

Local Workforce Development Board Plan
2 Year Modification
Program Years 2021–2024

(Released for Public Comment 01.18.2023)

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Part 1: Board Vision and Strategies

A. Vision and Goals

Workforce Solutions Lower Rio ~~(Rio~~ (WFS) meets its mission by collaborating with industry, education, economic ~~development~~development, and regional partners to develop a trainable and available workforce to provide workforce-relevant education and training opportunities for youth and individuals with barriers to employment throughout the service delivery areas of Hidalgo, Willacy and Starr counties.

WFS, under the direction of the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), is one of 28 workforce development boards located throughout the State of Texas. WFS is governed by a group of Chief Elected Officials (CEOs): the Mayor of the most populated city (McAllen), County Judges from Hidalgo, Willacy, Starr counties, and a 25-member Board of Directors representing the private sector, education, community-based organizations, labor, vocational rehabilitation, public assistance, and employment services.

The WFS Workforce Development Board of Directors (WFS Board) serves as the governing body for the workforce development area. The primary goal of the WFS Board is to respond to the needs of local employers and workers while supporting regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency through locally designed, demand-driven workforce development initiatives. The WFS Board's overarching goals strive to improve and further integrate the workforce system in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV).

WFS Board's Mission: To provide job seekers the skills, and business the talent, they need to be successful.

Purpose Statement: An educated and skilled workforce enabling LRGV economic prosperity.

Values: Integrity- Innovation- Inclusion, and Impact.

B. Board Strategies

The WFS Board's Key Strategic objectives align with the Texas' Strategic Plan Goals (TX SPG) for the Workforce System 2016-2023 ~~(2020 Update)~~ as follows:

TX SPG Goal #1: Focus on Employers

In collaboration with regional workforce partners, WFS will analyze and interpret labor market information, employer occupational skill and training needs for the development of programs that align and prepare local job seekers to meet employer's skills expectation resulting in employment.

WFS Goal: Understand business needs through business relationships.

- Communicate the business community's top priorities to stakeholders.
- Conduct continuous analysis of local labor market and industry data to validate demand.
- Work in partnership with employers to develop strategies that provide and support the delivery of services to meet business needs.

TX SPG Goal #2: Engage in Partnerships

WFS is aware that it is vital for the growth and success of the local workforce pipeline to maintain and continuously improve the strong, established, collaborative initiatives with local employers, education, training, economic development, and non-profit partners. To ensure individuals within the WFS service delivery area have the expected knowledge, skills and abilities to meet employer needs resulting in employment, WFS will continue to support, lead, facilitate, improve and enhance its strategies.

WFS Goal: Prepare a job-ready workforce and foster external partnerships that promote educational and skill attainment within service delivery areas.

- Support education and literacy initiatives that promote educational attainment.
- Engage in strategic conversations that open doors to new partnerships and strengthen existing partnerships.
- Provide educational and workforce stakeholders with information reflecting the needs of business and state of the workforce to contribute to a demand-driven system.
- Ensure available customer training responds to business demand and addresses current and future skill and educational gaps.
- Develop a mechanism to disseminate employer skill development training requirements to ensure expectations are met.
- Collaborate with educational and training institutions to promote industry recognized certification attainment.
- Collaborate with community colleges and training institutions to establish career pathway opportunities that include key target occupations.

TX SPG Goal #3: Align System Elements

WFS strives to consistently provide excellent service to workforce customers, both job seekers and businesses. All programs and services are coordinated with internal and external partners to help prepare local job seekers meet the employer's skill expectations.

WFS Goal: Build strategic partnerships to leverage resources for customers.

- ~~Strengthen-Continue~~ collaboration with core partners such as Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) and Texas Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation Services Division (TWS-VRS), Texas Veterans Commission (TVC), Job Corp, etc. to leverage resources and possible co-enrollment of customers.
- Collaborate with local organizations to secure and/or leverage resources.
- Initiate and develop strategic relationships to address unmet needs.

TX SPG Goal #4: Improve and Integrate Programs

The WFS workforce system is designed to increase access to, and opportunities for, employment, education, training, and support services that individuals need to succeed in the labor market, particularly those with barriers to employment including target populations. ~~The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted lives worldwide and caused economic havoc as numerous businesses closed and stay at home orders were issued nationally, statewide, and locally. WFS, deemed as an essential service organization, continued to serve customers to help meet employer needs for workers. WFS adapted quickly to continue providing services to both job seekers and employers. Due to COVID-19 pandemic workforce services were made available virtually via telephone, internet chat, and through website and Facebook pages. Services were also made available to walk-in customers at the WFS Workforce Career Centers, in particular but not limited to those individuals who may not~~

~~have access to virtual services.~~

WFS's Workforce Career Centers provide career services that encourage, support and empower customers, including individuals with disabilities and other barriers, to make informed decisions based on local and regional economic demand to effectively attain their personal employment and educational goals.

All customers are given access to WFS Workforce Career Centers that connect them with the full range of services available in their communities, whether they are looking to find employment, build basic educational or occupational skills, earn a postsecondary certificate or degree, or obtain guidance on making career choices. The following represents examples of how work-based learning and local labor market information are locally made available to the current and future workforce.

- Conduct assessment to identify and maximize opportunities for community partners with similar goals to align services for the benefit of all job seekers.
- Partner with K-12 educational institutes to provide career exploration and labor market information to school administrators, Career Technical Education (CTE) staff, counselors, educators, parents, and students.
- Develop a strategic training calendar to support high-quality child care through professional education and training.
- Seek out opportunities to partner with local child care providers to deliver age-appropriate, work-based learning experiences.
- Convene meetings with community partners to develop and align workforce local plans to maximize services for area youth and people with disabilities.
- Focus and identify resource and service development opportunities with area youth providers, that include foster youth agencies, school district dropout recovery programs, and youth offender programs.
- Develop strategic partnerships with regional community alliances to identify possible sources to leverage funding and align service delivery.
- Develop strategic partnerships with agencies such as AEL, TWS-VRS, and independent school districts (ISDs) to provide cross training of staff.
- Provide training to WFS Business Services Team to provide employers with information on the [grant opportunities \(e.g., TWC Skill Development Funds, High Demand Job Training Grant, Texas Industry Partnership, etc.\)](#), advantages of employing youth and individuals with disabilities.

C. High-Performing Board

To ensure continuous improvement in operations and sufficiently meet the needs of businesses, job seekers, workers, and child care customers while meeting performance measures, WFS negotiates with sub-recipient(s) to establish measures and strategies that are above and beyond the TWC contracted measures.

The following measures are conducted to ensure workforce system accountability:

- Performance measures within contracts are negotiated annually and include WFS Strategic Goals and Objectives.
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that measure the quality and quantity of services are established annually.
- KPIs for eligible training providers related to minimum performance requirements including program completion rate(s) and entered employment rate(s) for schools receiving WIOA participants are established annually.

To access the revisions of Part 2 Economic and Workforce Analysis, double-click or double-tap on the section title below:

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Part 2. Economic and Workforce Analysis

A. Regional Economic and Employment Needs Analysis

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

Boards must include a regional analysis of the following:

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

Board Response:

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

2.A.i - The economic conditions, including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations.

According to the TWC quarterly employment and wage data found in **Table 1**, in the 2nd Quarter of 20220, there were 13,80714,572 establishments located in the three-county WFS service area, an increase of 1,499734 establishments from 2nd Quarter of 2016. Hidalgo county reported 132,625864 (+1,473712), Starr Ccounty reported 62317 (+612), and Willacy County reported 32426 (+1426) establishment.

As evidence in Table 1, the three counties show steady growth in all indicators: the number of establishments, average employment, average weekly wages and total wages in the 2nd Quarter of 2016-202219. Although most of the indicators continued to grow steadily by the 2nd Quarter of 20220, the unprecedented situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic impacted negativelynegatively impacted the average employment indicator by -18,256 workers, taking back this indicator closely to the average employment reported in the 2nd Quarter of 2016. Despite this situation all other three indicators reported continuous growth in 20220, the average weekly wage for Hidalgo cCounty is \$76705, Starr county is \$724649, and Willacy county is \$843782.

Table 1 - Establishing Growth per WFS Service Delivery Area County

Timeframe	Data Element	Hidalgo County	Starr County	Willacy County
2016 2nd Quarter	Establishments	12,152	611	310
	Avg. Employment	250,058	15,466	3,528
	Avg. Weekly Wage	\$ 626	\$ 547	\$ 636
	Total Wages	\$ 2,036,366,658	\$ 109,955,414	\$ 29,187,623
2017 2nd Quarter	Establishments	12,306	603	316
	Avg. Employment	256,046	15,712	3,609
	Avg. Weekly Wage	\$ 632	\$ 548	\$ 634

A. Knowledge and Skills Analysis

Determining the knowledge and skills employers are seeking is important to creating a well-trained talent pipeline to meet the employment needs for employers in the region. Employers seek specific knowledge and skills required for occupations and outline their needs in job descriptions to serve as a guide to project job success.

Knowledge and skills are defined below:

Knowledge: The subjects, topics, and items of information that an employee should know at the time he or she is hired or moved into the job. Knowledge represents bodies of information that are applied directly to the performance of work functions.¹

Skills: Technical or manual proficiencies which are usually learned or acquired through training. Skills should be ~~measurable~~measurable and observable.¹

An analysis of the knowledge and skills for the following In-Demand Industry Categories, In-Demand Occupations and Target Occupations was conducted using O*NET OnLine tool sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor. The analysis provides insight on the knowledge and skills as identified by employers and detailed in the Occupation Summary Report available on O*NET OnLine website. The top five knowledge and skills were selected for each In-Demand Industry Category as listed below and continues with In-Demand Occupations and Target Occupations.

Knowledge and Skills In-Demand Industry Categories:

Industry Category: Business & Financial Operations

Knowledge

English Language
Customer and Personal Service
Administration and Management
Computer and Electronics
Mathematics

Skills

Active Listening
Reading Comprehension
Critical Thinking
Judgement and Decision Making
Speaking

Industry Category: Computer & Mathematical

Knowledge

Computer and Electronics
English Language
Customer and Personal Service
Engineering and Technology
Mathematics

Skills

Critical Thinking
Active Listening
Reading Comprehension
Programming
Systems Analysis

Industry Category: Management**Knowledge**

Administration and Management
Customer and Personal Service
English Language
Personnel and Human Resources
Mathematics

Skills

Active Listening
Speaking
Critical Thinking
Reading Comprehension
Coordination

Industry Category: Legal**Knowledge**

Law and Government
English Language
Customer and Personal Service
Administration and Management
Personnel and Human Resources

Skills

Active Listening
Speaking
Reading Comprehension
Critical Thinking
Complex Problem Solving

Industry Category: Sales & Related**Knowledge**

Customer and Personal Service
Sales and Marketing
English Language
Mathematics
Administration and Management

Skills

Active Listening
Speaking
Persuasion
Social Perception
Reading Comprehension

Industry Category: Education, Training & Library**Knowledge**

Education and Training
English Language
Customer and Personal Service
Administration and Management
Computers and Electronics

Skills

Active Listening
Speaking
Instructing
Learning Strategies
Reading Comprehension

Industry Category: Healthcare Practitioners & Technical**Knowledge**

Medicine and Dentistry
Education and Training
Biology
English Language
Customer and Personal Service

Skills

Critical Thinking
Active Listening
Reading Comprehension
Service Orientation
Social Perceptiveness

Industry Category: Healthcare Support

Knowledge

Customer and Personal Service
 English Language
 Education and Training
 Therapy and Counseling
 Administration and Management

Skills

Active Listening
 Service Orientation
 Social Perceptiveness
 Critical Thinking
 Speaking

Industry Category: Community & Social Service**Knowledge**

Therapy and Counseling
 Psychology
 English Language
~~Clerical Administrative~~
 Customer and Personal Service

Skills

Active Listening
 Speaking
 Social Perceptiveness
 Critical Thinking
 Reading Comprehension

Industry Category: Construction & Extraction**Knowledge**

Building and Construction
 Customer and Personal Service
 Mathematics
 Public Safety and Security
 Mechanical

Skills

Active Listening
 Critical thinking
 Complex Problem Solving
 Judgment and Decision Making
 Speaking

Industry Category: Installation, Repair & Maintenance**Knowledge**

Mechanical
 English Language
 Engineering and Technology
 Mathematics
 Public Safety and Security

Skills

Equipment Maintenance
 Repairing
 Operation Monitoring
 Troubleshooting
 Operation and Control

Industry Category: Transportation, Material Moving & Warehousing**Knowledge**

Transportation
 Customer and Personal Service
 Law and Government
 English Language
 Public Safety and Security

Skills

Operation and Control
 Active Listening
 Time Management
 Speaking
 Monitoring

Table 15: Knowledge and Skills for In-Demand Occupations:

Business & Financial Operations		
1	13-1041	Compliance Officers Knowledge: Law and Government Enforcement , English Language, Customer and Personal Service, Public Safety and Security, Computer and Electronics Skills: Active Listening, Reading Comprehension, Speaking, Critical Thinking, Judgment and Decision Making
2	13-1111	Management Analysts Knowledge: Administration and Management, English Language, Customer and Personal Service, Education and Training, Mathematics Psychology Skills: Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension, Judgment and Decision Making, Speaking Complex Problem Solving
3	13-1151	Training and Development Specialists Knowledge: Education and Training, English Language, Customer and Personal Service, Administration and Management, Personnel and Human Resources Skills: Instructing, Learning Strategies, Active Listening, Speaking, Social Perceptiveness Monitoring
4	13-1161	Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists Knowledge: English Language, Customer and Personal Service, Sales and Marketing, Mathematics, Administration and Management Skills: Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension, Writing, Active Listening, Complex Problem Solving
5	13-1082-198	Project Management Specialists and Business Operations Specialists, All Other 13-1199 Knowledge: Administration and Management, English Language, Computer and Electronics, Public Safety and Security, Customer and Personal Service Skills: Complex Problem Solving, Judgment and Decision Making, Speaking, Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension
6	13-2052	Personal Financial Advisors Knowledge: Customer and Personal Service, Economics and Accounting, English Language, Mathematics, Psychology Skills: Active Listening, Reading Comprehension, Speaking, Writing, Critical Thinking
7	43-3021	Billing and Posting Clerks Knowledge: Administrative, Clerical, Customer and Personal Service, English Language, Mathematics, Economics and Accounting Computers and Electronics Skills: Active Listening, Mathematics Speaking , Reading Comprehension, Critical Thinking, Monitoring Service Orientation
Computer & Mathematical		
8	15-1211	Computer Systems Analysts 15-1121 Knowledge: Computers and Electronics, English Language, Customer and Personal Service, Mathematics, Administration and Management Skills: Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension, Speaking, Systems Analysis
9	15-1244	Network and Computer Systems Administrators Knowledge: Computers and Electronics, English Language, Customer and Personal Service, Engineering and Technology, Mathematics Skills: Critical Thinking, Judgment and Decision Making, Reading Comprehension, Systems Analysis, Active Listening
10	15-1251	Computer Programmers 15-1131 Knowledge: Computers and Electronics, Mathematics, Engineering and Technology, English Language, Customer and Personal Service

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		<i>Skills:</i> Programming, Active Listening, Complex Problem Solving, Critical Thinking, Quality Control Analysis
11	15-1256	<u>Software Developers and Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers 15-1253</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Computers and Electronics, English Language, Engineering and Technology, Mathematics, <u>Design</u> <i>Skills:</i> Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension, <u>Writing</u> , Programming, Speaking, Active Listening
Management		
12	11-1021	<u>General and Operations Managers</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Administration and Management, Customer and Personal Service, Personnel and Human Resources, English Language, Mathematics <i>Skills:</i> Active Listening, Coordination, Monitoring, Social Perceptiveness, Speaking
13	11-3031	<u>Financial Managers</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Economics and Accounting, Administration and Management, Mathematics, Customer and Personal Service, <u>Administrative English Language</u> <i>Skills:</i> Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Monitoring, Reading Comprehension, Speaking
14	11-9032	<u>Education Administrators, Kindergarten through Secondary</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Administration and Management, English Language, Education and Training, Personnel and Human Resources, Customer and Personal Service <i>Skills:</i> Active Listening, Speaking, Critical Thinking, Learning Strategies, Reading Comprehension
15	11-9111	<u>Medical and Health Services Managers</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Administration and Management, English Language, Customer and Personal Service, <u>Education and Training</u> , <u>Clerical</u> , Personnel and Human Resources <i>Skills:</i> Speaking, Critical Thinking, Active Listening, <u>Complex Problem Solving</u> , <u>Coordination</u> , Judgment and Decision Making
Legal		
16	23-1011	<u>Lawyers</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Law and Government, English Language, Customer and Personal Service, Administration and Management, Personnel and Human Resources <i>Skills:</i> Active Listening, Speaking, Reading Comprehension, Critical Thinking, Complex Problem Solving
Sales & Related		
17	41-3021	<u>Insurance Sales Agents</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Customer and Personal Service, Sales and Marketing, English Language, Mathematics, Law and Government <i>Skills:</i> Reading Comprehension, Active Listening, Speaking, Critical Thinking, Persuasion
18	41-3031	<u>Securities, Commodities, and Financial Services Sales Agents</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Economics and Accounting, Customer and Personal Service, English Language, Mathematics, <u>Sales</u> , <u>Sales</u> -and Marketing <i>Skills:</i> Critical Thinking, Active Listening, <u>Judgement and Decision Making</u> , <u>Monitoring</u> , <u>Active Learning</u> , <u>Reading Comprehension</u> , <u>Speaking</u> , <u>Persuasion</u>
19	41-4011	<u>Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Customer and Personal Service, Sales and Marketing, English Language, Administration and Management, Mathematics

