,
- Department of Labor Apprenticeship Program,
- Local Community Colleges,
- ApprenticeTexas,
- Texas Workforce Commission's Adult Education and Literacy, and Rehabilitation Act Title I Programs, and
- Texas Veterans Commission's Veterans Employment Services.

Memorandums of Understanding/Agreement (MOUs) with Workforce partners describe the overall roles and responsibilities for each entity. Further, the MOUs define work parameters, service obligations, target populations, shared responsibilities, areas of coordination and related efficiencies gained, and, if appropriate, financial obligations.

Building upon current service practices, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas will continue to explore opportunities to gain efficiencies and improve service options. All Workforce programs, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas will continue to serve job seekers with specific emphasis on assisting targeted customer groups. Services will be provided through two full-service Workforce Centers in Killeen and Temple and two satellite/branch Centers in Lampasas and Rockdale. The Workforce Centers in Killeen and Temple are strategically located to serve the majority of the Workforce Area's business and job seeker populations. Using the lessons learned from COVID-19 and the period of Virtual Services, WSCT expanded methods to provide services to our customers. Technology that is being utilized to serve all our customers include:

- Virtual job fairs that allow businesses to meet/interview available job seekers remotely, utilizing Video Conferencing Software and Job Fair Platforms,
- Expanded server and hardware technology capacity to increase capacity for remote computer and telephone access capabilities to all staff,
- New technologies and strategies to support staff efforts to provide workshops and orientations remotely or in a mixed Zoom/In-person environment that changing service demands,
- Utilizing supportive service payments that distribute payments using refillable bank cards as primary source to support customers,
- Telephone system that seamlessly connects to staff for customers calling the centers – including a coordinated messaging system to ensure increased call volumes are managed and responded in a timely manner,
- Use of chatbot technology capabilities for the workforce website to help customers get the proper resources requested,
- Interactive training videos for access from the workforce website,
- Use of a website-based customer service portal to support remote program application, eligibility, and documentation sharing, and
- Utilization of a Workforce YouTube Channel for on-demand workshop access in English and Spanish

In order to obtain the goals of the Board and to train the workforce within the WBA, WSCT is developing new strategies to increase program participation. WSCT Centers work in a cross-functional team design in which the team lead is a highly knowledgeable staff member and the rest of the staff consists of members from each program area of responsibility. The cross-functional team allows for customers to be served by the full team of resources, allowing each to review the customer's history and needs. This cross-functional review helps staff identify co-enrollments in programs and additional support the customer can received. With the introduction of many of the virtual document and meeting software programs, the concept of "anyplace, anytime- on demand" has been expanded from just a wireless staff to a staff that can work both in and out of the office, providing more services to our customers.

WSCT is focused on the utilizing existing ETPs and educational resources within the region to develop the skills of our customers. With the existing partnerships, WSCT has identified short-term training programs that can be done in cohort groups that are within already established training programs at the local community colleges that lead to industry recognized certifications. Further developing our workforce, many of our business partners are developing apprenticeship programs that focus on their own staff's development and the potential of their own new employees that have existing skills, but may need to upskill in other areas.

In addition to the partnerships/coordination activities already described, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas has unique, highly productive partnerships with Fort Hood, community leaders, local Independent School Districts representatives, and community college and universities. Some of the many examples of resource expansion and service coordination include support for and active participation in:

- Fort Hood's Transition Assistance Soldier for Life,
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce Hiring Our Heroes Program,
- Career Technology Education Programs and,
- P-20 Council.

Developing the youth and future career marketability of our customers, the Director of Industry Education Partnerships, provides local ISDs an Education Outreach Specialist, who provide students at each High School with local labor market information, actively participating in efforts to align training options with skills that make students exemplary competitors for local high-skill, high-wage jobs. The Student Occupational Awareness and Recognition (SOAR) Program is currently operating in eight school districts in Central Texas including Temple, Belton, Killeen, Troy, Salado, Troy, Lampasas, Gatesville and Academy. The program provides career guidance and information to middle school and high school students. The goal is to expose, educate, and engage students in career development and career decision-making by promoting opportunities such as dual credit, industry based certifications, internships, and post-secondary enrollment which enhance a student's career pathway.

### **1.C High-Performance Board**

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

#### **Board Response:**

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas uses a tiered, team-based approach to monitoring and improving performance. Demonstrating the success of this approach, for the most recent Performance Year, the Workforce Area met or exceeded all performance measures contracted by the Texas Workforce Commission.

To continue to perform at the highest levels, Central Texas will maintain and expand upon its current strategies. Specific activities include availability of high level reports and regularly scheduled review of performance issues by the:

- Workforce Board,
- Leadership Team,
- Workforce Center Administrators and Supervisors, and
- Functional Teams, Subject Matter Experts, and Supervisors.

Further improving performance, Central Texas has an integrated Performance Improvement Team (PIT). Led by Board staff, the Performance Improvement Team also includes Workforce Center Administrators and Supervisors, Program and Eligibility Subject Matter Experts, and partner program representatives (AEL and Veterans Employment Services). Leadership relies upon PIT members to:

- Study performance definitions and changes,

- Identify potential strengths and negative trends
- Make recommendations for process improvements, and
- Respond, if necessary, to technical assistance issues brought forward by the Texas Workforce Commission.

Accomplishment of WSCT strategies are those that demonstrate appropriate workforce services that help local businesses gain competitive advantage through access to a qualified workforce. Texas' Workforce Commission uses statewide recognition including financial awards to promote positive service outcomes. These awards distribute incentives for outstanding results. WSCT's consistent success is demonstrated through these financial recognitions with Performance Awards totaling \$1,345,000 over a 7-year period. The awards received over the past few years include:

Texas Monthly, TX Assn. of Business	2017	Best Companies to Work for in Texas
Texas Workforce Commission	2017	#1 in Quartile for Training Related Placements, WIOA
Texas Monthly, TX Assn. of Business	2018	Best Companies to Work for in Texas
Girl Scouts of Central Texas	2018	Distinguished Workplace for Women
Office of Attorney General	2018	Top Performer–NonCustodial Parents Program
Belton Independent School District	2018	Big Red Community Partner
Texas Economic Development Council	2018	Workforce Excellence Award, Regional Category
Texas Workforce Commission	2019	#1 in Texas for Service to Workers
Texas Workforce Commission	2019	#1 in Texas for Service to Communities
Texas Workforce Commission	2019	#1 in Quartile for Training Related Placements, WIOA
Texas Workforce Commission	2019	#1 in Quartile for Choices
Texas Workforce Commission	2019	Statewide Apprenticeship Expansion Award
Texas Workforce Commission	2019	# 1 in Quartile: Foster Youth Incentive Award
Texas Monthly, TX Assn. of Business	2021	Best Companies to Work for in Texas

The development of all employees within WSCT's organization is very important to the Board. WSCT is a Registered DOL Apprenticeship site in which all employees are expected to continuously develop themselves in their area of expertise within our registered apprentice program, Workforce Professional Apprenticeship. WSCT has a robust training program utilizing an online learning management system in which WSCT covers all costs. Participation in the Registered DOL Apprenticeship is linked to the

performance incentives that the employees may receive during their annual performance appraisal rating. Employees are mentored throughout their Apprenticeship as they develop and show competency on predetermined attributes. When an employee has completed the DOL Apprenticeship, they will have earned an industry recognized Journeymen Level DOL Certificate as a Workforce Professional.

The staff at our Workforce Centers try and keep in touch with past customers to both provide continued support through their career but also check in on their well-being. Many times our customers respond back with gratitude for the support that they have received and have their own success stories to share. New to the area, one customer walked into the Killeen Workforce Center and asked for assistance with her resume and job search. She attended workshops and gathered every piece of information and resources that she could to help her find her next career. Through the center's staff, she was matched to a temporary position with a local staffing agency. At first she was hesitant, but with encouragement from the Workforce Staff, she decided to pursue the position. To her surprise, a few days later she was called for an interview for a Bilingual Legal Assistant. After the second round of interviews, she was excited to be offered a position as a Bilingual Legal Assistant for the Carlson Law Firm in Killeen through Sedona Staffing.

After a few months working for the company, her hard work and dedication resulted in earning a permanent position within the Carlson Law Firm as well as being recognized for her excellent customer service skills and her caring spirit. Even though she was happy about her job, she had one obstacle, no vehicle to get it to work. Still, that didn't hold her back, she would walk to work every day with an optimist spirit. It would take her about 40 minutes to get to work, and then the same time to get back home. During the 2018 Workforce Luncheon, she was awarded the Excellence in Workforce Achievement, as well as selected to receive a donated car. This assistance from both the staff and our Workforce Board Members is what motivates our staff to work hard to help the customers we serve.

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

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

Boards must include a regional analysis of the following:

- i. The economic conditions, including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations
- ii. The employment needs of employers in existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations

#### **Board Response:**

The Central Texas Workforce Area includes the seven Texas Counties of Bell, Coryell, Hamilton, Lampasas, Milam, Mills, and San Saba.

#### **Industries Super Sectors and Employees**

Regarding employment by major industry sectors, Central Texas grew 3,400 jobs over the past 5 years. Job growth related primarily to the construction sector, financial activities, and leisure and hospitality sectors. Other super sectors showed slight increases in jobs.

Still adhering to the demographics of business in the area, there is a prevalence of smaller employers with approximately 8,051 businesses which employed 10 or more employees accounting for 63.4 percent of the businesses, reported from Emsi.com. Compared to the Texas Workforce Commission's

data, it appears that there are 13,064 local employers with less than 10 employees. Of Central Texas' employers, approximately:

- 0.1 percent employed over 500 employees;
- 2 percent employed between approximately 250 and 499 employees,
- 1.2 percent employed between approximately 100 and 249 employees,
- 2.4 percent employed between 50 and 99 employees,
- 11.5 percent employed between 20 and 49 employees, and
- 21.6 percent employed between approximately 10 and 19 employees.

#### Commuting Pattern Impact

As will all Workforce Areas in Texas, some Central Texas communities function as major employment centers and others serve as "bedroom communities." Recognizing that residents may work in one community but live, pay taxes, and spend most of their income where they live, draws attention to the importance of exploring commuting patterns. The number employed in the Central Texas Area but living outside is 33 percent of the residents, compared to those living in the Central Texas Area but employed in outside areas is 44.7 percent.

#### Fort Hood

Fort Hood is the largest employer in Texas. The Texas Comptroller reports that Fort Hood has a \$10.6B impact on Texas' economy annually. With Fort Hood located in the middle of Central Texas, WSCT strategies include activities to engage military families thus stabilizing the workforce during large troop movements. In the past troop deployments have resulted in business closures when families left the area to return to their families. To promote family engagement, WSCT meets formally with community and Fort Hood representatives and uses non-allocated funding to provide specialized services for military spouses. The National Dislocated Workers Grant targeting workforce turnover associated with Fort Hood and The Soldier for Life-Transition Assistance Program. Our Military Transition Liaison works daily with the Soldier for Life program as well as the area businesses/training providers are called "Career Skills Programs" (CSP) to recruit both transitioning Soldiers and business, and improve the existing programs. Current CSP employer/training programs are:

- GM/Raytheon – Shifting Gears – Automotive Technicians
- Home Builders Institute – Heroes Make America
- Troops to Transportation – CDL Truck Drivers
- Hiring Our Heroes – Corporate Fellowship Program
- Warrior Training Advancement Course – Veterans Affairs Disability Rating Program
- Galvanize – Software Engineering
- Airstreams – Renewable Energy and Communications
- UBC Millwrights – Precision Machinery Professionals
- United Association Veterans in Piping – Plumbing
- SAP – Enterprise Resource Planning Software
- Texas Ford Dealers – Automotive Technicians
- MasTec – Electrical Lineman Program
- McLane – Distribution Operations

In 2019, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas (WSCT) received four awards at the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) 20th Annual Texas Workforce Conference. Workforce Solutions of Central Texas was awarded first place for statewide for Service to Workers and Service to Community. Top place awards were also received within budget quartile Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act Training Related Placements and TANF Choices program participation. The organization received \$120,000 in incentive funds for the four Awards.

## **2.B Knowledge and Skill Analysis**

Boards must include an analysis of the knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region, including employment needs for in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations.

### **Board Response:**

Based on the initial analysis of Central Texas Industries, three industry groupings were proposed. It was believed that the identified industries would potentially benefit from efforts to enhance worker employability through skill certifications. Those groupings were:

- Manufacturing,
- Health Care, and
- Information Technology.

The analysis then revised the initial groupings and performed a more in-depth Central Texas sector analysis covering all of the seven counties within the Central Texas Workforce Solutions Area. The objective was to identify the most robust industry sector targets that constitute key regional economic and employment drivers while also aligning with an industry sector strategy for prioritizing skill training initiatives. The analysis includes a regional economic overview, a sector and industry analysis, a review and discussion of the initial three industry sectors, and final recommendations and targets for the certification initiative.

### **Regional Background Analysis**

Comprising seven counties in the central region of Texas, the Area is dominated by Bell County which contains the major cities of Belton, Harker Heights, Killeen, and Temple, the population of the region in 2020 was 510,998. Regional population growth has increased in the past 5 years by 7.4 percent, 35,162, and expected to increase another 5.6 percent, 28,481, in the next 5 years. The bulk of that growth has been in Bell County with some additional growth in Lampasas County. The skill transferability concept allows the worker to potentially leverage a given skill set or certification related to one of these occupations into other job possibilities and a career progression. The construction sector is also fertile ground for apprenticeships and licensing- based educational programs.

The Central Texas regional economy had roughly 208,044 jobs in 2019 and grew by approximately 3,400 jobs over the past 5 years. The regional economy is undeniably dominated by Fort Hood, the largest active duty armored post in the U.S. Armed Forces. As the largest single economic driver of the Central Texas economy, Fort Hood supports 55,261 people on-post, including 10,503 civilian employees and contractors. According to a 2017 release by the Texas Comptroller's Office, Fort Hood is responsible for \$24.56 billion in Texas statewide economic activity and over 150,000 total jobs – a majority of which fall in Central Texas.

Although these latest figures show a decline in jobs and economic impact from 2016 estimates,

they are substantial none-the-less. As the largest Army Reserves training center in the Army, Fort Hood is estimated to economically touch 1 in 4 residents of Bell and Coryell counties in some manner. All support industries, from local school districts, to housing to retail trade, leisure and hospitality, owe some measure of activity from Fort Hood. Even with moderate population growth, the housing industry has continued to be strong in the region with the Heavy and Special Trade Construction sector.

An analysis of the region by industry sector reveals the significance of Fort Hood, which is included within, and dominates, the Corporate HQ, Administrative and Government sector. While the economic influence of Fort Hood cannot be understated, military employment is often hard to quantify using traditional data sets. The Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) data from Unemployment Insurance wage records provided to the Texas Workforce Commission does not include employment numbers related to the army base. Thus for this analysis, data from EMSI was used because of their additional efforts to backfill missing and disclosed industry employment.

The second largest industry sector in the region is Education, Training and Personal Development. This category dominated by Elementary and Secondary Schools (63% of sector employment), with another 16.6 percent or roughly 3,950 jobs coming from higher education institutions. Although a large employer in the region, the staffing pattern is bifurcated with roughly 45 percent of all employment in teaching professions, which require Bachelor's degrees or higher, and another 15 percent falling in lower skill, low wage service occupations with little certification-based upskilling likely.

#### Occupational Impacts of Identified Industry Sectors

Each targeted industry sector is composed of specific occupations that are critical to the basic operations of providing the designated good or service. In the case of the Biotechnology, Life Science, and Medical sector the nine detailed industries taken together have a common collection of such occupations. For purposes of this analysis, the industries comprising the healthcare related sector were processed through the Strategic Workforce Assessment Program (SWAP) from the Texas Workforce Commission.

SOC	Description	Employed in Industry Group (2020)	% of Total Jobs in Industry Group (2020)	Median Hourly Earnings	Typical Entry Level Education
29-1141	Registered Nurses	2,608	20.6%	\$33.55	Bachelor's degree
31-1131	Nursing Assistants	1,043	8.2%	\$12.27	Postsecondary nondegree award
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	878	6.9%	\$21.89	Postsecondary nondegree award
43-6013	Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	493	3.9%	\$15.93	High school diploma or equivalent
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	384	3.0%	\$49.53	Bachelor's degree
29-2018	Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	373	2.9%	\$23.71	Bachelor's degree

37-2012	Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	329	2.6%	\$10.20	No formal educational credential
29-1126	Respiratory Therapists	320	2.5%	\$27.62	Associate's degree
29-2098	Medical Dosimetrists, Medical Records Specialists, and Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other	312	2.5%	\$21.49	Postsecondary nondegree award
29-1228	Physicians, All Other; and Ophthalmologists, Except Pediatric	260	2.1%	\$99.23	Doctoral or professional degree
29-2031	Cardiovascular Technologists and Technicians	256	2.0%	\$24.31	Associate's degree
31-9092	Medical Assistants	224	1.8%	\$15.35	Postsecondary nondegree award

The same analysis was done for the Heavy and Special Trade Construction industry sector using a similar employment-weighted industry distribution.

