



WSB Board Plan

2025 – 2028



Workforce Solutions Borderplex Board Plan Modifications Program Years 2025–2028

Revised: January 2, 2025

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Introduction

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) §108 (20 Code of Federal Regulations §679.500–580), each Local Workforce Development Board (Board) is required to develop and submit to the state a comprehensive four-year plan (Board Plan) that identifies and describes policies and procedures as well as local activities that are in line with the State Plan. This Board Plan must be developed openly and be available to the public for comment for at least 15 days, but no more than 30 days, particularly to members of the business and educational communities as well as various other labor organizations. Along with the submission of the Board Plan to the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), the Board must submit all public comments of disagreement with the plan to TWC. At the end of the first two-year period, the appropriate chief elected officials (CEOs) and the Board will review the local plan and prepare and submit modifications to reflect changes in the labor market and economic conditions, factors affecting the implementation of the plan, changes in financing, changes to the structure of the Board, and/or the need to revise strategies to meet local performance goals.

Part 1. Board Vision and Strategies

A. Vision and Goals

The strategic elements of the Local Workforce Development Board Planning Guidelines (Guidelines) are as follows:

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

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

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

WSB's Response:

Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) is committed to serving as a regional convener for economic development and prosperity by cultivating a skilled workforce. Our mission and strategies focus on promoting economic self-sufficiency for businesses and job seekers throughout the six-county Borderplex region: Brewster, Culberson, El Paso, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, and Presidio counties. WSB aims to leverage data-driven solutions, strengthen partnerships with regional stakeholders, and deliver targeted workforce development initiatives that empower individuals and businesses to thrive in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

Goals for Preparing an Educated and Skilled Workforce

Early Education Services

WSB will continue to expand support for early childhood education providers through our Texas Rising Star program. By investing in professional development, equipment, and educational materials, we will ensure that providers are equipped to deliver high-quality care and education. WSB also subsidizes childcare services for parents and guardians while they are working or in training, helping families access reliable childcare support. These efforts align with WSB's commitment to fostering long-term academic success by ensuring children develop the foundational skills needed for school readiness and beyond.

Youth Services

WSB is dedicated to preparing the region's youth for success in the evolving labor market. To achieve this, we will increase our focus on work-based learning opportunities, internships, apprenticeships, and other career readiness programs. By collaborating with educational institutions, businesses, and community partners that provide vital services to youth, we will effectively reach out to young individuals and offer career pathways that align with local industry needs. Additionally, we will ensure exposure to labor market information and targeted industries, equipping youth with the skills and experiences necessary for successful employment.

Individuals with Barriers to Employment

WSB is dedicated to addressing the needs of individuals facing barriers to employment, including but not limited to those with disabilities, low-income

populations, and individuals with limited education. To support these groups, WSB will enhance collaboration with Vocational Rehabilitation Services and other community partners to ensure effective outreach and access to services.

In addition to work-based learning (WBL) programs, WSB will provide resources, including career counseling, financial literacy workshops, job placement assistance, and mentorship opportunities. We will also work closely with educational institutions to create pathways to education and training.

Through these efforts, WSB aims to empower individuals with barriers to pursue sustainable career pathways and achieve long-term economic self-sufficiency.

Goals Relating to Performance Accountability Measures

WSB is committed to achieving and exceeding the performance accountability measures established by our state and federal agencies. We will align our programs and strategies with these measures to ensure effective compliance and success.

- **Employment Rates:** We will improve employment outcomes by offering targeted workforce development programs.
- **Median Earnings:** WSB will focus on increasing median earnings for all participants, with particular attention to individuals facing significant barriers to employment.
- **Credential Attainment:** We will raise credential attainment rates by expanding access to targeted training programs, emphasizing certifications and industry-recognized credentials.
- **Measurable Skill Gains:** WSB will ensure participants acquire the skills needed for success in the workplace.

Employer Engagement: We will enhance employer engagement and satisfaction by offering tailored recruitment and retention strategies, and customized training solutions that meet the needs of local businesses.

Strategic Goals (2024-2025)

WSB has established key strategic goals, setting the foundation for the WSB Board Development Plan. The goals will ensure that WSB remains agile in addressing the evolving needs of the regional economy while preparing for long-term impact.

Strategic Goal 1: Purposeful Upskilling & Equitable Wages

Objectives:

- Develop & maximize tailored training programs.
- Make clients "ready"/"eligible" for a hot job.

- Establish a plan to train and employ at least 300 transitioning soldiers into upper-quartile occupations by December 2025.

Strategic Goal 2: Provide Work-Based Learning Opportunities

Objectives:

- Develop starter, step, and hot job work experience placements.

Strategic Goal 3: Elevate People Out of the System

Objectives:

- Increase access & entry points for clients through the Power Partner Network.
- Train staff to serve anyone.
- Identify, develop & connect the safety net from the benefits cliff.
- Convene & utilize the Power Partner Network.
- Integrate the childcare family population into all programs and initiatives to ensure that services and programs impact all customers comprehensively.
- Develop the Early Education Center of Excellence with Early Matters El Paso partners.
- Establish and operationalize a WSB Business Solutions Center, offering tailored in-person and virtual services aimed at delivering consultative workforce recruitment and retention solutions, focusing on comprehensive, collaborative, and innovative approaches.

Integration of Processes and Efficiency Improvements

To enhance operational efficiency and maximize outcomes, WSB will implement the following:

- Real-Time Financial Monitoring: Provide a near real-time financial overview to ensure efficient budget management.
- Reduced Processing Times: Continuously reduce processing times for key services to improve efficiency.
- Staff Development: Train staff to improve planning, time management, and project execution skills.
- Client-Centric Enrollment Options: Offer flexible enrollment options into WSB programs, ranging from self-managed to guided and concierge-style services, allowing individuals to choose the support level that best fits their needs.

B. Board Strategies

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

Boards must describe their strategies to work with the partners that carry out activities to align the resources available to the local workforce development area achieve the vision and goals.

WSB's Response:

Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR) and the Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) program remain integral partners within the WSB system. To strengthen collaboration between AEL and VR, the WSB Student HireAbility Navigator and Operations unit will host quarterly sessions to enhance coordination between both agencies. These sessions will focus on providing educational services and targeted upskilling opportunities.

Adult Education and Literacy

The Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) program collaborates with WSB and employers to effectively address individual needs as a required partnership through WIOA. AEL offers literacy and adult contextual learning for individuals requiring extra support, usually but not limited to out-of-school youth and re-entry students. The program consists of skills development courses, college and GED preparation, computer application, and training to improve overall educational attainment. AEL also offers transliteration of degrees to help ensure that academic qualifications are accurately recognized across cultural and linguistic boundaries. WSB sits primarily as a border town and often serves populations who have moved from another country. These initiatives are crucial for enhancing employment prospects, fostering personal development, and contributing to community growth.

AEL and WSB partner with school districts such as Ysleta Independent School District and El Paso Independent School District. Collaborating with local school districts enables WSB to connect with students in both urban and rural communities. We aim to create a 'power partner' model where school districts utilizing AEL services can refer students to WSB for support with job placements, career services, and more. This referral program is intended to reach individuals who may not be aware of the available resources. To ensure effective communication and follow-up on these referrals, WSB and AEL will hold monthly meetings.

Vocational Rehabilitation

WSB will continue its partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR) to advance and expand Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students with disabilities. The Student HireAbility Navigator plays a key role by offering information, training, and technical assistance to Workforce Solutions Offices,

local VR offices, school districts, Education Service Centers, community partners, and employers. This ensures that students with disabilities have access to resources and support that facilitate their successful transition into postsecondary education, employment, or both. Additionally, the Navigator's efforts help ensure that operations, partners, and the community are equipped to provide appropriate referrals and resources, making these services accessible to individuals with disabilities.

WSB and Vocational Rehabilitation Services will also intensify their focus on developing industry-specific Work-Based Learning (WBL) opportunities for individuals with barriers to employment. This will be complemented by upskilling initiatives and certification-based training. WSB will closely monitor and evaluate the outcomes of these industry-aligned WBL programs to enhance pathways to permanent employment.

Vocational Rehab and WSB will continue collaborating on paid Work-Based Learning experiences, including the Summer Earn and Learn and Year-Round programs, which provide valuable opportunities for youth with disabilities to gain work experience and develop skills.

C. High-Performing Board

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

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

WSB's Response:

At Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB), we strive to exceed the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) performance metrics by committing to continuous improvement, innovation, and accountability. Beyond meeting these standards, we are dedicated to remaining data-driven, agile, innovative, and transparent while being responsive to the needs of our community and the state. This approach ensures that the Borderplex region and Texas remain competitive in economic development.

To support our goals, we evaluate strategies that include identifying regional wage quartiles, utilizing a living wage to gauge impact, securing funding beyond formula allocations, enhancing monitoring and oversight, and strengthening our network of community stakeholders and partners.

1. WSB Customers Moved from Lower to Top Quartiles:

We annually update the Quartile Wage report (see table below), focusing

on moving individuals from lower income brackets into the top quartiles, driving upward economic mobility.

2. Number of People Placed at 90% or Above WSB Living Wage:

Based on the MIT Living Wage Calculator for El Paso, we define WSB's living wage as \$17.74 per hour (FY 25). Our goal is to place individuals in jobs where they earn 90% or more of the WSB living wage, allowing them to achieve self-sufficiency without the need for public assistance.

Occupation	El Paso, TX MSA 2023			Gender	
	Employment	Median Earnings	55 Years and Older	Male	Female
Management Occupations	20,680	\$ 38.82	4,156	64%	36%
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	5,960	\$ 33.90	3,438	79%	21%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	19,250	\$ 35.05	895	27%	73%
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	3,150 20%	\$ 31.66	617	87%	13%
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	14,980	\$ 29.45	321	59%	41%
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	1,750	\$ 29.22	2,848	52%	48%
Highest Quartile	65,770		12,276		
Legal Occupations	1,330	\$ 30.36	332	34%	66%
Education, Training, and Library Occupations	23,040	\$ 29.65	4,194	53%	47%
Protective Service Occupations	9,520 13%	\$ 23.67	1,455	80%	20%
Community and Social Service Occupations	4,330	\$ 21.68	850	33%	67%
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	2,540	\$ 19.58	471	57%	43%
Upper-middle Quartile	40,760		7,302		
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	14,190	\$ 19.51	2,764	96%	4%
Construction and Extraction Occupations	11,130	\$ 18.52	1,817	96%	4%
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	44,500 36%	\$ 17.09	9,388	30%	70%
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	32,160	\$ 16.27	6,381	81%	19%
Production Occupations	13,960	\$ 14.89	2,925	69%	31%
Lower-middle Quartile	115,940		23,275		
Sales and Related Occupations	31,050	\$ 13.85	5,973	73%	27%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	260	\$ 12.96	46	56%	44%
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	8,090	\$ 12.86	1,974	61%	39%
Personal Care and Service Occupations	5,380 31%	\$ 11.58	908	30%	70%
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	34,790	\$ 11.13	3,349	46%	54%
Healthcare Support Occupations	21,280	\$ 10.83	4,947	19%	81%
Lower Quartile	100,850		17,197		

Driving Community Growth Through Innovation

WSB's Innovation and Development Department is pivotal in driving regional growth by enhancing existing programs and securing additional grants beyond TWC funding. These efforts expand our reach to individuals and families who may not be eligible for TWC formula grants, ensuring access to essential resources and training. Our team consistently pioneers creative workforce development solutions, tailoring initiatives to address specific community needs. By doing so,

we foster economic growth and create opportunities that benefit both individuals and businesses, uplifting the entire Borderplex region.

Ensuring Excellence Through Oversight

Our Organizational Effectiveness and Research Team upholds the standards of program oversight, ensuring alignment with TWC, the Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC), and our partners. We maintain transparency, accountability, and quality by proactively monitoring and evaluating our programs and initiatives. These efforts allow us to consistently deliver value to our community, adapting to the ever-changing workforce landscape. This oversight protects our reputation and reinforces our commitment to excellence and sustainable economic growth.

WSB meets regularly with contractors to ensure quality customer service, identify gaps, and implement changes to improve program outcomes. Additionally, we have implemented project managers and use a project management tool to track progress, goals, and budgets effectively. WSB also created a technical assistance tool, a WSB Letter, which provides additional guidance to our sub-recipients when necessary.

Strategic Partnerships for Regional Advancement

WSB maintains strong partnerships with key regional entities, including the Borderplex Alliance, El Paso Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, El Paso Community Foundation, El Paso Del Norte Community Foundation, the City of El Paso, El Paso County, The Rio Grande Council of Governments, the University of Texas at El Paso, and El Paso Community College. These collaborations allow us to align and enhance workforce development efforts in the community, enabling resource sharing, skills development, and economic transformation across the region. Through these partnerships, we are building a resilient workforce and shaping the economic landscape to meet current and future challenges by aligning our focus areas and collaborating on available resources.

Power Partner Network

WSB also collaborates with the Power Partner Network, a dynamic partnership between Workforce Solutions Borderplex and community organizations. This initiative harnesses each entity's unique strengths to support individuals with diverse challenges in achieving meaningful, career-oriented employment. By connecting the expertise of various agencies in a coordinated sequence of services, this partnership enhances participants' journey to career-track employment and fosters economic prosperity.

Part 2. Economic and Workforce Analysis

A. Regional Economic and Employment Needs Analysis

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

Boards must include a regional analysis of the following:

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

WSB's Response:

The Labor Market Information (LMI) and career resource information are essential tools for shaping a strong, dynamic economy. These resources provide insights critical to addressing key questions in workforce planning tied to a robust workforce system. LMI helps customers make informed decisions regarding economic and workforce trends, business investment needs, career planning, training and education options, and job search opportunities. Accurate, objective, relevant, timely, and accessible workforce and labor market information is crucial to:

- building a skilled workforce that enhances business competitiveness and economic growth
- strengthening career pathways and guiding skill development for good jobs, economic opportunity, and career advancement
- understanding the evolving nature of work and its implications on the workforce and the U.S. economy
- allocating workforce training and education resources effectively

As we continue to expand our research capabilities, WSB has established itself as a reliable resource for our regional partners, organizations, and customers.

The evolving work landscape, driven by rapid technological advancements and changing infrastructure demands, highlights the critical role of workforce development in fostering sustainable employment for individuals and addressing skill gaps for employers. WSB remains dedicated to

understanding and responding to local labor market needs. The continuous request for research, labor market analysis, and presentations has cultivated the growth and expansion of partnership opportunities. Each month, WSB distributes a Labor Market Report to our partners, detailing the region's unemployment rate, labor force, industry sector distribution, and employment changes by industry.