		<i>Skills:</i> Persuasion, Speaking, Active Listening, Negotiation, Social Perceptiveness
20	41-4012	<p><u>Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products</u></p> <p><i>Knowledge:</i> Sales and Marketing, Customer and Personal Service, English Language, Mathematics, Transportation</p> <p><i>Skills:</i> Active Listening, Speaking, Negotiation, Persuasion, Social Perceptiveness</p>
Education, Training & Library		
21	25-1099	<p><u>Education Teachers, Postsecondary-25Postsecondary 25-1081</u></p> <p><i>Knowledge:</i> Education and Training, English Language, Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology, Administration and Management</p> <p><i>Skills:</i> Speaking, Reading Comprehension, Active Listening, Instructing, Learning Strategies</p>
22	25-2012	<p><u>Kindergarten Teachers, Except Special Education</u></p> <p><i>Knowledge:</i> Education and Training, English Language, Psychology, Mathematics, Customer and Personal Service</p> <p><i>Skills:</i> Instructing, Social Perceptiveness, Active Listening, Learning Strategies, Monitoring</p>
23	25-2052	<p><u>Special Education Teachers, Kindergarten and Elementary School</u></p> <p><i>Knowledge:</i> Education and Training, English Language, Psychology, Mathematics, Customer and Personal Service</p> <p><i>Skills:</i> Instructing, Social Perceptiveness, Active Listening, Learning Strategies, Monitoring</p>
24	25-4022	<p><u>Librarians and Media Collections Specialists 25-4021</u></p> <p><i>Knowledge:</i> Customer and Personal Service, English Language, Computers and Electronics, Education and Training, Communications and Media</p> <p><i>Skills:</i> Active Listening, Reading Comprehension, Speaking, Critical Thinking, Writing</p>
25	25-9031	<p><u>Instructional Coordinators</u></p> <p><i>Knowledge:</i> Education and Training, English Language, Administration and Management, Mathematics, Computers and Electronics</p> <p><i>Skills:</i> Learning Strategies, Instructing, Speaking, Writing, Active Listening</p>
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical		
26	29-1051	<p><u>Pharmacists</u></p> <p><i>Knowledge:</i> Medicine and Dentistry, Customer and Personal Service, Mathematics, Chemistry, English LanguageBiology</p> <p><i>Skills:</i> Reading Comprehension, Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Instructing, Monitoring</p>
27	29-1122	<p><u>Occupational Therapists</u></p> <p><i>Knowledge:</i> Psychology, Therapy and Counseling, Medicine and Dentistry, Education and Training, Customer and Personal ServiceEnglish Language</p> <p><i>Skills:</i> Monitoring, Service Orientation, Active Listening, Critical Thinking, InstructingJudgment and Decision Making</p>
28	29-1123	<p><u>Physical Therapists</u></p> <p><i>Knowledge:</i> Customer and Personal Service, Therapy and Counseling, Medicine and Dentistry, Psychology, Education and Training</p> <p><i>Skills:</i> Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension, Service Orientation, Social Perceptiveness</p>
29	29-1127	<p><u>Speech-Language Pathologists</u></p> <p><i>Knowledge:</i> English Language, Psychology, Customer and Personal Service, Education and Training, Therapy and Counseling</p>

		<i>Skills:</i> Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Learning Strategies, Reading Comprehension, Social Perceptiveness
30	29-12298	<u>Physicians, All Other; and Ophthalmologists, Except Pediatric 29-1069</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Medicine and Dentistry, English Language, Biology, Education and Training, Customer and Personal Service <i>Skills:</i> Critical Thinking, Active Listening, Reading Comprehension, Speaking, Coordination
Healthcare Support		
31	31-1131	<u>Nursing Assistants *Certified Only 31-1014</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Customer and Personal Service, Administration and Management, English Language, Medicine and Dentistry, Public Safety and Security <i>Skills:</i> Service Orientation, Active Listening, Social Perceptiveness, Monitoring, Coordination
32	19-3031	<u>Clinical and Counseling, Counseling, and School Psychologists 19-3033</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Psychology, Therapy and Counseling, English Language, Customer and Personal Service, Sociology and Anthropology <i>Skills:</i> Social Perceptiveness, Active Listening, Speaking, Critical Thinking, Reading and Comprehension, Service Orientation
Community & Social Service		
33	21-1012	<u>Educational, Guidance, and Career Counselors and Advisors</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Therapy and Counseling, Psychology, Education and Training, English Language, Administrative Clerical <i>Skills:</i> Active Listening, Social Perceptiveness, Speaking, Reading Comprehension, Service Orientation
34	21-1021	<u>Child, Family, and School Social Workers</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Customer and Personal Service, Psychology, Therapy and Counseling, English Language, Administrative Clerical <i>Skills:</i> Active Listening, Speaking, Critical Thinking, Social Perceptiveness, Judgment and Decision Making
Construction & Extraction		
35	17-3011	<u>Architectural and Civil Drafters</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Education and Training Design, Building and Construction, Public Safety and Security, Transportation Engineering and Technology, Computers and Electronics , English Language <i>Skills:</i> Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension, Speaking, Writing
36	49-9051	<u>Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Mechanical, Customer and Personal Service, Physics <i>Skills:</i> Active Listening, Monitoring, Operation and Control Critical Thinking, Operation Monitoring, Troubleshooting
Installation, Repair & Maintenance		
37	49-3011	<u>Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Mechanical, English Language, Engineering and Technology, Customer and Personal Service, Mathematics <i>Skills:</i> Equipment Maintenance, Repairing, Operation Monitoring, Troubleshooting, Complex Problem Solving
38	49-9041	<u>Industrial Machinery Mechanics</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Mechanical, Engineering and Technology, Production and Processing, English Language, Design Mathematics <i>Skills:</i> Equipment Maintenance, Repairing, Operation Monitoring, Troubleshooting, Operation and Control

Transportation, Material Moving & Warehousing		
39	53-3033	<u>Light Truck Drivers</u> Knowledge: Customer and Personal Service, Transportation, Law and Government, English Language Skills: Operation and Control, Active Listening, Speaking, Monitoring, Reading Comprehension
40	53-3052	<u>Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity 53-3021</u> Knowledge: Transportation, Customer and Personal Service, Public Safety and Security, English Language, Law and Government Skills: Operation and Control, Operation Monitoring, Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Service Orientation

Table 16: Knowledge and Skills for Target Occupations:

Healthcare Practitioners & Technical		
1	29-1126	<u>Respiratory Therapists</u> Knowledge: Customer and Personal Service, Medicine and Dentistry, English Language, Education and Training, Psychology Skills: Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Monitoring, Speaking, Active Learning
2	29-1141	<u>Registered Nurses</u> Knowledge: Medicine and Dentistry, Customer and Personal Service, Psychology, English Language, Administrative Education and Training Skills: Active Listening, Social Perceptiveness, Service Orientation, Speaking, Coordination
3	29-1292	<u>Dental Hygienists 29-2021</u> Knowledge: Medicine and Dentistry, Customer and Personal Service, English Language, Psychology, Biology Skills: Speaking, Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Service Orientation , Judgment and Decision Making , Monitoring
4	29-2032	<u>Diagnostic Medical Sonographers</u> Knowledge: Customer and Personal Service, English Language, Physics, Medicine and Dentistry, Administrative Clerical Skills: Active Listening, Reading Comprehension, Social Perceptiveness, Speaking, Critical Thinking
5	29-2034	<u>Radiologic Technologists and Technicians</u> Knowledge: Customer and Personal Service, Medicine and Dentistry, English Language, Computers and Electronics, Education and Training Administrative Skills: Active Listening, Speaking, Reading Comprehension, Service Orientation Critical Thinking , Social Perceptiveness
6	29-2042 4	<u>Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics</u> Knowledge: Customer and Personal Service, English Language, Public Safety and Security, Administration and Management, Law and Government Skills: Critical Thinking, Service Orientation, Active Listening, Active Learning, Reading Comprehension

7	29-2052	<u>Pharmacy Technicians</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Customer and Personal Service, English Language, Mathematics, Medicine and Dentistry, Computers and Electronics <i>Skills:</i> Active Listening, Reading Comprehension, Speaking, Critical Thinking, Active Learning Monitoring
8	29-2055	<u>Surgical Technologists</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Customer and Personal Service, Medicine and Dentistry, English Language, Education and Training <i>Skills:</i> Monitoring, Active Listening, Operation Monitoring, Coordination, Critical Thinking
9	29-2061	<u>Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Medicine and Dentistry, Customer and Personal Service, Psychology, English Language, Administration and Management <i>Skills:</i> Service Orientation, Active Listening, Coordination, Monitoring, Social Perceptiveness Reading Comprehension
10	29-2072	<u>Medical Records Dosimetrists, Medical Records Specialists, and Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other Specialist</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Customer and Personal Service, Clerical , Administrative , English Language, Computers and Electronics, Medicine and Dentistry <i>Skills:</i> Critical Thinking, Active Listening, Speaking, Monitoring, Reading Comprehension
11	31-2011	<u>Occupational Therapy Assistants</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Customer and Personal Service, English Language, Psychology, Education and Training, Therapy and Counseling <i>Skills:</i> Active Listening, Speaking, Reading Comprehension, Social Perceptiveness, Social Orientation Time Management
12	31-2021	<u>Physical Therapist Assistants</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Customer and Personal Service, Therapy and Counseling, English Language, Education and Training, Psychology <i>Skills:</i> Active Listening, Monitoring, Social Perceptiveness, Speaking, Active Learning
13	31-9092	<u>Medical Assistants *Certified</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Customer and Personal Service, Medicine and Dentistry, English Language, Administrative Clerical , Computers and Electronics <i>Skills:</i> Speaking, Active Listening, Reading Comprehension, Social Perceptiveness, Monitoring Critical Thinking
<u>Education, Training, & Library</u>		
14	25-2021	<u>Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Education and Training, English Language, Mathematics, Psychology, Computers and Electronics <i>Skills:</i> Instructing, Speaking, Learning Strategies, Active Listening, Critical Thinking
15	25-2022	<u>Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Education and Training, English Language, Customer and Personal Service, Psychology, Computers and Electronics <i>Skills:</i> Instructing, Speaking, Active Listening, Learning Strategies, Reading Comprehension
16	25-2031	<u>Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education</u> <i>Knowledge:</i> Education and Training, English Language, Psychology, Computers and Electronics, Customer and Personal Service <i>Skills:</i> Instructing, Speaking, Active Listening, Learning Strategies, Reading Comprehension

17	25-9045	<u>Teaching Assistants, Preschool, Elementary, Middle, and Secondary School, Except Special Education 25-9042</u> <u>Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary 25-9041</u> Knowledge: English Language, Education and Training, Computers and Electronics, Customer and Personal Service Skills: Reading Comprehension, Active Listening, Instructing, Speaking, Learning Strategies
Business & Financial Operations		
18	13-2011	<u>Accountants and Auditors</u> Knowledge: Economics and Accounting, English Language, Mathematics, Administration and Management, Customer and Personal Service Skills: Active Listening, Reading Comprehension, Critical Thinking, Speaking, Writing
Office & Administrative Support		
19	13-1071	<u>Human Resources Specialists</u> Knowledge: Personnel and Human Resources, <u>AdministrativeClerical</u> , Administration and Management, English Language, Customer and Personal Service Skills: Speaking, Active Listening, Reading Comprehension, Critical Thinking, Writing
20	23-2011	<u>Paralegals and Legal Assistants</u> Knowledge: <u>AdministrativeClerical</u> , English Language, Law and Government, Customer and Personal Service, <u>Computers and Electronics</u> Skills: Reading Comprehension, Active Listening, Speaking, Writing, Critical Thinking
21	43-3031	<u>Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks</u> Knowledge: Customer and Personal Service, <u>AdministrativeClerical</u> , Mathematics, Economics and Accounting, English Language Skills: Mathematics, Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension, Speaking
22	43-4051	<u>Customer Service Representatives</u> Knowledge: Customer and Personal Service, English Language, <u>Administrative and Management, Sales and Marketing, MathematicsClerical, Computers and Electronics</u> Skills: Active Listening, Speaking, Service Orientation, Reading Comprehension, Critical Thinking
23	43-6013	<u>Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants</u> Knowledge: Customer and Personal Service, English Language, <u>AdministrativeClerical</u> , Computers and Electronics, <u>Medicine and DentistryAdministration and Management</u> Skills: Speaking, Active Listening, Service Orientation, Reading Comprehension, <u>Complex Problem SolvingCoordination</u>
24	43-6014	<u>Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive</u> Knowledge: <u>AdministrativeClerical</u> , English Language, Computers and Electronics, Customer and Personal Service, Administration and Management Skills: Active Listening, Speaking, Reading Comprehension, Writing, Service Orientation
Computer & Mathematical		
25	15-1231	<u>Computer Network Support Specialists 15-1152</u>

		Knowledge: Computers and Electronics, Telecommunications, Customer and Personal Service, Engineering and Technology, English Language Skills: Critical Thinking, Active Listening, Judgment and Decision Making, Reading Comprehension, Active Learning
26	15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists 15-1151 Knowledge: Computers and Electronics, Customer and Personal Service, English Language, Telecommunications, Engineering and Technology Skills: Active Listening, Reading Comprehension, Speaking, Complex Problem Solving, Critical Thinking
27	15-1254257	Web Developers and Digital Interface Designers 15-1134 Knowledge: Computers and Electronics, English Language, Mathematics, Communications and Media Skills: Programming, Critical Thinking, Complex Problem Solving, Operations Analysis, Reading Comprehension
Transportation, Material Moving & Warehousing		
28	49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics Knowledge: Mechanical, Customer and Personal Service, Computers and Electronics, English Language, Engineering and Technology Skills: Repairing, Troubleshooting, Operation Monitoring, Equipment Maintenance, Critical Thinking Operation and Control
29	49-3031	Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists Knowledge: Mechanical, Transportation, Customer and Personal Service, Public Safety and Security, English Language Skills: Repairing, Troubleshooting, Equipment Maintenance Operation and Control , Operation Monitoring, Critical Thinking
30	53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers Knowledge: Transportation, Public Safety and Security, Customer and Personal Service, English Language, Law and Government Mechanical Skills: Operation and Control, Operation Monitoring, Reading Comprehension Time Management , Critical Thinking, Monitoring
Construction & Extraction		
31	17-3023	Electrical and Electronic Engineering Technologists and Technicians Knowledge: Computers and Electronics, Engineering and Technology, English Language, Design, Mathematics Skills: Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension, Complex Problem Solving, Active Listening, Troubleshooting
32	47-2111	Electricians Knowledge: Building and Construction, Mechanical, Mathematics, Design, Administration Management English Language Skills: Troubleshooting, Repairing, Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Speaking Judgment and Decision Making
33	47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters Knowledge: Mechanical, Building and Construction, Design, Mathematics, English Language Skills: Critical Thinking, Repairing Active Listening , Judgment and Decision Making, Troubleshooting Monitoring Speaking Complex Problem Solving
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair		
34	49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers Knowledge: Mechanical, Customer and Personal Service, Building and Construction, Computers and Electronics, Engineering and Technology Physics

		Skills: Troubleshooting, Reading Comprehension, Critical Thinking Equipment Maintenance, Repairing, Operation Monitoring, Installation
35	49-9071	<u>Maintenance and Repair Workers, General</u> Knowledge: Mechanical, Building and Construction, Mathematics, Production and Processing, Customer and Personal Service, Public Safety and Security, English Language Skills: Equipment Maintenance, Repairing, Troubleshooting, Critical Thinking, Equipment Selection Active Listening
		Production
36	51-4041	<u>Machinists</u> Knowledge: Mathematics, Mechanical, Production and Processing, Design Skills: Operation and Control, Critical Thinking, Monitoring, Operation Monitoring, Active Listening
37	51-4121	<u>Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers</u> Knowledge: Production and Processing, Mechanical Skills: Quality Control Analysis, Monitoring No skills met minimum score (ONET)
38	51-9161	<u>Computer Numerically Controlled Tool Operators 51-4011</u> Knowledge: Mechanical, Mathematics, Design, Computers and Electronics, Engineering and Technology Skills: Operation Monitoring, Monitoring, Critical Thinking, Quality Control Analysis, Operation and Control
		Protective Services
39	33-3012	<u>Correctional Officers and Jailers</u> Knowledge: Public Safety and Security, Law and Government, English Language, Administrative, Clerical, Administration and Management Skills: Social Perceptiveness, Speaking, Active Listening, Monitoring, Critical Thinking
40	33-3051	<u>Police and Sheriffs Patrol Officers</u> Knowledge: Public Safety and Security, Law and Government, English Language, Psychology, Customer and Personal Service Skills: Active Listening, Critical Thinking, Speaking, Social Perceptiveness, Active Listening Negotiation

1 <https://www.shsu.edu/dept/hr/employment/hiring.html>

The analysis of the 40 Target Occupations listed on Table 16 above titled, *Knowledge and Skills for Target Occupations*, indicates employers place a high emphasis on knowledge and skills ranked by frequency as -outlined in the Occupation Summary Report across all industries and occupations. The frequency of knowledge and skills was derived by quantifying the frequency of the top five knowledge and skills as outlined by Occupation Summary Report available on the O*NET OnLine website.

Identifying the frequency of the knowledge and skills valued by employers is critical to ensure job seekers and employees are well-trained and aware of the skills employers expect in the listed occupations.

Table 17: Frequency of Knowledge

Knowledge	Frequency
English Language	35
Customer and Personal Service	31
Computers and Electronics	17
Administrative Clerical	11
Medicine and Dentistry	10
Education and Training	10
Psychology	10
Mathematics	10
Mechanical	9
Public Safety and Security	6
Administration and Management	6
Engineering and Technology	5
Design	5
Law and Government	4
Building and Construction	4
Therapy and Counseling	3
Economics and Accounting	2
Telecommunications	2
Transportation	2
Production and Processing	2
Biology	1
Physics	1
Personnel and Human Resources	1
Communications and Media	1

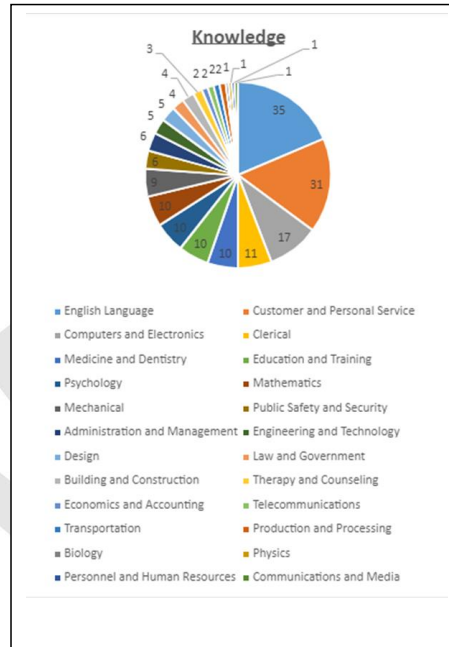


Chart 22: Frequency of Knowledge

Table 18: Frequency of Skills

Skills	Frequency
Active Listening	31
Critical Thinking	26
Speaking	24
Reading Comprehension	22
Monitoring	12
Social Perceptiveness	8
Operation Monitoring	7
Service Orientation	6
Troubleshooting	6
Repairing	5
Operation and Control	5
Active Learning	4
Coordination	4
Instructing	4
Learning Strategies	4
Writing	4
Judgment and Decision Making	3
Equipment Maintenance	3
Time Management	2
Complex Problem Solving	2
Mathematics	1
Programming	1
Operations Analysis	1
Installation	1
Equipment Selection	1
Quality Control Analysis	1
Negotiation	1



Chart 23: Frequency of Skills

B. Labor Force Analysis and Trends

In the WFS service delivery area, the business community constantly demands the need for a high skilled workforce through their entry level positions. WFS in partnership with the business community collaborates to identify skills deficiencies to develop training initiatives designed to target individuals with barriers to employment.