SOC	Description	Employed in Industry Group (2020)	% of Total Jobs in Industry Group (2020)	Median Hourly Earnings	Typical Entry Level Education
47-2061	Construction Laborers	2,971	12.6%	\$13.20	No formal educational credential
41-9022	Real Estate Sales Agents	2,853	12.1%	\$23.73	High school diploma or equivalent
47-2031	Carpenters	1,627	6.9%	\$18.21	High school diploma or equivalent
11-9141	Property, Real Estate, and Community Association Managers	1,111	4.7%	\$23.53	High school diploma or equivalent
11-9021	Construction Managers	914	3.9%	\$26.03	Bachelor's degree
47-2141	Painters, Construction and Maintenance	879	3.7%	\$16.08	No formal educational credential
41-9021	Real Estate Brokers	836	3.6%	\$31.19	High school diploma or equivalent
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and	804	3.4%	\$20.73	High school diploma

	Steamfitters				or equivalent
47-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	734	3.1%	\$27.08	High school diploma or equivalent
47-2111	Electricians	692	2.9%	\$21.19	High school diploma or equivalent

While seemingly very different, both of these sectors have administrative and managerial occupations in which incumbent workers could benefit from specific certifications including project management, technical sales or customer service skills. The skill transferability concept allows the worker to potentially leverage a given skill set or certification related to one of these occupations into other job possibilities and a career progression. The construction sector is also fertile ground for apprenticeships and licensing- based educational programs.

#### Review of Initial Proposed Industry Sectors

As mentioned previously, the initial analysis listed manufacturing, healthcare, and information technology as Central Texas’ three target industry sectors. The following section offers a review and discussion of the vibrancy and potential of those suggestions.

The Central Texas manufacturing sector is comprised of roughly 1,228 small and mid-sized businesses with a small but significant group of large manufacturers that dominate select industries. Employing roughly 23,542 employees in 2020, 15 percent below the national average.

Three industries dominate Central Texas’ manufacturing sector with almost 60 percent of 2016 employment. Each of these industries has a dominant company responsible for the bulk of industry employment:

- Wilsonart LLC manufactures plastics and high pressure laminates (NAICS 32261),
- Pactiv manufacturing packaging materials (NAICS 3222), and
- Indeco Sales, manufacturing cabinets and educational furniture and operating as both a manufacturing and sales company.

As large employers in the region, these companies likely offer significant insights into the kinds of skills and certifications valued by large businesses in the region. However, because manufacturing is a relatively small part of the region’s employment base, it does not match the criteria as a ‘robust industry sector target’. With that in mind, individual meetings were held with key human resources and operations managers at these major companies to learn their perspectives on workforce demand and related training needs.

The second target grouping initially proposed was the healthcare sector. Using EMSI data, the combined Education and Healthcare industry group (NAICS 61 and 62) is the largest grouping in the Central Texas economy with 41,655 jobs in 2020. The sector grew by 11 percent over the past 5 years. The Healthcare sector is a prominent and growing part of the Central Texas economy.

While the sector also includes many individual small dentist and physician offices and ambulatory care facilities, it is dominated by NAICS 6221 General Medical and Surgical Hospitals and led by:

- Baylor, Scott & White,
- Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center,
- Advent Health System,
- Olin E. Teague Veterans' Medical Center, and
- Seton Medical Center.

These larger facilities are part of a significant healthcare network that also includes smaller hospitals such as Little River Healthcare and Hamilton General Hospital. Given the importance of the healthcare sector to the Texas and Central Texas economy, the wide range of occupational opportunities available in the sector, the highly skilled nature of many jobs in the industry that require formal education, licenses and certifications, and future job growth prospects, the Healthcare sector is an ideal partner for Central Texas skills training and related initiatives.

The third initial targeted industry sector was information technology (IT). IT permeates every industry, occupation and workplace environment. From a workforce preparation perspective, it is better characterized as a set of skills that allow one to fully engage with any type of digital equipment or leverage computers to execute business processes. Because information technology skills transcend so many different types of industries, occupations, equipment and processes they are ideally suited to be confirmed through industry recognized certifications.

SOC	Description	Employed in Industry Group (2020)	% of Total Jobs in Industry Group (2020)	Median Hourly Earnings	Typical Entry Level Education
47-2111	Electricians	451	9.9%	\$21.19	High school diploma or equivalent
15-1256	Software Developers and Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers	249	5.5%	\$44.34	Bachelor's degree
49-9052	Telecommunications Line Installers and Repairers	220	4.8%	\$28.10	High school diploma or equivalent
15-1251	Computer Programmers	217	4.8%	\$40.54	Bachelor's degree
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	157	3.4%	\$24.04	Some college, no degree
41-3091	Sales Representatives of Services, Except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services, and Travel	151	3.3%	\$21.10	High school diploma or equivalent

47-2061	Construction Laborers	144	3.2%	\$13.20	No formal educational credential
15-1211	Computer Systems Analysts	143	3.1%	\$34.02	Bachelor's degree
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	133	2.9%	\$13.59	High school diploma or equivalent
47-3013	Helpers--Electricians	125	2.7%	\$12.22	High school diploma or equivalent
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	101	2.2%	\$15.55	High school diploma or equivalent
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	99	2.2%	\$38.02	Bachelor's degree

As an industry sector in Central Texas, however, the IT cluster is neither dominant nor growing significantly. Generously elaborating on the sector definition promoted by the Labor Market and Career Information department of the Texas Workforce Commission, the 'IT sector' might include both the Electronics and Applied Computer Equipment sector and the Telecommunications & Information Services sector.

The largest of the industries in the combined sector grouping is NAICS 5415 Computer Systems Design Services, which is traditionally found within the Professional, Technical, and Business Services grouping and which is a growing industry in Texas statewide and particularly in the Austin MSA. The industry includes an array of managed IT services, web application development, and related business software solutions. Sample companies in the Central Texas region include CGI, Professional Data Solutions (PDI), Microsoft, and McLane Advanced Technologies.

Central Texas does not specialize in the IT sector. The IT sector is 57 percent below the national average and does not justify IT as a robust regional employment driver. However, because IT skills, and certifications documenting those skills, are in demand across many different industries and occupations, Central Texas chose to seek out specific high value skills and any related industry training and certifications that are linked to technology-related occupations. A recent study from Money Magazine, in collaboration with compensation and benefits company PayScale, identified 21 'skills' that commanded a wage premium, all of which have some degree of training and/or certification linked to them.

Specific to potential IT certifications, the proliferation and categorization of certifications has expanded significantly in recent years. The federal ONET Career OneStop office has even created a 'certification finder' that allows a user to filter through thousands of available certifications by industry, occupation and skill keyword. As examples:

- Entering the skill keyword 'business analytics' yields 1,272 possible certifications offered by 290 organizations, and

- Entering the entry-level occupational title 'Home Health Aide' results in seven possible certifications offered by seven different certifying entities.

Thus, Central Texas will also focus on specific business and information technology skills that can be documented through industry-recognized methods that expand beyond the stricter industry sector certification approach. This is especially true for IT since these skills are found across many different occupations making them more transferable than those tied to a single industry.

The industry with the highest location quotient in the Business and Financial Services sector, signifying high relative concentrations of employment, is NAICS 5612 Facilities Maintenance and Support Service which provides administrative, maintenance and general operation support to primarily government operations; in this case mostly on Fort Hood.

#### Findings and Next-Steps

Central Texas believes that most effective approach to upskilling new and incumbent workers may be to look at the key work activities within each occupation critical to the industry and identify training and/or certifications that demonstrate competence in those work activities.

Central Texas' labor-based sectors approach is built around the belief that groups of detailed occupations can be identified will include common core precepts and/or occupation and certification requirements. If connected with an existing, integrated and aligned educational systems, especially ones that offers Competency Based instruction (CBI), promoting training and certifications within labor-based sectors can become a win-win-win scenario for all stakeholders.

Central Texas will strive to leverage scarce state and federal financial resources and target them where the opportunity exists for maximizing social outcomes, e.g. fewer mismatches between worker skills and employer hiring requirements result in reduced unemployment, greater worker mobility, and less social welfare. The business community benefits because they gain access to a larger, better and more appropriately skilled workforce with greater potential to enhance productivity and profitability. Industry recognized certifications will be used, when appropriate, to help document and communicate skill mastery and qualifications. Agencies charged with basic education and workforce preparation also win because they are able to target their efforts toward focused objectives and better leverage regional resources through improved communication and collaboration. It is anticipated that the result will be increased placements, improved wage at placement, and less cycling between employment and unemployment.

Central Texas job seeker customers will be offered the opportunity, with additional education and on-going knowledge, skills and ability (KSA) acquisition, to develop a personalized career progression that places them on the road to self-sufficiency. Central Texas is focused on the utilizing existing ETPs and educational resources within the region to develop the skills of our customers. With the existing partnerships, Central Texas has identified short-term training programs that can be done in cohort groups that are within already established training programs at the local community colleges that lead to industry recognized certifications. Moreover, newly trained individuals or struggling incumbent workers will form a pool of potential labor for industries that have a likelihood of becoming key growth poles or economic drivers of future growth and prosperity.

## **2.C Labor Force Analysis and Trends**

Boards must include an analysis of the regional workforce, including current labor force employment and unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment.

### **Board Response:**

Central Texas's region covers a 6,605 square mile Workforce Area had an estimated population of 488,698. As of 2020, Central Texas region's population increased 7.4% since 2015, growing by 35,162. The populations is expected to increase by 5.6% between 2020 and 2025. From 2015 to 2020, jobs increased by 1.7% in 7 Texas Counties from 204,644 to 208,044. This change fell short of the national growth rate of 3.6% by 1.9%. As the number of jobs increased, the labor force participation rate decreased from 51.9% to 49.1% between 2015 and 2020. The Texas Workforce Commission's LMCI Department reported a Central Texas Unemployment Rate of 5.9% in January 2021, while in January 2020 the rate was 4.0%. At the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic the Unemployment Rate raised to over 11.3%

### **Population and Demographics**

The Central Texas area has a population density of 68.08 residents per square mile compared to a statewide density of 95.92; it has one urban county with a population density of 285.14 residents per square mile and six rural counties with a combined population density of 25.27 residents per square mile.

According to the county-based population, the Central Texas Workforce Area the population of the region in 2020 was 510,998. Regional population growth has increased in the past 5 years by 7.4 percent, 35,162, and expected to increase another 5.6 percent, 28,481, in the next 5 years. The bulk of that growth has been in Bell County with some additional growth in Lampasas County. The population in Bell County which increased by 9.8 percent, 33,046, in the past 5 years. Based on State Demographer projections, the 7-county area will continue to grow reaching a population of 671,288 by the year 2040.

Residents 16 and older are fairly evenly balanced with 49.9 percent male and 50.1 percent female; 50 percent of the population is white, 19 percent is black, and 11 percent is classified as other; Hispanic is reported for 20 percent of the population. The potential full-time, work-eligible population (over 18 years old) for Central Texas is approximately 359,172 or 71.2 percent of the total population. According to the U.S. Bureau of Census, ex-military veterans made up 20.2 percent of the Central Texas population.

### **Income**

Total personal income is a widely used measure of regional economic health while per capita income is generally used to compare the relative well-being of residents across areas (not accounting for differences in area cost of living). Central Texas' average earning per job, based on the information from Emsi.com, estimates was roughly \$58,000 compared to \$59,600 statewide and \$70,700 nationwide.

For Central Texas, the Texas Workforce Commission reported an average weekly wage of \$946 during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2020 (all covered wages and salaried employment). The estimated the 2020 poverty rate in Central Texas is 13.9 percent. The number includes people of all ages.

## Education

The Central Texas Workforce Area is home to 31 Independent School Districts. Also, supporting local employers' training and development needs, the region is home to four higher education institutions; Central Texas College, Temple College, the University of Mary Hardin Baylor, and the newly established Texas A&M University - Central Texas.

School enrollment data from the 2019 A showed that there were 134,227 persons in the population who were 3 years of age and older and enrolled in school in the study area during the census collection period. Of this population, the following table shows a breakdown of what types of schools persons were enrolled compared to similar statewide information:

Type of School	Count	Area Percent	Statewide Percent
Nursery school or preschool	8,542	6.4	6.1
Kindergarten	7,374	5.5	5.5
Elementary School (grades 1-8)	54,548	40.6	42.9
High School (grades 9-12)	26,293	19.5	20.7
College or graduate school	31,848	27.9	24.6

The following presents levels of educational attainment in 2019 for Central Texas compared to statewide percentages:

Educational Attainment	Count	Area Percent	Statewide Percent
Less than 9th Grade	14,405	4.5%	8%
9 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade, No Diploma	20,120	6.3%	8%
H.S. Graduate (Inc. Equiv.)	83,720	26%	25%
Some College, No Degree	93,664	22%	29.1%
Associate Degree	36,325	11.3%	7%
Bachelor's Degree	49,253	15.3%	19%
Graduate or Prof. Degree	24,448	7.6%	10%

Based upon the above data, 10.8 percent of the population has no high school diploma or equivalent compared to 16 percent statewide. Thus, the percent of high school graduates or higher was 89.2 percent for Central Texas compared to 84 percent for Texas. The percent with bachelor's degree or higher was 22.9 percent as compared to 29 percent for Texas.

## 2.C Workforce Development Analysis

Boards must include an analysis of workforce development activities in the region, including education and training

**Board Response:**

2021-2024 Central Texas Targeted Occupations List (Based on Wages, Growth, Job Openings, and Training Time Requirements)

Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)	Target Occupation Job Title (Name)	Annual Average Employment 2018	Hourly Rate (Entry Wage)	Hourly Rate (Experienced Wage)	Typical Education Needed for Entry into Occupation
31-9092	Medical Assistants	1053	\$12.16	\$20.08	Postsecondary nondegree award
47-2111	Electricians	695	\$14.91	\$30.01	High school diploma or equivalent
47-2031	Carpenters	414	\$15.15	\$24.85	High school diploma or equivalent
29-1126	Respiratory Therapists	306	\$19.90	\$36.79	Associate's degree
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	577	\$15.07	\$54.31	Some college, no degree
35-1011	Chefs and Head Cooks	64	\$14.69	\$36.38	High school diploma or equivalent
29-2041	Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics	562	\$11.16	\$24.72	Postsecondary nondegree award
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	264	\$14.07	\$36.02	High school diploma or equivalent
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	834	\$11.92	\$27.52	High school diploma or equivalent
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	2093	\$17.76	\$26.24	Postsecondary nondegree award
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	2625	\$13.55	\$36.21	Postsecondary nondegree award
47-2211	Sheet Metal Workers	131	\$11.96	\$28.85	High school diploma or equivalent
51-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	495	\$15.98	\$39.02	High school diploma or equivalent
15-1231	Computer Network Support Specialists	276	\$21.81	\$48.17	Associate's degree

43-5031	Public Safety Telecommunicators	109	\$13.32	\$24.16	High school diploma or equivalent
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	470	\$13.09	\$22.82	High school diploma or equivalent
29-1141	Registered Nurses	3770	\$24.90	\$45.82	Bachelor's degree
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	119	\$20.54	\$45.09	Associate's degree
11-9051	Food Service Managers	159	\$16.01	\$38.46	High school diploma or equivalent
49-0323	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	989	\$12.61	\$30.80	Postsecondary nondegree award
15-1257	Web Developers and Digital Interface Designers	55	\$13.98	\$49.70	Associate's degree
29-2055	Surgical Technologists	175	\$13.41	\$30.63	Postsecondary nondegree award
29-2034	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	287	\$20.41	\$38.16	Associate's degree
29-2032	Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	82	\$23.46	\$45.90	Associate's degree
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	373	\$12.95	\$24.33	High school diploma or equivalent

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas follows a standard data model in its periodic review of the region's key industries and occupations for planning purposes. The process consists of identifying growth industries, analyzing industry staffing patterns, and then filtering and validating occupations. After the first step is complete, the data are reviewed by local education and business representatives; when appropriate, adjustments are made based upon such local wisdom. This model and the supporting software were developed by the Texas Workforce Commission's Labor Market and Career Information Department.

For the purposes of the analysis, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas defined the above targeted occupations as those jobs with the best potential for growth and quality employment. The jobs are occupations that require higher skills that, in return, offer higher wages.