WSB actively engages in regional economic development initiatives that focus on Borderplex business conditions, outreach strategies, and information sharing. Our partners include but are not limited to local Chambers of Commerce, the City of El Paso, El Paso County, Borderplex Alliance, regional business leaders, and higher education institutions.

To support economic development, WSB continues to expand on specialized research projects, such as comprehensive Wages in the Borderplex Analysis, which impacts the workforce and economic development. This analysis considers other data-driven factors that can influence our regional economic growth, such as expanding our regional Supply Chain Industry Sector, to help identify opportunities and gaps in business retention and development.

WSB is dedicated to creating strategies that address the needs of employers, job seekers, workers, and students in the Borderplex region. A key approach involves defining In-Demand Industries, In-Demand Occupations, and Target Occupations for the area. These lists are developed through labor market data analysis, in-depth research by our team, and local wisdom.

In-Demand Industries

Many industries show strong projected growth from 2022 to 2032, with notable increases in sectors like Computer Systems Design and Related Services (29.7%), Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services (31.5%), Freight Transportation Arrangement (29.1%), and Offices of Other Health Practitioners (20.7%). This indicates a high demand for technical, health, and logistics-related services. Industries related to health and professional services are expanding, reflecting a growing need for healthcare and specialized professional expertise in the region. Many of these high-growth industries are aligned with governor-designated industry clusters, which suggests targeted efforts to support sectors that can drive economic growth.

In alignment with the Office of the Texas Governor Economic Development,

WSB has identified specialized industries that offer growth and development opportunities for our state and the Borderplex region. As the Borderplex region continues to focus on building and growing its economy, WSB has also aligned target industries that were established under the Borderplex Alliance Ascend 2025 plan. The regional plan focuses on optimizing the region's limited resources and supporting industries with the best infrastructure and promise for growth.

The Ascend 2025 Plan and the WSB 2025-2028 plan both prioritize the following target industry sectors:

- Advanced Logistics
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Aerospace and Defense
- Business Services/Finance
- Life Sciences/Health Care

As outlined in the Ascend 2025 Plan, the target industries were identified using a straightforward ranking formula that averaged five key economic indicators: Location Quotient, Market Share, projected Job Growth from 2019 to 2029, Median Earnings per Job, and Industry Gross Regional Product (GRP). This quantitative analysis was supplemented by qualitative considerations, including the risk of automation, favorable macroeconomic trends, existing regional assets, and opportunities for career advancement.

In-Demand Occupations

In-Demand occupations are occupations that have projected employment growth in our region.

The methodology utilized to create the In-Demand Occupations is the following:

- ✓ 10% or more projected growth in the next ten years
- ✓ 20 or more annual job openings

There is substantial demand growth for managerial roles, such as General and Operations Managers and Financial Managers, and specialized positions, including Medical and Health Services Managers and Data Scientists. This indicates a shift towards knowledge-intensive roles, likely due to increased reliance on data-driven decision-making and advanced technical skills. Occupations in technology, such as Computer and Information Systems Managers and Software Developers, are expected to see significant growth,

reflecting the increasing digitalization and technology focus in the region's economy. A wide range of healthcare-related occupations, including Nurse Practitioners, Dental Hygienists, and Physical Therapist Assistants, show robust growth projections. This points to an increasing need for healthcare professionals to meet the demands of an aging population and expand healthcare access. Positions such as Logisticians and Project Management Specialists demonstrate growth, suggesting that logistics and project management are key areas supporting regional business infrastructure.

The growth in technical, healthcare, and managerial roles indicates a need for targeted training programs to develop skills aligned with high-growth sectors, particularly in healthcare, technology, and business management. The diverse range of high-growth industries and occupations highlights an economically diverse region. Emphasis on healthcare, technology, and logistics suggests resilience and adaptability in the local economy, even as traditional sectors like construction maintain moderate growth. As specific occupations, particularly in management, healthcare, and IT, demonstrate high demand, workforce development initiatives focused on these areas will be crucial for sustained economic growth and to address skill gaps.

Target Occupation List

WSB maintains an annual Target Occupations List (TOL) that reflects regional in-demand and emerging industry sectors and occupations. The TOL is developed using labor market data from the Texas Workforce Commission – Texas LMI, in collaboration with Board members and employers.

The list is based on key factors, including employment growth, job openings, and the WSB living wage. The living wage is defined as the hourly rate that an individual must earn to support their family without the need for public assistance. It reflects geographic costs related to a family's essential costs, such as food, childcare, healthcare, housing, transportation, civic engagement, and other necessities.

The following criteria were utilized to create the TOL:

- ✓ 10% or more projected growth in the next ten years
- ✓ 20 or more annual job openings
- ✓ \$17.74 or more per hour (Entry Wage - WSB Current Living Wage)

We also refer to the TOL as the "Hot Jobs List", alluding to the fact that a hot job is an occupation in demand in our region. From this list, we have identified a subgroup of "Hottest Jobs," marked with a flame icon, representing occupations that meet the following criteria:

- ✓ In the top 2 highest paying wage quartiles
- ✓ Entry wages are at or above the WSB living Wage (\$17.74)

Please see Attachment A for the WSB In-Demand Industries, In-Demand Occupations, and Target Occupations List:

[In-Demand Industries, Occupations, and Target Occupations List](#)

In addition to the Hot Jobs, WSB has established a Step-up jobs list to increase equitable access for individuals with diverse educational backgrounds, skills, non-academic needs, and barriers. The list may be utilized to provide training services to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and other Board-approved funding initiatives. The Step-up jobs list aims to:

1. Identify target populations and recruitment strategies that primarily focus on SNAP and TANF populations.
2. Complement the WSB Targeted Occupation List (Hot Jobs) by aligning entry-level job opportunities with regional industry needs and career pathways.
3. Combine multiple credentials, including prep courses, as needed to maximize successful outcomes.

B. Labor Force Analysis and Trends

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

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

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

WSB's Response:

Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) encompasses six counties: urban El Paso County and the rural counties of Brewster, Culberson, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, and Presidio. El Paso County is the most populated county, with more than 863,000 residents, and the majority of the region's employers are located within this county. The rural counties have a combined population of approximately 23,000 residents. The following table presents the population for each of the six counties in the Borderplex region.

WSB County	Population 2022
Brewster	9,454
Culberson	2,181
El Paso	863,832
Hudspeth	3,329
Jeff Davis	1,992
Presidio	6,168

Source: Census 2022: ACS 5-Year Estimates

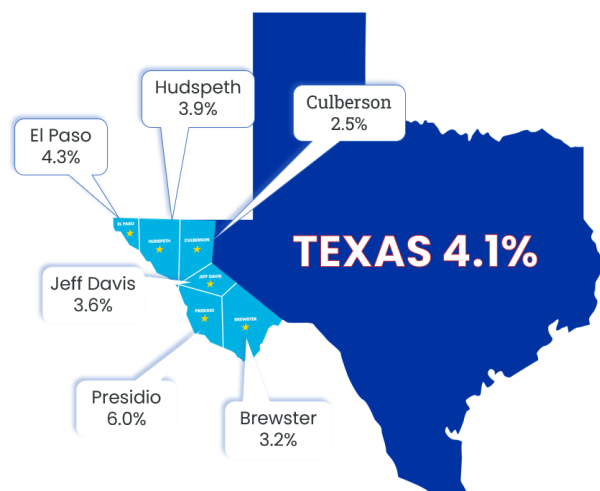
Employment and Unemployment

The Borderplex region's unemployment rate for September 2024 was 4.3%, with 17,449 unemployed individuals. The Labor Force for the Borderplex area in September 2024 was 402,207. Over the year, the Labor Force increased by 9,916.

The number of people employed in the Borderplex area in September 2024 was 384,758, an increase of 9,864 over the previous year.

The number of unemployed people in the Borderplex area for the month of September 2024 was 17,449. Over the year, the number of unemployed increased by 52.

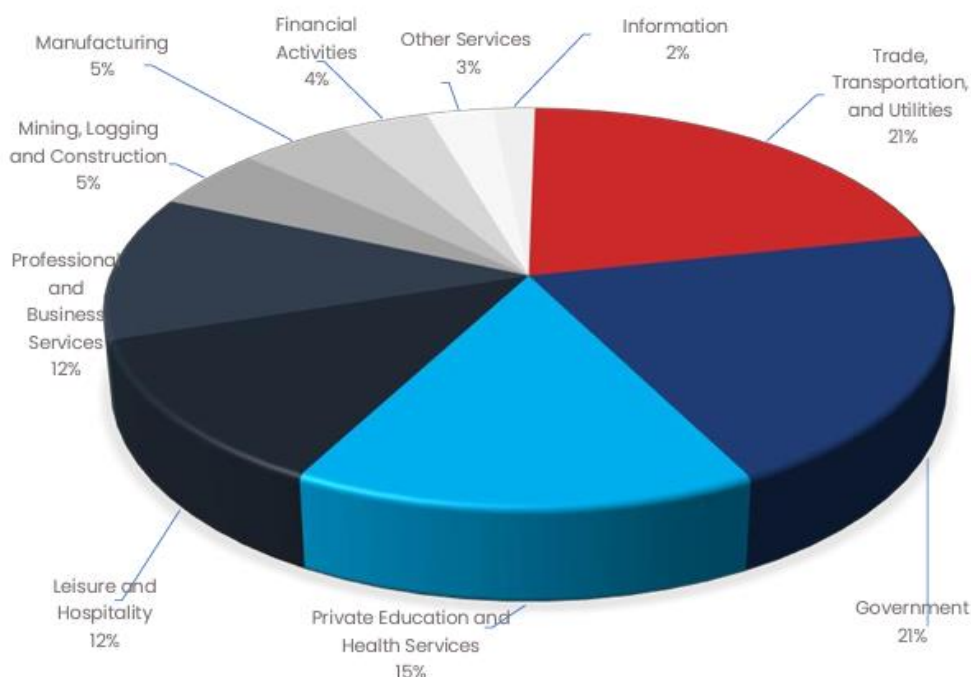
The map below presents unemployment rates for the six counties in the Borderplex region compared to the Texas average of 4.1%. Most counties, including Hudspeth (3.9%), Jeff Davis (3.6%), Brewster (3.2%), and Culberson (2.5%), fall below the state rate. El Paso (4.3%) slightly exceeds the state average, while Presidio reports the highest regional rate at 6.0%.



Source: Texas Workforce Commission, September 2024

The three Super Sectors with the greatest employment for the El Paso MSA in September 2024 were (1) Trade, Transportation, and Utilities; (2) Government; and (3) Education and Health Services. These three Super Sectors represented 58% of the total nonfarm employment.

The three Super Sectors with the least employment for the El Paso MSA in September 2024 were (1) Financial Activities, (2) Other Services, and (3) Information. These three Super Sectors represented 9% of the total nonfarm employment.

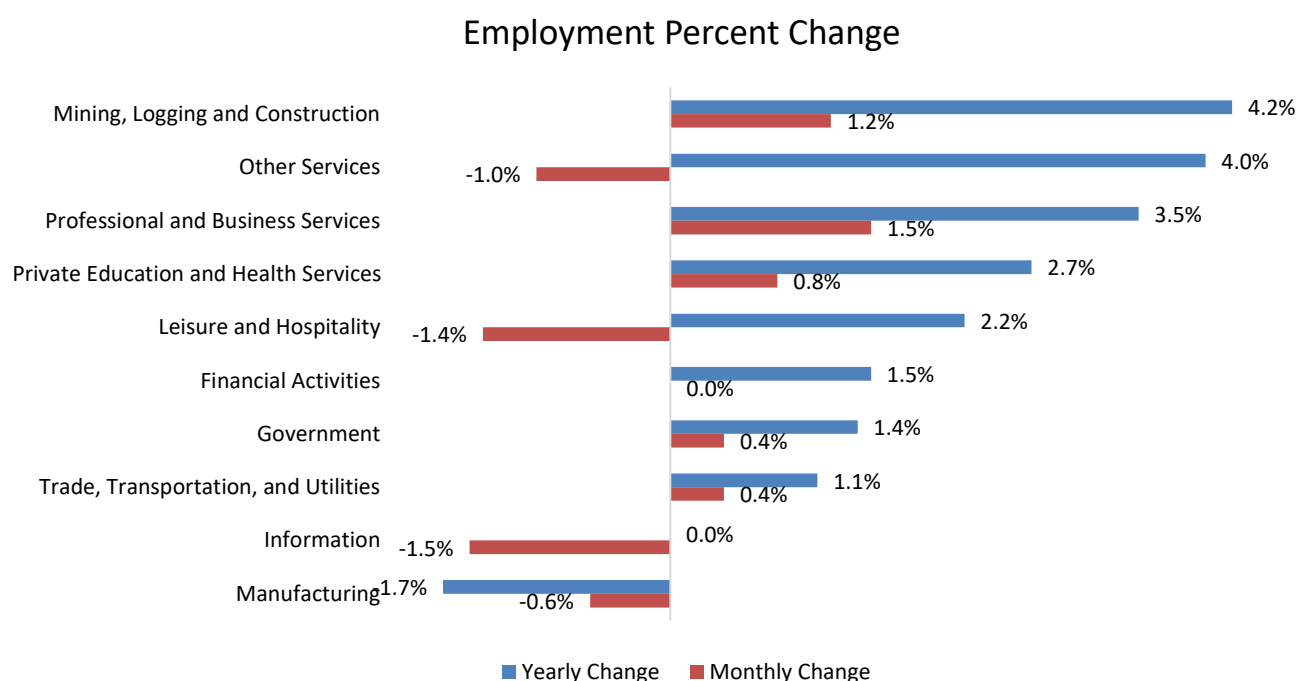


Source: Texas Workforce Commission, September 2024

Current Employment Statistics (CES) indicated that the Total nonfarm employment for the El Paso MSA in September 2024 was 350,000. 6,500 total jobs were added over the year. The total nonfarm employment for the El Paso MSA increased by 1.9% from a year ago (September 2023).

The two industry super sectors in El Paso MSA that had the most job losses or no change over the past year were (1) Manufacturing (300 jobs lost), and (2) Information (0 jobs lost/created).

The three industry super sectors in El Paso MSA that had the most jobs added over the past year were (1) Professional and Business Services (1,400 jobs added); (2) Private Education and Health Services (1,400 jobs added); and (3) Government (1,000 jobs added).