The continuous efforts to increase the labor force, 25 years and over, in the higher levels of education remains an extremely important challenge for the region. According to **Tables 19-21**, the labor force with less than a High School diploma is 61.1% for Hidalgo County, 62% for Starr County, and 49.7% for Willacy County as of 2019. This segment of the population has a significant risk of losing employment opportunities along with High School graduates.

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The populations of High School graduates and less than High School reported the highest unemployment rates. According to **Tables 19-21**, the educational segment with the highest unemployment rate in Hidalgo County was “High School Graduates” with 5.5%, in Starr County was the “Less than High School Graduates” with 14.2%, and in Willacy County was the “Less than High School Graduates” with 25.1%.

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The lowest unemployment rates reported in 2019 were for the “Bachelor’s Degree or Higher” educational segment with Hidalgo County reported at 2.8%, Starr County at 2.4%, and Willacy County at a 3.6%.

Table 19 – Hidalgo County Educational Attainment and Employment Statistics 2019

Hidalgo County, Texas – Estimates				
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	Total	Labor Force Participation Rate	Employment/Population Ratio	Unemployment Rate
Population 25 to 64 years	394,467	73.8%	70.0%	4.9%
Less than high school graduate	109,760	61.1%	57.8%	5.5%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	104,797	72.8%	68.3%	5.9%
Some college or associate's degree	101,163	80.5%	75.9%	5.0%
Bachelor's degree or higher	78,747	84.2%	81.8%	2.8%

Source: Census, American Community Survey 2019, S2301

Table 20 – Starr County Educational Attainment and Employment Statistics 2019

Starr County, Texas - Estimates				
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	Total	Labor Force Participation Rate	Employment/Population Ratio	Unemployment Rate
Population 25 to 64 years	28,401	70.5%	62.2%	11.7%
Less than high school graduate	11,232	62.5%	53.6%	14.2%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	8,442	70.4%	61.4%	12.7%
Some college or associate's degree	5,532	73.3%	63.9%	12.8%
Bachelor's degree or higher	3,195	93.9%	91.6%	2.4%

Source: Census, American Community Survey 2019, S2301

Table 21 – Willacy County Educational Attainment and Employment Statistics 2019

Willacy County, Texas - Estimates				
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	Total	Labor Force Participation Rate	Employment/Population Ratio	Unemployment Rate
Population 25 to 64 years	10,342	63.6%	56.4%	11.2%
Less than high school graduate	2,886	49.7%	37.2%	25.1%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	4,154	61.8%	57.3%	7.2%
Some college or associate's degree	2,428	76.2%	69.3%	9.0%
Bachelor's degree or higher	874	82.6%	79.6%	3.6%

Source: Census, American Community Survey 2019, S2301

It is expected that the population 25 years and over in the WFS service delivery area will increase by 8.6% from 2020-2030. According to **Table 22 and Chart 24**, the educational segments of the population that will experience the most significant increases are: Less Than 9th Grade with 10.8%, Associate's Degree with 10.9%, and Graduate Degree and Higher with 10.1%.

Combining Less than 9th Grade, 9th – 12th Grade, and High School Diploma populations, the total projected increase is 24.6%. Regional efforts to move up these segments of the population to Some College and above levels is critical for the economic development of the region in the next 10 years.

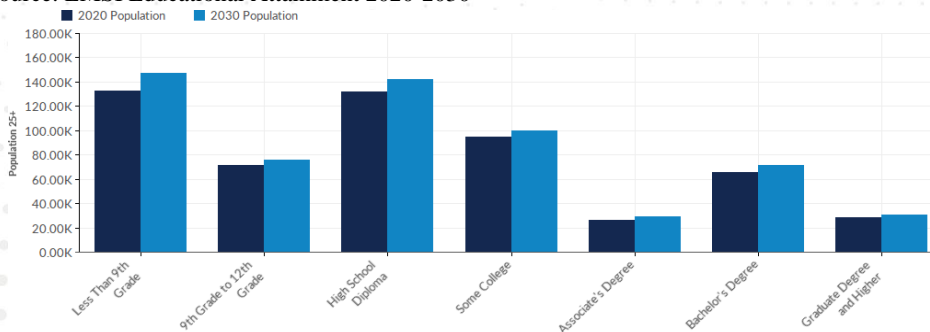
Table 22 – Three County Educational Attainment Projections 2020-2030

Education Level	2020 Population	2030 Population	2020-2030 Change	2020 Regional Population	2020 State Population	2020 National Population
Less Than 9th Grade	132,868	147,264	10.8%	24%	10%	6%
9th Grade to 12th Grade	71,497	76,004	6.3%	13%	8%	7%
High School Diploma	132,173	142,097	7.5%	24%	25%	27%
Some College	94,542	100,155	5.9%	17%	22%	21%
Associate's Degree	26,519	29,411	10.9%	5%	7%	8%
Bachelor's Degree	65,891	71,754	8.9%	12%	19%	19%
Graduate Degree and Higher	28,114	30,962	10.1%	5%	10%	12%
	551,604	597,648		100%	100%	100%

Source: EMSI Educational Attainment 2020-2030

Chart 24 – Three County Educational Attainment Projections 2020-2030

Source: EMSI Educational Attainment 2020-2030



The local unemployment statistics presented on **Table 23** show the unemployment rates during November 2019 in single digits ranging from 4.2% to 7.2% except for Starr County which reflected a unemployment rate of 10.9%. All rates were above the state and national rate of 3.3%. The unprecedented and unexpected Covid-19 pandemic slowed down the global economy and significantly impacted the local region by pushing the unemployment rates to double digits in all counties and most of the cities in the RGV.

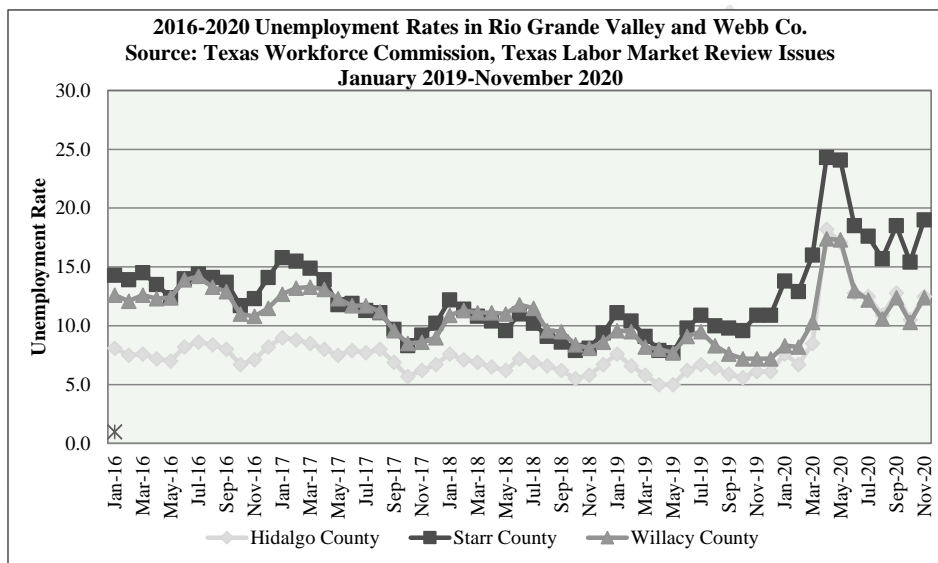
In November 2020, the unemployment rate reported for Hidalgo County was 12.5%, for Starr County 19%, and for Willacy County 12.4%. While the state and national level were 8% and 6.4% respectively. The lowest unemployment rate was reported for the cities of McAllen and Edinburg at 9.1%.

According to Chart 25, the economy in the three counties began a strong recovery in May 2020. However, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to cause ups and downs on the unemployment rate which ranges between 10% to 12% for Hidalgo and Willacy counties and between 15% to 19% for Starr County. The industry employment diversification is paramount for strong thriving economies but considering the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic had on all industry sectors, the challenge at hand is to bring the overall unemployment rates to single digits. Decreasing unemployment rates to single digits will be the main goal in the short and medium terms.

Table 23- Local Unemployment Statistics

Geographic Area	Nov-20			Oct-20	Nov-19
	Civilian Labor Force	Unemployed	Rate	Rate	Rate
USA	160,468,000	10,264,000	6.4%	6.6%	3.3%
Texas	14,204,927	1,129,593	8.0%	6.7%	3.3%
Workforce Solutions	392,651	50,808	12.9%	10.8%	6.4%
Hidalgo County	359,711	44,984	12.5%	10.5%	6.1%
McAllen	67,030	6,072	9.1%	7.8%	4.2%
Mission	35,884	4,514	12.6%	10.7%	5.9%
Edinburg	45,995	4,192	9.1%	7.9%	4.5%
Pharr	32,269	4,270	13.2%	11.5%	6.2%
San Juan	16,040	2,392	14.9%	12.3%	6.8%
Weslaco	16,405	2,020	12.3%	9.9%	6.3%
Starr County	26,232	4,993	19.0%	15.4%	10.9%
Willacy County	6,708	831	12.4%	10.3%	7.2%

Chart 25- Local Unemployment Statistics Trend 2016-2020



C. Workforce Development Analysis

Skill gap issues exist within the WFS service delivery area and currently range from a lack of skilled labor force, to filling jobs related to new technology, to increasing numbers of skilled workers leaving the workforce for retirement. ~~To compound the skill gap issue, the shift to remote learning or conducting virtual job searches during the COVID-19 pandemic is exposing gaps in computer literacy along with gaps in internet access across the service delivery area.~~

The following gaps are priorities for the WFS to address:

- **Youthful population:**

WFS has developed, through a TWC funded Special Project, a strategic approach providing career services to public middle and high school students, grades six through twelve. The Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialist Pilot Program provides career services to students and strives to direct students towards high growth high demand occupations. Students receive in-depth education and direction on career choices as well as access to up-to-date labor market and career data. For more information about the special project, please access following link: [Seven Workforce Boards Awarded Funding for Career and Education Outreach Specialist Pilot Program | Texas Workforce Commission](#)

• **Aging workers leaving the workforce and taking skilled knowledge with them:**

WFS and regional partners are working together and will seek funding opportunities to encourage more apprenticeship programs with employers. This will help younger workers learn from more experienced workers and will ensure that companies do not lose important knowledge and skill sets.

• **Educational attainment not matching employer needs:**

WFS and regional partners are encouraging workers and job seekers to pursue career pathways that lead to industry-recognized, portable, stackable credentials, so that these individuals can fill in-demand jobs and increase their earnings.

• **Job seekers and entry-level workers lack the soft/employability skills necessary for successful employment:**

WFS is collaborating with ISDs, post-secondary and community-based organizations to train job seekers in soft/employability skills, making it more likely that they gain and retain employment.

• **Workers need to be upskilled for new technologies:**

WFS and partners in the region are continuing to encourage employers to use state and federal workforce programs that will help them upskill their current workers, increasing worker retention and wages.

Part 3: Core Programs

A. Workforce Development System

Required Partners and Programs

WFS aims to yield the greatest benefits for job seekers and businesses in the service delivery area and is dedicated to ensuring all individuals, especially those with barriers to employment, have access to the WFS workforce system services in order to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

~~The COVID-19 pandemic forced many businesses to convert to virtual operations. At the same time, unemployment increased at a pace never seen before. WFS continues to provide services in a manner that is beneficial to employers, job seekers and staff, while leveraging the technology needed to virtually deliver services to complement face to face interactions wherever possible. The WFS Workforce Career Centers are taking the necessary precautions to maintain the safety of customers and staff as they remain open for individuals who need one on one interactions. In addition, WFS proposes to align the administration of the TWC programs below with the WIOA Texas Combined State Plan.~~

- WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs
- Wagner-Peyser Employment Service (ES) Program
- Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Program
- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program
- Unemployment Insurance (UI) Program
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program

- Choices, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Employment and Training (E&T) Program
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T)
- Subsidized Child Care Programs
- ~~Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Child Care/Texas Rising Star Program~~
- Apprenticeship Programs (Texas Education Code, Chapter 133)
- Veterans Employment and Training Programs
- Senior Community Service Employment Program

Working with Core Partners

WFS strives to consistently provide excellent service to workforce customers, both job seekers and businesses. All programs and services are coordinated with internal and external partners to help prepare local job seekers meet the employer's skill expectations. Strategies include:

- Strengthening collaboration with core and required partners such as: AEL, TWS-VRS and TVC to leverage resources and possible co-enrollment of customers.
- Collaborating with local organizations to secure and/or leverage resources.
- Identifying areas of opportunity to collaborate with community partners where there is goal and service alignment.
- Convening, when applicable, core, required and regional partners to align and expand services, ~~where applicable~~.
- Maintaining the WFS referral system and adapting customized initial intake forms to ensure consistency across core partner agencies. These standardized electronic forms will support alignment of services across programs by reducing duplicate data collections and allowing core partners to streamline services and work from the same basic customer information.
- Establishing local Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with core and required partners specifying how each agency's roles and responsibilities associated with supporting an educated and skilled workforce will be maintained (e.g., Senior Community Service Employment Programs (SCSEP), Adult Education and Literacy). Working with SCSEP to align services and outcomes.
- Coordination of services includes the identification of opportunities and strategies, and improvement of service delivery, where applicable.
- Leveraging co-enrollment opportunities amongst programs whenever beneficial to the customer.
- Supporting improved customer service and cross-program staff training to increase staff knowledge and capacity that allows for a seamless service delivery.
- Developing, supporting and/or collaborating with core, required and regional partners to create customized training for employers. (e.g., Skill Development Fund (SDF), High Demand Job Training (HDJT) grants).
- Responding to educational partners' consultations regarding the development of proposals related to workforce training (i.e., Jobs Education and Training (JET) and Self Sufficiency Fund (SSF) grants).
- Working with TWS-VRS to ensure a smooth transition and integration of TWS-VRS staff and services into WFS Workforce Career Centers.

- Collaborat~~ing~~ amongst WFS Student HireAbility Navigators, TWS-VRS and vocational rehabilitation counselors to help connect individuals with disabilities to services that facilitate a successful transition to employment and/or post-secondary education.

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

WFS is actively engaged in collaborative community planning with partners to enhance the community's access to workforce services. Community agencies, education and training partners, and employers have a history of operating true collective impact models that leverage the full scale of partner resources, braid funding, and provide better outcomes for the area's residents.

A key strategy will be the continued collaboration amongst WFS and core partners, such as but not limited to AEL, TWS-VRS to seek alignment of services and outcomes. The primary focus is to provide increased access to individuals with barriers in accessing services, including individuals with disabilities, low educational attainment and English Second Language customers, and rural customers.

The collaboration strategy ~~includes convening~~ includes convening Executive Leadership meetings with agendas tied to the following planning tenets: (1) identify opportunities and identify strategies, (2) identify what the entity/organization can bring to the table, (3) build trust, (4) continuously seek to improve delivery of services, and (5) be outcomes oriented. Collaboration amongst agencies includes a commitment of shared outcomes to include, but not limited to:

- Customers
- Expertise, Competencies, Skills and Knowledge
- Programs & Services
- Resources
- Media Outreach
- Leveraging Resources
- Increasing Access through Partnerships
- On-Line Service Lists
- Connection to job opportunities
- Social Media Platforms

Adaptive Equipment and Services

WFS and sub-recipient conduct annual training on WIOA 188, the Americans with Disabilities Act and proper use of accessibility software and hardware. WFS monitors and conducts annual accessibility reviews to improve or correct accessibility barriers for individuals with disabilities.

Workforce Services provides customers equal opportunity to access all facilities, programs. WFS manage and operate in compliance with EO and ADA requirements.

• Minimum Accessibility Standards

In order to comply with minimum accessibility standards and expand accessibility and services, WFS provides an array of adaptive equipment at all WFS Workforce Career Centers. The following is list of adaptive strategies used by sub-recipient in each office location to assist customers requiring accommodation:

- ZOOM Screen Magnifier Software
- Microsoft Windows Magnifier

- Microsoft Windows Narrator
- Microsoft Windows On-Screen Keyboard
- Large Print Keyboards with Braille
- BigTrack Trackball Mouse(s)
- Volume Control CapTel Phones
- TTY Telephones
- Bi-Level Adjustable Height Workstations
- One-On-One Staff Assistance
- Staff “Notetakers”
- Staff “Readers”
- Bilingual Staff Available (*Spanish*)
- In-Person Sign-Language Interpreting (procured)
- Large Print upon request
- POCKETALKER Ultra Speech Amplification Device with disposable headsets
- Sorenson Video Relay Service

Part 4: One-Stop Service Delivery

A. One-Stop Service Delivery System

WFS ensures effective coordination of programs and services for target populations through a controlled process of (1) regional analysis, (2) service delivery design, and (3) accountability.

Regional Analysis: WFS analyzes the regional economy and labor market, contrasted with regional demographic data and local wisdom to identify target populations and service gaps and limitations. Analysis is completed collaboratively with WFS’ sub-recipient and partners to ensure its fully contextualized and represents the interests of all constituencies.

Current target populations for the region include Public Assistance Recipients, Other Low-Income Adults, and Individuals that are Basic Skills Deficient. Additional priority/target groups include Eligible Veterans and Spouses, Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers, Individuals without a Diploma/GED, Foster Youth, Individuals with Disabilities, Referred Court Involved/Offenders, English Language Learners, Unemployed and/or receiving Unemployment Insurance, Individuals earning less than Self-Sufficiency Wage, Individuals with Cultural Barriers (including legal immigrants and refugees), and Individuals facing multiple barriers (such as substance abuse, mental health problems, and domestic violence issues).

