



MUNICIPAL COURT PROJECTS



*Creating Training Opportunities for Future Careers in the
Municipal Court System*

Valeria Contreras
Executive Coordinator

Marisela Correa
Workforce Development Manager

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.

Impetus

The City of El Paso Municipal Courts originally had volunteer opportunities at the courts to provide individuals studying criminal justice or social services with experience in their field. Many of these college students were working within the teen courts, but the opportunities remained unpaid. The courts then became interested in collaborating with WSB to create paid work opportunities that could count towards work experience for future employment at the City of El Paso.

About the Program

Collaborating with the City to provide a paid training opportunity allowed students to better position themselves for future employment. The City of El Paso usually only counts paid work experience towards qualifications when considering candidates for full-time positions, not unpaid internship, or volunteer opportunities. To participate in this program, selection criteria for students are based on referrals of unpaid volunteers from the municipal court. Qualifying volunteers are then enrolled into the WSB Youth Work Experience program which provides an hourly wage for five hours per week, totaling 240 – 360 hours of paid training experience.

After participating in this joint-program, students accumulated two to three months of paid experience. Although the City was not always able to offer a full-time opportunity after the training period, the students walked-away with experience that often led to finding full-time employment. Most recently, WSB worked with the City of El Paso to identify ways to better ensure full-time employment for these program participants. However, COVID-19 impacted the future of this discussion for the time being.

Program Goals & Funding Sources

This program aims to provide short-term, paid training opportunities to students that are directly related to their studies. The Municipal Court Program has successfully trained many students to apply that experience towards their next opportunity. Although there are benefits to the short-term opportunity, WSB also hopes to eventually work with the City, as well as other employers, to create training opportunities that can become permanent – by identifying employers that can offer full-time jobs after the two to three months of training. The program utilized combined funds from WIOA plus semi-restricted funds won by WSB during the 2018 TWC Annual Conference (Board Services Award and Youth Inspiration Award).

Program Challenges

Although this program has connected several students with training opportunities, COVID-19 has created the greatest challenge to the future of this program. Once COVID-19 changed the dynamics of the workspace, many employees began to work remotely. Since our students were not

City employees, they could not go into the office or the courts and thus the program has halted for the time being. Moving forward, we are hoping to identify ways to reimagine this program in a virtual world and work with employers that can secure full-time employment for participants after the program ends.

Outcomes and Successes

WSB sponsored these students at an hourly wage of \$13 per hour, with one student paid at a wage of \$18 per hour. In total, WSB has paid out almost \$37,000 in payroll to this group of students. This payroll has enabled them to pay for school and living costs while they continue their education. We were ultimately able to sponsor this short-term work-based learning at the City at 100 percent and accomplished the following:

- Seven participants, five of which are currently active;
- Two of the seven participants have since found permanent employment;
- One intern working as an IT Intern at the courts obtained permanent employment as IT Analysis with the Department of Energy; and
- One intern obtained full time employment with El Paso Transitional Center.

Solutions for the Future

Through this program, we learned how to partner and collaborate with a government agency such as the City. We learned their processes and policies for hiring individuals and will be able to better apply the lessons learned into future collaborations with other agencies. Moving forward, we are interested in identifying more companies that have future openings to hire the short-term staff after the program. This will allow participants to secure employment versus use the experience solely as a training opportunity. As the economy recovers from COVID-19, it is crucial to identify companies that are hiring position people for those opportunities.

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.