Source: Texas Workforce Commission, September 2024

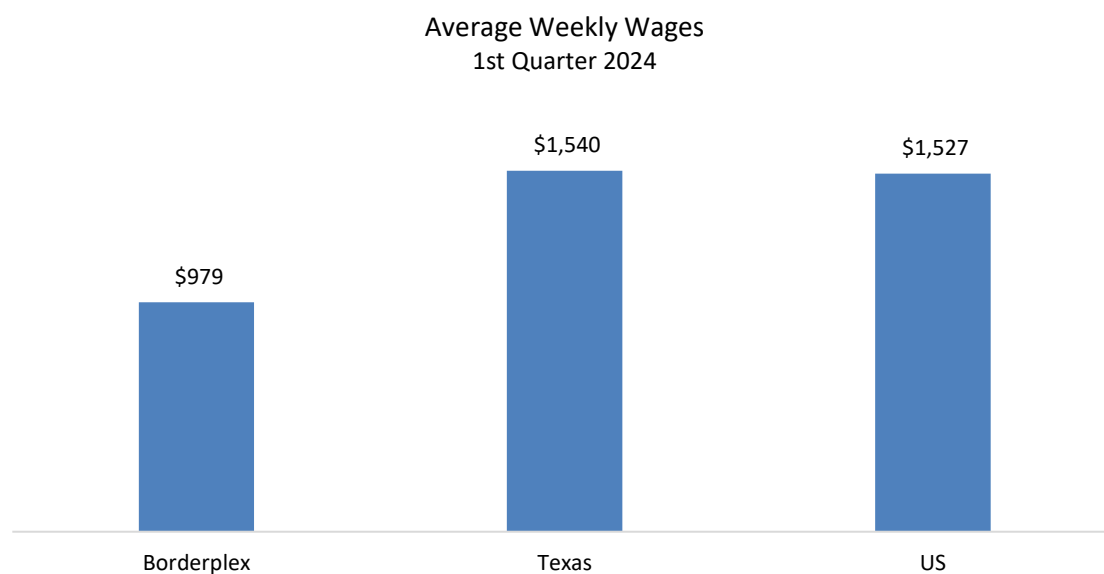
Average Weekly Wages

The average weekly wages for the Borderplex region in 2024 quarter 1 were \$979, an increase of 4% from the previous year, placing our wages far lower than the state (\$1,540) and the national average weekly wages of \$1,527. Many factors continue to contribute to these low wages. Still, low-wage

occupations consistently remain common in the area, such as office and administrative support, sales, and food preparation and services.

Average Weekly Wage (1st Quarter 2024)					
	Q1 2024	Q4 2023	Q1 2023	Quarterly Change	Yearly Change
Borderplex	\$979	\$967	\$938	\$12	\$41
Texas	\$1,540	\$1,427	\$1,480	\$113	\$60
USA	\$1,527	\$1,435	\$1,465	\$92	\$62

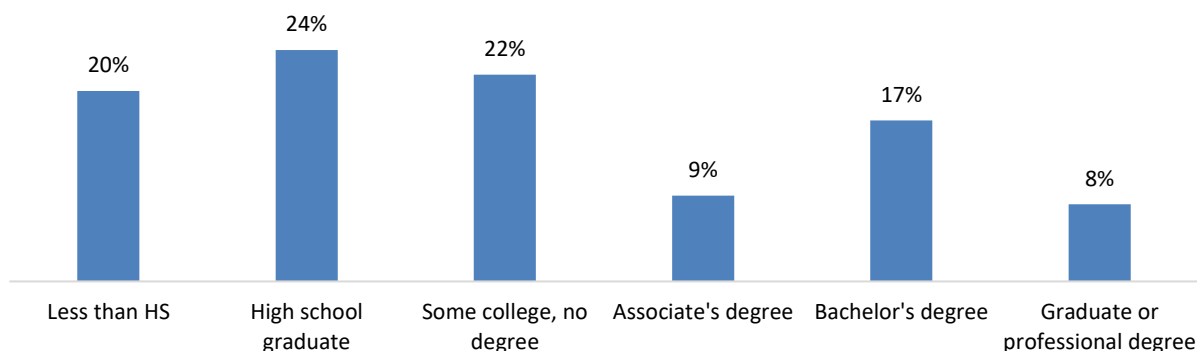
Source: Texas Workforce Commission, September 2024



Source: Texas Workforce Commission, September 2024

Regarding educational achievement, Census data (2022) indicated that 80% of the El Paso County population age 25 and older had obtained a high school diploma or higher, and only 25% had received a bachelor's degree or higher.

Educational Attainment Population 25 years and over



Source: Census 2022: ACS 5-Year Estimates

Gaps in Employment and Education

The table below explains the skills gaps for the WSB region. Approximately 90,000 employees who have high school or some college education earn less than the WSB living Wage (\$17.74).

The Hidden Talent Pool - El Paso, TX MSA	
Total Employees (2023)	323,310
Employees with High School Education & Earnings below WSB Living Wage (\$17.74)	54,233
Employees with Some College Education & Earnings below WSB Living Wage (\$17.74)	35,024
Total	89,257
Employees with a high school & some college education earning below the WSB living wage	28%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) 2023, JobsEQ 2024 Q1

Below is the Employment by Wage Quartile for El Paso MSA. 67% of the total workers are concentrated in the lower quartiles. WSB is working in partnership with community leaders to offer training and work experience opportunities to upskill employees in the lowest quartiles and transition them to an occupation in the top wage quartiles.

Occupation	El Paso, TX MSA 2023		
	Employment	Median Earnings	55 Years and Older
Management Occupations	20,680	\$ 38.82	4,156
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	19,250	\$ 35.05	3,438
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	5,960	\$ 33.90	895
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	3,150	\$ 31.66	617
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	1,750	\$ 29.22	321
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	14,980	\$ 29.45	2,848
Highest Quartile	65,770		12,276
Legal Occupations	1,330	\$ 30.36	332
Education, Training, and Library Occupations	23,040	\$ 29.65	4,194
Protective Service Occupations	9,520	\$ 23.67	1,455
Community and Social Service Occupations	4,330	\$ 21.68	850
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	2,540	\$ 19.58	471
Upper-middle Quartile	40,760		7,302
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	14,190	\$ 19.51	2,764
Construction and Extraction Occupations	11,130	\$ 18.52	1,817
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	44,500	\$ 17.09	9,388
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	32,160	\$ 16.27	6,381
Production Occupations	13,960	\$ 14.89	2,925
Lower-middle Quartile	115,940		23,275
Sales and Related Occupations	31,050	\$ 13.85	5,973
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	260	\$ 12.96	46
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	8,090	\$ 12.86	1,974
Personal Care and Service Occupations	5,380	\$ 11.58	908
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	34,790	\$ 11.13	3,349
Healthcare Support Occupations	21,280	\$ 10.83	4,947
Lower Quartile	100,850		17,197

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) 2023, JobsEQ 2023 Q4

C. Workforce Development Analysis

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

Boards must include an analysis of:

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

WSB's Response:

Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) supports a diverse and dynamic labor market in the Borderplex region, addressing the needs of both job seekers and employers through comprehensive programs and services. The following analysis highlights the region's workforce development activities, strengths, weaknesses, and capacity to meet current and emerging challenges.

WSB provides a range of workforce development initiatives, including:

- Employment services, career counseling, labor market information, community resource referrals, training, and job placement services.
- Work-based learning (WBL) opportunities such as internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training (OJT).
- Skills development through sector-specific initiatives targeting high-growth industries, including healthcare, IT, manufacturing, and infrastructure-related fields.
- Specialized services for veterans, individuals with disabilities, justice-involved individuals, transitioning military service members, and underserved and underrepresented populations.

Education Activities

- **Early Childhood Education (ECE):** Programs to ensure CCS providers meet Texas Rising Star (TRS) eligibility. Collaboration with childcare

providers to increase access to affordable, quality care, supporting working parents and enabling early learning for children.

- **K–12 Education:** Partnerships with independent school districts to provide career exploration, work readiness programs, and access to Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.
- **Postsecondary Education:** Partnerships with El Paso Community College and local universities to align curricula with regional labor market demands. Initiatives include dual-credit programs and industry certifications in high-demand fields.

Training Activities

- Industry-driven training programs funded through WIOA, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), DOL, and other grants as applicable.
- Digital literacy and transformation programs for small businesses and job seekers to enhance tech readiness.
- Expanded WBL opportunities to serve more employers and help qualified job seekers enter employment.
- Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) to upskill current employees, focusing on sectors such as advanced manufacturing, aerospace and defense, and healthcare.
- Customized training for underrepresented and special populations, including single working parents, justice-involved individuals, and veterans.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities

Strengths

1. Strong sector partnerships with employers and industry stakeholders, ensuring programs align with labor market needs.
2. Effective engagement with priority populations, including veterans, individuals with barriers to employment, and youth.
3. Innovative and adaptable programs, such as the Digital Transformation Specialist (DTS) initiative, which demonstrate the Board's ability to respond to market trends.
4. Strategic collaborations with chambers of commerce, educational institutions, and nonprofits to enhance service delivery, as exemplified by efforts to grow aerospace and advanced manufacturing sectors.

Weaknesses

1. Funding constraints that hinder the expansion of programs, particularly for underserved populations.
2. Awareness gaps, as some employers and job seekers remain unaware of available services. Efforts are needed to counter the stigma that TWC is

- solely an unemployment office.
3. Systemically low wages in the Borderplex region challenge employers' ability to offer competitive salaries. This contributes to a "brain drain" as talent migrates elsewhere for better opportunities.

Effectiveness of Programs and Services

- **Success Stories:** Initiatives like the Pathways for Heroes grant and collaboration with Project Arriba to expand nursing training have demonstrated measurable impacts, including increased job placement rates and participant retention.
- **Performance Metrics:** WSB consistently meets or exceeds WIOA performance standards, affirming the effectiveness of its service delivery.
- **Innovative Models:** Work-based learning programs and employer partnerships have successfully addressed skill gaps and enhanced workforce readiness.

Board's Capacity to Provide Workforce Development Activities

WSB has the infrastructure, partnerships, and expertise to address regional workforce needs:

- **Education and Skills Needs of the Workforce:** By leveraging surveys and partnerships with economic development organizations and educational institutions, WSB ensures employer feedback informs educational strategies.
- **Employment Needs of Employers:** Employer surveys, labor market analyses, and ongoing engagement enable WSB to tailor services to meet evolving industry demands.
- **Focus on Barriers to Employment:** Programs targeting justice-involved individuals, transitioning service members, individuals with special needs, and single working parents demonstrate WSB's capacity to serve those with barriers to employment.

Individuals with Barriers to Employment

WSB prioritizes service delivery for individuals facing significant barriers:

- Workforce services and resources for veterans, justice-involved individuals, and individuals with disabilities. For example, WSB operates a fully functioning satellite office within Fort Bliss to provide services for veterans.
- Access to childcare subsidies, transportation assistance, and other support services.
- Wraparound services, including financial literacy, mental health referrals, digital skills training, and utilization of power partner resources and

referral

Part 3. Core Programs

A. Workforce Development System

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

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

WSB's Response:

WSB is dedicated to enhancing economic growth and fostering talent within Texas as the regional Workforce Development Board serves the counties of Brewster, Culberson, El Paso, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, and Presidio. A key part of our mission towards promoting economic development and high-growth opportunities lies in collaborating with employers, educators, and community leaders. WSB is dedicated to designing and implementing strategic initiatives and programs that enhance opportunities and respond to the needs of our regional industries. To align the state's workforce with the demands of critical growth sectors, WSB manages and utilizes the following programs:

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs for Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)
- Employment Services (ES)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Choices
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T)
- Non-Custodial Parent Program (NCP)
- Business Services Unit (BSU)
- Child Care Services
- Rapid Response Services
- Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA)
- Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs
- Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) programs
- Vocational Rehabilitation programs
- National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) program
- Apprenticeship programs
- Career and Technical Education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act

- (Perkins V) (20 USC §2301, et seq.)
- Veteran employment and training programs–Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER)
 - Job Corp programs
 - Native American programs
 - US Department of Housing and Urban Development programs
 - Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act
 - Reintegration of Offenders programs
 - Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker programs
 - Senior Community Service Employment Program
 - Wagner-Peyser Employment Service program
 - Partners for Re-entry opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD)

Partnering with organizations and agencies in the region to provide these services and programs is a crucial part of our delivery of addressing the workforce needs and economic opportunities. The Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) and WSB work closely together to provide services for veterans, which makes up a large portion of our workforce population. Staff from TVC are housed within WSB's American Job Centers to offer additional collaborative support.

Other partners include Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), the local Adult Education and Literacy (AEL), and local education services. These groups contribute largely to supporting our mission to empower all people. WSB and VRS members are dedicated to removing barriers that individuals with disabilities face in the workforce. VRS staff members are present at workforce centers to offer pre-employment transitioning services (Pre-ETS) and provide personalized strategies to help individuals overcome obstacles. WSB and VRS work closely to provide programs for youth with disabilities, such as the summer Earn and Learn and Work Based Learning (WBL) program. These programs offer hands-on work and skill development for youth while offering support along the way.

The AEL partnership works with WSB in tandem with employers to better meet their needs. By providing literacy and adult contextual learning to individuals who need additional support. The AEL consortium supports individuals looking for employment, improving basic skills, obtaining a GED, enhancing computer skills, gaining citizenship, or earning industry-recognized certifications. GED classes are offered alongside industry certifications, with close collaboration with WSB's business services to customize curricula based on employer requirements.

Eligible participants can access various support services, including tuition assistance, training materials, certification exam fees, and transliteration services. The partnership with WSB strengthens job readiness programs, providing co-enrolled individuals with additional support services and workshops

that are available both in-person and online. These workshops address key job readiness topics such as resume writing, interview preparation, effective social media use, and job search strategies.

B. Core Programs—Expand Access, Facilitate Development, and Improve Access

References: WIOA §108(b)(3); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(2)

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

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

WSB's Response:

WSB's network of community partners within the Borderplex area has expanded to connect our resources to more individuals, particularly those who may face barriers to employment. This network helps WSB increase employment services, training, support services, and other educational opportunities. These networks are part of our Power Partner model and include Horizon City Economic Development Center, El Paso County Housing Authority, H.O.M.E, and the Socorro Hub. WSB staff are located on-site to help clients and expand our reach to areas where we do not have a physical location. Other partners we work with offer a referral program where they refer individuals to WSB who want help finding a job, getting training, or more. All our partner locations connect eligible individuals to our services and help connect them to core programs like WIOA, SNAP, TANF, NCP, ES, and RESEA or provide services that best meet their needs to get them back in the

workforce.

To ensure that all individuals receive the support they need to navigate employment opportunities, WSB collaborates closely with Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS). These services are colocated at our centers, providing personalized strategies and assistance for individuals with disabilities. VRS staff play a vital role by offering Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), designed to help individuals overcome obstacles. With staff members stationed at workforce centers, VRS ensures that individuals have the necessary resources and support to successfully pursue and secure employment.

The WSB board meets monthly with operators that provide these core services as well as the childcare contractors to update and provide support to one another. The childcare contractors offer subsidized childcare for parents who are working or in training and help alleviate the worry that parents face of bettering their education or employment or affording childcare. WSB staff also works closely with AEL, TVC, our post-secondary training provider by attending impact meetings and facilitating taskforces.