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

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

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

- i. the programs that are included in the system; and

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

### **Board Response:**

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas is a publically funded, not-for-profit organization that provides employment and training assistance for local businesses and job seekers. Funding for services is received as a formula-based allocation from the U.S. Department of Labor and passed through the Texas Workforce Commission. Workforce Solutions of Central Texas staff provide services that:

- Connect businesses with skilled employees, and
- Assist job seekers by ensuring they have the skills and abilities necessary to be competitive in the global job market.

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas is under the leadership of a local Workforce Board. The 27-member Board includes representatives from local businesses, education agencies and community-based organizations. The Board is made up of 51% business representation including local large, medium and small business members. Governor George W. Bush certified the local Workforce Board on July 22, 1996. The Workforce Board received not-for-profit, 501(c)3, designation in 1997.

### **Mission**

To provide quality education, training and labor market services which give employers and job seekers of the region competitive advantage in the global economy.

### **Service Area**

The Texas Counties of Bell, Coryell, Hamilton, Lampasas, Milam, Mills, and San Saba

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

- Workforce Solutions of Central Texas' Workforce Centers: Locations providing workforce services for local businesses and job seekers.
- Workforce Solutions of Central Texas' Workforce Board: Local agency acting as the administrative entity that provides planning, oversight, and evaluation of all Department of Labor and Texas Workforce Commission funded workforce development programs and services; the Workforce Board provides technical assistance and information system support to local Workforce Centers.
- Central Texas Chief Elected Officials Consortium Board: Local Elected Officials recruit and certify local Workforce Development Board members. They sit as ex-officio members of the local Workforce Development Board and are responsible for ensuring fiscal accountability.
- Central Texas Council of Governments: Staffing agent for Workforce Solutions of Central Texas Centers. Fiscal agent for Workforce Solutions of Central Texas.

- Texas Workforce Commission: State agency acting in capacity of fiscal agent and administrative entity to provide technical assistance, oversight and evaluation, and information system support to local, certified Workforce Development Boards.
- Vendors – Colleges, universities, and/or private training facilities providing education or training to customers of Workforce Solutions of Central Texas Centers.

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas provides Services at:

Workforce Center in Killeen  
300 Cheyenne  
Killeen, TX 76542  
Phone: (254) 200-2000

Workforce Center in Lampasas  
523 East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street  
Lampasas, TX 76550  
Phone: (512) 556-4055

Workforce Center in Temple  
Phone: (254) 742-4400  
200 Santa Fe Way  
Temple, TX 76501

Workforce Center in Rockdale  
313 N. Main  
Rockdale, TX 76567  
Phone: (512) 446-6440

Business Services:

Killeen/Fort Hood/Copperas Cove: 254-200-2020

Temple/Belton: 254-773-4200

Internet Access

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas website: [www.workforcesolutionsctx.com](http://www.workforcesolutionsctx.com)

Texas' Job Matching website: [www.workintexas.com](http://www.workintexas.com)

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas Educational Outreach Specialist (Student Occupational Awareness and Recognition SOAR Program, SOAR) are currently operating in eight school districts in Central Texas including Temple, Belton, Killeen, Troy, Salado, Troy, Lampasas, Gatesville and Academy. The program provides career guidance and information to middle school and high school students. The goal is to expose, educate, and engage students in career development and career decision-making by promoting opportunities such as dual credit, industry based certifications, internships, and post-secondary enrollment which enhance a student's career pathway.

Workforce Programs and Funding Sources:

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title 8: Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker Programs,
- Wagner-Peyser Employment Services,
- Child Care Services,
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Choices,
- Non-Custodial Parents, Choices,
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Employment and Training,
- Trade Adjustment Act,
- Veterans Employment Services,

- National Dislocated Worker Grant,
- Military Family Support Grant, and
- Competitive Grant Funding (when available).

#### Partner Programs and Funding Sources:

- Senior Employment Services,
- Veterans Employment Services,
- Adult Education and Literacy Services, and
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

#### Summary of Services Available Through Workforce Solutions of Central Texas Employer Services

- Labor Market Information
- Wage and Labor Law Information
- Recruitment / Referral of Quality Applicants
- Employee / Employer Job Matching
- Quality Testing / Prescreening
- Space for On-Site Interviewing
- Technological Access from Office / Home
- Personalized / Customized Service Options
- Job Posting
- On-Line Resume Search
- New Business Start-up Assistance
- Assistance to Expand Business Market, Access to Financial Assistance for Training Current Employees

#### Educator Services

- Labor Market Information
- Demand, Target and Emerging Occupations
- Teacher/Counselor Guide
- Career Testing and Exploration
- Matching Students and/or Education Programs to Quality Employer Learning Environments
- Scholarship Matching/Financial Assistance
- Job Seeker Services
- Labor Market Information
- Demand, Emerging and Target Occupations
- Local Jobs and Salaries
- Jobs in Demand
- Financial Aid for Education and Training Information
- Training Providers and Success Rate Information
- Preliminary Assessment / Prescreening
- Employment Information Including Registration with State Employment Service for Job Matching and Referrals
- Education and Training Assistance

- Customer-Driven Service Access
- Career and Self-Exploration Tools
- Career and Job Search Advice from Professionally Trained Career Specialists
- Internet Access
- Counseling Support to Eligible Students in Education or Training Programs
- Child care and Transportation Assistance to Eligible Students in Education or Training Programs

The Texas Workforce Commission lists programs available through and funded under the Workforce Commission. Those programs include the following required one-stop partners:

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA, formerly Workforce Investment Act (WIA),
- Wagner-Peyser Employment Service (ES),
- Unemployment Insurance (UI) Benefits Information,
- Choices, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) employment and training Program,
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T),
- Subsidized child care,
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), and
- Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) programs.

Of the above required programs, the Workforce Centers in Central Texas are funded and directly providing integrated services for everything with the exception of the Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) programs. For AEL services, the Workforce Center in Killeen has an AEL Lab staffed by Central Texas College. Additional AEL classes and labs are available throughout the Workforce Area. Workforce Solutions of Central Texas works closely with the Workforce Commission's contracted AEL providers and monitors progress through regularly scheduled Literacy Consortium Meetings. To promote a system with consistent coordination and a direct Workforce influence, the Chair of the Central Texas Literacy Consortium is a Workforce Board member.

Finally, the State Plan also encourages Boards to enter into MOUs with required and optional partners for programs that are not under the direct oversight of the Board including:

Required:

Adult Education and Literacy (WIOA, Title II),

- Apprenticeship programs,
- National and Community Services Act Program,
- Non-Certificate Postsecondary Career and Technology Training programs, and
- Senior Community Service Employment Program.

Optional:

- Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Act of 2006,
- Job counseling, training, and placement services for veterans, 38 USC 41,
- Education and vocational training program through Job Corps administered by DOL,
- Native American programs authorized under Title I of WIOA,

- HUB-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, and
- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker programs authorized under Title I of WIOA.

Regarding optional partners, Central Texas, either has agreements or works closely with providers of:

- Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Act of 2006 (Central Texas College and Temple College),
- Job counseling, training, and placement services for veterans, 38 USC 41 (Texas Veterans Commission),
- HUB-administered employment and training programs (component of Central Texas' Business Resource Center at the Workforce Center in Killeen and of the Business Incubator at Temple College),
- Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (United Way and other programs when available),
- Reintegration of offenders programs authorized under the Second Chance Act, 2007 (agreement with Texas Department of Criminal Justice), and
- Education and vocational training program through Job Corps administered by DOL.

There is no significant population, and, therefore, no agreements/programs available for:

- Native American programs authorized under Title I of WIOA, and
- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker programs authorized under Title I of WIOA.

### **3.B Core Programs – Expand Access, Facilitate Development, and Improve Access**

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

- i. expand access to employment, training, education, and support services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment;
- ii. facilitate the development of career pathways and coenrollment, as appropriate, in core programs, including specific career pathways occupations that the Board currently includes on its Target Occupations List, and career pathways occupations that the Board is planning to develop; and
- iii. improve access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable).

Boards must include a description of the Board's plan for working with at least one of the Governor's industry clusters.

#### **Board Response:**

Workforce services are funded through the Board and provided by the Workforce Centers Contractor. Central Texas' integration includes a strong collaborative model that encourages a Workforce System approach. Under the Central Texas model, Board and Center staff jointly plan service options and seek

and identify opportunities to expand access. Demonstrating the strength of the collaboration, Board and Center staff actively participate on Central Texas' Leadership Team.

To promote expanded access to individuals with barriers to employment, local collaborative efforts have been extended to include Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) partners. As examples, AEL and VR staff are invited to Workforce all-staff training events and AEL staff has begun participation on Central Texas' Performance Improvement Team.

WSCT Centers work in a cross-functional team design in which the team lead is a highly knowledgeable staff member and the rest of the staff consists of members from each program area of responsibility. The cross-functional team allows for customers to be served by the full team of resources, allowing each to review the customer's history and needs. This cross-functional review helps staff identify co-enrollments in programs and additional support the customer can received.

#### Barriers to Employment Considerations

Regarding blind and disabled Texans, and Texans with low literacy or reduced English language fluency, options to coordinate services and expand options continue to be explored. An issue that remains a concern is performance tracking for special populations. Since each program relies upon a different customer management system, common measures and joint service strategies are limited. Work in Texas allows customers to self-attest that they are disabled but does not require them to make such a declaration. Therefore, staff members' ability to track and monitor the outcomes of low literacy, reduced English language, and blind/disabled Texans is significantly limited and very likely to reflect an inaccurate picture of what actually occurs. Having the cross-functional teams allows for staff to identify customer's barriers and refer them to VR within our centers for additional assistance.

Specific of Texans with low literacy or reduced English language fluency, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas has staff members who are bi-lingual and available to provide services as needed. To facilitate this process, a desk aid has been developed that identifies each of the bi-lingual staff and lists the languages in which they are proficient. Languages supported by these staff include: Spanish, German, Czech, Russian, Tagalog (Philippine national language), Visayan, and American Sign Language. Staff and partners also have access to translation apps available on smart phones to facilitate communication. When the available resources fail to meet the needs of customers, staff and partners utilize Language Line or contact the Board's EEOC officer who arranges for a translator or alternative solution.

For individuals interested in improving their English language skills, Central Texas' largest Workforce Center in Killeen has a computer-based Adult Basic Education lab that is equipped with software supporting English language development. The lab, which is offered by Central Texas College, also offers English as a Second Language classes. A similar lab is also available at the Temple College campus.

As described under WSCT Vision, Commitments, "we maintain an integrated workforce system that:

- Ensures equal access to quality information and workforce services throughout the seven-county region we serve
- Promotes investments in education, training, and productive employment as critical to the self-sufficiency of individuals and families as well as to the economic vitality of the region as a whole,
- Creates and maintains strategic alliances with its partners and contractors to ensure the high quality of the workforce services we make available,

- Recognizes and rewards performance at all levels, and
- Continuously improves itself and the services it offers.”

To accomplish our goals and commitments, WSCT provides services for all job seekers and businesses requesting assistance. Services available to all job seekers include:

- Employer Services
- Labor Market Information,
- Wage and Labor Law Information,
- Recruitment / Referral of Quality Applicants,
- Employee / Employer Job Matching,
- Quality Testing / Prescreening,
- Space for On-Site Interviewing,
- Technological Access from Office / Home,
- Personalized / Customized Service Options,
- Job Posting,
- On-Line Resume Search,
- New Business Start-up Assistance, and
- Assistance to Expand Business Market, Access to Financial Assistance for Training Current Employees.

#### Job Seeker Services

##### Labor Market Information:

- Demand, Emerging and Target Occupations,
- Local Jobs and Salaries,
- Jobs in Demand,
- Financial Aid for Education and Training Information, and
- Training Providers and Success Rate Information;
- Preliminary Assessment / Prescreening,
- Employment Information Including Registration with Work in Texas,
- Customer-Driven Service Access,
- Career and Self-Exploration Tools,
- Group services/workshops (resume development, dress for success, etc.),
- Career and Job Search Information, and
- Internet Access.

In Central Texas, targeted populations are those which barriers that require additional assistance to prepare for employment, find a job, advance in a career, and/or retain employment. Central Texas provides coordinated service options for the following targeted populations.

- Veterans and Military Spouses (service priority),
- Low Income Adults,
- Dislocated Workers,
- Disadvantaged Youth,

- Unemployment Insurance Claimants,
- Individuals on Public Assistance,
- Individuals with Disabilities, and
- Individuals with Low Literacy and Limited English Proficiency.

Services available to targeted populations include all services listed above and:

- In Depth Assessment/Prescreening,
- One-on-one assistance with employment information Including guidance for registration on Work in Texas,
- Education and Training Guidance and Funding,
- Career and Job Search Advice from Professionally Trained Career Specialists,
- Counseling Support to Students in Education or Training Programs, and
- Child care and Transportation Assistance to employees entering the workforce and students in Education or Training Programs.

The following service and coordination strategies are available to assist Central Texas targeted customer groups.

#### Coordination and Services for Veterans and Military Spouses

With Fort Hood in the heart of Central Texas, veterans are a substantial part of our population and planned strategies are focused on meeting the needs of the high-priority group. In addition to our veterans population, we also have service strategies and resources targeting military spouses and exiting veterans.

The following is a short summary of activities supported by Workforce Solutions of Central Texas on and around Fort Hood. The list presents current collaborations and opportunities for continued mutual support.

Currently, WSCT has two grants designed to expand employment opportunities for veterans, exiting military, military spouses, civil service employees, and individuals laid off at Fort Hood.

1. The first grant is a National Dislocated Worker Grant targeted to individuals who are laid-off on Fort Hood. Specifically, funds can be used to assist civil service employees, defense contractor employees, military spouses, and military soldiers who are impacted by budget reductions. Available services include one-on-one assistance, funding for college, childcare and transportation assistance, and staff-guided job search.
2. The second grant is from the Texas Workforce Commission. This grant provides additional resources to serve military spouses. Funding from this grant can sponsor job search assistance, on the job training, internships, or college tuition, books and fees.

#### Employment Assistance for Military Spouses and Exiting Military

- Job Search Assistance including guidance with resumes, translating MOS to civilian jobs, support with job matching through Work in Texas, and a variety of workshops to prepare job seekers with skills.

- Vocational Training Scholarships provide funding for college tuition, books and fees for income-eligible job seekers and workers who were laid off from previous jobs. Spouses who leave employment to come to Fort Hood with soldiers are generally eligible for vocational training scholarships.
- Child Care and Transportation Subsidies are available for income-eligible job seekers who are working or in training or college.
- Fort Hood Corporate Fellowship Program (Hire Our Heroes) specifically targets transitioning military. It is a 13 week program that combines classroom training and internships to give active duty, transitioning military hands-on exposure to high-level civilian jobs. Currently, there are 32 recruiters representing 16 companies and 27 fellows (soldiers) in the program. The first cohort begins classroom training on August 10th.
- Veterans Inventory is a survey of soldiers exiting the military from Fort Hood. The survey assesses the intentions, educational levels, skills, employment interests, and suggestions to improve the Fort Hood region's "quality of place" for soldiers. The survey, which began in 2007, is supported by a partnership between Workforce and the Heart of Texas Defense Alliance, Greater Killeen Chamber of Commerce, Texas Veterans Commission, and the Soldier for Life Transition Assistance Program.
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation for local Child Care Centers was identified as a BRAC criteria priority in early 2012. Since that time, local and state Workforce Funds have been dedicated to encouraging local child care providers to pursue accreditation and WSCT staff assisting the Centers' efforts to complete the rigorous requirements. When the initiative began, there were four NAEYC Accredited Child Care Center on Fort Hood. Today, Central Texas is home to 35 NAEYC Accredited Child Care Centers.
- Military Transition Liaison staff member who is the primarily a marketer and provider of Workforce Solutions programs and services designed to assist transitioning service members, military spouses, and other dislocated workers associated with Fort Hood. The Military Transition Liaison promotes Workforce Services and facilitates access to services including but not limited to job search assistance, vocational training support, internships, apprenticeships, and supportive services such as transportation and child care assistance. This staff member works with the Fort Hood's Soldier for Life leadership and team members, education and training partners, transitioning military, military spouses and veterans.

Unique collaborations supporting veterans and military spouses:

Army Community Service Employment Readiness Branch Partnership: Military spouses often begin their job search on Fort Hood at Army Community Service. In an effort to expand their service options and help them become familiar with the local community area, WSCT provides space for Employment Preparation Workshops at the Workforce Center in Killeen.