~~(WFS Policy SKL# 021.01 Service Priority for Individualized Career Services and Training Services addresses/designates priority target populations. WFS Policy WSYS# 006.00 addresses veteran priority of service.)Veteran Priority of Service~~

Service Delivery Design: Analysis informs the development of programs, service design strategies and opportunities that will align the best interest of job seekers and employers. The WFS workforce system is designed to increase access to, and opportunities for, the employment, education, training,

and support services that individuals need to succeed in the labor market, particularly those with barriers to employment to include target populations.

WFS works with sub-recipients and partners to ensure all customers are given access to high-quality WFS Workforce Career Centers that connect them with the full range of services available in their communities (to include partner referrals). This occurs whether customers are looking to find jobs, build basic educational or occupational skills, earn a postsecondary certificate or degree, or obtain guidance on how to make career choices. All programs and services are coordinated, with both internal and external partners, to meet the customer's individual needs. WFS Workforce Career Centers directly provide career services that encourage, support, and empower customers, including individuals with disabilities and other barriers, to make informed decisions based on local and regional economic demand and effectively attain their personal employment and education goals.

Accountability: At the beginning of each contract year, WFS establishes service level targets based primarily on (1) TWC contracted measures, (2) target populations identified for specific grants, and/or (3) board/local priorities and service strategies. WFS ensures adherence to and accountability for service level targets, which include special target population enrollment/performance, via monthly data analysis and reporting priority service and activity levels.

The data documents whether projected outreach and service levels relative to WFS priorities and target populations are trending actual overages and/or deficiencies and are adjusted to achieve performance expectations. An example data point tracked by WFS is the Migrant Indicators of Compliance; the indicator provides data on levels of services provided within specific target population that alerts WFS to where services need improvement, increased outreach, and/or activity. In addition, each Workforce Career Center informs the accountability process by capturing customer requests for services, type of service requested and demographic characteristics to identify where the customer is within a specific target population.

Data is trended and analyzed by WFS staff, sub-recipient leadership, and Workforce Career Center leadership, and corrections to service strategies are made to meet service demand. Corrections are situation specific and collaboratively developed and implemented between relevant parties.

A description of the strategies and services that will be used in the local area include:

- a. To facilitate engagement of employers in the workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations
- b. To support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area
- c. To better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development
- d. To strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs

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

2.a. Facilitating Engagement of Employers:

WFS business service delivery is structured to provide strategic staff resources to ensure an understanding of the needs of the business community through its Board Staff Community Engagement Department's Business Relations Representatives (BRR) team and its sub-recipient's Business Solutions Unit (BSU). The WFS Business Relations team provides services to all industries but has a focus on the following industries:

- (1) Healthcare - One of largest employment industries in the service delivery area
- (2) Information Technology- The demand of skilled professionals in the IIT sector is growing exponentially each year and exceeding the supply with an estimated shortage of 3 million workers by 2021.
- (3) Manufacturing - An economic growth sector that creates multiple sub-sectors that serve this industry.

The BRR and BSU collaborative work -enables WFS to provide a full array of services to meet our employer's workforce needs. WFS' sub-recipient BSU provides direct employment services to business partners in the service delivery area including small businesses and new start-up businesses.

Table 24 below indicates how the two WFS teams facilitate engagement of employers in workforce development programs:

Table 24: WFS Department Roles and Responsibilities

WFS Community Engagement Business Relations Representatives:	WFS sub-recipient Business Solutions Unit:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides technical assistance to businesses• Updates the WFS target and demand industries and occupations (bi-annual)• Releases monthly Labor Market reports• Conducts Business Retention and Expansion visits (in partnership with area Economic Development Corporations (EDCs))• Develop and coordinate two industry-led taskforces, Healthcare (hospitals and behavioral health) and Information Technology)• Coordinates and presents to EDCs on area workforce resources, labor force availability and skills, and TWC skills training related grant opportunities.• Member of associations, chambers, coalitions, foundations, or organizes partner meetings, to discuss business issues, provide solutions and identify ways to improve the delivery of business	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assists employers in recruiting, screening, and referring qualified applicants to meet their hiring needs• Utilizes the WorkInTexas.com (WIT) system and navigating employers them through the job order process• Develops job descriptions to ensure quality matches in WIT and enters job postings into WIT• Manages job postings to ensure quality customer service• Coordinates and communicates with the WFS Workforce Career Centers on scheduling and logistics of hiring events and job fairs• Communicates hiring events and other activities through social media (e.g. RGV Operation Get Hired)• Coordinates and works with the Workforce Career Center staff to assist customers that are exiting training to facilitate training related placement

services by WFS and partner organizations. Examples: Local Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), South Texas Manufacturers Association (STMA), city chambers, economic development corporations, regional economic development organizations, and educational committees, advisory panels and support groups

- Researches and applies for grants, in partnership with employers, that bring additional resources or training opportunities for the business
- Maintains wfsolutions.org with content on labor market information and employer services available
- Manages WFS social media to provide employers with local economy, labor market information, jobs, and other related information
- Plans and coordinates large scale job fairs
- Outreaches, markets and distributes information about On the Job Training, Work Experience, Skills Development, Work Opportunity Tax Credit, and Fidelity Bonding resources available to employers
- Works closely with local partners to maximize grant opportunities (e.g. TWC High Demand Job Training, Texas Industry Initiative Program, Texas Apprenticeship grants)
- Leads or supports education driven initiatives for better alignment of education/training to employer workforce skills needs. Examples: Educate Texas/RGV FOCUS collective impact initiatives and RGV LEAD (Ford Foundation) Next Generation Learning Academies with area high schools. These initiatives have a strong focus on bringing business and educational delivery systems together to discuss program design and curriculum development and training delivery. This

- Communicate employer request details to Workforce Career Center staff to ensure employer human resource needs are met, as needed
- Follow-up regarding referrals made to employers
- Presents and provides labor market information in multiple formats to a diverse audience and extracts as necessary, relevant data for customer's needs
- Outreaches employers regularly by following up with repeat employer customers, reviewing other job announcement resources i.e. Local newspapers, job boards, and hiring websites
- Utilizes TWC provided tools to outreach new businesses including Texas Department of Labor Relations (TDLR) website to look for new business listings; The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST) new employer inquiry listings; and via active engagement with area chambers and economic development corporations
- Manages Work Experience and On the Job training programs with employers
- Oversees and maintains a secondary WFS Facebook (e.g. RGV Operation Get Hired) page that targets job seekers and promotes businesses that are currently hiring
- Provides UI information
- Provides access to resource room (i.e. phone, computer labs, fax machine, copy machine, etc.)
- Supports and facilitates virtual job fairs.
- Conducts capacity building with both local employers and job seekers to maximize on-line virtual platforms

helps ensure future workers leave the educational system with the right skills to fill open positions	
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2.b. Meeting the needs of local business:

WFS develops and integrates a workforce system in the spirit of our Key Strategic Imperative #1, “Understand the needs of the business community to ensure a demand-driven system.”

WFS accomplishes this by utilizing the Target Industry and Occupation research, and establishing functional partnerships with education, economic development, and community-based entities to ensure scarce resources are focused on meeting the workforce skills needs for the area’s businesses. WFS will continue to look for new ways to leverage resources, better align educational/occupational trainings for customers and students through employer participation and feedback. It is WFS’s position that this approach increases workforce service satisfaction for employers in the service delivery area.

2.c. Coordinating workforce and economic development:

WFS staff meet frequently with area economic development entities and collaborate regularly on employer focused services such as city specific job fairs, regional job fairs, business retention and expansion visits and increased sharing of data to benefit area businesses.

The WFS BRR and sub-recipient BSU teams attend and participate in economic development meetings and provide information about workforce programs available via the WFS Workforce Career Centers, including WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, TANF, TANF NCP, SNAP, and other program funding. These partnerships allow for distribution of information on available human resource assistance for businesses as well as skills training, through TWC Skills for Small Business Program, Self-Sufficiency Fund and Skills Development Grants.

WFS staff, in collaboration with area EDCs, actively seek additional and/or special funding and grants geared toward local priorities such as entrepreneurship and training. WFS staff also prioritize development of key partnerships that connect with targeted economic development initiatives, such as the UTRGV Small Business Development Center, a key partner for providing new entrepreneurs with information and services, and programs to assist with business planning, financing, and technical guidance.

2.d. Strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs: WFS works to strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs by:

- Providing general information to Workforce Career Center customers about the Unemployment Insurance (UI) Program, as well as contact information for TWC department administering that program. This includes printed “How to” apply for UI benefits material.
- Utilize a monthly dashboard to identify active UI job seekers and develop jobs with quality matches.
- Leverage networks and collaborative strategies, which include labor exchange and career counseling services, aimed at providing enhanced services to UI job seekers.

- Analyze demographics, work history, and education/skill level characteristics of the population of individuals receiving UI, and aligning employer outreach for job postings, work experience, on-the-job training, and other activities.
- Collaborate with employers laying off individuals to identify retention strategies and/or strategies for rapid placement. Services are tailored to affected worker occupational and skill profiles.
- Increase awareness of WFS Workforce Career Center services and Rapid Response services, as appropriate, to the general public to reach individuals that may be engaged with the UI Program, but not actively engaged with the Workforce Career Center.
- Coordinate with TWC UI office representatives to notify them of local layoffs and schedule Rapid Response services, and to enable TWC UI representatives to present at affected employee orientations.
- Work with the TWC statewide Rapid Response coordinator to share information on statewide layoffs and help place affected workers across WDA service boundaries.

3. Continuous Improvement: WFS Board staff and WFS sub-recipient are responsible for the continuous improvement of all system operations, and for sufficiently meeting the needs of businesses, job seekers, workers, and child care customers. To ensure continuous improvement, the following strategies are in place: (1) contract performance measures are negotiated annually and (2) contracts include language obligating sub-recipient(s) to adhere to Strategic Goals and Objectives established by the WFS Board and (3) Contracts are structured to ensure the Statement of Work is aligned with the Board Goals and Strategies and adherence is evaluated by multiple tiers of oversight.

In addition, WFS negotiates Key Performance Indicators (KPI) with sub-recipient(s). Current KPI are detailed below:

- Key Performance Indicators (KPI) that measure the quality and not quantity of services.
- KPI for eligible training providers related to cost reasonableness and quality services/outcomes for schools receiving WIOA participants. This provides for increased continuous improvement of eligible providers.
- Performance on WFS managed surveys that measure the quality of service from the Job Seeker, Employer, and the Child Care Customer perspective.

The WFS leadership team, which includes WFS Board staff and sub-recipient management staff meets regularly to review contractual performance, as well as progress and remedies for deficiencies.

Training Providers: WFS manages the Eligible Training Provider System (ETPS) and requires training providers to apply to the local workforce board for certification to receive WIOA training funds. To obtain approval and to ensure that employer needs are met, an analysis of the area's target industry and target occupations skill requirements is aligned to the training proposed before it is offered on the ETPS. WFS monitors the performance of each training provider that is certified and on the ETPS for program completion rate and entered employment. Regular oversight and updating of the ETPS, along with regular interaction with area employers, ensures that awareness of emerging employment trends and changing needs in the labor market is maintained.

WFS has policies and procedures in place for workforce system operations that are used to ensure efficient operation and continuous improvement of the ETPS, as well as the eligible providers within

the system.

3.b. Facilitating Access to Services:

As Texas abruptly shut down under the Governor's Stay Home, Stay Safe executive order, WFS shifted operations from primarily in-person to virtual delivery. To ensure no gaps in customer service delivery, WFS quickly developed innovative service strategies. Examples included rotating in-office staff teams to minimize contact, on-line resources (e.g. orientations, job readiness) and on-line recruitment events for employers that were hiring, Rapid Response virtual meetings via Zoom and/or Microsoft TEAMS to virtually address mass layoffs, and partnerships with regional organizations to support both business and job seekers. WFS board staff and sub-recipient staff spent countless hours supporting local business with up-to-date COVID-19 pandemic resource and answering phone calls and chat lines to help customers connect to vital resources like food, rental, and utility assistance.

WFS uses technology to bring workforce services to the customers instead of requiring customers to visit the Workforce Career Center. Initiatives and technologies employed by WFS to enhance access to the workforce system, include:

- On-line Booking and Appointment Scheduling: Office 365 Bookings provides faster alternatives to scheduling appointments. Job Seekers can access online Bookings to optimize time for both job seeker and WFS career center staff. Online Booking can be accessed via: [Workforce Solutions - Schedule Appointment \(wfsolutions.org\)](https://wfsolutions.org)
- Libraries and community centers: WFS partners with area municipalities and other government entities to leverage public infrastructure, including libraries and other community centers to host events and provide temporary office space, expanding the network of locations accessible by the public.
- Social Media (Facebook): WFS operates two active social media campaigns on Facebook (WFS and RGV Operation Get Hired) with a reach of more than 57k users. The campaign allows for broad distribution of events and jobs, outreach for workforce programs, and an opportunity to provide real time "help desk" services in a virtual space via messenger/chat.
- Affiliation with AEL sites: WFS leverages relationships with AEL providers to expand program services to their locations and market service offerings to AEL students.
- Community Engagement/Partnership: In addition to the initiatives above, WFS maintains relationships with numerous agencies throughout the region that provide services and give WFS the opportunity to expand the footprint of the workforce system. Rural community partners and those that serve special populations are particularly critical to create an effectively coordinated community.

3.c. Compliance with WIOA §188 and with applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990: WFS performs a bi-annual review of all WFS Workforce Career Centers to determine compliance with the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of WIOA §188. Both programmatic and physical accessibility are addressed during an EO compliance review. In addition, TWC monitors WFS on-site and includes reviews of DOL's Civil Rights Center (DOL-CRC).

WFS provide various methods of access to services compliant with ADA 188. Websites and other electronic and information resources are accessible, and content is user friendly for individuals with disabilities or individuals with Limited-English Proficiency (LEP). WorkInTexas.com also has information accessible and is available to job seekers in both English, and Spanish. TWC's website

is likewise available in Spanish, providing information regarding unemployment insurance, unemployment benefits, labor law, employment discrimination and housing discrimination. WFS Student HireAbility Navigators have worked in partnership with TWS-VRS and sub-recipient to equip WFS Workforce Career Centers with a range of adaptive equipment to increase accessibility of information and services for individuals with disabilities. Please reference Section C. Core Programs-Expand Access, Facilitate Development and Improve Access for listing of adaptive equipment available at Workforce Solutions Career Centers.

WFS also designates a staff person to coordinate and serve as a point-of-contact for all accessibility issues. The coordinator monitors compliance with accessibility policy of all WFS facilities and resources and facilitates prompt correction of any identified compliance concerns/issues. The coordinator partners with sub-recipient staff as an accessibility liaison for accessibility requirements, and assists in staff development, addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities.

The coordinator is also responsible for:

- *Scheduling TWC Training for One-Stop Staff* - TWC's Training and Development Department (T&D) provides WFS and sub-recipient staff with a comprehensive course, titled "Access for All," tailored to WFS Workforce Career Center staff that provide comprehensive instruction on serving individuals with disabilities. This training focuses on the basics of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act and how to apply the rules and regulations in WFS Workforce Career Centers.
- Scheduling additional regular classroom training sessions on a range of accessibility topics.
- Maintaining an inventory of all adaptive equipment to meet the needs of ADA;
- Consulting on accessibility purchases and facilitating the exception request process; and
- Meeting with and ensuring contracted Workforce Career Center staff are updated and trained on ADA.

3.d. Integration with TWS-VRS Roles and Responsibilities: WFS is prepared for the co-location of TWS-VRS staff at its WFS Workforce Career Centers. Presently TWS-VRS staff are co-located at the WFS Workforce Career Center in Weslaco, TX and Mission, TX.

The role and resource contribution of each partner in an integrated workforce system is successful provision of services consistent with its mission and expertise. The co-location will allow specialized reviews and over-views of the systems to identify and improve services to the disabled population and will likewise enable full WFS resources for the benefit of individuals with disabilities. On-site location will provide immediate services as well as consistent training of all Workforce Career Center and partner staff to better understand how to serve our customers.

B. Cooperative Agreements

WFS has executed cooperative agreements that explain how local service providers carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the local one-stop delivery system. Cooperative agreements include:

- Adult Education and Literacy: Region One ESC ([Memorandum of Understanding- Region One Education Service Center](#))

WFS and its AEL partner have committed to assign appropriate staff to (1) provide system-wide staff training/development, (2) implement appropriate policies/procedures, and (3) compile 'operational manuals' that facilitate full integration of and access to partner services. This document will address the WIOA requirement that the workforce system, programs and service access are integrated sufficiently so regardless of point of entry, the customer receives information on all services, program requirements (if any) and captures the provision of these services through an automated electronic system for use amongst all partners.

In addition to the core partnerships, WFS maintains MOU relationships with additional partners, co-located and/or coordinating, to implement the region's workforce system service delivery model. MOU Partners include:

- The Senior Community Service Employment Program (AARP)
- Motivation, Education, & Training (MET)
- Texas Department of Human Services
- La Reina Apartments
- La Sombra Apartments
- McAllen ISD Parental Involvement Program
- Oak Haven Apartments
- Reber Memorial Library
- La Rosita Library
- Abel B. Gonzalez Jr. Community Center
- Starr County Self Help Center
- Hidalgo Public Library
- Hidalgo County University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
- Rio Grande Public Library
- RGV Literacy Center
- Weslaco Public Library
- PSJA ISD Library Project
- Office of the Attorney General – Non-Custodial Parent
- Gary Job Corps SFA
- Starr County Public Library
- City of San Juan Public Library
- STC Child Care Quality CEUs
- Cesar Chavez Foundation
- Texas Veterans Commission
- McAllen Housing Authority
- AVANCE Inc.
- BCFS Health and Human Services
- Edinburg Housing Authority
- Hamilton Valley Management
- Texas Early Childhood Professional Development Systems
- Texas Department of Family & Protective Services
- UTRGV Small Business Development Center
- Villa Vallarta Apartments
- Experience Works

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- Pharr ISD High School Libraries Behavioral Health Solutions of South Texas
- Donna North HS T-STEM Academ- WBL
- Job Corps Center/Southeast Texas
- Job Corps Center Strategix Management, LLC – Laredo
- La Joya ISD
- Los Naranjos Apartments
- Raintree Apartments
- Region One Education Service Center
- Region One Education Service Center – Adult Education & Literacy
- Texas Health & Human Services (HHSC)
- University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston – UTHealth – Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System (TECPDS)
- Ysleta del Sur Pueblo – Native Pathways

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

WFS develops and integrates a workforce system in the spirit of our Key Strategic Imperative #1, “Understand the needs of the business community to ensure a demand-driven system.”