Coupled with the services WSB offers, WSB also provides assessment tools and resources to help guide individuals when exploring career pathways and the labor market. The Target Occupations List (TOL) highlights the job growth, pay, and openings in certain industries in the Borderplex Area, this is known as WSB's "Hot Jobs" list. The "Hot Jobs" list is used to educate and inform applicable parties about growing industries and highlight job market trends to both job seekers and employers about upcoming career opportunities and pathways.

The "Hot Jobs" list is one of the requirements for local training providers to be a part of the statewide eligible training provider list (ETPL). Being on this list allows eligible students assistance towards paying for school or training. The ETPL not only encourages students to go into training in growing fields, but it helps those sectors ensure they have qualified individuals to meet the demand.

Part 4. One-Stop Service Delivery

A. One-Stop Service Delivery System

References: WIOA §108(b)(6); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(5)

Each Board must include a description of its workforce area's one-stop delivery system, including explanations of the following:

- How the Board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers and how providers will meet the employment needs of local employers, workers, and job seekers
- How the Board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including to remote areas, using technology and other means
- How entities within the one-stop delivery system, including Boards, contracted service providers, and one-stop partners, will comply with WIOA §188 (related to Non-Discrimination), if applicable, and with applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals who have disabilities.
- The roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners

WSB's Response:

The board ensures that there is ongoing communication between staff and the eligible training providers to ensure compliance to meet the needs of the region. Eligible training providers collaborate with a designated staff member from the board, who acts as the primary point of contact and liaison with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). This point of contact serves to facilitate ongoing communication and support, conduct quarterly meetings and individual one-on-one sessions as needed.

During the quarterly meetings, training providers receive updates on requirements and criteria while also having the opportunity to ask questions. These sessions serve as a platform for staff to share new information, updates, or system changes. Additionally, providers gain insights into the demand for training in their region, enabling them to anticipate better and prepare for future needs. This quarterly meeting also serves as an introduction for any new providers who want to join the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)—walking them through the steps needed to apply as well as the criteria TWC requires to be added to the ETPL.

The one-on-one meetings offer personalized support for training providers. These sessions are designed to address specific inquiries and provide tailored assistance. Furthermore, they present a chance for providers to develop actionable plans and refine their services in alignment with the employment needs of the local workforce.

Securing reliable technology and other means to facilitate access to services:

WSB's Response:

WSB offers various ways to assist clients in all parts of our regions by providing services in town and rural areas as well offering remote options to best meet the client's needs. Working to support our rural clients, WSB has a physical location in Presidio and Alpine. To best facilitate access to services, these locations are equipped with the same tools necessary to ensure that clients who reside in Rural areas have the same access to our services as our locations in El Paso. We offer a mobile unit which we use for events that offers on the go services such as access to internet, laptops, printers, phones and TVs. Two of our workforce centers also offer technology to assist individuals with disabilities. Both of our large centers feature a monitor for visually impaired users and Dragon software that reads text aloud. We provide access to a sign language interpreter and can print in braille. Additionally, we have speech-to-text technology and adjustable desks to accommodate wheelchair users.

Maintain compliance with non-discrimination provisions consistent with WIOA §188 and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990:

WSB's Response:

In accordance with WD Letter 24-01, the board follows policies to ensure that customers with disabilities are provided equal access to services throughout the workforce system. These disabilities can include learning, emotional, or behavioral. To determine the best approach to assist an individual with disabilities, an assessment will be conducted to determine the following:

- Identification of language needs; situations in which the customer will need accommodations
- Resources needed and determination of how the resources will be made available
- Communications with customers with disabilities will be as effective as communications with customers without disabilities. Written and verbal communication must be in a language the individual customer understands (e.g., Sign language, Braille).
- Refer individuals with a disability to appropriate resource services (e.g., Vocational Rehabilitation)

When communicating with customers using sign language, appropriate staff or interpreters must be used. Additionally, the inclusion of customers with disabilities will be evaluated to ensure equal opportunity and access to workforce system services.

The Student HireAbility Navigator plays a crucial role in offering information, training, and technical assistance to Workforce Solutions Offices, local VR offices, school districts, Education Service Centers, community partners, and employers. Training includes using the accessible equipment and technology available at the centers and navigating areas or challenges that may arise when working with persons with disabilities at the one-stop.

This support focuses on resources and activities that help students with disabilities transition successfully to postsecondary education, employment, or both. By ensuring that operations, partners, and the community provide the necessary resources and referrals, the Navigator helps individuals with disabilities become aware of and access available resources.

Ensuring one-stop partners understand and execute the established roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners:

The roles and resources provided by WSB's one-stop partners include:

- Grant Association (GA): Is the workforce center operations. Overseeing WIOA program, case management, staff, resource center management and youth program case management. Providing soft skills training, web-based skills, and job readiness. GA also oversees the reemployment services, rapid response team, Eligibility assessment, and Universal client employment services.
- YWCA- oversees our childcare services
- Texas Veterans Commission (TVC): Works with veterans and transitional service members to provide employment services.
- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR): Offers services for job seekers who have disabilities that create barriers to employment.
- MSFW - Services for migrant seasonal farmworkers.

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

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

CFR
§679.560(b)(4)

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

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

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

WSB's Response:

The WSB Business Services Team (BSU) fosters strong relationships between local government agencies, economic development organizations, and businesses. This helps both employers and job seekers by connecting both parties through one centralized entity. WSB supports employers by helping them create and update job listings on Work in Texas, connecting them with potential job seekers who would be a good fit for their organization. Additionally, the BSU team facilitates hiring

events, either virtually or in person, link job seekers with a range of industries, which can be tailored to focus on specific industries to set job seekers up for long-term success.

WSB further supports by providing assistance to employers in areas such

as recruitment, workforce upskilling, business growth, and closures. The BSU partners closely with employers to identify qualified candidates, provides guidance on labor laws and unemployment insurance, and assists with fidelity bonding. WSB can also conduct applicant testing and screening to ensure candidates meet eligibility requirements for employment.

BSU also offers employers options to upskill current employees to contribute towards employee retention and advancement through gaining industry recognized credentials and enhanced skills through various federal, state and local program funding sources. Some of these programs include:

- WIOA adult and dislocated worker funds
- Skills Development Fund, Skills for Small Businesses
- Other awarded state and local grant funding, including American Rescue Plan

Additionally, the WSB business services team provides workforce data from TWC and the WSB research team to businesses of all sizes to inform the business community of trends in economic conditions. This method consists of the data being closely analyzed, interpreted, and conclusions drawn regarding metro El Paso workforce needs.

One way that WSB uniquely helps job seekers is by promoting entrepreneurial-skills training is through utilizing Texas Workforce Commission's Texas Industry Partnership (TIP) Grant. The TIP Grant supports entrepreneurial skills training by connecting participants with practical, real-world experience in business development and management. Through TIP funding, WSB can partner with local businesses and training providers to offer skills-focused workshops, mentorship, and internships that align with entrepreneurial training objectives.

This includes structured programs that teach foundational skills like financial literacy, marketing, business planning, and customer relations. By working with local entrepreneurs and business leaders as mentors, participants gain hands-on insights and are often able to apply what they learn directly in real-world settings. This approach promotes entrepreneurial skills and helps meet regional workforce demands by creating a pipeline of skilled individuals who may become future business owners or leaders in the community. TIP grants also allow WSB to subsidize some of the training costs, making entrepreneurial skills training accessible to a broader range of participants.

To support the local workforce and help businesses reach various benchmarks, WSB offers avenues for employees to broaden their skill set while using quantifiable data to illustrate employees' progress and how it impacts the

business community. To enhance the candidates within the metro El Paso area job market WSB provides work-based learning (WBL) program in which job seekers may apply to gain real-world experience in the industry of their choosing. WBL participants can strengthen their skills in any of the following ways:

- Internships: Paid or non-paid training for the duration of the program
- On-the-Job Training: Partially subsidized wages for employees during the training periods
- Apprenticeships and Pre-Apprenticeships: This method provides a career pathway through paid work experience and industry-recognized credential
- Job shadowing: Fostering informal collaborations between companies and organizations for non-traditional skills training
- Wrap-around services: Assistance with certification fees, work-related items, transportation, and childcare if available

To engage with the community and reach citizens in need of WSB services, it is important for WSB to work with microenterprises in El Paso to strengthen outreach efforts. A unique way WSB works in the community is by inviting small, local organizations in all areas of El Paso to be a Power Partner. When an organization is a Power Partner, they agree to offer services that WSB centers offer to clients that are unable to get access to a center. Power Partner sites are a great location for WSB to host community events and are essential to reaching the most vulnerable populations most in need of WSB assistance. Smaller, more intimate settings offer a more engaging approach to reach potential clients and local entrepreneurs directly. Furthermore, WSB is developing training programs through the 8A association that will help businesses connect to larger local, state and federal contracts. The training will help with business development, strategic planning, procurement and marketing to support an employer by identifying contracting opportunities to boost their business.

In addition to the relationships being built through Power Partners, WSB is also in collaboration with the local chambers and small business development organizations. As a result of this collaboration, workforce development services and resources such as digital transformation, incumbent worker training, and other support services tailored to the needs of microenterprises and small businesses are being promoted and continuously approved upon.

One aspect many individuals confuse is the WSB is not the unemployment office; we assist job seekers who qualify for unemployment to obtain employment. WSB is an American Job Center (AJC), a designated private room

for individuals with questions or concerns about unemployment benefits. This room is equipped with a telephone that connects directly to the unemployment office, ensuring access for those without their own phone or who have difficulty connecting. While WSB does not directly manage unemployment benefits, we frequently assist individuals who seek help in this area. Rather than turn away those in need, we strive to provide support and resources to bridge the gap. At the board level, WSB develops informational material, such as flyers, that include essential details such as the application number, website, necessary documentation for applying, and a QR code for additional information. We distribute these flyers to individuals who visit our headquarters seeking assistance with unemployment services.

C. Coordination of Wagner-Peyser Services

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

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

WSB's Response:

The Employment Services (ES) team fosters strong networking and working relationships with both employers and job seekers within the Borderplex region. This connection allows for better insights that help the job seeker, and the employer find contributing and long-term workers. Staying informed about current Workforce Development (WD) letters, amendments, board initiatives, and partner programs allows ES staff to be aware of any changes that could impact staff or their clients.

The first step in the service delivery process is to assess the client's eligibility for services. Previously, only RESEA clients needed to complete a Wagner-Peyser (WP) application, but as of March 18th, 2024, all clients receiving services need to have this application completed prior to client assessment. This application is built when the client creates their Work in Texas account. While a resume is not necessary to complete the application, it is required to be uploaded to their Work in Texas account before they apply for jobs through Work in Texas. WSB Board is working with staff to develop a process in which clients complete the portion of the WP before their scheduled meeting with a Career Navigator. This aims to ensure the one-stop meeting time between the client and Career Navigator is as efficient and productive as possible and the WP is properly completed to avoid duplication of services.

Technology plays a crucial role in the project management of clients.

Tools such as Work in Texas, Microsoft TEAMS, Outlook, Salesforce, Monday, and Premier Platform are used to monitor progress and track services to avoid duplication of services. Clients receive regular check-ins through Employment services until they seek employment. All services are offered in both English and Spanish as well as virtually or in person to provide quality service. Employment Services utilize TEAMS, Zoom, TextUS, Work in Texas emails, and Premier Platform to participate in pop-up events.

Employment Services receives annual training to comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to ensure that there are proper measures in place to assist individuals with disabilities with physical and programmatic accessibility throughout all facilities, programs/services, and technology.

D. Integrated, Technology-Enabled Intake and Case Management

References: WIOA §108(b)(21); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(20)

Boards must include a description of how one-stop centers are implementing and transitioning to WorkinTexas.com for the programs carried out under WIOA and by one-stop partners.

WSB's Response:

The one-stop partners are leveraging technology to improve the customer experience and the efficiency of the staff providing these services. This section will cover how technology is implemented for both clients and staff to enhance interaction and productivity.

Client technology experience:

Upon entering one of our offices, clients are required to use our check-in system. This initial step allows them to provide their contact information and specify the services they need for that visit. The check-in system streamlines the process by automatically directing clients to the appropriate department.

For job seekers, technology is integrated throughout their experience. We provide access to computers and printers for resume preparation and assist individuals in creating a Work in Texas (WIT) account. The WIT website enables job seekers to search for local job openings, participate in both in-person and virtual hiring fairs, and update their virtual resumes. If they encounter technical issues, such as resetting passwords or updating contact information, they can receive support from WSB staff by submitting an inquiry ticket online or visiting one of our centers.

Clients also have another option for getting connected to WSB. They can

submit a help ticket through TWC's Help Desk Portal. This online form allows users to outline their questions or concerns, along with their contact information and location. The submission is automatically routed to the appropriate board, and a confirmation is sent to the client. Subsequently, a WSB representative will follow up with those sent from the Borderplex area to address their inquiries and provide the necessary assistance.

To qualify for various WSB programs, individuals are required to complete an eligibility form. This form helps determine their eligibility for available programs. To streamline this process, clients can fill out the form online at their convenience, ensuring that their appointment with an eligibility specialist is efficient.

While much of the form can be completed online, certain sections must be finalized in person with WSB staff to ensure compliance. Additionally, WSB staff will review the information submitted by individuals to identify and correct any errors, providing further assistance as needed.

Staff Technology Experience:

Technology plays a crucial role in enhancing the efficiency of client services, as well as supporting staff operations behind the scenes. To ensure participant files are organized and easily accessible, staff utilize a document management system called Cabinet, which centralizes all files, including previously paper records that have been scanned and entered in the system.

In addition, staff use tools such as Formstack and Adobe Sign to manage customer-facing forms, facilitate internal transfers, and obtain signatures. These programs help ensure that forms are properly completed and tracked.

For clients who cannot meet in person, staff leverage various communication methods, including email, phone, Zoom video conferencing, and Microsoft Teams. This multi-channel approach ensures that clients have multiple avenues to connect, even if they lack access to a computer or phone.

To boost productivity, staff utilize Microsoft applications such as OneDrive, Word, and Excel. Additionally, center and board staff employ CRM systems to monitor projects, referrals, and essential tasks. These systems promote accountability and keep all staff organized by centralizing information in one accessible location.