Business Resource Center is a joint initiative supported by WSCT, Central Texas College, and the Greater Killeen Chamber of Commerce. The Business Resource Center provides high- quality business counseling, training, and assistance to potential business owners, new entrepreneurs and existing business owners. Assistance and workshops are provided at little or no cost. Because the Business Resource Center is co-located at the Workforce Center in Killeen, job seekers and exiting military

beginning their job search have direct access to start-up business guidance and tools. Since inception, the BRC has grown in scope and service structure.

#### Workforce Solutions of Central Texas' Support of Military-Focused Organizations and Events

- Central Texas-Fort Hood Chapter, AUSA membership with WSCT Executive Director serving on the Chapter's Executive Committee, and the WSCT Workforce Center Director serving on the Board of Governors.
- As a sponsor for BLORA's Nature in Lights event, WSCT attends the annual kick-off event.
- Legislative Day is a Greater Killeen Chamber of Commerce annual event. The day is designed to expose state legislators to Fort Hood's extensive contribution to Texas.

Blind and Disabled Texans, and Texans with Low Literacy/Poor English Language Fluency As already described, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas has adaptive devices to support the general needs of individuals with disabilities. Additionally, coordination and accommodation efforts are being expanded following the guidance provided by the Texas Workforce Commission's Vocational Rehabilitation transition plan.

For individuals with low literacy or poor English language fluency, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas has bi-lingual staff and service options are coordinated with Central Texas' Adult Education and Literacy providers. Workforce Solutions of Central Texas works closely with AEL providers including participation on the Central Texas Literacy Consortium and availability of AEL/ESL classes and labs at a variety of days, times, locations across the Workforce Area.

Reemployment Strategies for Dislocated Workers including but not limited to those who received Rapid Response assistance:

Unemployment insurance claimants identified by TWC as needing one on one customized assistance career path development and re-employment engagement, known as the RESEA list. Every single one of these customers take part of an orientation about all WSCT services and programs. Also, get an individual Customized Labor Market Information and a detailed personalized employment plan with goals, objectives, and tasks with follow-up dates.

The focus for reemployment strategies is on early engagement and development of understanding of assistance available. Customers may complete a general assessment to identify any basic education skills upgrade or refresher needs. When claimants come in to complete the worker profile orientation, staff develop individual employment plans with worker profiled customers.

One strategy used to rapidly reengage dislocated workers is the identification of workers' transferrable skills. To identify workers' transferrable skills in our local Workforce Centers, surveys and assessments are used. Examples include: job search self-assessment, resume job title and related skills descriptions, rapid response orientations and surveys, workforce programs enrollment, and assessment of training opportunities in related-experience jobs.

When working with dislocated workers identified by TWC as being most likely to exhaust their Unemployment Insurance benefits, individuals are registered in Work in Texas which collects past and current skills and occupations. When appropriate, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas develops an Employment Plan (EP) with these individuals. The EP identifies employment goals, employment barriers,

and an action plan to achieve the goals and address the barriers. Staff consistently met the WDA UI Claimant Reemployment Measure set by the state to get unemployed claimants reemployed within 10 weeks.

Center Staff engage unemployed or underemployed job seekers by utilizing our tools to reengage in employment, such as:

- Customized Labor Market Information
- Demand, Emerging and Target Occupations
- Reality check of Local Jobs and Salaries,
- Financial Aid for Education and Training Information
- Preliminary Assessment / Prescreening,
- Employment Information Including Registration with Work in Texas
- Resume support
- Identifying transferable skills
- Career and Self-Exploration Tools
- Group services/workshops virtual & on-site (resume development, interview, soft skills, dress for success, discussing criminal background, etc.)
- Career and Job Search Information
- Develop employment plans and provide follow-ups
- Internet, phone, computer, printer, and photocopy machine access
- Referring to matching job opportunities and upcoming virtual hiring events
- Referring to eligible WSCT Programs & Services
- Referring to Support Services provided by WSCT or local community partners

Workers' abilities to become rapidly employed are enhanced as they complete the tasks identified in their Employment Plans. Further, because the workers are registered in Work in Texas, the local Business Services Unit is able to:

- Fully define and describe its available applicant pool to local and potential employers, Identify opportunities for short- or long-term training that will make those with declining skills more likely to match local job openings, and
- Match available skills with similar or emerging businesses' job openings.

#### Entrepreneurial Assistance

As an aid to job seekers and claimants that may be interested in starting their own business, startup assistance for new businesses is available through the Business Resource Center located at the Workforce Center in Killeen or Temple College's Business Incubator. Employees identify potential entrepreneurs during one-on-one meetings and refer those who indicate they have a desire to start their own business.

#### Services for Central Texas Youth

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act, priority for funding is given to out-of-school Youth. To meet this priority, substantial outreach is conducted through the local Workforce Centers and through partner referrals. To accomplish this priority in Central Texas, youth services, especially those

mandated and funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, are coordinated and provided by Workforce Center staff housed in local school districts and colleges. Youth staff members work with partnering agencies such as the school districts, Communities in Schools, and the Central Texas Youth Services (including specific services for Foster Youth), PAL (Preparation for Foster Youth Transitioning to Adult Living), programs to provide Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act eligible youth with appropriate services as listed in their Individual Service Strategies.

Staff members provide one-on-one counseling and workshops and assistance regarding all parts of the employment process including preparing for employment – job getting and job keeping skills. Staff members also broker employment and training opportunities for the youth customers including monitoring of work experience sites to ensure youth are receiving quality work experiences that will enhance their abilities to get and keep jobs in the future. In addition to coordinated services and support as well as employment experiences, educational services are provided to encourage efforts that lead to high school and college credentialing. Such services could include, but are not limited to, mentoring, tutoring, and basic skills upgrades through educational labs or traditional schools.

#### Services for Youth with Disabilities

In partnership with Texas Workforce Commission Vocational Rehabilitation staff, Central Texas will participate in a summer program targeting youth with disabilities. Youth with disabilities can participate in a work experience program. Youth ages 14-22, who are in school and are either current or potential Vocational Rehabilitation customers will be eligible. Participants will receive employability skills training, either prior to or during their work experience placement. Local Vocational Rehabilitation counselors will assist in identifying students who may participate in Summer Work Experience and will refer them to Workforce Youth staff. The Board and Vocational Rehabilitation staff will partner to identify the students who can best benefit from participation, this will be especially important since it is anticipated that there are more potential participants than work experience opportunities. In addition, youth will have the opportunity to participate in learning activities such as informational interviews to research employers, job site tours, job shadowing, and mentoring opportunities by an employer in the community.

#### Trade Adjustment Act Assistance

Benefits and services available to certified trade-impacted workers vary depending upon the Trade law in effect at the time of DOL certification. If training is determined to be appropriate for the customer, vocational and/or remedial training are explored. The maximum duration of TAA-supported training varies between 104 and 156 weeks, depending upon the TAA petition number.

When a customer is identified as a trade impacted customer, staff members work with the customer to provide a full array of service options. As examples, TAA impacted workers receive skill assessments, career counseling, job search assistance, and information on training. Staff members also provide intake services for all potential TAA eligible customers and forward the intake information to the Workforce Commission's TAA department for individual training plans approvals. In addition, staff, as part of the TAA orientation for customer, will discuss the following benefits for these customers:

- Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA) – Wage subsidies for workers who are enrolled in full-time training no later than their waiver/in training deadline date. The maximum duration of TRA

support will vary between 104 and 156 weeks, depending upon the TAA petition number and course of training.

- Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC) - A tax credit covering 72.5% of the worker's monthly premium for qualified insurance.
- Reemployment Trade Adjustment Assistance (RTAA)- A wage subsidy for up to 2 years available to workers age 50 or over who are reemployed at annual wages of \$50,000 or less.
- Job Search Allowance- A reimbursement for job search costs outside of the worker's local area.
- Relocation Allowance- A reimbursement for relocation costs for a job outside of a worker's local area.

Following services and training, Central Texas staff members work closely with TAA customers to promote their successes. The staff goal is to encourage active efforts that quickly lead to employment following service completion.

#### Use of Technology to Support Services for Businesses and Job Seekers

Primarily, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas relies upon Work in Texas as the essential tool for addressing businesses' hiring needs through matches with qualified jobs seekers. This tool is not only used by staff, it has proven value as demonstrated by the significant amount of direct access by businesses' human resource representatives, job seekers, and local community partners.

In addition to this invaluable tool, job search staff members encourage job seekers to leverage personal and social networks using systems such as LinkedIn or even Facebook. The social network site LinkedIn is also used to facilitate UI Claimant follow up. Job seeker assistance is also enhanced using the internet to provide webinars or training which is constantly available at job seekers' conveniences. Relying upon technology, staff members also engage in live-chat during office hours. Topics include but are not limited to (1) Job Searching & Networking, (2) Navigating WorkinTexas.com, (3) Soft Skills in today's workforce, and (4) Virtual Job Fairs.

Finally, WSCT utilizes social media tools and online communities that give us opportunities to connect with job seekers and employers. The platforms are used for community outreach on programming, online events, and direct messaging. Our social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and a YouTube channel.

## **Part 4. One-Stop Service Delivery**

### **4.A One-Stop Service Delivery System**

Boards must include a description of the one-stop delivery system in the workforce area, including explanations of the following:

- i. How the Board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers and how providers will meet the employment needs of local employers, workers, and job seekers
- ii. How the Board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including to remote areas, through the use of technology and other means
- iii. How entities within the one-stop delivery system, including the one-stop operators and the one-stop partners, will comply with WIOA §188 (related to

Non-Discrimination), if applicable, and with applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals who have disabilities

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

#### **Board Response:**

##### **Continuous Improvement**

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas currently uses a managing director/staffing agency model for the delivery of services for employers and job seekers. The model provides stability for staff even if the Managing Director changes; thus, Central Texas has consistently maintained greater numbers of higher-tenured, knowledgeable Workforce professionals. Further, under this model, Central Texas Board and contractor staff work jointly to identify opportunities and implement improvements based upon continuous feedback loops between business and job seeker customers, frontline staff, supervisors, and the Central Texas Leadership Team (made up of Workforce Center and Board leadership).

Demonstrating the success of our coordinated, systemic improvement approach, for 16 consecutive years, Central Texas has successfully competed with Texas businesses to be listed as one of the 100 Best Places to Work for in Texas. Workforce Solutions of Central Texas is the government organization in Texas to have made the list in the 16 years since the program began. Further, it should be noted that results from the Best Companies Employee Surveys and results from Texas Survey of Employee Engagement are used to guide an annual Organizational Improvement Day which produces 3-5 high level improvements that are implemented using cross-organizational teams.

Specific to contracted and program performance measures, Central Texas has a Performance Improvement Team made up of representatives and subject matter experts from all programs. This team monitors performance, identifies issues, discusses solutions, and recommends/implements process changes. On the rare occasions requiring technical assistance from the Texas Workforce Commission, the Performance Improvement Team works directly with Workforce Commission staff to address issues/concerns.

##### **Access to Services**

Direct access to Workforce services are provided through two full-service Workforce Centers serving businesses and job seekers in our most populated cities/surrounding areas and two satellite Centers serving our rural customers in the east and west sides of the Central Texas Workforce Area.

For all Central Texas business customers, WorkInTexas.com provides an on-line portal for posting job openings and searching for a match to local job seekers. For job seekers the WorkInTexas system provides a mechanism for defining skills and developing a resume, identifying desired employment parameters, and searching for job openings within that parameter. WorkInTexas is a system providing 24-7 access. For those requiring additional assistance, Business Solutions and Workforce Center staff are available by telephone, email or in person to answer questions and provide guidance.

In addition to WorkInTexas, technology enabled service access includes information and guidance provided through the Workforce Solutions of Central Texas website [www.workforcesolutionsctx.com](http://www.workforcesolutionsctx.com). The website is compliant with applicable ADA guidelines. The following are examples of information/services provided at [www.workforcesolutionsctx.com](http://www.workforcesolutionsctx.com).

- Explanation/definition of programs and services,
- Guidance on how to access services,
- On-line Orientations for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act, TANF Choices, and Claimant Reemployment programs,
- Job search guidance including but not limited to:
  - 450 job descriptions describing specific work-related skills to use to develop resumes, and
  - “How to” guides for marketing oneself as a product including, as examples, skills identification, resume development, knowing the “product,” and “closing the sale”
- Information on types and schedules for workshops,
- News and events,
- Workforce Board info including schedules, meeting materials, minutes, and annual report.
- Vendors and Bid opportunities,
- Careers within Workforce Solutions of Central Texas,
- Links to local education and training providers,
- Contact information including the ability to submit questions and receive real-time responses, and
- Privacy policy, terms, and conditions of use.

In addition to information for all Central Texas businesses, job seekers, and residents, [workforcesolutionsctx.com](http://workforcesolutionsctx.com) also provides specific information for targeted populations. The following dedicated pages provide program/population specific guidance:

- Disabilities Resources,
- Veterans,
- Youth,
- Child care and training ops for child care providers, and
- Business Solutions.

#### Accessibility and One-Stop Partner Contributions

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas’ Equal Opportunity Officer/Section 504 Coordinator reviews program and physical accessibility annually to ensure services and facilities are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Further, reviews are conducted to ensure the Workforce Administrative Office and Workforce Centers are compliant with federal, state, and local Equal Opportunity requirements. Central Texas Workforce policy describes requirements for providing equitable access and ensuring facilities and services accessibility, including accommodations to support the use of mobility devices. The policy covers:

- Reasonable accommodations/modifications,

- Prohibition against denying customers access to services or benefits because of a disability or need for reasonable accommodation(s),
- Requirements to provide services, as appropriate, for individuals with disabilities in integrated settings, and
- Admittance of service animals.

#### **4.B Cooperative Agreements**

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

#### **Board Response:**

Memorandums of Understanding/Agreement (MOUs) and Cooperative Agreements with Workforce partners describe the overall roles and responsibilities for each entity. Further, they define work parameters, service obligations, target populations, shared responsibilities, areas of coordination and related efficiencies gained, and, if appropriate, financial obligations.

Current Cooperative agreements include:

- ARCIL Inc., Center for Independent Living,
- Central Texas Youth Services Bureau,
- Central Texas Youth Services,
- Central Texas College Adult Education and Literacy,
- Central Texas Council of Governments Housing,
- Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeship,
- Temple College Adult Education and Literacy,
- Texas Department of Criminal Justice, and
- Texas Department of Human Services.

Regarding optional partners, Central Texas, either has agreements or works closely with providers of:

- Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Act of 2006 (Central Texas College and Temple College),
- Job counseling, training, and placement services for veterans, 38 USC 41 (Texas Veterans Commission),

- HUB-administered employment and training programs (component of Central Texas' Business Resource Center at the Workforce Center in Killeen and of the Business Incubator at Temple College),
- Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (United Way and other programs when available),
- Reintegration of offenders programs authorized under the Second Chance Act, 2007 (agreement with Texas Department of Criminal Justice), and
- Education and vocational training program through Job Corps administered by DOL.

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

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

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

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

#### **Board Response:**

WSCT is committed to providing basic and in-demand services for local employers of all sizes. To encourage employer participation and facilitate engagement, WSCT has business services staff who are specifically assigned to work directly with local businesses to identify businesses' needs and develop solutions that are individually customized to meet those needs. Examples of business engagement solutions include but are not limited to:

- Assistance with job postings using Work-in-Texas
- Virtual and On-site Job Fairs
- Industry- and Occupation-specific Labor Market Information including Job Market and Economic Data
- Job seeker outreach and job candidate screening and referral
- Workforce Center space for employers to conduct talent recruitment
- Labor and Unemployment Insurance laws and appeals information
- Tax information including, for example, Worker Opportunity Tax Credit

- Information on future and incumbent worker training and supportive services assistance for eligible job seekers and workers sponsored by local Workforce Center funding and Texas Workforce Commission grants
- Layoff assistance
- Guidance on how to access or develop a skilled Workforce pipeline of trained employees that match in-demand occupations using strategies such as Department of Labor Recognized Apprenticeship Programs
- Information/assistance on starting or expanding a business

Further, WSCT has a designated Director of Industry Education Partnerships who works as the primary business intermediary in coordination with the Centers' Business Services staff and Workforce leadership,

- Participates in and/or coordinates partnerships to create industry- and sector-specific strategies to identify and prepare employees for in-demand and targeted occupations.
- Facilitates connections between businesses requiring specifically-trained workers and local community colleges and Independent School Districts.
- Provides information about funding sources to improve training options and/or offset the cost of training. As one example, WSCT accessed all of the Texas Industry Partnership Grant funds available to the Central Texas using matching funds for local businesses. This activity brought \$600,000 to local training providers to cover the costs of up-to-date, industry-specific equipment and tools.
- Supports efforts to develop and fund customized and incumbent worker training for businesses that are attempting to expand and better prepare their workforce pipeline.