WFS accomplishes this by utilizing the Target Industry and Occupation research, and establishing functional partnerships with education, economic development, and community-based entities to ensure resources are focused on meeting the workforce skills needs for the area’s businesses. WFS works closely with business to promote, develop, and execute employer-based strategies including, but not limited to apprenticeships, On-the-Job Training, and internships opportunities. WFS seeks to develop and maintain relationships with local employers that need to fill jobs that pay a family self-sustaining wage and/or provide an on-ramp to a career pathway. WFS continues to look for new and innovative ways to leverage resources, better align educational/occupational trainings for customers and students through employer participation and feedback. It is WFS’s position that this approach increases workforce service satisfaction for employers in our area.

Coordinating workforce and economic development:

To improve coordination between workforce services and economic development efforts, WFS partners with a multitude of economic development corporations and stakeholders across the service delivery area to help connect the LRGV employers and job seekers with opportunities available through new economic development in the region. Through these relationships, WFS can identify in-demand employment opportunities, access local labor market information and employment trends, help new businesses attract, find, and retain talent, identify training opportunities, and support entrepreneurship.

WFS staff meet frequently with area economic development entities and collaborate regularly on employer focused services such as city specific job fairs, regional job fairs, business retention and expansion visits and increased sharing of data to benefit area businesses.

The WFS BRR and BSU teams attend and participate in economic development meetings and provide information about workforce programs available via the WFS Workforce Career Centers, including WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, TANF, TANF NCP, SNAP, and other program funding. These partnerships allow for distribution of information on available human resource assistance for businesses as well as skills training, through TWC Skills for Small Business Program, Self-Sufficiency Fund and Skills Development Grants.

WFS staff, in collaboration with area EDCs, actively seek additional and/or special funding and grants geared toward local priorities such as entrepreneurship and training. WFS staff also prioritize development of key partnerships that connect with targeted economic development initiatives, such as the UTRGV Small Business Development Center, a key partner for providing new entrepreneurs with information and services, and programs to assist with business planning, financing, and technical guidance.

WFS Workforce Career Centers are the main point of customer intake and delivery for both Wagner-Peyser Employment Services (ES) and WIOA services. The workforce system will fully integrate service delivery between Employment Services and WIOA and improve coordination with [TWC's](#) Unemployment Insurance Agency (UIA) staff. The integration is intended to not only strengthen the linkage between the two programs, but also maximize the use and impact of resources.

WFS works to strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs by:

- Providing general information to Workforce Career Center customers about the Unemployment Insurance (UI) Program, as well as contact information for TWC department administering that program. This includes printed "How to" apply for UI benefits material.
- Utilizing a monthly dashboard to identify active UI job seekers and develop jobs with quality matches.
- Leveraging networks and collaborative strategies, which include labor exchange and career counseling services, aimed at providing enhanced services to UI job seekers.
- Analyzing the demographics, work history, and education/skill level characteristics of the population of individuals receiving UI, and aligning employer outreach for job postings, work experience, on-the-job training, and other activities.
- Collaborating with employers laying off individuals to identify retention strategies and/or strategies for rapid placement. Services are tailored to affected worker occupational and skill profiles.
- Marketing and advertising Workforce Career Center services and Rapid Response services, as appropriate, to the general public to reach individuals that may be engaged with the UI Program, but not actively engaged with the Workforce Career Center.
- Coordinating with TWC UI office representatives to notify them of local layoffs and schedule Rapid Response services, and to enable TWC UI representatives to present at affected employee orientations.
- Working with the TWC statewide Rapid Response coordinator to share information on statewide layoffs and help place [in employment](#) affected workers across WDA service [delivery area boundaries](#).
- Staff cross training [to ensure Workforce Career Center staff is up to date with TWC UI program guidance and regulations](#).

D. Coordination of Wagner-Peyser Services

WFS administers Wagner-Peyser through its Agency Board Agreement according to which merit staff are responsible for providing the core of Wagner-Peyser Act services, with WFS sub-recipient staff supplementing services. Additionally, under the agreement and consistent with the Texas Model of operations, sub-recipient staff are responsible for providing guidance, in coordination with TWC, of all merit staff.

WFS Career Center and partner staff are provided with community resource listings and utilize 2-1-1 ~~Texas with career customers~~ to connect customers with appropriate agencies and services. ~~2-1-1 Texas is an online database maintained by Texas Health and Human Services for the purpose of connecting people and services in their local communities and across the state of Texas. 2-1-1 is a vital service that connects millions of people to help with essential needs such as supplemental food and nutrition programs shelter and housing options and utilities assistance as well as assistance with transportation to name a few. In addition,~~ WFS also utilizes its inter-agency referral process to connect customers with various agencies. The inter-agency referral process aids agencies to direct customers to another agency/service provider because ~~the customer/he/she~~ requires help that is beyond the expertise or scope of work of the current agency/service provider. ~~The referral form allows for inter-agency referral of customers and self-referrals and can be access via the following link: Workforce Solutions – Referral (wfsolutions.org).~~

~~This~~ allows for maximum coordination, enhanced and consistent service delivery, and minimal ~~redundancy/duplication of services.~~

Other strategies may include:

- Webinars, cross -training opportunities to foster information sharing across agencies.
- Leadership meetings to discuss, alignment and coordination ~~of~~ agency services.
- ~~Annual Conduct a~~ partner assessment, to maintain updated listing of services available across core and required partners.
- ~~E.g. Integrated,~~ Technology-Enabled Intake and Case Management

WFS utilizes The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST) and WorkInTexas.com (WIT) as directed by TWC for integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management for programs carried out under WIOA and by one-stop partners. As core partners are incorporated into the service delivery model (e.g.e.g., AEL and Rehabilitation Services), WFS will modify practices as directed by TWC to integrate systems and/or enable data entry of core partners. Workforce Career Centers also utilize ~~(4) Vos1) Vos~~ Greeter, an automated system from the point of entry to capture customer information and track to the core partner customer traffic, (2) an inter-office referral system to account for the services core partners provide and (3) a web-based system for service registration of individuals seeking AEL services and sharing this information with Region One ESC.

In addition, WFS continuously works with core partners and other community partners providing social services, educational services, AEL and TWC Vocational Rehabilitation Services to enhance the common system referral process. The online referral system directly links representatives and core partner staff and captures common customer data requirements at point of entry and provides for efficient referrals between agencies. The system enables partners or customers utilizing the online referral system with an

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~~acknowledgement of receipt and assurance the referral is being processed. In addition, WFS will work closely with core partners and additional community partners who provide social services, educational services, etc. to develop and test requirements for a common system intake/referral system. The system will directly link representatives and core partner staff will capture common customer data requirements at point of entry and provide for efficient referral with clear description of services and anticipated outcomes. This system will also enable all partners providing services to document customer progress and outcomes to ensure a continuity of concurrent or sequential services and will be used to measure successful performance within each partner's unique services or additional reporting requirements.~~

Part 5: Workforce Investment Activities

A. Economic Development and Entrepreneurial/Microenterprise Activities

WFS' work with economic development organizations includes partnering on industry-based work groups, sharing planning and evaluation information (e.g. WFS & the RGV Partnership Commission Study to Foster Industry Development: [Economic Impact Study of the RGV Healthcare Bioscience Industry](#)), coordinating grant proposals, and assisting in bringing new businesses to the region and retraining and supporting existing businesses (e.g. regional job fairs). WFS works closely with economic development partners to identify long-range issues such as the changing demographics of the region's workforce and a trend to lower educational achievement; and shorter-range issues such as transportation solutions to facilitate connecting job seekers to services and/or jobs.

The WFS BRR and BSU teams attend and participate in economic development meetings and business retention and expansion visits to provide information about workforce development programs available via the WFS Workforce Career Centers, including WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, TANF, TANF NCP, SNAP, High Demand Job Training Grants and other program funding. The partnerships with area EDCs allow for the distribution of information to area businesses that include assistance with recruitment of qualified candidates for employment, Labor Market Career Information (LMCI), as well as the availability of funding for skills training, through TWC Skills for Small Business Program, Self-Sufficiency Fund and Skills Development Grants.

As mentioned above, WFS seeks to continuously enhance coordination with regional economic development partners by:

- Meeting frequently with regional EDCs, chambers of commerce, and other economic development agencies to better understand (1) the economic development initiatives and priorities operating in the region and (2) the needs of business, including the staffing and workforce concerns of their employer constituents.
- Developing employer focused service strategies that (1) support partner strategies and (2) address the community's needs, including city specific job fairs, regional job fairs, business retention and expansion visits.
- Sharing of targeted LMCI to enhance the business intelligence of partners and employers and support the development of fact-based business development activities. LMCI sources utilized by WFS include Bureau of Labor Statistics data/reporting, Department of Labor data/reporting, Census data/reporting, Texas Workforce Commission data/reporting (i.e.

tracer2.com, texasindustryprofiles.com, etc.), HelpWantedAnalytics, SitesOnTexas, Economic Modeling Specialists Inc. (EMSI), etc.

- Collaborating with economic development partners to pursue additional funding through competitive grant proposals that support regional initiatives.

Entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services: WFS staff prioritize the development of integral partnerships that promote entrepreneurial-skills training and microenterprise services. The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Small Business Development Center (UTRGV SBDC) is a key partner for providing pre-venture and existing business owners with information and services to assist with business planning, financing and technical guidance helping local businesses, meet and exceed their goals. In collaboration with UTRGV SBDC, WFS continues to host series of business trainings to help with business creation, ownership, and support with helping businesses adjust to how services are delivered and operate successfully in the changing business environment.

Additional entrepreneurship and microenterprise service partners include:

- McAllen Chamber of Commerce: The Chamber is a keystone in the local entrepreneurial ecosystem. It mentors, connects, fosters, and provides funding to start-ups through Launch McAllen. The goal is to help all entrepreneurs lower the transactional costs and help them succeed. Launch McAllen has the following programs that drive innovation and sustain startups and entrepreneurs, they are as follows: (1) IDEAPLACE (2) DESIGNPLACE (3) CROWDFUNDING CATAPULT (4) THEGOODPITCH COMPETITION (5) TECHPLACE (6) THIRDPLACE ON THE 2ND FLOOR (7) VIRTUALPLACE (8) 1 MILLION CUPS (9) INVENTORS & ENTREPRENEURS NETWORK (7) THE LATINA HOPE NETWORK (8) MCALLEN FOOD TRUCK PARK (9) ENTREPRENEUR SUMMIT (10) MATCH200 A MENTORING PLACE. Click on the link for access to the webpage: [Innovation Programs - McAllen Chamber of Commerce](#)
- McAllen Creative Incubator: The Incubator is a venue that offers low cost studios for start-up artists. The Incubator is meant to foster the creativity of the tenants and provide emerging artists and organizations with managerial, legal, and technical support. The goal of the McAllen Creative Incubator is to support the continued professional growth of artists in order to enhance the cultural and economic vitality of our local community. The McAllen Creative Incubator markets and publicizes the Incubator as a creative cooperative. Marketing materials are created to promote the Incubator and its resident artists. Events are held at the incubator to develop dynamic relationships between art, artists, audiences, and the public. Click on the link for access to the webpage: [McAllen Creative Incubator \(mcallenincubator.com\)](#)
- UTRGV Center for Entrepreneurship and Commercialization: The Center helps entrepreneurs develop and expand their business through education, offering an entrepreneurial laboratory where entrepreneurs inside and outside of the University can collaborate to take advantage of opportunities and create value. The Center has over 14 years of experience in providing business assistance through the means of its experienced staff, UT System and community partners and delivers its services through its Business Incubation Membership,

Entrepreneurship Development, Commercialization and Business Development programs.
Click on the link for access to the webpage: [Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Center | UTRGV](#)

B. Rapid Response Activity Coordination

The WFS BRR team oversees services pertaining to employers, to include Rapid Response activities. WFS has designated a Rapid Response Coordinator within the BRR team to serve as a single point of contact, and to ensure timely delivery of Rapid Response services in the service delivery area. WFS provides Rapid Response services to employers and dislocated workers because of as a result of a permanent closure or mass layoff at a plant, facility, or enterprise, or as the result of a natural disaster that results in mass job dislocation.

Upon the receipt of a WARN Notice from TWC or a employer notice, the Rapid Response Coordinator:

1. Makes immediate contact with the employer, representatives of the affected workers, and the local community. Based on the assessment of the layoff plans and employer needs, the Rapid Response Coordinator engages the sub-recipient BSU and the TWC Unemployment Insurance Representative to facilitate services.
2. Rapid Response Coordinator meets with employer to:
 - Discuss plan ~~potential for~~ potential for layoff aversion/shared work plan and informational sessions (in consultation with the TWC).
 - Develop a pPlan utilizing the list of affected workers for background ~~and probable~~ assistance needs ~~assessment of the affected workers, and~~ reemployment prospects for workers in the local community.
 - Determine whether a trade petition and/or employer/employee intervention is needed.
 - Provide information and instructions on Mail Claim procedures, as needed.

Throughout the process, the Rapid Response Coordinator, works with the sub-recipient BSU and WFS Workforce Career Center staff to ensure timely delivery of Rapid Response services.

3. The sub-recipient BSU:
 - Engages with employer and worker representatives, to provide information and access to unemployment compensation benefits, inclusive of WFS Workforce Career Center services employment and training activities (including information on Trade Adjustment Act program), crisis counseling, financial planning assistance and debt management, interview techniques, resume and application preparation, stress and change management and referral to other partner agencies
 - Coordinates with WFS Workforce Career Center staff to match affected workers with immediate job referrals or other available resources to meet short and long-term needs of dislocated workers.

4. WFS Career Center staff:

- Engages affected workers and provides services related to job search, WIOA and TAA training opportunities, financial management, coping with lay-off stress, etc.

In addition, the Rapid Response Coordinator coordinates with other state agencies and partners to ensure affected workers have access to other available services as needed.

C. Youth Activities and Services

WIOA provides a comprehensive youth employment program for serving eligible youth, ages 14-24, who face barriers to education, training, and employment. The program includes 14 program elements which are required to be made available to youth customers.

WIOA is designed to help local youth secure employment, education, training (e.g. work experience, on-the-job training, internships and apprenticeships) opportunities and support services necessary to prepare and succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy.

Services provided to youth customers include the full range of employment and training activities offered through the WFS Workforce Career Centers (i.e. Work Experience, Individual Training Accounts (ITA's), Supervised Job Search and Job Readiness).

WFS understands that effective training programs must respond to real-time labor market analysis, that effectively uses direct assessment and prior learning assessments to measure an individual's/customer's prior knowledge, skills, competencies and experiences, and evaluate such skills, and competencies for adaptability, to support efficient placement into employment and/or career pathways.

An initial assessment is conducted of academic levels, skill levels and service need for customer is conducted. Assessments include a review of basic skills, occupational skills, prior work experience, employability interest, aptitudes (including interest and aptitudes for nontraditional jobs), supportive service needs, and developmental needs. A determination of need for individualized career services, as established by the initial assessment or the individual's inability to obtain employment through the career services provided is documented. If an initial assessment indicates a customer is job ready, WFS immediately connects customer to employment opportunities via the State of Texas Application for job seekers, WorkInTexas.com. If customer requires additional assistance (e.g. training, upskilling, career advancement opportunities) a comprehensive objective assessment is conducted.

A comprehensive objective assessment includes customer's employment and training service needs and goals; academic levels; prior work experience; occupational skill levels, abilities and aptitudes; supportive service needs; barriers to employment and/or training; and employability potential and developmental needs. The WFS Workforce Career Centers offer a full range of assessment tools including Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), CAPS & COPS and Spanish Assessment for Spanish only speaking customers (SUPERA). The TABE is designed to effectively assess both the knowledge and skills of learners while CAPS & COPS Assessment –A computerized career assessment that measures both aptitude and career interest to help begin the career or educational planning process.

Assessment results along with other relevant information help to shape the development of individual service strategies, to include the identification and enrollment into youth program elements/services as listed in **Table 25**.

In efforts to provide wrap around services and aide youth's success, WFS (1) leverages community partnerships to provide services to customers that are not available through the workforce system and (2) deploys technology to provide virtual services.