E. Third-Party Partnership in SNAP Employment and Training Programs

Reference: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training Third-Party Partnership Guide

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

WSB's Response:

As the SNAP E&T Third Party Partnerships (TPP) is a 4-year pilot program beginning in Fiscal Year 2025, TPPs, such as community colleges, local governments, private-sector entities, and community-based organizations, have the opportunity to supply funding for the provision of SNAP E&T services through Third Party Reimbursements (TPR). Through this program, TPPs can be reimbursed up to 50 cents per dollar expended. Following further TWC guidance, WSB will use the below framework as a starting point to implement this pilot program:

1. **Understanding SNAP E&T Requirements:** WSB staff and board will familiarize themselves with the specific requirements of the Texas SNAP E&T program.
2. **Building Partnerships:** Community organization partners will be identified to create a supportive network and establish clear roles and responsibilities among partners.
3. **Program Design:** Using TWC guidance, a comprehensive program for TPPs to follow that ensures that the program aligns with SNAP E&T goals set by TWC will be developed in tandem with TWC
4. **Outreach and Recruitment:** Exempt SNAP recipients and mandatory work registrants may participate in E&T services under a TPP. Community centers, social media, and local events can be used to promote TPP services.
5. **Training and Support Services:** Offer relevant training programs that enhance employability, such as soft skills, technical skills, and industry certifications. Additional support services like childcare, transportation, and financial literacy training may be offered if allowable under TWC guidance and compliance.

6. **Job Placement:** Leverage employer partnerships to create job opportunities for participants and assist with job search strategies, resume writing, and interview preparation.

Part 5. Workforce Investment Activities

A. Rapid Response Activity Coordination

References: WIOA §108(b)(8); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(7)

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

WSB's Response:

The Rapid Response program is an initiative aimed at mitigating the impact of layoffs and business closures by promptly providing workforce services to affected companies and their employees. Boards are mandated to offer Rapid Response services when certain qualifying events occur, such as permanent business closures, mass layoffs affecting 50 or more workers, or mass job dislocations due to disasters. Notifications about these events can come from various sources, including WARN (Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification) notices, direct communications from employers, media reports, or community organizations.

Once a notification is received, the Rapid Response Team, composed of a Rapid Response coordinator and any other stakeholder applicable to the employer and employees, must engage with the employer within 5 working days to coordinate an on-site meeting, ensuring that services are delivered efficiently and effectively. The Rapid Response team also provides a breakdown of the structure of the in-person orientation meeting. It provides step-by-step instructions to process their unemployment insurance claim, along with services that will be available to all employees through Dislocated Worker funds.

The orientation meetings for affected employees are crucial as they provide essential information in English and Spanish about services offered through the Work Solutions Offices and assist with registration on the state's job exchange platform.

Rapid Response services are tailored to meet the specific needs of employers, regardless of their size. In preparation for the orientation, employees

are advised to bring updated resumes, which will assist Employment Services Specialists in guiding them through the Work in Texas registration process. Each orientation involves two Employment Specialists to help employees fill out their registration forms. These orientations aim to address the diverse needs of affected workers by bringing together various departments and partners to inform participants about additional resources available to them during this transitional period

Following the orientation, the Rapid Response coordinator will update the employer profile in Work in Texas with the Rapid Response services provided, and the Employment Services Specialist will document the orientation details in each client's profile. Additionally, reverse job fairs may be organized in conjunction with Business Services, thus allowing employers to conduct on-the-spot interviews with affected employees and offer in-depth orientations on targeted industries, labor market information, and stress management seminars. This comprehensive approach ensures that workers receive the necessary support and resources to navigate their job transitions effectively.

B. Youth Activities and Services

References: WIOA §108(b)(9); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(8)

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

WSB's Response:

Workforce Solutions Borderplex provides extensive youth services aimed at helping both out-of-school and in-school youth with one or more barriers to employment. Our services support them in preparing for employment and postsecondary education, obtaining educational or skills training credentials, and securing jobs with career advancement opportunities.

Our region encompasses 20 independent school districts, and WSB works in close collaboration with Region 19 Education Service Center (ESC), a critical partner that connects us directly with these school districts. WSB also actively participates in the Career and Technology Education (CTE) Advisory Committee, a monthly forum to discuss updates and changes to CTE programs. These meetings bring together representatives from each school district and key industry partners, ensuring that CTE programs remain responsive to workforce needs and educational standards.

Region 19 ESC has been awarded the Tri-Agency Regional Convening Grant; a project aimed at designating a regional convener in each of Texas' 28 workforce development areas (WDA). The grant aims to establish a leader in each region who will coordinate the development, implementation, and monitoring of a comprehensive regional strategy focused on building high-quality career and education pathways into targeted industries.

As a designated Tri-Agency regional convener, Region 19 ESC is tasked with guiding the alignment of education and workforce systems across the entire WDA to support pathways that lead to

sustainable, in-demand careers. WSB plays an instrumental role in this initiative, actively supporting Region 19 ESC in achieving the objectives of the Tri-Agency Regional Convening Grant and advancing workforce development across the region.

Through its contracted service provider, WSB offers a curriculum designed to equip both in-school and out-of-school youth with essential career skills, including soft skills, entrepreneurship, leadership, and financial literacy. By working with partners, WSB provides a range of activities that support youth in preparing for college and career paths. These activities include labor market information, academic and technical work experiences (paid and unpaid), and job training opportunities such as summer employment, pre-apprenticeships, internships, and On-the-Job training.

Youth attending high school or pursuing a GED receive tutoring support to help them succeed in testing. WSB collaborates with organizations like The PRIDE Center, Job Corps, and alternative education providers to support disconnected youth in achieving their academic and career goals. Eligible participants can also access support services, such as funding permits, which are essential, reasonable, and directly related to eligible career programs and services in accordance with authorized regulations. Before providing these services, WSB ensures coordination with other workforce center resources and external organizations to prevent service duplication, following WIOA guidelines.

Additionally, WIOA Youth Program participants receive follow-up services for a full year, supporting their sustained success in education or employment.

Connecting Young Adults to Part-Time Employment Opportunities:

When youth and young adults come from disadvantaged backgrounds and/or drop out of high school, they often experience more hurdles, from job and financial instability to unplanned pregnancies and experiences with the justice system. They may struggle to enter society as adults with the skills needed to thrive.

Utilizing funding provided through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, Workforce Solutions Borderplex initiated the Growing Forward Initiative in the El Paso community to support disadvantaged youth populations and address inequalities among these groups. Working with established partners at local independent school districts and with employers in the region, at-risk and opportunity youth were introduced to subsidized employment opportunities – or employment in which the employer receives funding from TANF – to help them gain the skills needed to obtain unsubsidized employment after high school or college.

Individuals between the ages of 14 and 24 obtain part-time employment with organizations from different industries, including education, community engagement, retail and utilities, allowing them to gain a wide range of skills and experiences to apply to future jobs and help increase their likelihood of being hired elsewhere.

Services for Youth with Disabilities:

WSB will continue its partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation Services to advance and expand Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students with disabilities. The Student HireAbility Navigator plays a key role by offering information, training, and technical assistance to Workforce Solutions Offices, local VR offices, school districts, Education Service Centers, community partners, and employers. WSB and Vocational Rehabilitation Services will also intensify their focus on developing industry-specific Work-Based Learning (WBL) opportunities for individuals with barriers to employment. This will be complemented by upskilling initiatives and certification-based training. WSB will closely monitor and evaluate the outcomes of these industry-aligned WBL programs to enhance pathways to permanent employment.

Vocational Rehab and WSB will continue collaboration on paid Work-Based Learning experiences, including the Summer Earn and Learn and Year-Round programs, providing valuable opportunities for youth with disabilities to gain work experience and skills development.

Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL) Program establishes a mechanism by which pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) are provided to students with disabilities, as required under Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which modified the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act). SEAL is a statewide strategy that includes Work Readiness Training and Paid Work Experience for students with disabilities. It will be offered in each local workforce development area (LWDA) during the summer months when students are out of school.

SEAL includes basic work-based learning and training services for students with

disabilities that provide:

- pre-employment work readiness training and preparation for the work experience placement
- work experience to help participants gain familiarity with the workplace environment and develop transferable job skills
- paid compensation for time worked on the job.

C. Coordination with Secondary and Postsecondary Education Programs

References: WIOA §108(b)(10); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(9)

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

WSB's Response:

WSB has developed a strategic plan centered on collaboration, innovation, and efficiency to effectively coordinate workforce activities with secondary and postsecondary education programs while improving services and reducing redundancy over the next two years:

1. Strengthening Partnerships with Educational Programs:

WSB will deepen its relationships with local education institutions by working more closely with school districts, El Paso Community College (EPCC), and universities like Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso (TTUHSC). These collaborations will align training programs with the region's labor market demands, ensuring educational offerings are relevant to employers.

- **Expanding Career Pathways:** Building on successful models like the fast-track BSN program, WSB will work with more schools and colleges to create accelerated or dual-credit programs in fields such as IT, healthcare, and skilled trades. These programs will allow high school students to earn college credits and certifications faster, getting them more efficiently ready for high-demand jobs projected to have continued growth to set students up for a successful career.
- **Industry-Driven Curriculum:** WSB will continue to involve local employers in developing educational curriculum. By ensuring that secondary and postsecondary programs match industry needs, students

will be better prepared to enter the workforce with the skills employers seek.

Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) remains committed to supporting curriculum-based programs for students with disabilities through partnerships with local Education Service Centers and Independent School Districts (ISDs). The Project HIGHER program at El Paso Community College (EPCC) exemplifies this commitment by providing individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, ages 18–25, in El Paso County with the opportunity to earn a level one certificate at EPCC and secure employment in their field of study.

- **Pre-Employment Transitioning Programs:** WSB will collaborate with ISDs to expand the Project SEARCH program. This unique, business-driven, one-year Transition-to-Work Program is conducted entirely within a workplace setting, where participants benefit from complete workplace immersion. This environment enables a seamless integration of classroom learning, career exploration, and hands-on training through various worksite rotations, preparing participants for meaningful employment.

2. **Streamlining Services and Reducing Duplication:**

Through clear and concise communication and transparent data sharing, within the next two years WSB will coordinate efforts with local education and training providers to prevent overlap and ensure efficient services.

- **Centralized Data-Sharing:** WSB plans to create a centralized platform where education institutions, employers, and workforce professionals can share labor market data and training outcomes. This will help avoid duplicated efforts and allow a more coordinated response to regional workforce needs.
- **Regional Workforce Development Councils:** By establishing councils that bring together employers, educators, and workforce experts, WSB will create a space for stakeholders to align strategies and address emerging trends. This coordinated approach will reduce the risk of redundant services and keep everyone on the same page.

3. **New and Innovative Strategies:**

WSB is focused on implementing forward-thinking initiatives that will improve workforce development over the next two years.

- **Micro-Internships and Industry Projects:** WSB will work with local businesses to offer short-term, project-based internships for high school students. One program is the Work-Based Learning program, where

students can gain hands-on experience while helping local employers cultivate young talent.

- **Youth Apprenticeships:** WSB is committed to Expanding apprenticeship opportunities in various sectors, such as manufacturing, healthcare, and IT. WSB will work with employers to offer structured work-based learning programs for high school students, combining classroom learning with real-world experience.
- Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) will collaborate with our local education service centers to develop certification-based exploratory apprenticeship programs tailored to special populations.
- **Employer-Led Training Hubs:** WSB will collaborate with local businesses to establish training hubs focused on high-demand skills. These hubs will be led by industry and designed to upskill workers quickly to meet local employer needs.
- **Upskilling Students with Disabilities:** Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) is partnering with the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) to develop the UpLift All Scholar Program, a postsecondary educational initiative for students with disabilities. This program will introduce an alternative learning model, enabling students with special needs to enroll in a certificate program. Additionally, participants will have the chance to gain practical experience through an industry-based, paid internship at the university.

4. Enhancing Career Guidance and Resources:

To ensure students and job seekers have access to relevant information, WSB will broaden its outreach efforts:

- **Middle School Career Awareness:** WSB will expand its efforts by introducing career awareness programs in middle schools. By helping students understand the connection between their interests and education, these programs will give students an idea of potential career paths they may want to pursue as they progress through school.
- **Comprehensive Career Fairs:** WSB will host annual career fairs, partnering with school districts to bring in employees from the region's high-demand industries. These fairs will include interactive workshops and one-on-one sessions with professionals to give students a deeper understanding of career opportunities.
- **Transition Sessions:** In collaboration with local Independent School Districts (ISDs), Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) will host Transition Sessions for students enrolled in Special Education and 504 programs and their parents. These sessions will cover targeted topics to support Pre-Employment Transition Services offered in conjunction with Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) and Education Service Centers.

5. Tracking Performance and Ensuring Continuous Improvement:

WSB will prioritize continuous evaluation and improvements to ensure the effectiveness of its workforce initiatives. We will conduct quarterly reviews to track progress and drive improvements within a one-year timeframe.

- **Performance Dashboards:** WSB will develop dashboards to track key metrics like program enrollment, job placement, and wage outcomes. These tools will be available to WSB staff and partners, fostering transparency and helping identify areas for improvement and success.

D. Child Care and Early Learning

References: 40 TAC §809.12

Boards must include a description of how they are strategically managing childcare and early learning within the workforce system to enhance school readiness and strengthen and support the childcare industry.

Efforts include:

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

WSB's Response:

Workforce Solutions Borderplex will continue to provide accessible, customer-friendly Child Care services to families across the six-county region. These services include determining eligibility and conducting annual recertifications for qualified families, offering resources to both families and childcare providers, fostering high-quality childcare, and promoting career advancement and upskilling opportunities for families.

- **Workforce Training:** Provide comprehensive workforce training to all childcare staff, ensuring they understand the full range of WSB
- services. This will equip them to better assist parents and direct them to the appropriate resources, leading to improved outcomes for families.
- **Collaboration with Workforce Center Operator:** Work in partnership with the Workforce Center Operator to ensure families have access to the full spectrum of WSB services. Establish an ongoing referral and follow-up system with other Workforce Center partners to offer continuous support to parents and families.
- **Follow-up with Participating Parents:** Foster ongoing relationships with parents through a follow-up process to ensure the successful completion of workforce programs, supporting their long-term success.
- **Promote Early Education Programs:** Encourage CCS parents to utilize HeadStart and Pre-K services offered by all local school districts to support the child(ren)'s early learning and long-term academic success.
- **Employer Partnerships:** Collaborate with CCS parent employers to provide training and certification opportunities that promote career growth and lead to higher wages within their organization.

Managing childcare services within the workforce system, early learning, and helping families on public assistance become independent go hand-in-hand; therefore, WSB will continue to focus on the childcare industry, the education of families, and early educators collectively. The efforts include ensuring that WSB continues to listen to the childcare community to identify their needs, concerns, and recommendations, as well as reviewing employment and education trends, along with feedback from parents and childcare providers, to determine where we are succeeding and where improvement is needed. In addition, WSB will continue to disseminate data supporting and recognizing that access to stable childcare is a valuable benefit for employers. Reliable childcare supports consistent work attendance, contributing to stronger economic growth. Given the high demand for childcare services in the Borderplex area and the number of parents on the waitlist, WSB does not utilize contracted slot agreements to ensure equal access for all families in the region.