Finally, Workforce Solutions of Central promotes understanding of available jobs, career pathways, and local labor demand through our SOAR program which has Workforce Specialists located in local Middle and High Schools to provide guidance and workshops for students, teachers and counselors. The Career Education Navigators also work directly with Career and Technology Training programs in the high school to support efforts to engage local industry and business representatives and gather their input regarding job demands and work expectations.

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas (WSCT) leadership actively participate on Economic Development Boards, and they support or co-host Economic Development activities occurring across the Workforce Area. Demonstrating the strength of coordination, the Workforce Center in Temple is co-housed with the Temple Chamber of Commerce and the Temple Economic Development Corporation. This arrangement was supported by a grant to WSCT for \$500,000 to offset the costs of moving to, furnishing, and equipping the new location.

Additionally, as a key partner, WSCT is invited to initial and ongoing meetings when new any new business is involved in site selection. With all partners filling goals related to their service areas, WSCT initially brings information related to, as examples: the available workforce, methods to upskill potential workers and address skills gaps, and prevailing wages.

Services available for new and expanding businesses are customized to focus on addressing specific business needs such as space for recruitment, assistance with employee identification and screening, targeted job fairs, and future or incumbent worker training. As one example of how these services are

provided, WSCT worked with Niagara Bottling when the company moved to Temple to open a water bottling and distribution center.

The following summary demonstrates the services and outcomes that were made available. Similar services are available for any business coming to or expanding their business in Central Texas.

In, February 2019 Niagara Bottling LLC committed to construct a \$90 million bottling and distribution plant on a 40-acre site in the Temple Industrial Park. Construction began in March 2019 on a 450,000-square-foot facility. There are two phases to the project. Phase 1 included real property improvements (construction) in the amount of \$30 million, and personal property improvements (equipment) in the amount of \$40 million. Phase was completed in April 2020. The second phase is an additional capital investment of \$20 million and another 21 jobs. Phase 2 is to reach completion by Dec. 31, 2022.

To accommodate Niagara's hiring needs, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas (WSCT) held a targeted job fair. WSCT and Niagara teamed up to host over 500 job seekers to fill 32 open positions at the bottling plant. Niagara HR representatives and WSCT staff coordinated a multi-phased plan to address customer flow and support WorkinTexas registration in the WSCT Career Center. Space was also made available to conduct onsite interviews using the two-levels of the Workforce Center to increase the space available to conduct simultaneous job interviews. During this standing-room only event, WSCT and Niagara staff worked seamlessly to ensure all 500 job seekers were interviewed in 9 hour window. Through the WSCT job fair, Niagara was able to identify and select most if not all of the needed start-up employees through a single event.

As a result of the pandemic in 2020-21, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas (WSCT) staff have gained substantial knowledge in the area of Unemployment Insurance (UI). In fact, in this year, due to the pandemic, WSCT has served more UI customers, responded to more UI-related questions and issues, and provided UI claimants with more Workforce services than any past year. Further, through the efforts of the Texas Workforce Commission, staff have an array of resources to answer customer's UI questions and help them complete the tasks necessary to register in Work-in-Texas, complete job search requirements, and meet UI filing requirements.

Demonstrating our commitment of assisting individuals drawing UI, WSCT has dedicated a team of individuals who work on TWC-identified RESEA claimants who require extra assistance to find and compete for available jobs. These claimants receive a specialized orientation followed by one-on-one meetings to develop an employment plan and determine their eligibility for other Workforce resources. The goal of the RESEA program, is to help individuals who may have substantial barriers to employment to get the resources they need to find, compete, and retain jobs.

#### **4.D Coordination of Wagner-Peyser Services**

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

**Board Response:**

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas follows the Texas Model for the delivery of Wagner-Peyser/Employment Services. Under the Texas Model, Employment Service staff are integrated in the local Workforce System. They are managed and/or they manage as any other staff in a similar position; they perform job tasks and functions similar to their locally-employed workforce counterparts.

Although Central Texas has a limited number of Employment Services staff they are vital assets to our local system. In the local area, they provide direct service to employers and in rural areas they also assist with services to job-seekers. Daily management and supervision of Employment Services staff is the responsibility of the Central Texas Workforce Centers Director and the local Workforce Centers Administrators. The Director and Administrators ensure equal treatment and responsiveness. The complete integration of Employment Services staff into the local Workforce System eliminates the likelihood of duplication of Wagner-Peyser services with other one-stop services.

**4.E Integrated, Technology-Enabled Intake and Case Management**

Boards must include a description of how one-stop centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under WIOA and by one-stop partners.

**Board Response:**

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas relies upon the Texas Workforce Commission's automated systems for intake, case management, job posting/matching, data collection/reporting, and financial reporting. Specifically, Central Texas uses:

- TWIST for integrated intake, eligibility, case management, and reporting for Texas Workforce Commission funded programs and Texas Workforce Commission designated partners,
- Workforce Center Customer Tracking is an initial intake system that is used to track/count customer service access. The system is useful in efforts to adjust staffing to match service demand, and
- Texas' labor exchange system is automated through WorkInTexas.com. WorkInTexas provides a portal for automated job postings, job matching, job application/resume development, and Workforce tracking/reporting.

The development of a customer-facing online portal for our website will allow for a seamless, safe environment for customers to complete and upload documents all virtually to their case manager. The process of development for the WSCT customer portal started during 2020. During year 1 of this plan the portal will be finalized and implemented in year 2. This portal will allow for the completion of all applications online, registration and completion of online workshops, and have workflow capabilities to send all documents through an electronic approval process. This system will allow for a touchless virtual case management that can be accomplished in person or remotely.

**Part 5. Workforce Investment Activities****5.A Economic Development and Entrepreneurial/Microenterprise Activities**

Boards must include an explanation of how the Board will coordinate local workforce investment activities with regional economic development activities that are carried out in the

workforce area and how the Board will promote entrepreneurial-skills training and microenterprise services.

**Board Response:**

There are several methods that are used to promote coordination between Workforce Solutions of Central Texas and our local economic development entities. First, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas is a member of the Grand Central Texas Economic Development group. This group includes Economic Development organizations from the Central and Heart of Texas Workforce Regions. Member Economic Development organizations represent the cities of:

- Belton,
- Cameron,
- Harker Heights,
- Killeen,
- McGregor,
- Temple, and
- Waco.

The Grand Central Texas Economic Development group works jointly to market the region to expanding and potential new businesses. They agree to jointly work together with an understanding that internal competition may occur for businesses seeking to locate in Central Texas. Workforce Solutions of Central Texas (WSCT) supports the group and individual efforts by providing regional, county, and city-specific labor market information. For new business prospects, WSCT also provides information about available workforce training funds such as Skills Development and Skills for Small Business resources available through the Texas Workforce Commission. Additionally, WSCT provides an overview of services available through its Business Solutions of Central Texas. Examples of services for new businesses include:

- Use or identification of facilities for employee identification/recruitment that can be used until the new business location is available,
- Work in Texas training,
- Job posting and matching,
- Business-driven employee prescreening and assessments, and
- Targeted job fairs.

In its support capacity, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas maintains a neutral position and does not share information between competing economic development entities.

In addition to the activities described above, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas promotes coordination and communication with economic development entities by ensuring a presence on the local Workforce Board. Currently, representatives from local Economic Organizations serve on the Workforce Board from the Cities of Killeen, Temple, Belton, and Cameron, as well as the District Development Board within Central Texas Council of Governments that focuses on the development of the rural areas in the area.

WSCT Workforce Centers have a dedicated team of Business Service Unit (BSU) Specialist who provide personalized service to employers to educate on best employment hiring practices, business strategies,

training, and retention issues. The staff members develop a plan of action to assist in addressing these issues by:

- Discussing and utilizing Labor Market Data Analysis to determine what is the industry demand, salary expectations, and future projections
- Using survey provided by Synchronist to identify areas of improvement and how we can support with WSCT services and programs
- Assist with hiring needs by providing in-person & virtual hiring events, in addition, to job seeker screening and referrals provided by our WSCT staff
- As part of our job fairs, we provide on-site spaces for interviews, onboarding, and employee training. As a virtual response, we allow employers to use our Zoom platform to host employer showcases and meet virtually with applicants.
- Training & Consultation Services related to Unemployment Benefits, Labor Law, Wages, and more.
- Ensuring quality referrals to employer “specific” job postings,

As part of WorkinTexas.com (WIT), BSU staff can assist employers by searching for candidates that meet the requirements provided by the employers for their specific job postings. Sending referrals to these candidates to apply for the job postings following employers preferred method of application. BSU Staff providing solutions for employer’s needs, after determining their needs, BSU assists by:

- Using WorkinTexas.com (WIT) to create job orders, search for resumes, screen candidates, send candidate referrals, and provide assessment/testing tools to better align with qualified applicants
- Discussing and developing apprenticeships opportunities to assist in training an applicant pool to close an employment gap
- Referrals to our programs and services to help meet their hiring needs, such as, but not limited to: WIOA Youth training program, WIOA Adult & Dislocated Worker, National Dislocated Worker (NDW) grant.

To better meet employer needs, we use our Career Center Specialist to identify candidates that meet employers’ expectations. After meeting with the customer 1-on-1, reviewing their resume, their WIT profile, and matching them with potential job opportunities, they provide quality referrals to employers.

Career Center (CC) staff have access to every single person that has claimed unemployment benefits in our WDA. This allows them to reach out to them, identify their employment goals, and send quality referrals. In addition, CC staff assist those who are underemployed seeking better opportunities in our WDA. Our BSU staff identifies the industries of UI claimants being laid off and share the list of job postings meeting that criteria for easier reference for our Career Center specialists.

Our partners are available as well, to assist in specific candidate referrals and training. Texas Veteran Commission (TVC) can assist in the transition of military members and their dependents. Also, our Texas Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), assist in training employers how to provide reasonable accommodations to those with disabilities. Our partners at Business Resource Center (BRC) assist in those wanting to start their own business.

The Business Resource Center is located in the Workforce Center in Killeen. The Business Resource Center provides high-quality business counseling, training, and assistance for new entrepreneurs and existing business owners with services/training provided at little or no cost. Because of its close proximity to Fort Hood, the Business Resource Center also provides counseling and workshops for exiting military through the Transition Assistance Program on Fort Hood. The co-location and integrated service structure facilitates referral of job seekers who are interested in starting a new business. Physical proximity promotes efficient communication and referral between Workforce Specialists and Business Resource Center staff. The location also gives job seekers access to a full range of services such as childcare and transportation all in one location. A comprehensive array of services through a single location follows Workforce Solutions of Central Texas' mission is to provide ease of access where individuals can seek out and receive all of the services needed to become self-sufficient and productive.

### **5.B Rapid Response Activity Coordination**

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

#### **Board Response:**

##### **Rapid Response Services and Coordination with Other Workforce Programs**

In general, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas uses a multi-stage process to ensure that Rapid Response activities are supported appropriately and efficiently. The process follows the following steps:

1. Rapid Response coordinator communicates State notices of employer layoffs to appropriate members of the Rapid Response team,
2. Rapid Response coordinator meets with Workforce Centers staff members to plan Rapid Response event for unemployed individuals,
3. Rapid Response coordinators and Workforce staff and partners provide information to unemployed individuals regarding all Workforce Center Services, and
4. Rapid Response coordinators and Workforce staff coordinate with State UI representative.

To fully illustrate the underlying processes, the following detailed description is provided.

Central Texas' Rapid Response coordinators work directly with employers and staff from the Workforce Commission to communicate information accurately and appropriately. Rapid Response coordinators ensure that everyone involved knows which entities are having layoffs, how many people will be impacted, and when the layoffs will occur.

Rapid Response activities begin with employee orientations which are scheduled through the employer if possible. Additionally, if lead time is available, pre-orientation visits are made to determine employer needs and discuss the possibility of averting a lay-off through Workforce Commission endorsed activities such as the state's Shared Work program. Workforce Solutions of Central Texas' program supervisors and subject matter expert staff contribute to the planned employee orientations by providing a broad array of information about potential services and assistance that is available to re-engage the effected employees. Workforce supervisors have front-line staff available at the orientations to discuss the overall process as well as activities, services, and avenues for accessing local Workforce assistance.

Essentially, employees are strongly encouraged to rely upon the services available through local Workforce Centers.

Additionally, special or customized approaches may also be arranged based upon the expressed needs of the employer and employees.

### **5.C Youth Activities and Services**

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

#### **Board Response:**

Services for Central Texas Youth

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act, priority for funding is given to out-of-school youth. To meet this priority, substantial outreach is conducted through the local Workforce Centers and through partner referrals. To accomplish this priority in Central Texas, youth services, especially those mandated and funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, are coordinated and provided by Workforce Center staff housed in local school districts and colleges. Youth staff members work with partnering agencies such as the school districts, Communities in Schools, and the Central Texas Youth Services (including specific services for Foster Youth), PAL (Preparation for Foster Youth Transitioning to Adult Living), programs to provide Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act eligible youth with appropriate services as listed in their Individual Service Strategies.

Work-based training and Internships provide customer in the program career training based on real-world employment experience combined with career coaching and employer development so we use objective assessments depending on what the customer wants to accomplish. The work-based training provides a structured assessment that is customer driven. The training provides an environment in which the customer receives soft skill coaching, develops hard skills experience and interaction with potential employers. If a customer wants to pursue an internship, WSCT will require them to complete the one interest profiler. By using the work-based training, we hope find out what their genuine career interests are so that WSCT can place them in the correct paid work experience.

Staff members provide one-on-one counseling and workshops and assistance regarding all parts of the employment process including preparing for employment – job getting and job keeping skills. Staff members also broker employment and training opportunities for the youth customers including monitoring of work experience sites to ensure youth are receiving quality work experiences that will enhance their abilities to get and keep jobs in the future. In addition to coordinated services and support as well as employment experiences, educational services are provided to encourage efforts that lead to high school and college credentialing. Such services could include, but are not limited to, mentoring, tutoring, and basic skills upgrades through educational labs or traditional schools. If the customer is pursuing educational goals, we require to take either the TABE, CASAS or TSI. We education-oriented customers, it is more important to assess ability over interest (initially at least), since post-secondary usually requires higher academic standards.

## Services for Youth with Disabilities

In partnership with Texas Workforce Commission Vocational Rehabilitation staff, Central Texas will participate in a summer program targeting youth with disabilities. Youth with disabilities can participate in a paid work experience program. Youth with disabilities, ages 14-22, who are in school and are either current or potential Vocational Rehabilitation customers will be eligible. Participants will receive employability skills training, either prior to or during their work experience placement. Local Vocational Rehabilitation counselors will assist in identifying students who may participate in Summer Work Experience and will refer them to Workforce Youth staff. The Board and Vocational Rehabilitation staff will partner to identify the students who can best benefit from participation, this will be especially important since it is anticipated that there are more potential participants than work experience opportunities. In addition, youth will have the opportunity to participate in learning activities such as informational interviews to research employers, job site tours, job shadowing, and mentoring opportunities by an employer in the community.

Central Texas' award winning youth program. As the Texas Workforce Commission's 2016 recipient of the statewide Youth Inspiration and Career Awareness Award, the local program has been identified as a "successful model." However, local Workforce Staff continuously strive to improve programs and service options by exploring opportunities and seeking strategies that combine work experience with a training emphasis. Additionally, staff strive to stay abreast of employer expectations and adjust training models to prepare future workers to meet employer demand.

WSCT hosts a summer program, Creating Futures Summer Program, in which youth explored careers at various training sites throughout the seven Texas counties of Bell, Coryell, Milam, Lampasas, Mills, Hamilton, and San Saba. In addition to working, some youth participated in workshops such as Resume Writing, Dress for Success, and Interviewing Tips and a full day CPR training. The Training Site Supervisors served as Adult Mentors. Enhancing the work experience, youth interviewed for the training/work experience in our six rural counties, and in our urban county, youth participated in a Job Fair during which they dressed for interviews and competed for selection with the employers with whom they wanted to work.

The goals of the Creating Futures summer work program are:

- Prepare youth to succeed in employment by providing quality work-related experiences in realistic work situations,
- Improve educational achievement and academic standards,
- Encourage school completion, or enrollment in supplementary or alternative school programs, and
- Connect what youth learn in school to the world of work.

Workforce staff recruited worksites, trained work site supervisors, and identified eligible youth workers. For the youth, staff prepared them with resume and interviewing skills. Additionally, staff members facilitated the Job Fair for youth in the urban area.