Table 25

WIOA Youth Element	WFS Provided Services	Partner Services
(1) Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion of the requirements for a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent (including a recognized certificate of attendance or similar document for individuals with disabilities) or for a recognized postsecondary credential.	Tutor.com provides online tutoring to youth currently in high school or post-secondary education. Tutors offer specialized individual tutoring to assist in meeting youths' immediate educational goals. Tutoring topics include math, science, English, writing, social studies, business, computer software, foreign languages, college entrance exams and more.	Communities in Schools, GEAR UP
(2) Alternative secondary school services, such as basic education skills training, individualized academic instruction, and English as a Second Language (ESL) training, assist youth who have struggled in traditional secondary education.	Identification of Barrier and referral	AEL providers, school recovery programs, South Texas College (STC)
(3) Paid and unpaid work experience that provide youth with opportunities for career exploration and skills development.	Youth with limited work experience get paid \$7.25 an hour at a job site aligned with their overall career goal. Youth with more specialized training may gain employment through On-the-Job Training where youth will obtain employee training while doing the job. Youth get paid a wage comparable to other employees with same	Local employers, School Districts with work experience programs

	job title. Duration varies between 3 to 6 months.	
(4) Occupational skills training is an organized program of study that provides specific vocational skills that lead to proficiency in performing actual tasks and technical functions required by certain occupational fields at entry, intermediate, or advanced levels. Boards must give priority consideration to training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials that align with in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area.	Youth with no post-secondary training may enroll in a TWC eligible training. Youth with a post-secondary training that seek to upgrade, may also enroll in a TWC eligible training. Youth are connected with occupational skills training that are aligned with local target and in-demand occupations.	Eligible Training Providers or WFS designated contracted trainings
(5) Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupation cluster.	Remediation via service providers such as WIN Work Keys with courseware that provides foundational skills instruction encompassing career and education-oriented skills and proficiency areas needed in today's workplace.	Region One ESC and STC
(6) Leadership development opportunities encourage positive social behaviors. Services may include community service and peer-centered services.	A paid one-week Youth Workshop includes community service hours that enhance teamwork skills while encouraging positive social behaviors and responsibility. Other opportunities are integrated into work experience and other service options.	Local community organizations
(7) Supportive services for youth are services that enable an individual to participate in WIOA activities.	Support services may include transportation assistance, work attire, work-related tools, testing fees, books, utility bills, childcare and more.	Reference Support Service Policy (Supportive Services Policy No.002.11)
(8) Adult mentoring must last at least 12 months and may take place both during the program and following exit	Work Readiness Concepts (WRK) supports youths' career path by building distance mentoring relationships with youth. Relationship focuses on	Work Readiness Concepts (WRK)

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	academic and career assistance. Youth are provided with a mobile device. May also be integrated into work experience and other service options.	
(9) Follow-up services for not fewer than 12 months after the completion of participation.	Placement in follow-up services is determined by WIOA Youth Career Counselor to ensure youth continue on target in achieving long-term career goals. Services include continued regular contact with youth, leadership development, adult mentoring, financial literacy education and more.	
(10) Comprehensive guidance and counseling provide individualized counseling to customers. This includes drug and alcohol abuse counseling, mental health counseling, and referral to partner programs, as appropriate.	The Workforce Ready Concepts (WRK) Learning Platform provides youth with the opportunity to participate in online courses and interact on online discussion with peers. Participation is managed by an educational professional. Courses include pre-employment readiness, career development, business ethics, healthcare, Microsoft Office and more. For other types of guidance and counseling needed, referrals are made to partners as appropriate.	Access 211 listing here: Texas 211 Directory Community Resources
(11) Financial Literacy	Financial literacy education is integrated into the Youth Workshop. Topics covered includes bank accounts, budgeting and credit reports. Youth also participate in interactive activities such as Texas Reality Check.	Access 211 listing here: Texas 211 Directory Community Resources
(12) Entrepreneurial skills training	Career advising, service planning and referral by Career Counselor	Small Business Development Center, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

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(13) Services that provide labor market information	Identification of activity by Career Counselor or other qualified staff to educate youth on local trends that may impact youths' career decisions.	Various modules available via links to STC, ISDs TWC Sites
(14) Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training	Identification of activity and referral by Career Counselor	Various modules available via links to STC, ISDs TWC Sites

WFS, through its sub-recipient(s), administers WIOA funds to provide employment and training activities for WIOA Youth through a network of five WFS Workforce Career Centers located throughout the service delivery area.

WFS Workforce Career Centers are in each of the three counties in the WFS service delivery area, ensuring maximum accessibility to services by locating facilities in high density population areas.

WFS Workforce Career Center	County
Edinburg Office 2719 W. University Dr., Edinburg, TX 78539 Tel: (956) 380-0008 / Fax: (956) 316-2626	Hidalgo County
Mission Office 901 Travis St., Ste. 7, Mission, TX 78572 Tel: (956) 519-4300 / Fax: (956) 519-4388	Hidalgo County
Raymondville Office 700 FM 3168, Ste.3, Raymondville, TX 78580 Tel: (956) 689-3412 / Fax: (956) 690-0285	Willacy County
Rio Grande City Office 5408 Brand St., Ste.1, Rio Grande City, TX 78582 Tel: (956) 487-9100 / Fax: (956)	Starr County
Weslaco Office 2290 W. Pike Blvd., Weslaco, TX 78596 Tel: (956) 969-6100 / Fax: (956) 969-6190	Hidalgo County

Additional Youth Service Initiatives:

E3 Youth Program: The E3 Youth Program (E3) is a year-round program and impacts in-school youth (ISY) and out-of-school youth (OSY). E3 offers an intensive selection of organized activities supporting the youths' short- and long-term career goals. The E3 model focuses on the in-demand

industries of healthcare, education, public safety, and retail/hospitality. The success of the E3 model is in offering a combination of activities that could potentially lead the youth to meaningful employment and self-sufficiency.

In addition to E3, WFS offers various youth special programs that focus on more specific populations. Some of these programs are:

- Summer Earn and Learn – offers a job readiness workshop and work experience to youth with disabilities.
- Texas Internship Initiative – offers an internship opportunity to high school juniors and seniors.
- TANF Subsidized Employment Initiative – offers the E3 workshop and work experience during the summer for youth ages 16 to 24.

Workforce Outreach Specialists: Workforce Outreach Specialists (WOS) coordinate activities with secondary and postsecondary programs. WFS has five WOS on staff assigned to school districts representing different sections of the board service delivery area. The WOS are tasked with establishing and strengthening their partnership with each secondary campus within their assigned school districts. WOS coordinate with their assigned districts on dates and times of presentations and workshops for students, teachers, administrators, and parents of students in grades 6th – 12th. These workshops and presentations focus on career exploration, career pathways, post-secondary programs, work-based-learning opportunities, and the development of job readiness skills. WFS make concerted efforts to focus on providing LMCI on High Demand and Target Occupations as well as High Demand Middle Skilled STEM Occupations to help students make informed decisions on future careers.

TWC tools such as Texas Reality Check and Texas Career Check are utilized for career exploration. In addition, Career Coach, a board purchased platform, is used to enhance career exploration experience for youth to include information for post-secondary programs, resume writing, and access to employment opportunities. Presentations and workshops informing youth how to use these tools is shared with students, teachers, administrators, and parents through presentations and workshops scheduled by school districts and conducted by their respective WOS.

Virtual Learning Tools: ~~In response to COVID-19 pandemic,~~ WFS has pivoted on how information is delivered, switching from a predominately in-person format to a virtual one. WOS have become fluent in virtual presentation platforms that include GoToMeeting, Zoom, Google Meets, and Microsoft Teams. The WOS team ~~have~~ utilized tools to increase engagement during presentations and workshops. These tools include but are not limited to Bitmoji, ~~Kahoot~~, Padlet, and Screen Rec. The presentation of resources via a virtual platform is one that enables WFS to expand its service delivery and reach more students. Connecting on a virtual platform is a viable option that will continue to be enhanced in the coming years.

In addition, WFS identified the need to adapt and pivot to provide services virtually to meet the distance learning needs of secondary and post-secondary education partners. WOS identified the following distance learning tools and resources to ensure virtual presentations are engaging, informative and are easily accessible to education partners.

Google Suites, most notably G Drive and Google Classroom, serve as depositories of literature, videos, quizzes, activities, and the WFS Job Readiness Curriculum. In speaking with local school districts, it was discovered that close to 100% of local districts utilize Google Classroom and G Drive. WOS have created G Drives and Google Classrooms for their assigned districts allowing quick and seamless accessibility for educators.

A video library has been created and will continue to be developed to be accessible via the WFS website (WFSolutions.org). The video library contains “How To” and “Employer Interview” videos. Topics covered in the “How To” videos include step by step instructions on how to use Texas Reality Check and Texas Career Check. Each of these videos highlight specific features of each online tool. In addition, quizzes and activities are available allowing educators to check for retention of material and assign videos as part of student assignments and learning curriculum.

Employer Interview videos assist employers who find it difficult to take time from their busy schedules to participate in school exploration events. These videos are available to teachers upon request and assist with meeting the requirements for career exploration for students in 6th through 12th grade. Industries represented by Employer Interview videos range from Health Care, Law Enforcement, Education, Construction, and Engineering.

Virtual interviews for job applicants are quickly becoming the norm for business. This format of interview requires a unique set of preparedness that is not required during face to face interviews. WFS is utilizing Interview Stream Prep to assist students with mastering the skills needed for virtual interviews. The platform enables teachers to assign virtual interviews to students and then review the recorded session. Enabling teachers, the opportunity to provide students with feedback and recommendations and providing students the opportunity to view themselves and note areas for improvement. Students can also share the video with parents so as to allow parents to view the assignment and provide their feedback.

Youth with Disabilities:

Student HireAbility Navigators (SHNs) across the state of Texas are tasked with promoting, developing, and strengthening the processes and resources needed to ensure successful transition of youth with disabilities to post-secondary education and employment. WOS and SHNs work cohesively to ensure all services, resources, and tools are accessible to youth with disabilities. WFS ensures the use of Closed Caption function, if available via the presentation platform. Reading material is available in large print or in some instances, Braille when needed or requested. WOS and SHNs routinely present together at presentations, workshops, and events targeting students, educators, and parents. This is part of WFS holistic approach that focuses on providing all students with the tools needed to be successful in the workforce. Tools such as Interview Stream Prep, Google Suites, Microsoft Teams, and many of the TWC resources are accessible to youth with disabilities. Similar to WOS, the SHNs are assigned school districts within our board area. SHNs work with each district to provide information on student transition services to post-secondary and/or employment. Furthermore, SHNs help to connect TWS-VRS and school officials for Admission Review and Dismissal Committee reviews and to promote TWC-VRS services. SHNs assist in planning and hosting job fairs for school district Special Education departments and provide Job Readiness Curriculum (JRC) training to teachers for implementation of soft skills training for youth with

disabilities. SHNs also work diligently with 18+ programs found in several districts in the service delivery area.

Successful Models Identified:

- WFS Job Readiness Curriculum Certificates of Completion. WFS has collaborated with South Texas College (STC), a post-secondary institution, to offer secondary students training and certification in Job Readiness Curriculum soft skills training program. Utilizing a WFS created JRC, which is comprised of 13 modules, WOS provides training to students and train-the-trainer sessions to educators utilizing the curriculum. Teachers have the option of having their students register with STC for a Certificate of Completion and Continuing Education Units upon completion of 12 hours of the soft skills training curriculum. The curriculum was created in response to the demand from employers seeking a more job ready workforce, one that had the soft skills to be successful in the workplace. Skills covered in the curriculum include Job Search, Interview Skills, Customer Service, Active Listening, Workplace Etiquette, Time Management, Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution, Coping with Stress, Financial Literacy and Critical Thinking. WFS recently added modules customized to meet the needs of youth with disabilities. The additional modules are Self Advocacy, Career Exploration, and Transition Resources. These were created in partnership with WFS SHNs and focus on providing soft skills training to individuals with disabilities and may be seamlessly integrated into the existing JRC.
- Connecting with local school districts by partnering with Region One ESC. Region One ESC is a vital partner in connecting with local districts. Through Region One ESC, WOS and SHNs have presented and networked with Career and Technology Education (CTE) directors for districts in the WFS service delivery area during quarterly CTE director meetings. SHNs have connected with Special Education directors from districts in the service delivery area during Special Education Directors Meetings. Attending these director meetings has enabled WFS to share new resources, tool, and projects with all of the districts in the WFS service delivery area in one meeting. Additionally, WOS and SHNs have been asked to present at Region One ESC events such as the CTE Summer Conference, GEAR UP Kick Off, and STEM conference.

D. Coordination with Secondary and Postsecondary Education Programs

WFS staff including WWOS and SHNs coordinate with several educational partners to enhance services and avoid duplication.

Workforce Outreach Specialist (WOS) provide career services to students at public middle and high schools, grades 6th – 12th, to provide youth with career exploration information focused on High Growth, High Demand Occupations. Students receive in-depth education and direction on career choices as well as access to up to date labor market and career data.

SHNs are tasked with promoting, developing, and strengthening the processes and resources needed to ensure successful transition of students with disabilities to post-secondary education and employment. This is done by raising awareness and connecting disability stakeholders to services provided by workforce development boards and TWS-VRS services. SHNs are committed to

collaborating with schools, employers, and community partners to create systemic solutions that advance inclusion.

WOS and SHNs fulfill their roles through presentations, utilization of TWC tools and resources, and leveraging of partnerships with community-based organizations and employers. WOS and SHNs work closely with their assigned districts. Presentations and workshops are scheduled and coordinated directly through each schools' administrators, counselors, or instructors. Assignment of districts avoids duplication of services and ensures a single point of contact for local school districts to connect with.

Partners include RGV LEAD (Linking Economic & Academic Development), RGV Focus, Educate Texas, South Texas Career And Technical Association (STCTAT), Region One ESC, Career and Technology Education (CTE) Directors Network, RGV Academy Leaders Coalition, P-16 Council, Counselors Network, South Texas College (STC), University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV), University of Texas Youth Engagement Center, and GEAR UP grant recipients and Vanguard Academy.

WFS works with each of these organizations in providing services regarding career exploration, soft skills, and TWC resources and tools to students, educators, parents, and businesses. Working diligently to convene partners and schedule opportunities for strengthening partnership among these entities, leveraging resources, and seeking opportunities to impact the community and avoid duplication of services.

E. Child Care and Early Learning

Childcare services are managed through regulated providers or eligible relatives whom parents or caretakers have chosen to care for their children in accordance with 40 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 809, as amended. Local pledge contributions/match for Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) federal funds are utilized in a timely manner in accordance with the Agency rules (40 TAC Chapter 809), federal regulations (45 CFR Part 98) and with all applicable state, federal guidelines, rules and regulations. Childcare services are also made available for children determined eligible and authorized by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS) local Child Protective Services staff.

E.

The LRGV economy is comprised of a diverse array of employers. WFS mission is to provide job seekers with the skills, and business with talent, they need to be successful. Parents depend on reliable childcare so they can work. By extension, childcare is also essential for their employers, who depend on them to be at work and support business operations. Ensuring businesses have the labor force available, WFS provides employers with information on workforce services, to include services that aide the removal of job candidate barriers such as adequate child care. Information is disseminated via business webinars, recruitment fairs, partner meetings (e.g. Economic Development Corporations, Chamber of Commerce). Partnerships with economic development corporations, chambers of commerce and non-profit organizations across the RGV have collectively brought local businesses important information and services that supports a thriving economy.

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Support services such as affordable high-quality child care is provided through subsidized Child Care Services Program which aids with retention strategies that provide eligible working families the assurance that their children are in a safe and stimulating environment that support learning and healthy development. WFS' efforts to increase visibility in the region utilizing social media strategies has helped expand the vision and mission to a vast number of businesses and job seekers in the service delivery area. As such, WFS continues to use these platforms to bring about the awareness that a high-quality early learning and development program for a child gives parents the stability to be productive employees.

Support improved school readiness through higher-quality child care, including Texas Rising Star, and through partnership opportunities such as prekindergarten partnerships

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

Knowledge of child development and learning enables providers to create curriculum and environment that aligns to state standards/guidelines for early childhood programs. WFS supports the needs of the child care industry by providing early educational materials, curriculum, and an array of professional training opportunities geared towards promoting higher quality care that leads to improved school readiness. These professional development activities help improve quality and address the critical needs of young children and families which include but are not limited to:

- handling temperaments and developmental milestones of Infants and Toddlers
- promoting reasoning, language, and social-emotional development
- learning about the impact of nutrition and movement on early brain development
- implementing ~~low-cost~~low-cost ideas for gathering and creating rich explorations in learning centers
- incorporating Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics activities
- leading effectively and maintaining a positive attitude
- generating revenue through customer service
- implementing organizational systems to focus on problem solving, productivity, effectiveness, and efficiency

To further support the advancement of child care professionals' early childhood career pathway, WFS implemented the Child Care Staff Retention Initiative to enhance the use and familiarity of Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System (TECPDS). Texas Rising Star (TRS) staff provides ongoing assistance and guidance to child care professionals with their professional development planning through proper tracking and maintenance of qualifications and trainings in TECPDS. Effectively, training opportunities offered by our region have training certificates generated through TECPDS. Centralizing all training hours and certifications provide a holistic data analysis that support the growth and expansion of a high-quality childcare industry in our region.

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Additionally, credentialing child care professionals in the region with a Child Development Associate (CDA), the most widely recognized credential in early childhood education (ECE), is a key stepping stone on the path of career advancement. Credentialed staff can help ensure the proper use and

implementation of curricula in classroom activities to positively affect early learning domains. WFS continuously focuses on connecting with child care providers and public-school administrators on adequate research-based curricula that will close achievement gaps and address instructional needs in the age groups served by Texas Rising Star (TRS) providers. The TWC TRS program is a quality rating and improvement system for Texas early childhood programs. These efforts help sustain TRS Category 3 Curriculum and promote a child's school readiness when transitioning from a child care provider facility setting into a school setting.

While a vast array of professional development opportunities is offered to child care professionals, WFS recognizes the child care industry faces staffing challenges and competition from public programs as professionals gain recognized credentials. Effectively, we continuously support the child care industry through a Child Care Staff Retention Initiative to help increase staff retention.

Additional resources to support capacity building for toddler expansion within child care centers include, but are not limited to: Early Literacy Center for infant, toddler, preschool and school age children, Social-Emotional Learning Kits, technological tools such as a HATCH Computer or HATCH tablet, and other additional incentives that help create a nurturing, safe, and early learning environment.

Along with promoting higher quality child care through the attainment of the TRS certification, WFS also support providers that have attained a Texas School Ready (TSR) designation. The TSR program is a comprehensive preschool teacher training program which combines research-based, state-adopted curriculum with ongoing professional development and progress tools. The goal of the TSR program is to support school readiness. WFS is equipped with knowledgeable, skilled, and credentialed board and sub-recipient staff to mentor and coach professional caregivers to intensify support models that help ensure the continuum of high-quality providers throughout our region. Both mentors and coaches conduct onsite visits, observe classroom settings, evaluate instructional curricula, and provide critical resources to increase professional development that nurtures a child's progress in their early learning development while responding to their needs.

Child care back-office solutions such as software licenses or subscription fees support sound business practices and promote management efficiencies for TRS-certified child care providers. These solutions allow child care providers to operationalize and deliver services more effectively and efficiently. WFS' has contracted with a vendor for an all-in-one software platform for preschools, child care providers and afterschool programs. The software helps teachers manage their day and communicate with parents, giving parents deeper insights into what their children are learning, and automates the process of managing operations for child care administrators. Proper usage and implementation of these systems in the child care industry will foster overall parent engagement and satisfaction.

WFS supports the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Plan for Texas FFY 2019-2021 in which Texas Rising Star (TRS) program has established goals for more subsidy providers to participate and develop and outreach campaign to educate both parents and providers on quality child care. WFS promotes family engagement through outreach and consumer education available at our centers, board website, and through key partners in our region that share the common interest in introducing education and other life skills early in a child's life starting in the home. It is through a

holistic approach that we can provide our community with measurable outcomes while building community, trust, and social capital.