WSB will continue active engagement with the Early Matters El Paso Collaborative, underscoring the vital role of early childhood education in regional economic development. WSB will continue to emphasize early learning as a key driver of economic growth and will continue providing essential data to support the

Collaborative's efforts to highlight the importance of quality early education for our children, ultimately fostering a well-educated future workforce.

Workforce Solutions Borderplex Child Care Advisory Committee has representation from licensed contracted early child development centers and homes, childcare services parents, and organizations that work within the early childcare community. The appointed representatives will continue to meet and provide recommendations for improving the quality of the infant, toddler, preschool, and school-age childcare workforce and best practices to assist the Board in improving, sustaining, and supporting the childcare workforce industry. The input from the committee is utilized to develop initiatives and strategies for the support and strengthening of the childcare industry and services to parents and their children.

The past year's experiences and feedback from the childcare industry have identified the need for businesses to transition to the digital world and how businesses are not ready for the transition. Applications for services, tracking attendance, and managing their business overall have become more technical, and the need for support for businesses is growing. WSB will support this effort by implementing a Child Care Business Support Specialist who will provide guidance with acclimation of the new software and systems, such as Kinder Track, Kinder Connect, and Texas Child Care Connection (TX3C). The business specialist will look at the needs of their business and connect them with partners in the community. These grants become available to support, programs, and initiatives available through workforce services. In addition, the business specialist will work on outreach strategies towards building the childcare capacity for parents with a focus on increasing capacity in our region that falls under the definition of a desert area and special population.

Through our childcare quality initiatives, we will strengthen and support the childcare industry with:

- Grant for expanding their childcare capacity. The support would be through the purchasing of equipment, furnishing, and age-appropriate materials to meet the needs of childcare regulation and Texas Rising Star (TRS) certification requirements. While having support and guidance on getting the classroom ready for instruction from a TRS Mentor.
- Educational scholarships are available for the staff to take college courses in early education and pursue a child development associate's degree.
- Provide stipends for their teachers who are obtaining a child development certificate (CDA).
- Access to staff retention support for the teachers who are participating in obtaining a college degree in early education.
- Wage retention efforts that can assist them with the development of strategies to meet their individual needs and wage stipends to support

retaining their teachers.

- Provide opportunities for the teachers and directors to build their skill sets through professional development and training. Areas of focus include age-specific training, brain development, working with children's abilities, curriculum and lesson planning, health and safety, age-appropriate activities for indoor and outdoor play, behavior, and classroom management.
- Access to qualified TRS Mentor staff who will guide, coach, and support them through the TRS requirements and certification process.

By providing professional development, education resource materials, and equipment to our early childhood quality TRS provider industry, they in turn, have helped the children develop the skill sets they need to become self-confident, Pre-K ready, and lifelong learners

E. Transportation and Other Support Services

References: WIOA §108(b)(11); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(10)

Each Board 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.

WSB's Response:

Workforce Solutions Borderplex has developed a comprehensive strategy to coordinate transportation resources and support services, aiming to enhance accessibility and affordability for qualifying customers in need of assistance to remove barriers. This strategy relies on collaboration with various community organizations to provide necessary support while adhering to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) guidelines, ensuring streamlined service.

Support services extended to eligible customers must be reasonable, necessary, directly linked to participation in career services and programs, and upon funding availability. Moreover, support services are based on the Employment Plan of each individual participant. Transportation support includes assistance with gasoline costs, bus passes, ride-sharing services (like Uber and Lyft), bicycle assistance, and other federally approved transportation options. Additionally, WSB offers support for automobile repairs, consumables (such as tires and batteries), and expenses related to state requirements, such as driver's licenses and insurance. This assistance is available through WIOA's Dislocated Worker (DW), Adult, and Youth programs, as well as through the Temporary

Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) employment programs.

WSB connects participants with community resources when transportation assistance is available externally. If external options are not available or are insufficient, WSB conducts assessments to determine eligibility for support services. Per WIOA Title 1, transportation assistance is provided to and from workforce activities by use of bus cards, ride-share services, gas cards, and any other federally approved options.

In addition to transportation, support services for program participants such as help with room and board, incentives, lodging, healthcare, counseling, travel expenses, training-related to be used only for GED-only testing support, work-related costs (like uniforms and tools), needs-related payments, food support, and crisis assistance such as utility support and housing are also available upon eligibility. Furthermore, they also assist with vision care, interview clothing, telecommunications, and child/dependent care.

To maximize funding resources, WSB often enrolls customers in both the WIOA and Child Care programs when applicable. Childcare services may be obtained through community resources or, if necessary, through WSB's Child Care Services, which collaborates with pre-K and Head Start programs to offer comprehensive childcare solutions.

F. Coordination of Adult Education and Literacy

References: WIOA §108(b)(13); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(12); WD 18-23, Change 2

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

WSB's Response:

Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) has established a collaborative relationship with the Far West Adult Education Consortium (FWAEC) focusing on integrating Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) services within the workforce system. This partnership has fostered consistent communication and strategic initiatives aimed at aligning AEL programs with workforce needs,

particularly in relation to targeted occupations.

The collaboration includes training sessions for staff on best practices for client intake and joint outreach efforts with various partners and employers. Training also encompasses the intake of clients via the online referral link to ensure all clients who want to part take in the program are reached. Regular

meetings between WSB and AEL personnel ensure effective utilization and implementation of AEL services.

The AEL consortium caters to individuals seeking employment, enhancing basic skills, obtaining a GED, improving computer proficiency, gaining citizenship, or earning industry-recognized certifications. GED classes are offered combined with industry certifications, working closely with WSB's business services to tailor curricula based on employer needs.

Enrollment in AEL programs follows a structured process: prospective participants attend an information session, verify necessary documents, complete an application, undergo an interview for goal setting and needs assessment, and take an assessment before attending an orientation outlining policies, expectations, and learning plans.

Eligible participants may receive various support services, including tuition coverage, training materials, certification exam costs, and transliteration services. The partnership with WSB enhances job readiness initiatives, allowing co-enrolled individuals access to additional support services and workshops, which are offered both in-person and online. Workshops cover essential job readiness topics such as resume writing, interview preparation, social media use, and effective job searching.

For those committed to more extensive training, WSB offers a Workforce Ready Certification program—a three-day intensive workshop that includes personalized instruction, resume reviews, mock interviews, and the development of an “Elevator Pitch”. Participants earn a virtual Workforce Ready badge upon completion, signifying their enhanced job readiness skills.

WSB reviews applications under Title II to ensure alignment with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and facilitates the transition of AEL participants into employment through coordinated services. This collaborative effort aims to equip participants with the necessary skills to thrive in their respective industries, ultimately enhancing their job readiness and employment prospects.

Part 6. Adult and Dislocated Workers

A. Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training

References: WIOA §108(b)(7); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(6)

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

WSB's Response:

WSB has created a strategy to offer tailored employment and training activities for WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth participants. Each participant undergoes an initial assessment to gather essential information for a smooth transition to services, including registration and eligibility for various programs such as Work-In-Texas and WIOA and any other programs a client may be eligible for. Based on this assessment, WSB staff help clients identify preliminary needs and preferences and then assist in setting and achieving goals using Client-Centered Coaching techniques.

Once eligible, participants receive a more detailed assessment (i.e. NRS National Reporting System for Adult Education) covering basic skills, occupational abilities, educational background, work experience, and other factors influencing employability. The youth program also accommodates assessments at hybrid locations and can administer assessments at a worksite, place of residence, or an established training facility. This information helps WSB staff develop an Individual/Employment Plan with the client that is tailored to the client's skills and interests. Additionally, participants receive labor market information to make informed decisions about their career paths. Once the assessment is completed, funding availability for individual participants in the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth participants is determined based on the current allocation. WSB will continue to facilitate this process and will monitor and improve areas as needed.

B. Service Priority

References: 20 CFR §679.560(b)(21)

Boards must include the Board policy to ensure that priority for adult individualized career services and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient, as consistent with WIOA §134(c)(3)(E) and 20CFR §680.600, along with veterans and foster youth, according to the priority

order outlined in the WIOA Guidelines for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth. Boards must also include a list of any Board-established priority groups, if any.

WSB's Response:

1. Priority of service will be provided in accordance with federal and state rules and regulations and in accordance with all guidance and requirements set forth by the Texas Workforce Commission. Priority will be given to eligible federal qualified veterans and spouses, eligible state qualified veterans and spouses, and eligible foster youth over all other equally qualified and eligible individuals for workforce services as set forth in Texas Workforce Commission [WD Letter 43-11 Change 2](#), and U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) [TEGL 19- 16](#), to include subsequent issuances or replacements. Should a conflict exist between federal, state and WSB' Headquarters (HQ) policy, federal and state policy will control.
2. Eligible veterans and qualifying spouses and eligible foster youth must be identified at their point of entry and informed of their right to priority of service, the full array of workforce services available under priority of service and informed of any eligibility requirements for those programs and services.
3. Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Funds, priority must be provided to:
 - Recipients of public assistance.
 - Other low-income individuals
 - Individuals who are basic skills deficient

WIOA funding for individualized career services and training services will be limited to participants who:

- are unable to obtain grant assistance from other sources to pay for individualized career services and training services; or
 - require assistance beyond that available under grant assistance from other sources to pay for these services.
4. Veterans and eligible spouses continue to receive priority of service for all DOL-funded training programs as defined by DOL and TWC. Priority for WIOA individualized career services and training services must be provided in the following order:
 - Eligible veterans and eligible spouses, as defined by DOL and TWC, who are also recipients of public assistance, low-income, or basic skills deficient.
 - Non-covered persons (individuals who are not veterans or eligible spouses) who are recipients of public assistance, low income, or basic skills deficient in the following order:
 - i. foster youth and former foster youth (as defined by TWC) as

required by [Texas Family Code §264.121](#).

- ii. non-foster youth
 - All other eligible veterans and eligible spouses.
 - Priority populations established by the governor and/or WSB' Headquarters (HQ) in the following order:
 - i. All other foster youth and former foster youth, as required by [Texas Family Code §264.121](#).
 - ii. Local WSB (HQ) priority groups

LWDB priority groups further allow WSB to develop and provide a better-skilled workforce to meet the demands of our regional employers. WSB has identified two local priority groups as follows.

1. Below WSB Living Wage: Individuals whose income is above WIOA's low-income threshold but is below the WSB' Headquarters (HQ) Living Wage. Reference ([Living Wage](#)) to access the WSB HQ Living Wage Calculator by family size.

Low income is defined in the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act as 70% of the Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL) established annually by the Department of Labor reference [WIOA Low- Income Guidelines](#). WSB serves a large population outside the basic federal income guidelines parameters but demonstrates a need for assistance to become self-sufficient and less vulnerable to associated economic hardships and instability. The WSB living wage is defined and updated in the policy manual.

2. Working but Underpaid: Individuals who are currently employed and whose wage compensation is not commensurate with their experience and/or education and require services in order to upskill and earn at a minimum the related occupational entry wage in a WSB Hot Job. Individuals must meet at least one of the following criteria to be considered underpaid:
 - Individuals that have a high school diploma or GED yet no post-secondary credential.
 - Individuals with over two years of work experience are currently employed and have obtained post-secondary credentials but require updated or additional short-term training* or certification to earn, at minimum, the related occupational entry wage in a WSB Hot Job.
 - Individuals who have obtained a degree (Associate or higher) related to the current WSB Hot Job list but require additional work experience or short-term training* or certification to obtain direct employment to earn, at a minimum, the related occupational entry wage in a WSB Hot Job.

- Services must be related to the most recent WSB Target Occupations List (TOL).

*WSB defines Short Term Training lasting six months or less, with limited exceptions subject to WSB Board staff approval. Training may include classroom, online training, and work experience.

Non-covered individuals outside of the groups that are given priority under WIOA

Part 7. Fiscal Agent, Grants, and Contracts

A. Fiscal Agent

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

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

WSB's Response:

Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) is tasked with administering state and federal grant funds outlined in this plan, as well as planning, evaluating, and overseeing workforce development programs and services within the Borderplex region.

B. Subgrants and Contracts

References: WIOA §108(b)(16); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(15)

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

WSB's Response:

WSB will procure the required products and services to perform its mission through one of three methods: 1) Micro and/or Small purchase procedures, 2) Competitive negotiation, or 3) Purchasing Cooperatives & State Contracts. The purchasing thresholds represent limits for the total purchase amount of similar goods and services by all departments in the aggregate, or total, as a

whole contract amount. "Separate", "split", or "sequential" purchases of goods or services made separately and/or over a period that in normal purchasing practices would be purchased as a group or whole in one transaction is a violation of state law and WSB policy.

1. Micro-Purchases - Aggregate amount up to \$10,000: Goods or services up to \$10,000 per purchase, unless superseded by the terms and conditions of the TWC grant award (i.e., relatively simple purchases for which the aggregate cost does not exceed the micro-purchase threshold.). These items can be ordered, received, invoiced, and paid via procurement card (P-Card), check request, or ACH (electronic) payment. Micro-purchases must be made based on whether the price is reasonable. Purchasers can make micro-purchases without soliciting price or rate quotations when using an approved vendor (Approved Vendor list) or if the Purchaser considers the price reasonable based on research, experience, prior purchases, or other relevant information. The purchaser will certify that reasonableness was obtained by providing their signature on the required purchase form(s), Reference TWC's FMGC Procurement Supplement, I.1: Procurement by Micro-purchase Procedures.
2. Small Purchases - Aggregate amount of \$10,000.01 - \$250,000.00: The small purchase method of procurement will be used for purchases of products or services with an aggregate cost of \$10,000.01 to \$250,000.00. Every effort must be made to source and compare at least two quotes required by phone, fax, email, and/or prospective vendor's websites. Purchasers must obtain price or rate quotations from an adequate number of qualified sources for all purchases. WSB recommends (but does not require) that purchasers obtain quotations from at least three (3) qualified sources. Receiving at least three (3) quotations enables the purchaser to more effectively identify underpriced quotes and those that exceed typical market rates, compared to obtaining only two (2) quotations.
3. Competitive Negotiation Method - Aggregate amount of \$250,000.01 or more:
 - a. When more than one source is expected, the competitive negotiation method of procurement is also generally referred to as a Request for Proposal (RFP) or Request for Qualifications (RFQ). The RFP/RFQ procurement process shall be utilized when purchases or services are anticipated to have an aggregate cost

- greater than \$250,000.
 - b. WSB will develop a solicitation that specifies a detailed scope of work, including geographic area to be served, timeline for product or service delivery, and deliverable results or actions, and allows prospective bidders to understand the expectations of the solicitation to maintain a fair and equitable competitive process.
 - c. The issuance of an RFP or RFQ does not guarantee a contract or commitment from WSB.
 - d. Competitive solicitations should be posted for 21 days at minimum, but preferably for 30 days, if time permits, from the first day of the bid advertisement. More complicated solicitations may require longer responses from vendors and a longer posting period.
 - e. If the services solicited meet the definition of workforce services, a pre-award fiscal integrity review is conducted as mandated by the Texas Administrative Code, Title 40, Part 20, Chapter 802, Subchapter B §802.21. The pre-award fiscal integrity review is approved by the Comptroller or designee.
5. Cooperative Purchases: In accordance with Texas Government Code Section 791.025, WSB is eligible to participate in purchasing agreements and cooperatives. The procurement procedures used by the cooperative or network should satisfy the procurement requirements of this manual, e.g., full and open competition, requirements for small purchases, competitive proposals, sealed bid requirements, conflicts of interest, federal debarment, etc. such purchasing cooperatives or networks include, but are not limited to:
- a. Texas Department of Information Resources (DIR); and
 - b. Texas Smart Buy.
 - c. Other interlocal agreements with specific governmental agencies for specific purchases.