Central Texas' Youth at Work has an unquestionable, beneficial impact on the youth who gain a better understanding of the world of work. Additionally, they obviously benefit from gaining work experience and related skills through summer employment. A unique feature of the Central Texas program is our

emphasis on helping young workers understand the importance of an exceptional work ethic. Therefore, the youth benefit for work experiences that focus on “the Big 20” things local employers look for in their employees. Through their work experience and Workforce staff guidance they learn appropriate behaviors related to:

Good Attendance	Leadership Skills	Punctuality	Setting/Meeting Goals
Teamwork	Good Work Attitude	Problem Solving	Following Instructions,
Meeting Deadlines	Honesty	Planning Processes	Self-responsibility,
Proper Appearance	Decision Making Skills	Taking Initiative	Respecting Authority
Communication Skills	Interpersonal Skills	Time Management	

In Central Texas, the 14 required program elements are addressed as follows:

1. Academics—evidenced based program—we partner with Communities in School and AEL programs—tutoring, study skills training,
2. Alternate School Offerings
3. Paid/Unpaid Work Experience—Summer Employment, Internships, and Work Experiences
4. Occupational Skills Training—WIOA Adult program administers
5. Leadership Development—Employability, Life Skills Training (Citizen Skills), etc. we use the curriculum from the DOL—“Skills to Pay the Bills”
6. Workforce Preparation—Work Readiness Skills, Personal Presentation, Application Completion, Resume—Staff provides the training
7. Financial Literacy—FDIC—Money Smart curriculum
8. Entrepreneurial Skills Training—Business Resource Center
9. Labor Market Information—provided by staff and quarterly newsletter
10. Transition Services to Post Secondary—FASFA, College Applications, Assessments – Staff assist with completion of FASFA application and coordinate with the College Financial Aid office.
11. Support Services—Child Care partnered with Child Care Services, transportation, Assistance with work attire/work related tool costs
12. Adult Mentoring—All worksite supervisors are Adult Mentors
13. Follow up Services—Staff provided to include leadership development activities, tracking the progress of youth in employment, Assistance in finding employment again or securing a better paying job, quarterly newsletter
14. Comprehensive Guidance/Counseling—Drug/Alcohol abuse counseling—referral to counseling.

From past experiences, youth involved in the WIOA Youth programs need dedicated case management principles that include client centered, relationship based, and coaching style of counseling. An empathetic staff member who prescribes action centered on client needs and their environmental contexts. Genuine case manager and a customer relationship built on a foundation that support the customers’ ability and capacity toward self-determination and self-sufficiency. A Staff member who is actively focused on strengths-based and outcome-oriented goal structuring tools (ISS). Utilization of the cross-functional teams in the Workforce Centers that plan and strategize across programs teams to

ensure all services are accessible and available to eligible customers while avoiding the duplication of services.

#### **5.D Coordination with Secondary and Postsecondary Education Programs**

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

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

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas has a variety of strategies designed to coordinate with relevant secondary- and postsecondary-education. The approaches are developed to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services in Central Texas.:

First, the Workforce Board membership includes the Presidents of Central Texas College, Temple College, and Texas A&M University, Central Texas. The Superintendent of the Belton Independent School District is also on the Workforce Board. These members provide updates to the Board on secondary and postsecondary programs, career/technology training initiatives, best practice/award winning programs, and challenges requiring Workforce assistance. Further enhancing coordination and expanding opportunities, Board members and Workforce staff serve on School and College Boards and Advisory Committees.

Encouraging coordination through Training Provider Certification, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas provides outcome data for our post-secondary education partners regarding (1) their training programs, and (2) training that would make them more responsive to local labor conditions. Such support is provided through direct contact and visits to training provider facilities. The on-site visits are used to make sure that providers have (1) infrastructure necessary to accomplish the training and (2) instructors who are qualified to teach the subject. While we do not have the desire or authority to force change, staff stress the fact that we will only sponsor training to prepare job seekers for demand and target populations.

Workforce staff are also members of the Centroplex P-20 Regional Council. The local P-20 Council meets regularly to discuss opportunities to improve secondary and post-secondary education/training systems with a focus on preparing students for jobs. They also share best practices and have an annual training event that brings economic information and best practice strategies from other areas and states. The P-20 Council membership includes representatives from:

- Academy ISD
- Bartlett ISD
- Belton ISD
- Boys & Girls Club of Central Texas
- Buckholts ISD
- Cameron ISD
- Central Texas College
- Cherokee ISD
- Copperas Cove ISD
- Education Service Center
- Region 12
- Evant ISD
- Gatesville ISD
- Goldthwaite ISD
- Greater Killeen Chamber of Commerce
- Heart of Texas Defense Alliance
- HEB Distribution
- Holland ISD
- Jonesboro ISD
- Killeen ISD

- Lampasas ISD
- Mullin ISD
- Priddy ISD
- Richland Springs ISD
- Rockdale ISD
- Rogers ISD Salado ISD
- San Saba ISD
- Seton Hospital
- Temple College
- Temple Economic Development
- Temple ISD
- Texas A&M University-Central Texas
- Thorndale ISD
- Troy ISD
- University of Mary Hardin-Baylor
- Workforce Solutions of Central Texas

Finally, Workforce Solutions inspires coordination with secondary and post-secondary educators through Texas Workforce Commission funded Teacher Externships. The overarching goal of Central Texas' Teachers Externship Program is to give teachers an understanding of work requirements so they can develop/revise curriculum that links learning and work demands and thus answers the age-old questions from students, "Why am I learning this? When will I ever use it?" To accomplish its goal, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas in partnership with the Centroplex P-20 Regional Council selects teachers to participate in a teacher externship for 4.5 days during the summer. Participating instructors are given an incentive for presenting results from their classroom experiences at local P-20, Workforce Board, or School Board meetings.

### **5.E Child Care and Early Learning**

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

#### **Boards Response:**

Our plan includes the following goals and support for both current and new quality child care providers:

- Training and Development: provide reimbursement to staff working at Texas Rising Star providers or providers working toward Texas Rising Star certification when they attend local and state trainings and conferences aimed at improving their professional growth.
- Providing scholarships to two local Community College's for employees who are currently employed by a Texas Rising Star provider or a provider working towards certification. These scholarships provide the employee the opportunity to enroll in early childhood development courses allowing the employee to gain the valuable training needed to support early learning in the classroom.
- Provide reimbursement to centers who are Nationally Accredited and are enrolling, renewing or submitting their application for candidacy.
- Continue to provide mentorship support and technical assistance to those preparing for accreditation or re-accreditation. This past year we supported 6 centers in the re-accreditation process and 2 others that received accreditation. In 2021 we will provide support to 2 accredited providers who are working on re-accreditation and 2 other Texas Rising Star 4 Star centers who will be submitting their candidacy for accreditation.

Support improved school readiness through higher-quality child care, including Texas Rising Star, and through partnership opportunities such as prekindergarten partnerships. Central Texas currently has 28 Texas Rising Star Providers. As part of our strategy to increase awareness and need for high quality providers, we have actively recruited 17 new providers interested in becoming Texas Rising Star certified.

The Texas Rising Star program is “a voluntary, quality-based child care rating system of child care providers participating in the Texas Workforce Commission’s subsidized child care program.” TRS Certification is available to Licensed Center and Licensed and Registered Child Care Home providers who meet the certification criteria. The TRS Provider certification system offers three levels of certification (Two-Star, Three-Star, and Four-Star) to encourage providers to attain progressively higher certification requirements leading to a Four-Star level. WSCT currently has 22 Texas School Ready Providers with 1 rejoining the soon.

Texas School Ready is a comprehensive preschool teacher training program that combines high quality classroom materials and curricula with ongoing professional development and progress monitoring tools. Teachers from child care centers, Head Start programs, and public school pre-kindergarten participate in TSR. Throughout the school year, teachers enrolled in TSR are provided tools to help them learn more about the specific instructional needs of the children in their classrooms and how to support children using engaging lessons and activities. The new skills and techniques that teachers learn through TSR positively affect the classroom experience for children.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is a professional membership organization that works to promote high-quality early learning for all young children, birth through age 8, by connecting early childhood practice, policy, and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children. The association comprises nearly 60,000 individual members of the early childhood community and 52 Affiliates, all committed to delivering on the promise of high-quality early learning. Together, we work to achieve a collective vision: that all young children thrive and learn in a society dedicated to ensuring they reach their full potential. Central Texas currently has 17 accredited providers.

Central Texas is committed to serving our Pre-K population through prekindergarten partnerships. We are excited to participate in the Pre-K Partnership Summit being held virtually this spring. We have 3 Texas Rising Star providers who will participate in the summit as they have showed interest in the partnership and possibility of serving Pre-K children. We currently have one Quality provider who is in partnership with a private school.

Texas has its challenges no matter if you are teaching them within the ISD setting or at an early learning center. Both types of settings struggle with capacity issues, having enough qualified teachers and the proper amount of funding to adequately serve these children in a high-quality Pre-K environment. When the ISD and an early learning center can partner to serve the Pre-K population, we can overcome these obstacles together while building on each other’s strengths.

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

As one of the Shared Services Alliances, Central Texas currently has 6 providers, 7 locations that participate in the Shared Services project. The providers in the project have received Procure software at no cost, along with PC's to assist with their business management. Procure software expedites the tasks associated with childcare management, to include finances, security, and communications. This software is used to handle many of the administrative tasks in child-centered businesses in hopes of allowing teachers more time to grow professionally and in turn bringing those skills to the classroom. We believe these providers participating in the project will be able to grow their business skills, allowing them more time spent in the classroom.

#### **5.F Transportation and Other Services**

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

#### **Board Response:**

In Central Texas, the support services most requested by targeted populations are child care and transportation. On rare occasion, customers require and receive services related to work related expenses. Support services are provided to support:

- Training completion,
- Job search/participation requirements, and
- Job retention.

Support services are authorized based upon:

- The need to resolve emergency situations preventing the completion of participation requirements,
- The verification of an employment interview,
- Reimbursement for weekly or monthly completion of paid or unpaid employment,
- The verification of a merit pay raise or promotion, or
- The verification of subsequent employment at a higher wage.

Specific to transportation, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas' strategy for the coordination of transportation resources and other supportive services involves taking advantage of both internal and external community resources to ensure the accessibility and affordability of services. Hill Country Transit District (HCTD) operates the HOP, a regional public transit system that serves a large multicounty area. The HOP provides fixed route transportation and it coordinates many types of trips, including service to passengers with disabilities. The HOP partners with many area social service agencies, including Workforce Solutions of Central Texas, to provide transportation to clients who lack this resource.

For transportation-related expenses funded by Workforce Solutions of Central Texas, transportation is paid in the form of gas cards or refillable back cards for customers enrolled in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) employment programs. This approach promotes immediate access to resources for our most in need customers.

Individuals enrolled in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs, may be reimbursed for miles driven in their own automobile to attend training activities. For this customer group:

- Transportation payments are based on mileage; pre-paid cards are not used,
- Transportation requests for activities other than training such as workshops, job search, and interviews are on a case by case basis and approved in advance by the administrator,
- Purchase of bus fare or other forms of available public transportation is allowable. Taxi fares are not paid,
- Travel reimbursement is made at established per mile rates,
- Training customers must turn in attendance records before receiving payment,
- Proof of participation is required for travel involving other activities,
- Miles are recorded to the nearest whole mile and round trip mileage is computed by adding together and rounding both one way trips and then multiplying the mileage by the number of days as applicable
- The MapQuest Internet mapping service ([www.mapquest.com](http://www.mapquest.com)) is used to determine mileage using the customer's address of departure and the address of the destination,
- Reimbursement for mileage is submitted when the total payment exceeds \$20.00, and
- For TAA customers commuting to a training site outside the Board's established commuting area of 50 miles, Texas Workforce Commission rules apply. If training is within the commute area, WIOA/other grant rules will apply.

Targeted customers requesting childcare assistance will be referred to the Workforce Centers' Child Care Specialists. Parents who are referred from the following programs are immediately authorized based on the referral.

- TANF/Choices,
- Child Protective Services, and
- Department of Family and Protective Services.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) eligible customers are referred and served using the following process:

- Referral to Child Care Specialist;
- For the first 30 training days, WIOA funds, if available, may be used for child care costs with no parent fee and no eligibility requirements. The customer will be informed that the care is temporary, for 30 days only;
- If WIOA funds are not available to cover the first 30 days, child care cannot be provided until Child Care "at risk funding" eligibility is determined;
- If the first 30 days are funded, the specialist will determine income eligibility during the first 30 days;
- If eligible, the Specialist will notify the customer and parent fees will apply if warranted.
- The goal is for the customer to become child care income eligible (at risk) by the end of the 30-day period;
- If the customer is eligible, child care at risk funding will be used;

- If the customer is not child care eligible, WIOA support services eligibility may be established and grant funding used for child care (based on availability of funding). The administrator must approve and funds must be available;
- Workforce specialists must notify Child Care Specialists immediately if a customer receiving child care is terminated or leaves the activity requiring childcare;
- Customers receiving training and living outside the Central Texas Workforce Area may be referred to a childcare service provider in the area where the training activity is taking place; and
- Note: Regular Child Care eligibility shall not apply to grant customers funded from a National Dislocated Worker Grant or other grants with special conditions.

Support services for work related expenses are available, as determined by need, for individuals enrolled in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act customers. Examples of work related expenses include but are not limited to:

- Health cards,
- Licensing expense,
- Job-related equipment and clothing/uniforms,
- Minor car repair, and
- Emergency housing/utilities.

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

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

#### **Board Response:**

Temple College and Central Texas College receive funding from the Texas Workforce Commission to provide Adult Education and Literacy classes. As described previously, Central Texas' work with local Adult Education and Literacy includes communication and joint strategy development through the Central Texas Literacy Consortium. A MOU has been established between WSCT and individually with both Central Texas College and Temple College that outlines the roles and responsibilities for each organization, as well as all related cost for the infrastructure related to the programs.

Under the Central Texas Literacy Consortium, which is led by a Workforce Board Member, the consortium brings together local stakeholders in the community to review the current status of the AEL program and performance as well as expand the deliver through service mediums and locations. WSCT works jointly with the college leadership to focus on efforts to link the AEL Training with employment needs to ensure that the training the participants are receiving is relevant to the job requirements.

Further increasing coordination, at the Workforce Center in Killeen AEL services are provided on site with direct referrals customers to programs. The Workforce Center in Temple, AEL is integrated through programs like "Go to Work" which targets low income and AEL participants and provides training for certificates that lead to employment. The Central Texas Literacy Consortium reviews all AEL Plans and makes recommendations to ensure integration of education and work based learning.

The broad representation from key stakeholders provides a forum for identifying best practices and strategies to best serve individuals facing barriers to employment associated with lower literacy and English proficiency. In addition to coordination, the Literacy Consortium reviews current enrollment, performance trends, service expansion efforts, and issues that limit service options for AEL providers. In this regard, Central Texas is in the process of exploring options to:

- Increase the availability to AEL/ESL teachers,
- Expand classrooms and/or distance learning options for rural areas, and
- Improve efforts to connect classroom education and training to related work experiences.

## **Part 6. Adult, Dislocated Workers, and Youth Services**

### **6.A Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training**

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

#### **Board Response:**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) describes two service levels for eligible Adults and Dislocated Workers. The two levels are (1) career services, and (2) training.

Career services are intended to connect individuals with local jobs through self-help, information assistance, and staff-assisted guidance. Career services will generally be provided through the Career Centers (resource rooms) which are equipped with technologies and staff providing a variety of service options. For the career services level WIOA eligibility determination is not required. As stated previously, the following career services are available at all Central Texas Workforce Centers:

- Labor market information,
- Demand, emerging and target occupations,
- Local jobs and salaries,
- Jobs in demand,
- Financial aid for education and training information, and
- Training providers and success rate information;
- Preliminary assessment/prescreening,
- Employment information including registration with state employment service for job matching and referrals,
- Self-exploration tools,
- Group services/workshops (resume development, dress for success, etc.),
- Outreach/orientation for Workforce programs/targeted population
- Entrepreneurial training, and
- Technology support including but not limited to internet access.

To receive individualized career services, training assistance, and follow-up, Adults and Dislocated Workers must be determined WIOA eligible. Following eligibility determination available services include:

Individualized Career Services requiring substantial/on-going staff assistance. Individualized services are designed to assist individuals who have barriers to obtaining/retaining employment. Individualized career services include:

- In depth assessment / prescreening,
- One-on-one assistance with employment information including staff guidance for registration on work in Texas,
- Career and job search advice from professionally trained career specialists,
- Counseling support to students interested in education or training programs,
- Child care and transportation assistance to employees entering the workforce and students entering education or training programs, and
- Education and Training Guidance.