F. Transportation and Other Support Services

Transportation: WFS provides transportation related support services to eligible customers in the form of gas cards and vehicle related repair assistance. In addition to support services, WFS collaborates to advise and build system capacity through its role as a member of the Regional Transportation Advisory Panel (RTAP).

The RTAP is operated by the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) and is comprised of 14 advisory members representing transportation entities, workforce development boards, and community-based organizations. Collectively the advisory members provide a unique perspective and offer their knowledge and experiences to better meet the public transportation needs of the region. The RTAP meets on a quarterly basis to provide the latest information concerning the availability of transit services and discuss the needs of public transportation.

Participation in RTAP helps to leverage resources for WFS customers in terms of maintaining constant coordination and communication of transportation services available and addressing the transportation needs collaboratively for the benefit of the region. WFS provides the group with current information concerning the workforce system and offers recommendations on updating bus routes, as well as coordination of transportation for special community events such as job fairs or health related events.

Additional regional transportation resources in the Lower Rio Grande service area include: Cities/County governments, LRGVDC, Federal Highway Administration, Texas Department of Transportation, Regional Mobility Authorities, Private Sector, Valley Metro, McAllen Metro, Brownsville Metro, Island Metro, and Workforce Solutions Cameron.

Other Support Services: WFS provides a broad range of additional support services including emergency assistance, work related clothing/tools/supplies, books (training related), and additional supports allowable based upon program. WFS, however, understands that traditional workforce system resources are insufficient to meet the community's need. To address this gap, WFS seeks to leverage resources to avoid duplication of services by developing partnerships with agencies that can supplement workforce system resources to better meet the customer's needs.

The WFS Community Engagement Department maintains a presence and a connection to the local community by serving in an advisory capacity on area Community-Based Organizations, Non-Profit Organizations, Educational Institutions as well as private foundations and public entities. A Memorandum of Understanding or Agreement is developed to identify the entity and the services provided.

G. Coordination of Adult Education and Literacy (AEL)

WFS has a history of active coordination with Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) providers in the service delivery area. In 2016, WFS hosted AEL partners, to include Region One ESC and other regional literacy partners, to work with a national consultant to identify strategies for alignment of AEL and the workforce system. Region One ESC is the TWC funded AEL provider for the region.

As a result, stakeholders have engaged in cross-partnership, cross-functional workgroups to infuse traditional AEL services with work-based literacy and contextualized learning components that are aligned to WFS Career Pathways and Target and Demand Occupations. WFS intends to continue this work and to engage with Industry Task Forces to identify the ways adult education and literacy can better align to work-based skill requirements, skills gaps, and emerging industry skill needs; this continuous effort will better position AEL providers to meet educational benchmarks, gainful employment requirements, and employer skills demands.

Strategies that strengthen collaboration with core partners such as AEL partners are as follows:

1. Adult education and literacy remain a priority for WFS.
2. WFS convenes adult education and literacy leadership and stakeholders in regular discussions to address adult education and literacy needs in the RGV and strategize solutions to leveraging resources and partnerships.
3. Reviews application(s) submitted by adult education and literacy under Title II Adult Education and Literacy for services provided.
4. WFS has executed cooperative agreements that explain how local service providers carry out the requirements for integration and access to the set of services available in the local one-stop delivery system. Cooperative agreements include:
 - a. Adult Education and Literacy: Region One ESC
 - b. Rehabilitative Services: TWS-VRS Division
5. Develops Memorandum of Understandings with agencies to outline partnership roles and responsibilities.
6. Utilizes WFS On-Line Referral system to connect customers in need of agency services.

WFS meets regularly with agency leadership ~~and entities~~ that provide adult education and literacy program and services in service delivery area. A few are noted below:

- **Region One ESC Adult Education and Literacy Program** is the adult education and literacy provider for the LRGV and offers English as a Second Language (ESL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE) and English Literacy and Civics (EL Civics) classes. WFS collaborates with Region One ESC with all literacy programs via a.) regular meetings with leadership to discuss program progress/performance issues and solutions b.) an on-line service registration link, c.) supporting outreach and recruitment, d.) connecting with business and /or community-based organizations. In addition, WFS has partnered with Region One ESC to co-locate in the Starr County WFS Career Office where ESL and GED classes are provided on-site Monday- Thursday.
- ~~Rio Grande Valley Literacy Center serves as a nonprofit organization providing adult education and literacy programs (English Second Language, Adult Basic Education and General Equivalency Degree preparations) in Pharr, Texas.~~
- ~~University of Texas Rio Grande Valley High School Equivalency Program is a comprehensive federally funded program of adult education that strives to assist migrant-farm worker individuals to obtain the equivalent of a high school diploma. The program helps migrant and seasonal farmworkers (or children of such workers) who are 16 years of age or older and not currently enrolled in school to obtain the equivalent of a high school diploma and, subsequently, to gain employment or begin postsecondary education or training.~~

Review of Local Applications: WFS, as a coordinator and convener for the region, shall review applications to provide adult education and literacy activities under Title II Adult Education and Literacy for the service delivery area to ensure (1) consistency with the local plan and (2) advises applicants on alignment of resources with additional adult education and workforce services. WFS staff may offer technical assistance, training, and relevant information sharing to assist applicants.

Part 6: Adult, Dislocated Workers, and Youth Services

A. Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training

WFS, through its sub-recipient(s), administers WIOA funds to provide employment and training activities for WIOA Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth through a network of five Workforce Career Centers located throughout the service delivery area. Services provided to Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth customers include the full range of employment and training activities, i.e. Work Experience, Individual Training Accounts (ITA's), Supervised Job Search and Job Readiness.

The location of Workforce Career Centers ~~are~~ in each of the three counties in the WFS service delivery area, ensuring maximum accessibility to services by locating facilities in high density population areas.

Workforce Career Center Edinburg Office 2719 W. University Dr., Edinburg, TX 78539 Tel: (956) 380-0008 / Fax: (956)-316-2626	County Hidalgo County
Mission Office 901 Travis St., Ste. 7, Mission, TX 78572 Tel: (956) 519-4300 / Fax: (956) 519-4388	Hidalgo County
Willacy County Raymondville Office 700 FM 3168, Ste.3, Raymondville, TX 78580 Tel: (956) 689-3412 / Fax: (956) 690-0285	Willacy County
Starr County Rio Grande City Office 5408 Brand St., Ste.1, Rio Grande City, TX 78582 Tel: (956) 487-9100 / Fax: (956) 487-9190	Starr County

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Weslaco Office 2290 W. Pike Blvd. Weslaco, TX 78596 Tel: (956) 969-6100 / Fax: (956) 969-6190	Hidalgo County
<u>South McAllen Office</u> <u>2101 S. 2nd St., McAllen, TX 78503</u> <u>Tel: (956) 302-0800 / Fax: (956) 627-5239</u>	<u>Hidalgo</u>

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In addition to the physical locations, WFS ~~(4)~~ leverages partner locations in the rural areas to provide services to customers that are not able to access the Workforce System easily. As an alternative to onsite in-person services, WFS offers online virtual service options for customers to access, and (2) deploys technology to provide virtual services.

The Workforce Career Centers also offer a full range of assessment tools including Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), CAPS & COPS and Spanish Assessment for Spanish only speaking customers (SUPERA). The TABE is designed to effectively assess both the knowledge and skills of learners while CAPS & COPS Assessment –A computerized career assessment that measures both aptitude and career interest to help begin the career or educational planning process.

There is a plan to incorporate the use of the CASAS assessment tool. CASAS measures multiple skills including reading, listening, math, writing and speaking. The tool serves all learners (English language learners, ABE learners, high school diploma candidates, potential and incumbent employees) including those with intellectual and learning disabilities, with a wide range of accommodation materials and guidelines.

Assessment results along with other relevant information contribute to college help to shape the development of individual service strategies. Individual service strategies include:

- Customized career pathway plan
- Addressing barriers
- Setting goals and related activities
- The documenting of achievements/credentials

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

WFS ensures effective coordination of programs and services for target populations through a controlled process of (1) regional analysis, (2) service delivery design, and (3) accountability.

Regional Analysis: WFS analyzes the regional economy and labor market, contrasted with regional demographic data and local wisdom to identify target populations and service gaps and limitations.

Analysis is completed collaboratively with WFS' sub-recipient and partners to ensure it fully represents the interests of all constituencies.

Current target populations for the region include Public Assistance Recipients, Other Low-Income Adults, and Individuals that are Basic Skills Deficient. Additional priority/target groups include Eligible Veterans and Spouses, Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers, Individuals without a Diploma/GED, Foster Youth, Individuals with Disabilities, Referred Court Involved/Offenders, English Language Learners, Unemployed and/or receiving Unemployment Insurance, Individuals earning less than Self-Sufficiency Wage, Individuals with Cultural Barriers (including legal immigrants and refugees), and Individuals facing multiple barriers (such as substance abuse, mental health problems, and domestic violence issues).

WFS has policies in place address and designate priority target populations and is shared with WFS sub-recipient and partners. ~~WFS Policy SKL#021.01 can be accessed by accessing the following link: [Accessing an Individual Training Account Policy](#)~~

As per the provisions of WIOA and WIOA final regulations §680.600, WFS board policies in place that addresses and designates priority target population to ensure compliance with the TWC Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA): Guidelines for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth. TWC guidelines state: "Individualized career services and training services must be given on a priority basis, regardless of funding levels; to:

- public assistance recipients;
- other low-income adults; and
- Individuals who are basic skills deficient."

WFS policy further states Veterans and eligible spouses receive priority of service for all Department of Labor (DOL)-funded job training programs, which include WIOA programs.

Priority for individualized career services and training services must be provided in the following order:

1. Eligible veterans and eligible spouses **who are also** recipients of public assistance, low-income, or basic skills deficient
2. 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 required by Texas Family Code 264.121
 - ii. Non-foster youth
3. All other eligible veterans and eligible spouses.
4. Priority populations established by the governor and/or Board in the following order:
 - i. All other foster youth and former foster youth, as required by Texas Labor Code 264.121
 - ii. Local Board priority groups; Board's Target Groups: Adults who meet one or more of the following:
 - a. Migrants and Seasonal Farmworkers;
 - b. Individuals with disabilities;

- c. Referred Court Involved/Offenders;
- d. Unemployed and/or receiving Unemployment Insurance;
- e. Earning less than the Board Defined self-sufficiency wage;
- f. Individuals with cultural barriers (including legal immigrants and refugees); and
- g. Individuals who face multiple barriers such as substance abuse, mental health problems, and domestic violence issues.

Additional Board established priority groups include those who meet one or more of the following:

- a. Migrants and Seasonal Farmworkers;
- b. Individuals with disabilities;
- c. Referred Court Involved/Offenders;
- d. Unemployed and/or receiving Unemployment Insurance;
- e. Earning less than the Board Defined self-sufficiency wage;
- f. Individuals with cultural barriers (including legal immigrants and refugees); and
- g. Individuals who face multiple barriers such as substance abuse, mental health problems, and domestic violence issues.

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

- are unable to obtain grant assistance from other sources to pay the costs of such training services, including such sources as State-funded training funds, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), and Federal Pell Grants; or
- require WIOA assistance in addition to other sources of grant assistance, including Federal Pell Grants.

Individual Training Accounts (ITA) training services must be directly linked to:

- occupations that are on the WFS Board's targeted occupations list; or
- are on the targeted occupations list for another local workforce development area to which a customer is willing to commute or relocate; or a
- Registered Apprenticeship (RA).

Part 7: Fiscal Agent, Grants, and Contracts

A. Fiscal Agent

WFS is responsible for the workforce development (WD) planning, contracting, oversight and evaluation of the local workforce system and the services it provides. WFS is the administrator of grants received and is responsible for disbursing the state and federal grant funds provided under this plan.

WFS is a non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization serving Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy counties, in Texas with its corporate office located at 3101 West Business 83, McAllen, TX 78501. WFS was certified by the Governor of Texas in 1999 and incorporated in 2000. The WFS Board is a volunteer Board appointed by the CEOs of the WD area and is composed of a majority of representatives of private sector employers, labor, education, childcare, social services, community-based

organizations, rehabilitation agencies and other local interests.

B. Sub-Grants and Contracts

Procurement is the process and procedures utilized to obtain goods and services from the marketplace. WFS ensures that the procurement of all goods and services is conducted, to the maximum extent practical, in a manner providing full and open competition consistent with applicable administrative requirements. The estimated amount of award or contract determines the procedures used to competitively procure goods and services. This process includes standards of conduct and detailed procedures for both small and large procurements as outlined below.

WFS maintains written standards of conduct, which govern the performance of individuals engaged in the award and administration of contracts and contain disciplinary action if such standards are violated. The definition of immediate family and substantial interest is included in the standards of conduct (WFS Procurement available by accessing the following link: [Procurement Procedures](#)). No employee, officer, or agent of WFS may participate in the selection, award, or administration of a contract that is supported by federal or state funds if a conflict of interest or apparent conflict of interest would be involved. In general, a conflict of interest exists when any of the following have a financial or other interest in a firm that is selected to receive an award:

- an employee, officer or agent;
- any member of the employee's immediate family;
- the employee's partner; or
- any organization that employs or is about to employ any of these groups.

WFS standards of conduct prohibit the solicitation and/or acceptance of gratuities, favors or anything of monetary value by an officer, employee, or agent of WFS from a bidder or sub-recipient. Every reasonable course of action shall be taken to maintain the integrity of the expenditure of public funds and to avoid any favoritism or questionable conduct. Any situation is avoided which suggests a decision was influenced by prejudice, bias, special interest, or personal gain. WFS Board, WFS staff, or agents involved in the procurement process are prohibited from accepting gifts, favors, or anything of monetary value from the existing or potential sub-recipients or contractors.

The small purchase method of procurement is used when purchasing goods or services for which the aggregate cost does not exceed the simplified acquisition threshold per 41 U.S.C. §403(11) of \$150,000. When using the small purchase method, WFS staff obtains price or rate quotations from an adequate number (usually two or more) of qualified sources.

Competitive proposal methods of procurement are appropriate when purchasing goods or services for which the aggregate cost exceeds the simplified acquisition threshold of \$150,000. The competitive proposal method is used when two or more responsible bidders are willing and able to compete effectively for the business and the procurement lends itself to a fixed-price or cost-reimbursement contract. The competitive proposal method is generally used when conditions are not appropriate for the small purchase method.

Competitive proposal methods of procurements meet the following federal requirements:

- Requests for proposals (RFP) are advertised in the newspaper with the highest circulation and identify all evaluation factors and their relative importance. Any response to the advertised RFP is honored to the maximum extent practical;
- RFP is solicited from an adequate number (usually two or more) of qualified sources;
- The method for conducting technical evaluations of the proposals received and for selecting awardees is contained in the RFP;
- Awards are made to the responsible firm whose proposal is most advantageous to the program, with price and other factors considered; and
- Competitive proposal procedures for the qualifications-based procurement of architectural/engineering professional services are utilized whereby competitors' qualifications are evaluated and the most qualified competitor is selected, subject to negotiation of fair and reasonable compensation. The method, where price is not used as a selection factor, can only be used in procurement of "professional services." It cannot be used to purchase other types of services.

All non-competitive or sole source procurements that will be conducted by WFS will have adequate documentation in the procurement file for auditor and monitor review.

Part 8: Performance

A. Board Performance Targets

WFS negotiates performance measures with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to ensure standards are reflective of conditions/activity in the LRGV service delivery area; data is compiled by WFS and sub-recipient to support deviations from TWC proposed performance and to serve as the basis for negotiated measures.

All negotiated TWC measures are contracted to the sub-recipient for the Operation and Management of Workforce Career Centers. The sub-recipient is required to meet minimum standards and higher stretch goals are negotiated with the sub-recipient during the contract negotiation process. Performance is measured at monthly intervals utilizing The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST) and Work in Texas (WIT) reports as well as ad hoc data analysis. Failure to meet acceptable measures of performance requires WFS to implement Technical Assistance Plans, Corrective Action Plans and or up to including sanctions for continued low performance.

Eligible Training Providers (ETPS) must also meet the minimum performance standards established by WFS for inclusion in the Eligible Training Provider System. The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) issues ETPs performance outcomes on all providers annually. ETPS providers not meeting minimum performance two consecutive years are not eligible to participate in the delivery of training services.

Part 9: Training and Services

A. Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)

WFS approves training providers through the TWC Eligible Training Provider System (ETPS). The basis for all trainings listed on the ETPS is the WFS Board adopted Target Occupations list. WFS

staff conduct an analysis of regional economic conditions, and evaluate industry/occupational growth projections, economic development trends, and other regional factors to determine the occupations that represent the best targets for investment of workforce development resources. WFS staff also work with regional education providers (1) to encourage them to submit applications for inclusion on the ETPS for programs aligned to the Target and Demand Occupations List and (2) to encourage/assist them in developing programs aligned to regional economic and trainee needs.

WIOA customers (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Out of School Youth) are provided access to training on the ETPS through Individual Training Accounts (ITA). Customers seeking to access training services complete a comprehensive assessment to determine the need, interest and eligibility for training services, and are provided with a full orientation and coaching regarding selection of an appropriate training provider and use of the ETPS. Information provided to customers seeking to access an ITA includes provider/program performance data, training cost, accessibility, and relevant labor market information and Career Pathway information. WIOA customers are counseled to review all information prior to making selection. ITAs are required to be within WFS Board approved allowable limits.

B. ITA Limitations

Under Title I of WIOA, training services must be provided in a manner that maximizes informed consumer choice in selecting an eligible provider. Through the WFS Career Centers, staff must make the Eligible Training Provider Listing (ETPL) available to customers. Eligible individuals may select training services from the ETPL, in consultation with a case manager, in order to maximize informed customer choice. Customer choice is a guiding principle of WIOA.

Currently, WFS has a maximum per participant funding cap for Individual Training Accounts (ITA) and contracted training set at \$9,000 with a maximum amount of time allowed for the use of an ITA at two (2) program years. ~~This information may be found by accessing the link: Accessing an Individual Training Account policy (WFS Board Policies SKL-009-07).~~

The policy also includes an exception to the ITA limits, this is primarily due to the high projected growth over the next ten years and the high entry level wages for registered nurse and licensed vocational nursing programs. The maximum amount for an ITA for training programs for these two occupations is increased as follows:

- Maximum amount of an ITA - \$18,000 (\$9,000 per program year)

WFS evaluates ITA limits on an annual basis to determine if additional revisions are warranted.