Part 8. Performance

A. Board Performance Targets

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

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

workforce area.

WSB's Response:

At Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB), we are committed to meeting and exceeding the local performance levels negotiated with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). These performance levels are critical in assessing the success of the workforce area under the WIOA Title I Subtitle B and the one-stop delivery system.

WSB's strategy includes rigorous monitoring and evaluation to ensure we consistently meet or exceed these measures. Below are the performance measures and systems we utilize to track and assess the success of our workforce area.

Performance Systems

WSB utilizes the Work In Texas (WIT) system to conduct in-depth participant data analysis, including Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage information. This comprehensive approach allows us to effectively monitor and evaluate performance outcomes, tracking key metrics such as employment data, earnings, skills gains, and credential attainment for our participants.

TWC Local Workforce Area Performance Metrics:

WSB adheres to the performance measures set by TWC that are in line with the federal requirements, below are the current performance metrics:

1. WIOA Quarter 2 & Measurable Skills Gains:

- Employed Q2 Post Exit – Adult
- Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit – Adult
- Measurable Skills Gains – Adult
- Employed Q2 Post Exit – Dislocated Worker (DW)
- Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit – DW
- Measurable Skills Gains – DW

- Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit – Youth
- Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit – Youth
- Measurable Skills Gains – **Youth**

2. WIOA Quarter 4 & Credential Measures:

- Employed Q4 Post Exit – Adult

- Credential Rate – Adult
- Employed Q4 Post Exit – DW
- Credential Rate – DW
- Employed/Enrolled Q4 Post Exit – Youth
- Credential Rate – Youth
- Credential Rate – All Career & Training Participants

Additional Texas Workforce Commission Performance Measures:

In addition to the WIOA measures, WSB tracks the following state-specific metrics established by TWC to assess our impact on the local economy and workforce development:

- **Number of Employers Receiving Texas Talent Assistance:**
This metric tracks the number of employers WSB serves through talent acquisition, upskilling, onboarding, and related services.
- **Successful Texas Talent Assistance Rate:**
The percentage of employers that received talent assistance and were successfully served by WSB.
- **Active Job Seeker New Employment Connection Rate:**
The percentage of new active job seekers who secure employment within two quarters of becoming active.
- **Maintaining Employment Connection Rate:**
The percentage of new employment connections maintained for two consecutive quarters.
- **Average Children Served per Day:**
The average number of children receiving subsidized childcare services per day through various funding streams.
- **Childcare Initial Job Search Success Rate:**
The percentage of parents using Initial Job Search Childcare who secure employment and maintain access to childcare services after the initial period.
- **Choices Full Engagement:**
The percentage of Choices families who meet their participation goals through approved activities.
- **Claimant Reemployment within 10 Weeks:**
The percentage of unemployment claimants who are reemployed within 10 weeks.

Part 9. Training and Services

A. Individual Training Accounts

References: WIOA §108(b)(19); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(18)

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

WSB's Response:

Contracts for Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) are established between Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) staff, the individual receiving training, and the eligible training provider. This process ensures that all parties are aligned on the allocated costs, requirements, and points of contact. To maintain consistency and transparency, the contracting process is standardized across all ITAs, ensuring that both clients and training providers are fully informed and in agreement.

In accordance with WD Letter 14-19, Change 3 WSB ensures that all ITA contracts are made with appropriately licensed or regulated training providers while also preserving consumer choice. Except for On-the-Job Training (OJT), customized training, and incumbent worker training, training contracts must be linked to the Target Occupations List (also known as "Hot Jobs"). If the training is outside of our local area but in demand elsewhere, the customer must be willing to relocate or commute. Occupations selected for ITA training must demonstrate high potential for sustainable growth, meet local demand, and align with the criteria outlined in 40 TAC § 840.2(11)(B).

When customers seek training, our career navigators guide them through the options available on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) and other regional training providers. They provide relevant information to facilitate informed decision-making, ensuring that participants can choose based on their specific needs and interests.

For clients uncertain about their desired industry, we implement an assessment process to help identify their interests, skill sets, and motivations. This assessment aids in determining the most suitable fields for them. Even when a client is certain about their chosen industry and provider, we still present all available options within that industry. This

approach allows clients to compare different providers and make the best-informed choice.

B. ITA Limitations

References: 20 CFR §663.420; WD Letter 14-19, Change 3

Boards may impose limits on the duration and amount of ITAs, which must be described in the Board Plan. If the state or Board chooses to impose limitations, they must not undermine the WIOA requirement that training services 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.

WSB's Response:

Training funds are made available through an Individual Training Account (ITA) or project-specific contract. These funds are intended to help qualified residents with access to post-secondary education such as:

- certificate and degree programs
- training for industry-recognized credentials
- support leading to skilled, well-compensated jobs with anticipated high employment demand

ITAs are limited to a two-year period and maximum of \$10,000 for training programs but participants are able to receive support services that go beyond the \$10,000 threshold if necessary. If the training program exceeds the \$10,000 limit, the center provider has 48 hours to notify OER in writing to determine if additional funding will be granted.

In addition to paid training, WSB will utilize open-access matrix training, such as LinkedIn Learning, to supplement paid training and further upscale the client. Matrix training may be used at any point in the client's journey to promote the skills needed in the workforce. The Board reserves all rights to extend these limits on a case-by-case basis applicable to high-impact areas.

Part 10. Apprenticeship

A. Registered Apprenticeship Programs

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

WSB's Response:

WSB is actively encouraging Registered Apprenticeship programs to register with the Eligible Training Provider System (ETPS) for WIOA funding by strengthening outreach and partnerships with DOL-registered apprenticeship programs and unions in the area. WSB promotes apprenticeships with regional partners, businesses, and industries through these efforts to increase ETPS registrations. WSB has also engaged AEL partners, Education Service Centers, and independent school districts, particularly CTE programs, to expand apprenticeships into various industries. Regular meetings have been held to discuss customized training options. WSB will continue to focus on outreach, highlighting the benefits of apprenticeships and encouraging all programs to register with the ETPS to receive WIOA funding.

B. ApprenticeshipTexas

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

WSB's Response:

Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) continues to pursue apprenticeship opportunities to address talent gaps across critical industries, from healthcare to early childhood education and technology. In 2023, WSB partnered with Education Service Center 19 to launch the Teacher Pipeline Apprenticeship Program, the first of its kind in the region. This program, created in collaboration with Apprenticeship Texas, allows Head Start teachers in Early Childhood Education to further their education while maintaining employment to become certified teachers in Texas. Building on this momentum, WSB is now working with the University of Texas at El Paso's College of Education to develop a Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Program, further expanding career pathways in education.

Recognizing the need for skilled Early Childhood Education workers, WSB is partnering with licensed childcare providers to pilot a childcare worker apprenticeship program. Additionally, WSB is collaborating with an established apprenticeship provider to apply for an apprenticeship expansion grant, which will allow WSB to offer two distinct tracks in Early Childhood

Education: a certification route through the established program and a degree route through the new pilot. These pathways are designed to build a skilled childcare workforce to meet the growing demand in the region.

Expanding into technology, WSB has partnered with the El Paso Community Foundation and the El Paso Innovation Hub to launch a Full-Stack Track Web Development and Application Development training program. This initiative collaborates with companies like El Paso Labs, Innovare, AizenFlow, BrightSolTech, and Minski to create opportunities for students in high-demand fields like web development. Participants gain hands-on experience and can pursue industry-recognized certifications, such as a LinkedIn Learning certificate in Full Stack Web Development or an optional Codecademy React-101 certification. This program, supported by detailed instructor evaluations, ensures participants are ready to meet industry needs statewide.

WSB is expanding apprenticeship programs in healthcare to build a resilient workforce. Through a nursing preceptorship program with the University Medical Center (UMC), WSB supports nursing students with hands-on experience under professional mentorship, preparing them for employment to address the regional nursing shortage. WSB also works with Texas Tech Health Science Center, a key partner in enhancing healthcare training. Together, they're creating a robust pipeline of healthcare professionals to meet the region's demand for skilled workers.

In addition, WSB collaborates with community organizations like Project Vida to promote in-demand roles such as Community Health Workers (CHWs), fostering career pathways in public health to serve underserved communities. WSB is committed to promoting work-based learning and on-the-job training models that lead to apprenticeships and connecting healthcare employers with training providers to ensure real-world training is aligned with industry standards.

WSB's commitment to apprenticeships also extends to the skilled trades. In partnership with the El Paso Electricians Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (JATC)—a state- and federally registered apprenticeship program developed with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local Union 583 and the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA)—WSB supports participants in earning a living wage, receiving comprehensive benefits, and gaining hands-on experience toward becoming Journeyman Inside Wiremen. Currently, 13 youth participants are actively engaged in this program. Additionally, WSB collaborates with The Independent Electrical Contractors, Inc. (IEC) to offer youth participants practical experience in the electrical industry.

Through these initiatives, WSB seeks to broaden apprenticeship opportunities in established and emerging fields, ensuring participants acquire valuable skills, gain industry certifications, and access viable career paths that align with their interests and the regional labor market. By fostering partnerships with employers and educational institutions across Texas, WSB's commitment to ApprenticeshipTexas contributes to a comprehensive, skill-focused workforce that addresses the diverse talent needs of Texas industries.

Part 11. Public Comment

References: WIOA §108(d); 20 CFR §679.550(b) and

§679.560(b) and (e) Boards must provide a description of the public comment process, including:

- making copies of the proposed local plan available to the public through electronic and other means, such as public hearings and local news media
- an opportunity for comment by members of the public, including representatives of business, labor organizations, and education
- 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.

WSB's Response:

The public comment period is from January 16, 2025, through February 14, 2025.

The Board provided a 29-day public comment period before submitting the Board Plan. Notification of the 29-day public comment period was posted on the Workforce Solutions Borderplex website, and a press release was sent to major local newspapers and other Borderplex media outlets to alert the public. An advertisement notice was posted on social media platforms for expanded audience viewership.

Furthermore, notice of the public comment period was sent electronically to our Board of Directors, our Chief Elected Officials, regional government agencies, regional ISDs, higher education institutions, and community partners, with an invitation to submit their comments.

There were no inquiries, public responses or comments received and no edits to consider. This result was shared during our General Board Meeting on March 20, 2025.

Appendix: Texas Workforce Investment Council Requirements Local Board Plan Requirements for Alignment to the Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan

Requirement for Workforce Systemwide Alignment

State law requires local workforce development boards (local board) to adopt a plan that “sets broad goals and objectives for all workforce development programs in the local area consistent with statewide goals, objectives, and performance standards,”¹ as outlined in the workforce system strategic plan, [*Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031*](#).

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

Demonstrating Local Alignment with Texas’ Workforce System Strategic Plan

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

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

Board response cover the three strategic opportunities and four system goals in *Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031* that focus system partners on the Council’s mission to produce an agile and resilient workforce. Building on a foundation of continuous innovation

and increased collaboration, the system plan calls for accelerated engagement around three strategic opportunities: engagement of employers, improving outcomes for Texans with barriers, and use of data to support investment decisions. Each of these envisions a desirable future state for Texas and lays out essential actions to be implemented that support system goals and stronger outcomes across the Texas workforce system.

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

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

(Texas Government Code Sec. 2308.304, Local Plan.).

System Goals and Objectives

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

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

WSB Response and corresponding page(s): pg. 3-8, 30-32

Workforce Solutions Borderplex utilizes data gathered from local industry needs, Hot Jobs, and the living wage models to guide programs geared toward the advancement of middle-skill workers based on employers' needs. Grant funding

from incumbent worker training is used to introduce employers to opportunities to advance and reskill current employees towards the skills required to retain and promote existing talent, including adult education and literacy. Our goal for incumbent worker training is to assist businesses in identifying short-term training in their respective industries that results in industry-recognized credentials, licenses, and/or certifications to help the employer gain more skilled and productive employees. It also strives to help employers with the retention of talent with opportunities for advancement. WSB uses local, state and federal sources to identify special populations that require supportive services to successfully complete training.

To evaluate the effectiveness of programs, WSB tracks data following enrollment into reskilling and upskilling programs. This includes ensuring that employees successfully complete grant-funded training and reviewing training drop circumstances to improve future program completion. Certain incumbent training requires a job position promotion and/or increase in wage, and WSB follows up to make sure that is accomplished after training is completed when required. In addition, WSB uses TWC outcome tracking modules for proper enrollment and to measure successful training outcomes well after completion.

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

WSB Response and corresponding page(s): pg. 19.22, 32, 39, 43, 60-62

Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB), in partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation Services and various regional stakeholders, is expanding work-based learning (WBL) and apprenticeship opportunities to meet the skill demands of critical industries, such as healthcare, IT, aerospace, and advanced manufacturing in the El Paso Borderplex region. Through these initiatives, WSB focuses on accessible career pathways for individuals facing employment barriers, including individuals with disabilities, foster youth, re-entry populations, LGBTQ+ individuals, and Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFW). Certification-based training, exploratory apprenticeships, and industry-specific WBL programs support pre-employment transitions, equipping participants for sustainable, high-demand roles.

WSB collaborates closely with employers, educational institutions, nonprofits, and local government entities to design and deliver structured WBL experiences, enabling high school and college students, recent graduates, and adult learners to gain hands-on, industry-aligned skills. Partnerships with organizations like the West Texas Aerospace Coalition, UTEP Aerospace Center, El Paso Makes, and El Paso Community College (EPCC) focus on short-term technical training that aligns with labor market needs, offering certifications and competencies essential in aerospace, precision machining, and advanced manufacturing.