Training services are provided for WIOA eligible Adults and Dislocated Workers who require/will benefit from vocational training and/or skills certification. Central Texas training services generally include:

- Occupational skills/Vocational training,
- Workplace training and cooperative education programs,
- Private sector training programs,
- Skills upgrading and retraining (including stackable credentials),
- Job readiness training provided in combination with other training described above, and
- Internships/Work-based training.

Additional training options, when available, may include:

- On-the-job training,
- Registered apprenticeship,
- Incumbent worker training, and
- Customized training.

Referral for Adult Education and Literacy Activities training assistance may include:

- English as a second language, and
- Integrated education and training programs.

Follow-Up Services are available for all WIOA enrolled customers. Follow-up is used as a method to promote job retention and increase the potential for wage gains/career progression. Specifically, staff will attempt to remain engaged for customers following employment and program exit with the goal of helping customers who experience unforeseen challenges. If appropriate, post-participation support services will be considered. Based on WIOA guidance Central Texas' follow-up services may include but are not limited to:

- Career planning and counseling,
- Assistance with work-related problems,

- Information about educational and skills development opportunities, and/or
- Consideration for support services.

#### **6.B Priority to Recipients of Public Assistance and Low-Income Individuals**

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

#### **Board Response:**

Consistent with WIOA §134(c)(3)(E) and §680.600 of the Final Regulations the following is the Board's policy for ensuring that priority for adult individualized career and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient.

WIOA Adult Program customers are prioritized according to whether they meet criteria for one of the three priority groups—low income, public assistance, or basic skills deficient. Based on available guidance, following eligibility and priority determination, staff provide services to priority groups in the following order:

1. Eligible veterans and eligible spouses—as defined in WD Letter 25-15—who are also recipients of public assistance, low-income, or basic skills deficient. WIOA Guidelines 15 September 26, 2016.
2. Foster youth and former foster youth—as defined in WD Letter 43-11, issued on November 3, 2011, and entitled, “Priority of Service for Eligible Foster Youth”—who are also recipients of public assistance, low income, or basic skills deficient.
3. All other individuals who are recipients of public assistance, low-income, or basic skills deficient.
4. All other eligible veterans and eligible spouses.
5. All other foster youth and former foster youth.
6. All other individuals, including local Board priority groups. Each Board must establish a policy to ensure priority for the populations described above.

With Central Texas' close proximity to Fort Hood and our unusually large number of local Veterans, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas gives first priority to Veterans and qualified military spouses. Such priority/preference is mandated through Title 5 and Title 38 of the United States Code, Section 2108; the Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 1998, and the Veterans Employment Opportunity Act. Veterans and qualified military spouses receive front-of-line priority for:

- Job Search Assistance,
- Vocational Training, and
- Support Services.

Having noted requirements for priority assistance, next-level priority will be given for adult individualized career and training services to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, individuals who are basic skills deficient, and foster care youth. Such priority will be based upon availability of funding, individual ability to benefit from such training, and program eligibility.

For Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult Program customers, Central Texas' initial eligibility selection targets low income individuals including those on public assistance. Individuals who are basic skills deficient are generally referred to Adult Education and Literacy training programs and partners (previously described); when their skills are improved through initial training they receive priority consideration for additional training assistance sponsored through WIOA.

The Board's policy may include a process that also gives priority to other individuals, as long as priority for those individuals comes after the first three 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, but 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 Board priority groups," as listed above.

WIOA Dislocated Program customers must meet Dislocated Worker Program eligibility. Recognizing that dislocated workers may also have priority as recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, individuals who are basic skills deficient, it is noted that the same priority order used for the WIOA Adult Program applies to the Dislocated Worker Program.

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

### **7.A Fiscal Agent**

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

#### **Board Response:**

The Fiscal Agent for Workforce Solutions of Central Texas is the Central Texas Council of Governments (CTCOG). CTCOG was selected by the Central Texas Chief Elected Officials Consortium Board. Specific responsibilities for the Fiscal Agent are defined in the local Workforce Board and Chief Elected Officials Partnership Agreement.

### **7.B Sub-Grants and Contracts**

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

#### **Board Response:**

Central Texas contracts with procured service providers for the provision of workforce and child care services. RFP documents are designed to ensure fair competition and allow for contracting with an entity for up to four years, based on the Board's discretion. Based on past experience, the Board will assess/evaluate the contract after the first year and each year thereafter, not to exceed a total of four

years. The Board's competitive process complies with the procurement requirements in the Texas Workforce Commission's Financial Management Grants and Contracts and in the Agency-Board Agreement.

Regarding the specific process, Central Texas will develop contracts following a formal Request for Bids/Proposals/Quotes. The Request will be published on the Workforce website and distributed using the Workforce vendors list. A Bidders' Conference will be held, when deemed appropriate, at the Workforce Administrative Office in Belton. Proposals will be rated using a pre-identified weighted scale that aligns with the requirements of the initial Request. The process will include a written Question/Answer period with all responses provided to all bidders.

## **Part 8. Performance**

### **8.A Board Performance Targets**

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

#### **Board Response:**

The following table describes the contracted performance measures Workforce Solutions of Central Texas has with the Texas Workforce Commission. The performance measures remain stable from year-to-year. However, the targets change annually to reflect economic trends, barriers faced by customers served, and other factors as determined through TWC negotiations. For the 2020-2021 performance year, many targets and current performance percentages are not available because of relaxed work and participation requirements related to COVID-19.

<b>Program and Measure</b>	<b>2020-2021 Target</b>	<b>Current % of Target</b>
Employer Engagement: Claimant Reemployment in 10 Weeks	Not Available	Not Available
Employer Engagement: # of Employers Receiving Workforce Assistance	Not Available	Not Available
Choices Full Work Rate – All Family Total	Not Available	Not Available
Child Care: Average # of Children Served Per Day – Combined	2,665	Not Available
Child Care: # of EWC Children Served	Not Available	Not Available
WIOA: Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit – C&T Participants	Not Available	Not Available
WIOA: Employed/Enrolled Q2-Q4 Post Exit – C&T Participants	Not Available	Not Available
WIOA: Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit – C&T Participants	Not	Not Available

Program and Measure	2020-2021 Target	Current % of Target
	Available	
WIOA: Credential Rate – C&T Participants	Not Available	Not Available
WIOA: Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit – Adult	76.50%	121.59%
WIOA: Employed/Enrolled Q4 Post Exit – Adult	76.70%	108.64%
WIOA: Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit – Adult	\$6,500	206.03%
WIOA: Credential Rate – Adult	82.70%	98.94%
WIOA: Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit – Dislocated Worker	82.30%	99.42%
WIOA: Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit – Dislocated Worker	82.10%	105.57%
WIOA: Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit – Dislocated Worker	\$8,600	132.47%
WIOA: Credential Rate – Dislocated Worker	76.80%	96.62%
WIOA: Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit – Youth	76.80%	103.58%
WIOA: Employed/Enrolled Q4 Post Exit – Youth	65.10%	121.28%
WIOA: Credential Rate – Youth	62.50%	0.00%

In addition to contracted measures, once every three years, the Texas Workforce Commission's review team verifies that the Workforce Solutions Offices in each local Workforce Area meet Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act standards. Central Texas' Workforce Centers have been reviewed and were confirmed to meet required standards in 2020.

Further, the fiscal agent for Workforce Solutions of Central Texas is designated by the Central Texas Chief Elected Officials Consortium Board. The designated fiscal agent is the Central Texas Council of Governments. Central Texas' Chief Elected Officials are Board members for the Central Texas Council of Governments, and, in that capacity, they receive fiscal reports at every CTCOG Board meeting. CTCOG also undergoes a full annual risk-based audit, to ensure compliance with all Generally Accepted Accounting Procedures (GAAP), Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB), and Texas Financial Manual for Grants and Contracts (FMGC) standards.

Finally, the Texas Workforce Commission sets standards and measures to ensure that training sponsored by Workforce Solutions of Central Texas results in training-related, high-skill, high-wage jobs. These standards are applied through Eligible Training Provider application and review processes to confirm that the training is in-demand and graduates are being hired to do the jobs for which they were trained.

## **Part 9. Training and Services**

### **9.A Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)**

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

#### **Board Response:**

The Board will use ITA's in all cases involving use of program funds to pay for Adult and Dislocated Worker/NDWG costs. The ITA shall be established on behalf of a WIOA customer eligible for training services and funded with WIOA or other program funds.

For WIOA, the ITA is used only for expenses for programs of instruction certified under the TWC Eligible Training Provider (ETP) system. In addition, funds may be used for occupations that have been determined, on a case-by-case basis to have a high potential for sustained demand and growth in the Central Texas area based on sufficient and verifiable documentation as approved by the Board.

For the NDWG, training programs and providers are not required to be certified under the ETP or appear on the state list.

ITA's may be used for training at out-of-state schools subject to the following:

- The training program must be listed on the statewide ETPL in the state where the provider's main office or campus is located.
- Case managers must document out-of-state ETPL listings in participant case files prior to the use of an ITA.
- The training program must be aligned with either WSCT target occupations or target occupations in a workforce area to which the participant is willing to commute or relocate (See 4.10.06 below).
- The ITA is used in accordance with other existing guidance.

ITA's may be used for training programs in Texas that are outside the Central Texas Workforce Area subject to the following:

- With the exception of the NDW grant, the training program must be listed on the statewide Eligible Training List (ETL).
- The WIOA training program must either be aligned with the WSCT demand/targeted occupations list or,
- WIOA ITA's may support occupations that are ETP-certified demand occupations of another area that the customer is willing to commute to work or to relocate.

Individual participant ITA costs may be limited based on availability of funds as approved by the Chief Operating Officer. If ITA's are to be limited across the board, the limit must be set by the Central Texas Workforce Board. If no limit has been set, the ITA will be for the maximum expected cost of training. On a case-by-case basis, the board designated representative may approve costs that exceed ITA amount. Submit changes to fiscal as a numbered ITA change and enter into TWIST and case notes as a change.

Workforce specialists are responsible for reporting expected total cost of individual programs, by school, in which sponsored customers are enrolled.

Exceptions to the use of ITA's: ITA's are not required for:

- on-the job training, customized training, incumbent worker training, or;
- with prior TWC approval if there is:
  - an insufficient number of ETP-certified providers in the area to make an ITA system effective; or

- a training program of demonstrated effectiveness offered in this area by a community-based or private organization, which serves special populations with multiple barriers to employment; or
- Training at a licensed or regulated institute of higher education for which a contract is made by the Board to provide class-size training.
- A contract for delivery of training services is made with an institute of higher education or school that is licensed or regulated, to include:
  - Contracts that facilitate training of multiple individuals in occupations on the demand/targeted list or occupations for which a high potential and sustained demand and growth has been determined by the Board. This contract must not limit customer choice.
  - Contracts that include pay-for-performance, specifying a fixed amount to be paid based on achieved levels of performance for target populations within a defined period. This requires outcomes to be independently validated prior to payment.

### **9.B ITA Limitations**

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

#### **Board Response:**

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas generally sponsors training for two year degrees and certificate programs. Central Texas does not commonly apply additional limitations of the duration and amount of Individual Training Accounts. However, caps may be imposed from time to time based on the budget and the cost of individual training programs. Central Texas' Workforce Centers Administrators and the Workforce Centers Director have authority to set caps.

## **Part 10. Apprenticeship**

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

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

#### **Board Response:**

The development of all employees within WSCT's organization is very important to the Board. WSCT is a Registered DOL Apprenticeship site in which all employees are expected to continuously develop themselves in their area of expertise within our registered apprentice program, Workforce Professional Apprenticeship. WSCT has a robust training program utilizing an online learning management system in which WSCT covers all costs. Participation in the Registered DOL Apprenticeship is linked to the performance incentives that the employees may receive during their annual performance appraisal rating. Employees are mentored throughout their Apprenticeship as they develop and show competency

on predetermined attributes. When an employee has completed the DOL Apprenticeship, they will have earned an industry recognized Journeymen Level DOL Certificate as a Workforce Professional.

As well as having our own Registered Apprenticeship Program, WSCT is part of the Central Texas Consortium and existing partners focus on these key industry clusters: Advanced Manufacturing; Biotechnology, Life Sciences, and Healthcare; Construction; and Information and Computer Technology.

Two occupation-specific apprenticeship applications will be submitted through Whinstone US Inc. in Milam County Texas. Others will also be developed as the Apprenticeship Navigator engages with employers and employer groups.

Seven local apprenticeship programs will be expanded. These programs are: Airstreams, Apprenti/CGI, Ford Dealers of Texas, OS2, Mils Wright, MASTEC, and Shifting Gears. Five of the seven involve pre-apprenticeship training cohorts for exiting military thus giving veteran preference for their new apprentice selection.

Central Texas' current apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs support our local underrepresented populations. Specifically, Airstreams, Ford Dealers of Texas, Mils Wright, MASTEC, and Shifting Gears target exiting military and military veterans. Since these apprenticeships are recruiting their candidates from the military, their apprentices will not only be veterans they are also as diverse as all aspects of the military. Apprenti/CGI is an apprenticeship program that is just coming to Central Texas. Their target apprentices are 18 years old with a high school diploma, and their screening process is online to avoid any bias. Finally, OS2 works with WSCT to identify individuals who have a background that may have exposed them to medical terminology. OS2 candidates are primarily women and those sponsored through WSCT are often active duty military spouses. For all of the current apprentices, the primary need is either supportive services to cover work-related expenses or tuition assistance for apprentice-specific training that is listed on the Eligible Training Provider list. Other needs are generally occupation-specific and may include, as examples, assistance to address a need for training that leads to industry-recognized certifications, safety, or workplace English.

Regarding the specific number of New Apprentices expected to be trained for the listed occupations and the number of new RAPs to be created or existing RAPs to be expanded for this occupation, current partners have varying pre-apprenticeship training and hiring schedules. Further these partners' training and hiring efforts have been and will continue to be impacted by COVID 19 isolation and quarantine requirements. However, the projected numbers in the above table are expected to be met or exceed proposed enrollment numbers.

#### **10.B ApprenticeshipTexas**

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

#### **Board Response:**

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas (WSCT) has experience working with both of the partner community colleges. WSCT and partner colleges work jointly to develop employer-defined customized training resulting in competency-based skills enhancement. Consortium employer partners are formally committing to submit applications or expand their apprenticeship opportunities. In addition to the four partners named in the Consortium Agreement, WSCT is already working with seven on-going

apprenticeship programs and all are committed to expanding the number of apprentices being trained/hired. The Apprenticeship Navigator will continue to support current programs and also promote and support the development of apprenticeship applications and training opportunities as well as two industry sector/community events. In addition to the Apprenticeship Navigator, the WSCT Business Services staff and the Workforce Board's Director of Industry-Education Partnerships will promote and support local apprenticeship events and employers' apprenticeship efforts.

The Central Texas Consortium and existing partners focus on these key industry clusters: Advanced Manufacturing; Biotechnology, Life Sciences, and Healthcare; Construction; and Information and Computer Technology.

There are often many types of organizations associated with a new or expanded RAP. For the purpose of the WSCT and Consortium partners' project, the primary organizations are the apprentice employers, the training providers, and WSCT including Board and Centers. Recognizing that other partners may have roles and responsibilities associated with a singular apprenticeship program, the following answers focus on the three organizational groups identified.

WSCT and Consortium partners have been promoting apprenticeship opportunities for local businesses for several years. First, there is an issue that seems to influence potential apprentices' interests in joining an organization that offers RAP occupations. Further, although each program may face program/industry-specific barriers, there are some overarching issues that impact employers' interests and capacity to move forward with an apprenticeship application.

The barrier that influences new job seekers considering an apprentice opportunity is that they do not know/understand the advantages associated with being an apprentice. Specifically, they do not know that apprentices become Department of Labor recognized/licensed journeymen and potentially masters in their field. They are also not aware of the fact that they get paid while they learn the job or that increased skills will result in increased pay. To address this issue, Workforce Career Center staff and the Fort Hood liaison provide explanations to potential apprentices. Further, when apprentices are eligible for Workforce funding, Workforce staff encourage participation in apprenticeship jobs by paying the initial work-related expenses associated with the job. As one example, Workforce buys the starter tool kits costing about \$4,000 for graduates who receive an apprenticeship job offer as a result of Ford's pre-apprenticeship training program which is conducted by Central Texas College.