Part 10: Apprenticeship

A. Registered Apprenticeship Programs

WFS encourages Registered Apprenticeship programs through collaboration with area educational institutions and employers to (1) identify apprenticeship programs currently operating that can be registered with the Eligible Training Provider System (ETPS) and (2) inventory current pre-apprenticeship programs or related initiatives that can be scaled up into full registered apprenticeship

programs.

The WFS Community Engagement and Contract Administration departments work collaboratively with area higher education partners to outreach and educate employers regarding the benefits of apprenticeship programs to include:

- Registered Apprenticeship program eligibility in the ETPS: Under WIOA, all Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors are automatically eligible to be placed on the ETPS.
 - WFS encourages sponsors to request placement of all eligible Registered Apprenticeship programs on ETPS.
- Registered Apprenticeship benefits: Registered apprenticeships provide many benefits including: earn while they learn opportunities and nationally recognized credential for apprentices and state tax credits for businesses.

Outreach and marketing efforts are not limited to traditional apprenticeship industries (e.g. skilled trades, construction, manufacturing, etc.). WFS also outreaches non-traditional industries employers, such as healthcare, to participate in apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs.

B. Apprenticeship Texas

WFS understands the need to have a skilled workforce to meet industry needs and has established regional partnerships with employers, educational institutions, and stakeholders in order to develop a talent pipeline and to align education to business needs. WFS is committed to closing skills gaps by utilizing apprenticeships as a workforce development strategy. Serving as a liaison between industry and education through industry led business relations initiatives such as WFS Healthcare and IT taskforces and business retention and expansion visits, WFS is able to assist with expansion of apprenticeship programs by providing vital business intelligence and labor market information, bridging gaps between target and demand occupations and current training opportunities to include apprenticeships, and identifying industry training needs that would allow for new and expanded apprenticeship models throughout a broad range of industries.

WFS is an active participant in the TWC Apprenticeship Texas program, and supports program efforts by:

- Publicly recognizing support by including its logo on printed material and website.
- Aiding local entities, including industry leaders, economic development organizations, etc. in the development of registered apprenticeship training programs in the service delivery area to include new occupations and underrepresented populations.
- Developing outreach strategies for both traditional and non-traditional industries.
- Outreaching underrepresented populations to include youth and individuals with disabilities.
- Facilitating successful entrance of underrepresented populations into registered apprenticeship training programs.

WFS collaborated with South Texas Colleges on two (2) Apprenticeship Grants. These grants will result in the increase of new Registered Apprenticeship Programs and new apprentices which in turn support statewide apprenticeship expansion efforts. Additionally, WFS has also collaborated with local industry to include a TWC Healthcare Apprenticeship Expansion Grant and a Department of

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Labor (DOL) Nursing Expansion Grant proposal to help increase apprenticeship opportunities through high-quality career and educational pathways in healthcare. WFS will continue to seek and pursue new opportunities that are presented and will actively outreach regional stakeholders to support and participate in the initiative.

Part 11: Public Comment

Appendix: Texas Workforce Investment Council Requirements

Local Workforce Development Board Strategic Planning

Consistent with The Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC) is charged under Texas Government Code §2308.101(5), 2308.302(a), and 2308.304(a)(b)(4), and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) (Public Law 113–128) with recommending the plans of Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) to the governor for consideration for approval, WFS Lower Workforce Development Board Plan Program Years 2021-2024 was published and made available for review and commentary to the Chief Elected Officials, WFS Board of Directors, members, business representatives, labor organizations, educational entities, and the public.

WFS (Lower Rio) made available to stakeholders the WFS Lower Rio Workforce Development Board Plan Program Years 2021-2024 as follows:

- A Notice of Public Comments ad was placed in print media with largest circulations in service delivery area, to include Cameron County.
- The Board Plan was made available during the review period of January 28, 2021-February 12, 2021, for viewing and public comments at the administration office, made available via electronic and hard copy.
- The Board Plan was made available for viewing and public comments during the review period via the Corporate Website: www.wfsolutions.org
- As required, WFS forwards all comments that express disagreement with the Plan to TWC.
- The Board Plan was provided for review to the Board of Directors and Board Committees, three County Judges representing WDA, and the Mayor of McAllen.
- General publication date of Public Notice: January 25, 2021
- Board Action of Approval February 24, 2021

Demonstrating Alignment with Texas' Strategic Plan for the Workforce System

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

System Goal 1 and Rationale

Focus on Employers

By accessing critical education and labor data sets, employers can better find and plan for skilled workers to meet their needs in both the immediate time frame and the future. Through greater engagement with employers, education and training providers can better design career and technical education content and delivery options that are more aligned with industry needs.

Providers can adjust in program content to benefit employers and students, as well as address both state and regional economic needs.

System Goal 1—Local Board Response

Board Response: The ability for individuals to access education and training opportunities is critical to support regional economic and employer needs. As such, WFS Corporate goal(s) provide a means by which WFS achieves and sustains success.

Board Initiative: WFS recognizes that the Healthcare Industry in the RGV is amongst the fastest growing in the region, with a projected growth of 32.1% by the year 2030. To better provide for the workforce readiness needs of future healthcare workers, WFS and the Rio Grande Valley Partnership (RGVP) commissioned an Economic Impact Study by ~~the University~~ the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Data and Information Systems ~~Center, Center,~~ of which the findings were presented on Wednesday, October 28, 2020, during the WFS Healthcare Taskforce meeting.

The study was funded via \$7,000 in federal funds awarded to WFS by the TWC Texas Industry Partnership Grant and leveraged by matching contributions from RGVP. The purpose of the study was to measure the regional impact to the Healthcare Industry, focusing on wage data for high-demand, middle-skilled occupations. The data collected, provides wage and salary information on the existing workforce and highlights training needs in specific occupations to continue to build the talent pipelines in the healthcare industry for a better trained workforce.

Information gathered via the study is shared with a multitude of stakeholders, to include but not limited to regional leadership, K-12 education, post-secondary education, adult education and literacy institutions, business, and economic development corporations. Information within the study can help develop strategies to meet immediate and future employer needs in the healthcare industry.

To access the full report please access the following link: [Economic Impact Study of the RGV Healthcare Bioscience Industry.pdf \(wfsolutions.org\)](#)

System Goal 2 and Rationale

Engage in Partnerships

Through collaborative and transparent processes, workforce system partners focus on outcomes

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

System Goal 2—Local Board Response

Board Response: ~~WFS fosters collaboration and builds trust among partners to achieve collective impact outcomes. With a shared vision that all Texans are prepared to contribute to an inclusive and competitive Texas economy, WFS pursues grant opportunities that help equip Texans with the necessary industry skills and credentials needed for economic advancement. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, community stakeholders (workforce development, economic development corporations, chambers of commerce and educational institutions) convened to meet the needs of business by providing business partners with real-time critical information to assist with helping them safely re-open.~~

Board Initiative: ~~WFS and South Texas College have had a long-standing collaborative partnership. Since 2019, WFS and South Texas College have worked successfully on the creation, development, and expansion of Registered Apprenticeship Programs. This work was conducted under Texas Workforce Commission Apprenticeship Texas grant opportunity(ies). As of January 2023, 176 apprenticeship opportunities have been created in the following occupations: Computer Numerical Controlled Programmers, Construction Superintendent/Manager, Phlebotomy Technician, and Industry Machinery Mechanic.~~

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~~WFS collaborates with local economic development corporations to bring forth critical COVID-19 Pandemic employer information and resources.~~

~~In an effort to adapt to the changing environment brought on by COVID-19, the State of Texas began reopening businesses in phases, in addition to those providing essential services, on May 1, 2020. Reopening the economy while containing the spread of the COVID-19 virus is a daunting balancing act requiring mitigating safety protocols and close monitoring of public health data. WFS has actively partnered with economic development corporations, chambers of commerce, educational institutions and non-profit organizations to collectively bring local businesses important and pertinent information. Since the onset of COVID-19, approximately 55 presentations have been conducted, with approximately 2,543 participants in attendance. Listing of events are noted below:~~



DATE	PARTNER(S)	PRESENTATION(S) / TOPIC(S)
3/26/2020	Brownsville Chamber &	Small Business Administration (SBA)

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	Brownsville Chamber of Commerce	Disaster Loans
3/30/2020	Weslaco Chamber of Commerce	University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV), Small Business Development Center (SBA & CARES Act) & WFS
3/30/2020	Pharr Economic Development Council (EDC)	SBA Disaster Loans
4/1/2020	Rio Grande City EDC & Starr County Industrial Foundation	SBA Disaster Loans
4/1/2020	Brownsville Chamber & BCIC	Cameron Workforce Covid-19 Resources:- Mass Unemployment Claims
4/2/2020	RGV Hispanic Chamber	SBA Disaster Loans
4/2/2020	Pharr EDC & Chamber of Commerce	Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act Paycheck Protection Program
4/3/2020	Edinburg Chamber of Commerce	SBA Disaster Loans
4/7/2020	Mission Chamber of Commerce	UTRGV SBDC (SBA & CARES Act) & WFS
4/15/2020	Rio Grande City EDC	Governor's Small Business Webinar Series
4/15/2020	Pharr EDC & Lone Star National Bank	Insight on The Valley's Bank: Paycheck Protection Loans for Small Businesses
4/16/2020	Mission Chamber of Commerce	SBA Disaster Loans and Small Business Relief
4/17/2020	Pharr EDC & Chamber of Commerce	Small Business Relief Webinar
4/21/2020	Brownsville Chamber of Commerce	Save Small Business Webinar
4/22/2020	US Hispanic Chamber of Commerce & Google	Keeping Your Business Open During Covid-19
4/23/2020	Rio Grande Valley (RGV) Hispanic Chamber	Covid-19 Tax Relief Webinar
4/24/2020	Rio Grande City EDC	Opening Texas Information Session
4/28/2020	Mission Chamber of Commerce	Texas Dept of Health of State Services and tip for retail
4/29/2020	McAllen Chamber of Commerce	Senator John Cornyn discusses Covid-19 business issues
4/29/2020	Mission Chamber of Commerce	Webinar with Plant Manager at Royal Technologies
4/30/2020	McAllen Chamber of Commerce	Small Business Relief Webinar
5/5/2020	McAllen Chamber of Commerce	McAllen Chamber Talks Tax Strategies for Covid-19
5/5/2020	Mission Chamber of Commerce	Mission Open 101
5/5/2020	RGV Hispanic Chamber	Ted Cruz Cares Act Updates
5/6/2020	Pharr EDC, Pharr San Juan Alamo (PSJA) Independent School District (ISD), Cobalt Digital	Pharr EDC Brick To Click Engaging In E-Commerce

	Marketing	
5/6/2020	Mission Chamber of Commerce	The Way Forward
5/12/2020	Pharr EDC	Workforce Strategies Webinar
5/12/2020	Mission Chamber of Commerce	Planning for Recovery Webinar
5/13/2020	Brownsville Chamber of Commerce, RGV Women's Business Center	Small Business Association Roundtable
5/18/2020	City of Pharr	Business Resources Webinar
5/19/2020	RGV Hispanic Chamber	WFS Services
5/21/2020	RGV Hispanic Chamber	WFS Services
5/22/2020	Hidalgo County Economic Development Department	Business Resources Webinar
5/28/2020	City of Mission	2020 Census Webinar
6/2/2020	Brownsville Chamber of Commerce	Facing the Realities of Under Served Communities During Covid-19
6/17/2020	McAllen Economic Development Corporation	United States Mexico Canada Agreement: A new Beginning in Cross Border Trade Webinar
7/1/2020	Edinburg Chamber of Commerce	Public Affairs Live Stream: Covid-19 Healthcare Forum
7/8/2020	Mission Chamber of Commerce	UTRGV Dr. Contreras: Covid-19 Toll on Texas
7/30/2020	RGV Partnership	Economic Indicators in Housing and Commercial Markets Texas & RGV
7/31/2020	WFS & Edinburg EDC	WFS Services Available Webinar
8/4/2020	RGV Hispanic Chamber	Mistakes that Lead to Success
8/5/2020	Governor's Office	Webinar Series: Business Strategies for an Evolving Future
8/6/2020	WFS, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center (TMAC)	Business Recovery: Safety First
8/11/2020	TWC Office of Employer Initiatives	Office of Employer Initiatives Business & Industry Upskill Forum: Aerospace and Defense
8/19/2020	Governor's Office	Webinar Series: Starting a Business in Texas
9/10/2020	RGV Hispanic Chamber	Financing Options
9/15/2020	University of Texas San Antonio (UTSA) Small Business Development	A Return to the Work Environment: Cybersecurity Considerations
9/17/2020	Pharr EDC	SBA Disaster Loans: Hurricane Hanna
9/17/2020	TWC Commissioner Representing Employers	Texas Conference for Employers presents Luncheon Live
9/22/2020	Small Business Administration	Lower Rio Grande Valley SBA Small Business Awards

9/24/2020	UTRGV Small Business Development Center	Strong Entrepreneur Bootcamp Zoom Webinar
10/7/2020	Governor's Office	Webinar Series: Business Strategies for an Evolving Future
10/28/2020	Governor's Office	Webinar Series: Optimizing Online Marketing and Selling
10/28/2020	WFS Healthcare Taskforce	WFS Healthcare Taskforce Meeting
10/28/2020	South Texas Manufacturers Association	Webinar Series: Prospecting in Today's Environment

System Goal 3 and Rationale

Align System Elements

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

System Goal 3—Local Board Response

Board Response: WFS is committed to aligning programs, ensuring the portability and transferability of programs of study and credentials in support of continuing education to gain the necessary and critical employability skills to meet the needs of business.

Board Initiative: In efforts to support an enhanced education and training pipeline, WFS currently operates and manages several career and educational pathway initiatives and/or programs within the region. Below are two examples:

Initiative 1: Texas Workforce Commission Workforce Outreach Specialist (WOS): The initiative is designed to provide middle and high school students with information about educational opportunities, local labor market demand, and career information to help them make sound career decisions that lead to marketable skills after graduation. Since 2019 WFS has partnered with 21 Independent School Districts (ISDs) in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV) and have provided career information to approximately 97,982 individuals. WFS has created innovative approaches to reach customers to include in-person, virtual presentations, and a Train the Trainer model with educators to extend the reach of information.

Initiative 2: TWC Texas Internship: Since 2018, WFS has partnered with its neighboring workforce board, WFS-Cameron, to provide approximately 200 high school (juniors and seniors) internship opportunities in Middle skill STEM occupations such as Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics, Computer Network Support Specialist, Electrician interns and medical assistants.

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WFS hosted the 2020 Careers In Texas Youth conference on October 12, 2020-October 15, 2020. For the first time the event was hosted in a virtual platform due to the continuation of COVID-19 pandemic, and in compliance with local health department guidance to ensure the safety of staff, students, and educators. The virtual conference was held in collaboration with RGV Partnership and Region One ESC. The event was designed to further align education to business by assisting in the improvement of transitions from education to the labor force, aligning programs and creating opportunities for youth to access labor market information including information on career pathways. The RGV Partnership is composed of community minded business leaders that are devoted to successfully promote community growth to our business entities within the four county region. Region One ESC is part of the state wide system of 20 regional education service centers across the State of Texas, they work closely with the region's school districts to improve student performance, enable school districts to operate more efficiently and economically and support the implementation of initiatives. Through their networks, RGV Partnership engaged regional employers to participate in the event and share first hand the critical skills required for employees to find success in the workplace. In addition, Region One ESC aided in connecting local school districts across the service delivery area to ensure they were able to participate in conference. The event reached 4,447 students, parents, and educators, representing 11 area school districts. Each day offered three concurrent sessions, Career Exploration, Soft Skills, and Parental Engagement. In efforts to increase accessibility, the Career Exploration Tract was be broadcast via You Tube to allow educators and students access. The Parental Engagement Tract had a Spanish Translator providing access to presentations in Spanish through Zoom. All sessions were broadcast through the WFS Facebook Live page. Below is a breakdown of the daily attendance as well as a listing of take aways for each grouping of stakeholders:

WFS 2020 Careers in Texas Conference

DATE	Zoom Login	YouTube Views	Facebook Views
Monday, October 12	498	718	885
Tuesday, October 13	217	593	405
Wednesday, October 14	469	369	229
Thursday, October 15	496	499	269
TOTAL:	780	1,879	1,788

Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share with education partners' employer needs (knowledge, skills abilities (KSA), soft and technical skills) in order to sustain and /or expand workforce. Labor Market Information (wages, target and demand occupations, unemployment rates).
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local businesses were recognized for their partnership and support with local school districts
Educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen and learn first hand what employers are saying they need from students to be work-ready. Engage and network with employer partners. Partner with workforce board and access up-to-date information on target and demand occupations within the region. Share best practices amongst various school districts that support persistence to completion via career exploration.
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to engage in career exploration event, as attended by their child/student. Listen and learn first hand what employers are saying they need from students to be work-ready. Learn about LMI, target and demand occupations to support career decisions.
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to network with business community. Listen and learn first hand what employers are saying they need from students to be work-ready. Learn about LMI, target and demand occupations to support career decisions.

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System Goal 4 and Rationale

Improve and Integrate Programs

Accelerate employment and improve efficiencies through shared resources that can be leveraged to create new, relevant, and innovative opportunities that serve the needs of all stakeholders. By addressing high-priority programmatic needs through an integrated strategy, decision-making at the system, partner, and participant levels is improved and system service delivery is enhanced.

The changing economic and educational landscapes provide opportunities to share relevant data through appropriate “push” mechanisms in an organized manner to key stakeholders who rely on information generated by system partners.

System Goal 4—Local Board Response

Board Response: WFS commits to strengthening data sharing and utilizing data to support data driven decisions. The use of relevant data will allow and support continuous improvement of programs and services.

Board Initiative: WFS continues to plan and convene core partners to support system integration, as referenced in the WIOA final rules and regulations. WFS and core partners convene regularly to identify strategies that support system alignment. Strategies may include the enhancement of a cross agency reference guide to better facilitate customer connections, where applicable, customized initial intake form, standardized electronic forms and partnership agreements with core agencies/ programs.