An expanding employer network—including Schneider Electric, Blue Origin, and local ISPs—supports diverse WBL and apprenticeship opportunities. This network, developed in collaboration with entities like the Borderplex Alliance, the El Paso Chamber of Commerce, and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, provides registered and industry-recognized apprenticeships in cybersecurity, environmental health and safety (EHS), and advanced manufacturing. Regular employer engagement ensures these programs align with industry standards, driving regional economic development and a robust workforce pipeline.

Through these coordinated efforts, WSB and its partners are building an industry-relevant talent pipeline that prepares job seekers for regional demands and positions the El Paso Borderplex as a hub of skilled talent across multiple high-demand sectors.

3. Partners Goal – Alignment to Support Career Pathways

WSB Response and corresponding page(s): pg. 25-27, 33-34, 39-42

WSB collaborates with a range of regional stakeholders to gather input and work together on developing our workforce. Our board of directors is composed of individuals from diverse industry sectors who provide valuable feedback on how we can achieve our mission and offer insights into potential partnership opportunities. Key system partners include the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), El Paso Community College (EPCC), and Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) programs. These partnerships help us create pathways that enable participants to gain training and certifications that will enhance their career prospects. It is important WSB continues to maintain an open line of communication amongst stakeholders so WSB can help fill gaps in the job market and upskill the overall workforce.

In order to provide accurate information to stakeholders, it is first and

foremost important that all parties value and understand the weight certifications can have on an individual's ability to obtain employment and set themselves apart from the pool of candidates. The Board's ability to work with employers and educators to identify marketplace trends is crucial to the options provided to job seekers. Providing quantifiable data to employers through tools such as JobsEQ ensures employers are getting a true and detailed picture of the state of the labor market. This data can also help employers identify qualities in candidates that will make their business as successful as possible. It is the Board's responsibility to ensure opportunities, like CompTIA and Project Management Professional certifications, are offered to set job seekers up for the best long-term solution to their employment. Certifications confirm individuals possess specialized skills which make them more enticing for employers to hire.

Many participants are eager to join the workforce but are not yet prepared for the positions listed on our Target Occupations List (TOL) or Hot Jobs, as these roles typically require additional education or training. While our goal is to help individuals fill these high-demand jobs, we recognize that not everyone is ready for them right away. To support these participants, we offer a separate "Step-Up List." This list highlights jobs that can help individuals re-enter the workforce while also providing opportunities to build the skills and experience needed to eventually move up into in-demand, growth-oriented positions in our region.

4. Policy and Planning Goal – Relevant Data Sets

WSB Response and corresponding page(s): pg. 42-47, 58-59, 13

Licensed and registered childcare centers and homes that are contracted to provide subsidized childcare services must be Texas Rising Star (TRS) certified providers. WSB TRS Mentors have been working diligently with our contracted childcare providers by providing guidance, support, and coaching to meet the TRS certification. This certification is a quality rating and improvement system for childcare programs in Texas. The TRS childcare provider meets a level of quality that exceeds Child Care Regulation standards. This mandate is part of expanding the availability of high-quality childcare. In addition, WSB conducts outreach to childcare providers that are not contracted with us and provides them with the benefits of becoming contracted with WSB and becoming a TRS provider. Aside from being recognized and holding a quality status, they will have access to professional development, education scholarships, educational material and equipment, and resources to obtain and maintain their TRS status.

In efforts to engage childcare providers and employers, WSB provides business support to our childcare providers on how they can establish a

partnership with employers to potentially offer their employees discounts and priority to their services. WSB also work with employers and connect them with appropriate support if they want to establish on-site childcare for their employees. WSB is also working with multiple entities to support them with data as they pursue potentially opening a childcare center in the downtown district of the city.

Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) is committed to expanding access to high-quality childcare by supporting childcare providers, employers, and community initiatives. By aligning efforts with Texas Rising Star (TRS) standards and engaging key stakeholders, WSB promotes quality improvements in childcare services and fosters collaboration between providers and employers to address regional childcare needs.

To support high-quality childcare availability, WSB ensures that all licensed and registered childcare centers and homes contracted to provide subsidized childcare services meet Texas Rising Star (TRS) certification standards. TRS is a quality rating and improvement system for childcare programs in Texas, requiring providers to exceed Child Care Regulation standards.

WSB TRS Mentors work closely with contracted childcare providers, offering guidance, coaching, and support to help them achieve and maintain TRS certification. Certification benefits providers by enhancing their quality status and granting access to professional development, educational scholarships, materials, equipment, and resources to sustain their TRS status. Additionally, WSB conducts outreach to non-contracted providers, educating them on the benefits of partnering with WSB and achieving TRS certification.

In collaboration with childcare providers and employers, WSB facilitates partnerships to expand access to childcare services. Initiatives include:

- Providing business support to childcare providers to establish partnerships with employers, offering employees discounts and priority access to services.
- Assisting employers in connecting with resources to establish on-site or near-site childcare facilities for their employees.
- Supporting local entities with data and resources as they explore opportunities to develop a childcare center in the downtown district of the city.

Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) implements various activities and processes to ensure the availability of workforce, education, and employment data, enhancing program evaluation and responding to the needs of policymakers, planners, and employers.

Collaboration with Employers

WSB prioritizes strong relationships with employers to gain insights into employment trends and outcomes. These efforts include:

- Hosting employer roundtables and distributing surveys to gather feedback on workforce needs and program impacts.
- Aligning training programs with the Hot Jobs List, WSB's Targeted Occupations List, which reflects high-demand careers aligned with the Governor's targeted industries.
- Providing community, economic development, education, and employer sessions to promote the Hot Jobs List and share annual wage analysis.

Hot Jobs List and Targeted Industries

WSB's Hot Jobs List highlights high-growth occupations in the region, helping guide training and workforce strategies. Key initiatives include:

- Hosting information sessions to educate stakeholders on career pathways.
- Promoting occupations aligned with the Governor's targeted industries to support regional economic development.

Data Collection and Follow-Up Practices

WSB employs targeted strategies to ensure accurate data collection and evaluation of program outcomes:

- Engaging with participants after program completion to verify employment outcomes, prioritizing accurate data before case closure.
- Launching a CRM system to streamline follow-up efforts and improve tracking of participant and employer interactions.
- Using WSB's Organizational Effectiveness and Research Department to analyze data from systems like WIT, identifying gaps and improving data completeness.
- Leveraging verification tools to access reliable employment and wage data, minimizing reliance on self-reported information.

Research and Data Matching

WSB's Research and Innovation teams play a critical role in evaluating program effectiveness and sharing insights with stakeholders. These efforts include:

- Conducting labor market analyses to inform training strategies and workforce planning.
- Collaborating with employers and educational institutions to validate industry-based certification data and assess program impacts.

- Exploring innovative methods to securely share data and improve the timeliness and accuracy of reporting.

Through these initiatives, WSB ensures its workforce development system remains responsive, data-driven, and aligned with policy and regional priorities.

Strategic Opportunities

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

Strategic Opportunity 1 – Employer Engagement

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

Response should address the following:

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

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s): Pt. 4 Section B pg. 29-33

WSB coordinates closely with regional stakeholders—including educational institutions, chambers of commerce, industry associations, and the Tri-Agency Texas Regional Pathways Network—to streamline employer engagement and minimize redundant inquiries. Through these partnerships, WSB reduces the burden on employers by creating a unified, coordinated platform for gathering insights. By organizing joint meetings with stakeholders, WSB provides employers with a consolidated avenue for input on workforce needs, eliminating duplicate outreach and fostering a more effective, targeted approach.

Additionally, WSB collaborates with local non-profits and economic development

entities to expand outreach across the Borderplex business community, ensuring employer feedback is gathered with clear, relevant goals. This coordinated effort allows WSB to project workforce needs more accurately by aligning with city and state government entities, ultimately refining workforce solutions while minimizing unnecessary requests from multiple partners.

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

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

Response should address the following:

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

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s): Pt. 1 Individuals with Barriers to Employment pg. 2, pg. 22

Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) has developed a strategic plan focused on collaboration, innovation, and efficiency to effectively coordinate workforce initiatives for Texans with diverse needs. This includes tailored support for individuals with disabilities, foster youth, survivors of sex trafficking, incarcerated youth and adults, and opportunity youth.

As part of our commitment to supporting Texans with diverse needs, Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) will continue partnering with Vocational Rehabilitation Services to enhance and expand Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services offer training on accessible equipment and technology for individuals with disabilities, along with sensitivity training and mental health services for effectively working with and assisting people with disabilities.

Foster Youth with Special Needs: Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) and Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) have established a collaborative co-enrollment referral system specifically for foster youth. Dedicated vocational rehabilitation counselors are assigned to the

Pride Transitioning Center, where they work closely with WSB youth coordinators to co-enroll foster youth with disabilities in both programs. This partnership ensures that these young individuals receive comprehensive and optimized support tailored to their needs.

Mental Health Services: Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) is dedicated to supporting customers in need of mental health services. In partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Emergence Health Network, WSB ensures that customers have access to essential mental health resources as they work toward their employment goals.

Workforce Solutions is proud to partner with the El Paso Human Services, Inc. PRIDE Center to support foster youth in their journey toward independence and self-sufficiency. The Preparation and Resources for Independence through Determination with Excellence (PRIDE) Center serves as a comprehensive, one-stop resource hub in El Paso, Texas. Here, current and former foster youth, ages 16-25, have access to a wide array of services and growth opportunities designed to help them thrive as they transition to adulthood.

Through this partnership, Workforce Solutions provides a dedicated career navigator who works at the PRIDE Center twice a month, creating a supportive environment where foster youth can feel comfortable and engaged. This in-person presence allows us to meet these young individuals where they are, fostering connections and encouraging their progress. Additionally, we hold bi-weekly meetings with PRIDE Center staff to review each participant's progress, address challenges, and ensure both organizations are aligned in delivering effective, impactful support. Together, we are empowering young people to reach their full potential and succeed in life beyond foster care.

Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) is also proud to collaborate with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) through the Transitional Living Services Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program. The PAL program is a vital partner, regularly providing referrals via our partner referral link, which enables us to connect with youth in need of workforce services and resources tailored to foster youth.

In addition to referrals, we conduct monthly touchpoint meetings with PAL staff to review each participant's progress and address any challenges they may be facing. This collaborative approach allows us to offer holistic, individualized support that acknowledges and addresses the unique obstacles fostering youth encounter. By working closely with the PAL program, we are able to coordinate resources, guidance, and mentorship that foster youth needs as they transition to independent adulthood.

Furthermore, we are excited to be collaborating with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and the PAL program on a special project called Texas Works Paths to Success. Through this initiative, 11 current or former foster youth will receive paid training that equips them with valuable skills and work experience. Upon completion of the program, these

Supporting Justice-Involved Youth and Adults:

Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) is dedicated to creating opportunities for justice-involved youth and adults, helping them transition to meaningful

employment and self-sufficiency. Through partnerships with federal, state, and local organizations—including FCI-La Tuna, Dismas Charities, the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD), the El Paso County Juvenile Probation Department, the County of El Paso, the Federal Courts, and the City of El Paso—WSB seeks to deliver comprehensive workforce development services tailored to the unique needs of individuals impacted by the justice system.

Network of Support

WSB is working to establish a network of support aimed at reducing recidivism and promoting successful reentry in the Borderplex region. Through a grant from the Department of Labor and the Department of Justice, WSB has worked closely with FCI-La Tuna and Dismas Charities to create projects to provide justice-involved adults with access to job readiness training, vocational certifications, and employment placement services. These projects will be designed to equip participants with the skills and confidence needed to reintegrate into the workforce.

Focus on Youth Reentry

WSB is working to establish partnerships with TJJD and the El Paso County Juvenile Probation Department. Recognizing that justice-involved youth face barriers to training and employment, we are exploring initiatives that will include career exploration, skill-building workshops, and access to education and training. By partnering with these agencies, we seek to address the specific barriers these young individuals experience.

Comprehensive Community Support

The County of El Paso, the Federal Courts, and the City of El Paso recognize how a partnership with WSB can strengthen the ability to provide support for justice-involved individuals. WSB is exploring community partnerships that can lead to connections to services from offering job explorations and softs skills leading to solid employment connections.

Initiatives for Sustainable Success

A cornerstone of WSB's efforts is its collaboration with local businesses. As a component of these efforts, WSB participants in community coalitions and is exploring methods to connect participants with projects and initiative that can include, transitional employment projects and apprenticeship opportunities, helping justice-involved individuals gain direct experience while earning an income. Additionally, WSB's partnerships with local employers create pathways to sustainable, long-term employment in high-demand industries.

Through these efforts, WSB and its partners are transforming lives and creating a

more inclusive and resilient workforce in the Borderplex region.

Strategic Opportunity 3 – Use of Data to Support Investment Decisions

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

Response should address the following:

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

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s): Pt. 2 Section B. Labor Force Analysis and Trends

Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) is committed to utilizing data and evidence-based practices to drive strategic investments that enhance system performance and address the needs of our region's workforce.

Evidence-Based Practices: WSB employs a range of evidence-based practices and data analytics to inform our decision-making processes. These include comprehensive regional supply chain industry sector analysis, wage data analysis, and quartile data reports, which allow us to identify key trends in the local labor market. Monthly labor market reports (LMR) provide data to support initiatives to improve workforce outcomes. This data is instrumental in developing strategies supporting business retention and expansion (BR&E), ensuring local investments align with employer demand and economic growth trends.

Strategic Investments and Program Funding: Each year, WSB creates an in-demand industry, in-demand occupations list, and an annual Target Occupation List (TOL/Hot Jobs), which are grounded in extensive labor market analysis, local expertise, and collaboration with regional economic development partners. WSB utilizes various data sources, including the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Jobs EQ - Chmura, Census/ACS, TWC Labor Market Information (LMCI), and the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), among others. WSB prioritizes initiatives that provide participants with the skills and credentials needed to succeed in these in-demand fields, ensuring a robust pipeline of qualified workers. These lists guide our investment decisions by identifying the occupations and industries with the greatest growth potential and data lead strategies for program development.

WSB continues to fund programs with a proven track record of success, as evidenced by several initiatives that have demonstrated high rates of credential attainment and positive employment outcomes among participants.

By evaluating the outcomes of previous participants, we ensure that future investments are directed toward programs that yield measurable results, such as

increased earnings and reduced dependency on public assistance; we aim to elevate our participants out of the system and reliance on government subsidies.

Collaborative Research and Resource Sharing: To foster alignment and enhance economic development across the region, WSB actively shares research findings and resources with local employers, educational institutions, and economic development partners. By disseminating data and analysis, we help regional stakeholders and partners make informed decisions that strengthen the workforce system and support the broader goals of economic prosperity in the Borderplex region.