Similar to the issue faced by job seekers, local employers have a variety of misconceptions about apprenticeship programs. As examples, some employers believe they must have a union to be an apprenticeship program, or that RAPs are only for skilled-trades or at-risk populations such as ex-offenders or high school dropouts. To address the issues, WSCT staff and partners explain apprenticeship programs to potential businesses. They challenge the myths by providing factual information and they discuss the advantages of having apprenticeship opportunities. Perhaps the greatest incentive that WSCT has found to influence local employers is the opportunity to:

- Prepare employees to meet the individual employer's specific work expectations,
- Engage them through the availability of a clearly defined develop and growth pathway, and
- Receive support from WSCT that may ultimately lead to funding to support employee training and work-related needs. As described below, potential funding/resources are related to

programs such as Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act resources, Texas Industry Partnership Grants, and Skills Development Grants.

## **Part 11. Public Comment**

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

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

### **Board Response:**

#### **Opportunity to Review and Comment**

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas encourages public input using the following methods:

- Public Notice in local newspapers;
- Email invitations to Public Meeting including elected officials, businesses, educators, economic development, chambers of commerce, and interested community members/stakeholders;
- Open Workforce Board business meeting including posting notice of meeting in the Texas Register, on the Workforce Board Administrative Building, and at the County Court House in the County where the meeting was held; and
- Draft plan posted on the Workforce Solutions of Central Texas website, [www.workforcesolutionsctx.com](http://www.workforcesolutionsctx.com) for review and comment.

In 2020, publication and solicitation of public comment for the Workforce Solutions of Central Texas Strategic Plan included:

#### **Publication: February 12, 2021**

- Public Notice of availability of Workforce Solutions of Central Texas strategic plan modification, 2021-2024, for review and comment at the administrative office of the Workforce Board
- Announcement of 15-Day Comment Period in the area's two largest newspapers on February 14, 2021. 15-Day Comment period: February 14, 2021 through March 1, 2021.
- Posting of the Workforce Solutions of Central Texas plan on the Workforce Solutions of Central Texas website, [www.workforcesolutionsctx.com](http://www.workforcesolutionsctx.com) for review and comment.

#### **Public meeting: February 25, 2021**

- Public comment was solicited as an agenda item of the business meeting for the Workforce Solutions of Central Texas Board of Directors; and

- Public comment will be solicited at the P20 Council Meeting in reference to the in demand targeted occupation list.

The 2021 process and activities surrounding the Workforce Solutions of Central Texas Strategic Plan included the following Public Notice was published in two local newspapers on Sunday February 14, 2021. Workforce Solutions of Central Texas issued the following public notice of the publication of its strategic plan.

The Board of Directors for Workforce Solutions of Central Texas (WSCT) is responsible for the planning and oversight of workforce programs throughout the Texas counties of Bell, Coryell, Hamilton, Lampasas, Milam, Mills, and San Saba. As part of its planning responsibility, WSCT releases this public notice announcing opportunity for the public to review its strategic plan covering fiscal years 2021-2024. This announcement is published in the area's two largest newspapers and on the Workforce website. Dates of publication are February 14, 2021.

The plan is available to the public beginning on February 12, 2021. The 2021-2024 Strategic Plan covers:

#### Board's Vision

- Strategic Vision
- Partnership Strategies

#### Economic and Workforce Analysis

- Regional Analysis
- Demand Industries and Occupations
- Target Industries and Occupations
- Knowledge and Skills Requirements
- Regional Workforce Overview
- Regional Workforce Development Activities

#### Operational Elements

- Description of Central Texas' Workforce System
- Coordination and Integration of Workforce Programs
- Strategies for Coordinating Programs/Services for Target Populations
- Integrated Technology-Enabled Intake and Case Management Systems
- Description of One-Stop Delivery System and Strategies for Providing Services
- Type and Availability of Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Services/Programs
- Training Services, Limitations, and Duration of Individual Training Accounts
- Registered Apprenticeships and ApprenticeshipTexas
- High Performance Strategies and Actions
- Coordination with Secondary/Postsecondary Education
- Copies of Executed Cooperative Agreements
- Coordination of Workforce and Economic Development Activities

#### Administrative Elements

- Identification of Fiscal Entity
- Competitive Process
- Performance Negotiation
- Policy for Service Priority for Targeted Groups
- Texas Workforce Investment Council Requirements
- Comments and Adjustments Resulting from Public Comments

Public Input: A public comment period will begin on February 12, 2021 and end at the close of business on February 28, 2021. WSCT will also accept public comments in an open meeting on February 25, 2021, 9:30 a.m. Comments will be accepted as an agenda item of the Board's regularly scheduled business meeting; business meetings are open to the public. Adjustments to the Plan, including demand and target occupations will be made, as appropriate, based on input gathered during the comment period and public meeting. All comments and adjustments will be submitted to the Texas Workforce Commission as part of the Board's strategic plan on March 1, 2021. To attend this meeting via Zoom please email [jared.porritt@workforcesolutionsctx.com](mailto:jared.porritt@workforcesolutionsctx.com) no later than February 20, 2021 requesting meeting log in information.

The public may access the draft strategic plan on the Workforce website, [www.workforcesolutionsctx.com](http://www.workforcesolutionsctx.com), or interested parties may request the draft plan document at: 200 N. Main, Belton, TX, 76513. Public comments must be submitted in writing – by mail: P. O. Box 450, Belton, TX. 76513; or by e-mail: [jared.porritt@workforcesolutionsctx.com](mailto:jared.porritt@workforcesolutionsctx.com). The deadline for receipt of comments is 5:00 p.m. on February 28, 2021. For more information, call Jared Porritt at 254-742-4517.

The Central Texas Workforce Board is an equal opportunity organization. Auxiliary aids or services are available upon request to those individuals with disabilities. For extra assistance, please contact us at 254-939-3771, ext. 3310.

Public Input: A public comment period began on February 12, 2021 and it end of the day on February 28, 2021. Specific to the demand/target occupation list, comments were accepted as an agenda item of the Board's February 25, 2021 business meeting and the demand and target occupations were adjusted, as appropriate based on input gathered. All comments will be submitted to the Texas Workforce Commission and incorporated as part of the Board's strategic plan on March 1, 2021.

#### Specific Activities

Public notice was published in the Workforce Area's two major newspapers, the Killeen Daily Herald and the Temple Daily Telegram on Sunday, February 14, 2021. Notice of availability of the Workforce Solutions of Central Texas plan for review and comment at the administrative office of the Workforce Board on February 12, 2017 was published in the above Public Notice. During the comment period, the Workforce Solutions of Central Texas Strategic plan, 2021-2024, was posted on the Workforce Solutions of Central Texas, [www.workforcesolutionsctx.com](http://www.workforcesolutionsctx.com) for public and stakeholder review and comment.

In addition to the 15-day comment period, the Workforce Solutions of Central Texas Strategic Plan remains as a link on the local Workforce website, [www.workforcesolutionsctx.com](http://www.workforcesolutionsctx.com), throughout the year to further encourage on-going public review and comment.

#### Comments

Publication and solicitation of public comments were completed with no comments received.

#### Board Approval

The Workforce Board's open business meeting was held at Zoom Video Conference, at 9:30 a.m. on February 25, 2021. The Board approved the Workforce Solutions of Central Texas Strategic Plan, 2021-2024, having received no public comments for incorporation into the final document.

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

#### Local Workforce Development Board Strategic Planning

The Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC) is charged under Texas Government Code §2308.101(5), 2308.302(a), and 2308.304(a)(b)(4), and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) (Public Law 113–128) with recommending the plans of Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) to the governor for consideration for approval. TWIC reviews each Board Plan to ensure that local goals and objectives are consistent with the statewide goals and objectives in the system plan, The Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan FY 2016–FY 2023, which can be found at <https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/organization/twic/System-Strategic-Plan-Update.pdf>.

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

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

The four sections below list and describe the four system goals from The Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan FY 2016–FY 2023 (2020 Update) that identify critical, high-priority system issues for the state. For each goal, briefly describe one significant Board strategy or initiative that fulfills the intent of the goal. Also, please include the corresponding page number(s) within your plan that further details the identified strategy or initiative.

## **System Goal 1 and Rationale**

### **Focus on Employers**

By accessing critical education and labor data sets, employers can better find and plan for skilled workers to meet their needs in both the immediate time frame and the future. Through greater engagement with employers, education and training providers can better design career and technical education content and delivery options that are more aligned with industry needs. Providers can make adjustments in program content to benefit employers and students, as well as address both state and regional economic needs.

### **System Goal 1—Local Board Response**

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s): Page 52

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas has many initiatives that fulfill the intent of the TWIC Goal to Focus on Employers by making connections between businesses and educators so that students benefit from training that meets the employers' in-demand skills requirements. Active membership on the Central Texas P-20 Council and WSCT's Teacher Externship are two such initiatives are interlinked and coordinated to maximize results.

As reflected through its mission statement, the P-20 Regional Council exists "to create a collaboration that connects students to college and job readiness." This concept is expanded through the P-20 purpose statement "to build pathways from education to the workplace." Goals of the Central Texas P-20 Regional Council are to:

- Coordinate efforts between educational groups, workforce development, communities, and businesses in order to promote the development of a college culture.
- Focus on the State's new Career and College Readiness Standards.
- Coordinate and strengthen academic programming and support services among public and higher education.
- Facilitates cooperation between education, community, and business to enhance educational and professional development opportunities for all citizens.

Member organizations include:

- |                               |                         |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| • Academy ISD                 | • Belton ISD            |
| • Bartlett ISD                | • Cameron ISD           |
| • Belton Chamber of Commerce  | • Central Texas College |
| • Belton Economic Development | • Copperas Cove ISD     |

- Gatesville ISD
- Hamilton Economic Development
- Harker Heights Chamber of Commerce
- Holland ISD
- Killeen ISD
- Lampasas Economic Development
- Lampasas ISD
- Salado ISD
- San Saba ISD
- Temple Chamber of Commerce
- Temple College
- Temple ISD
- Texas A&M Central Texas
- Troy ISD
- United Way of Central Texas
- University of Mary Hardin-Baylor
- Workforce Solutions of Central Texas

Working in coordination with the membership of the P-20 Council WSCT sponsors a Teacher Externship program. Teachers and teacher worksites are recruited from P-20 Council Education members and employer representatives. In 2021, 50 teachers will be identified across our seven-county Workforce Area and they will be matched to businesses based on the teachers' subject matter and interest areas. During the Teacher Externship, teachers are paid through Workforce to go to their assigned job site where they shadow various jobs to learn the required skills sets. They are also exposed to work expectations such as dressing for the job, showing up on time, getting along with others, etc. After the one-week experience, the teachers are incentivized to create curriculum that brings their work experience into the classroom and they receive a second incentive for presenting their experience and results to teacher- and/or community-groups

## **System Goal 2 and Rationale**

### **Engage in Partnerships**

Through collaborative and transparent processes, workforce system partners focus on outcomes that improve the employability of all program participants—from across a wide spectrum of capabilities and experiences—to meet employer needs. The leveraging of partnerships to enhance system alignment and outcomes depends on trust, a culture of collaboration both within and external to the workforce system, deep working relationships, and technical capacity to communicate to share needs, data, and information. Partnerships can provide for common planning, intake, and reporting on outcomes, as well as ensuring a “no wrong door” approach to the provision of workforce programs and services.

### **System Goal 2—Local Board Response**

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s): Page 11

The Workforce Solutions of Central Texas manages performance and coordinates improvement strategies through a multi-program/partner Performance Improvement Team. Lead by the WSCT Deputy Executive Director, the team includes representation from all Workforce-funded programs as well as all partner programs. Program representatives/subject matter experts provide performance information and describe performance-related issues for the following programs:

- Wagner Peyser Employment Services Programs
- WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs
- WIOA National Dislocated Worker Grant Program
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Choices Program
- Supplemental Nutrition for Needy Children (SNAP) Program
- Non-Custodial Parent Program

- Child Care Services Programs
- Texas Veterans Commission – Veterans and Disabled Veterans Employment Services Programs
- Vocational Rehabilitation Program
- Adult Education and Literacy Programs

During Performance Improvement Team meetings, performance for each program is reviewed, and the representative(s) for that program explain their performance challenges and their planned solutions. Others in the room help to brainstorm for possible solutions that could be supported by multiple programs and they also explore actions in their own programs that may be negatively impacting the performance outcomes of one of the partners. One example of a resulting improvement strategy is Central Texas' virtual job fairs. As a result of COVID-19, customers in all programs were suffering and enrollment was down, to promote employment opportunities in a safe environment, Central Texas program partners began working together to identify job applicant candidates to compete for local job openings. This was especially important because local businesses that were striving to remain open at allowable capacities were having problems filling their job openings. With only three months of providing the virtual jobs the following has been achieved:

- Number of Virtual Job Fairs: 5
- Number of Job Postings: 461
- Number of Job Openings: 5,590
- Number of Participating Job Seekers: 625
- Number of Participating Employers: 43

### **System Goal 3 and Rationale**

#### **Align System Elements**

By improving transitions, aligning programs, and ensuring portability and transferability, Texas improves access and the ability of all participants to complete programs of study, earn credentials, transition to further education, and gain critical employability skills. Texas employers are better positioned to find and hire the employees they need through an enhanced education and training pipeline.

#### **System Goal 3—Local Board Response**

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s): Page 14

Since the U.S. Army Military Base at Fort Hood is centered in the Central Texas Workforce Area, this program is unique to Central Texas. However, the model described below is a best practice example for how to help job seekers transition from one education/training/employment program(s) into sustained employment. The program also reflects the key aspects of training cohorts as described in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

The program begins with a vetting process done by the Army's Soldier for Life-Transition Assistance Program at Fort Hood. During vetting, Fort Hood conducts meetings and leadership reviews data from businesses and their training providers. All participating businesses have job openings that they want to fill with soldiers transitioning out of the military. The vetted businesses/training providers are called "Career Skills Programs" (CSP). Current CSP employer/training programs are:

- GM/Raytheon – Shifting Gears – Automotive Technicians

- Home Builders Institute – Heroes Make America
- Troops to Transportation – CDL Truck Drivers
- Hiring Our Heroes – Corporate Fellowship Program
- Warrior Training Advancement Course – Veterans Affairs Disability Rating Program
- Galvanize – Software Engineering
- Airstreams – Renewable Energy and Communications
- UBC Millwrights – Precision Machinery Professionals
- United Association Veterans in Piping – Plumbing
- SAP – Enterprise Resource Planning Software
- Texas Ford Dealers – Automotive Technicians
- MasTec – Electrical Lineman Program
- McLane – Distribution Operations

Through Army policy and Fort Hood Garrison support, soldiers are released to participate in training in a CSP program up to six months prior to getting out of the military. Soldiers take classroom training and receive hands-on work place training during the six months while the Army pays the soldiers' salaries and maintains their benefits such as access to healthcare. For some programs, the Texas Workforce Commission pays the soldiers' tuitions for classroom training, and Workforce Solutions of Central Texas pays the soldiers' work-related expenses after the soldier is hired and transitioned to the civilian job for which they were trained. This coordinated assistance strategy creates a workforce pipeline for hard-to-fill job openings with specifically-skilled employees. The programs also keep highly-skilled, highly-sought-after veterans employed in Texas.

#### **System Goal 4 and Rationale**

##### **Improve and Integrate Programs**

Accelerate employment and improve efficiencies through shared resources that can be leveraged to create new, relevant, and innovative opportunities that serve the needs of all stakeholders. By addressing high-priority programmatic needs through an integrated strategy, decision-making at the system, partner, and participant levels is improved and system service delivery is enhanced. The changing economic and educational landscapes provide opportunities to share relevant data through appropriate “push” mechanisms in an organized manner to key stakeholders who rely on information generated by system partners.

##### **System Goal 4—Local Board Response**

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s): Page 39

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas has an integrated structure that serves job seekers customers using cross-program, cross-functional Workforce Center Teams. To ensure job seekers have the resources they need to address their barriers to employment, the customer experience begins with a one-page basic needs assessment/check list. Workforce staff immediately review the form and determine whether the customer needs a single service/program or whether the person would benefit from multi-program services.

Customers who would benefit from two or more program services are referred to a Workforce Service Team. Programs represented on the team include all Workforce Programs as well as partner programs.

Thus, job seekers are immediately connected to all resources available through any of the following programs:

- Wagner Peyser Employment Services Programs
- WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs
- WIOA National Dislocated Worker Grant Program
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Choices Program
- Supplemental Nutrition for Needy Children (SNAP) Program
- Non-Custodial Parent Program
- Child Care Services Programs
- Veterans and Disabled Veterans Employment Services Programs
- Vocational Rehabilitation Program

When referred to a Workforce Center Team, individual job seekers are assigned a specific case manager, but eligibility for multiple programs is pursued based on the customer needs and interests. Further, the customer is supported by the team with the case manager taking responsibility for helping the person navigate through and select the services options that the customer wants. The customer-driver coordinated service approach improves customer satisfaction and increases the potential for the individual job seekers to be successful in their training or job search.