



BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE PARTNERSHIPS



*Collaborating with Regional Economic Development Partners to
Increase Workforce Development Outcomes*

Valeria Contreras
Executive Coordinator

Alma Aranda
Workforce Development Director

A proud partner of the
americanjobcenter
network

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Relay Texas: 711 (Voice) or 1-800-735-2989 (TTY) Igualdad de oportunidades de Empleo/Programas. Equipo auxiliar y servicios de apoyo están disponibles para personas con discapacidad al ser requeridos. Relay Texas: 711 (Voz) o 1-800-735-2989 (TTY)

Funded by all or in part of, the Department of Labor/ETA WIOA Formula Grants and Wagner-Peyser; the Department of Health and Human Services TANF and Child Care Development Fund; and the Food and Nutrition Service SNAP Employment & Training.

At Workforce Solutions Borderplex, contributing towards economic development of the region is a priority in our mission. Collaborating with organizations in the area that have close access and relationships with businesses, site selectors, or future investors benefits our long-term workforce development goals to best align our resources towards assisting workers. In past years, Workforce Solutions Borderplex collaborated with community partners informally. We worked to collect data about the business community via self-organized meetings and events that were not always as highly attended as some other business events in the community. Because of this, WSB realized the value of formalizing a partnership with the various leading organizations within the business community. The relationships allow us to exchange information with our partners as we work towards assisting workers with their future career goals.

About the Partnerships

WSB now partners with specific organizations that represent the business community at-large for us to access employers through events and close relationships. After formalizing our partnership with these organizations, our collaboration has only strengthened. Furthermore, these partnerships allow WSB to gain insight into the private industry to better serve employers of the region. Our key business intelligence partners include:

- The Borderplex Alliance
- El Paso Chamber
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Better Business Bureau

Together, these organizations allow WSB to remain in tune with a diverse range of businesses, from large employers to even sole proprietors. This has only enriched our ability to provide helpful data and recommendations for the local economy.

Program Goals and Funding Sources

The goal of these partnerships was to develop long-term relationships with the business community through the channels and organizations that they already trust. These relationships are important to bring the business community to the table and have conversations about workforce development. We want to establish trust with these stakeholders and hear firsthand what some of the workforce issues may be throughout El Paso. This has helped us better provide solutions that can strengthen the local economy.

By leveraging formula funds such as WIOA, SNAP and TANF, as well as other federal dollars, these partnerships help us create further engagement with small businesses. Overall, we want to be an active partner on initiatives related to broadening the scope of what discussions businesses participate and engage in discussions to align our priorities

with employers. Through these partnerships, we aim to align our resources to pursue specific goals that will not only advance our mission and vision, but also result in economic development and prosperity for the region overall.

Program Challenges

Some challenges have been related to aligning timelines on specific projects due to conflicting organizational priorities across the board. COVID-19 has also imposed its own challenges on these partnerships as we have navigated new ways to connect with businesses virtually. We are also interested in creating more in-depth interactions with businesses through this partnership. However, these efforts have also been slowed down as businesses shift focus on immediately surviving the pandemic and less-so on long-term plans.

Outcomes and Successes

Our business intelligence partnerships have allowed us to gain access and exposure to the various segments of the business community in the region. By collaborating with several organizations, we have gained the important perspective and insight of businesses across the spectrum (large and small). The following list outlines specific outcomes and successes associated with each entity:

- **The Borderplex Alliance:** We have influenced the target industries and the recommendations of their regional strategic plan. We are committed to the regional strategy to attract business but also encourage growth and development and retention from within. We were also one of the main sponsors for a recent study. *This collaboration has also provided us with regional economic insight.*
- **El Paso Chamber:** We have gained a tremendous amount of exposure and facetime with businesses that the Chamber represents and captures in their events. The El Paso Chamber also provides access to larger employers and representation related to community-wide policy initiatives. We share data with the Chamber to further provide information to employers in the area. This partnership has allowed us to gain exposure and credibility within the business community. *This collaboration has also provided us with large business insight.*
- **Hispanic Chamber of Commerce:** We have gained exposure and access to smaller businesses that may serve a more niche client base. The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce also serves several construction businesses or women owned businesses, so they are experts at helping these specific types of employers. We have benefited from business intel that those businesses have shared and what their needs are with their own employees. *This collaboration has also provided us with small business insight.*

- **Better Business Bureau:** This partnership has granted us further exposure to the business community. They serve small “mom and pop” shops across all sectors, especially in the service industry. Additionally, gaining a direct introduction to these businesses helps us develop further awareness about microbusinesses. *This collaboration has also provided us with microbusiness insight.*

Overall, these partnerships have positioned WSB to be the subject matter expert on workforce data and workforce plans for a diverse range of businesses. All four partnerships have allowed us to keep a pulse on the local economy—without writing off any business regardless of its size or industry. This insight has only become more and more valuable, especially as we strive to support employers in times of economic crisis.

Solutions for the Future

WSB developed the idea of establishing formal partnerships with local business organizations from a National Association of Workforce Boards conference in 2019. As an economic development partner in the region, WSB continues to focus on innovative and proactive engagement. We have been able to do this by successfully leveraging WIOA funds towards partnerships that have furthered our mission. Our goals moving forward include continuing these conversations and relationships with the business community to identify short-term solutions to respond to the pandemic, and long-term solutions that will allow WSB to continue as a key economic developer of the region. These partnerships are the first step towards our efforts to assist employers and employees to understand the different audience segments within the business community.

About Workforce Solutions Borderplex

Workforce Solutions Borderplex (WSB) is the public workforce system in the six-county Borderplex region that assists employers in finding quality employees, and training individuals with the skills necessary to thrive in the workplace. We administer a broad range of programs and services to effectively address local workforce issues. Workforce Solutions also establishes partnerships with various stakeholders within the region to improve education, employment, and economic development. Our organization aims to provide skilled workers for employers by advancing education, employment, entrepreneurship, and economic development opportunities in support of global competitiveness and regional prosperity. Ultimately, we are interested in empowering the most dynamic workforce to achieve global competitiveness and regional prosperity.