Board Strategic and Operational Plan, PY 2021-2024
Updated March, 2023

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Part 1: Board Vision and Strategies
A. Vision and Goals
(WIOA §108(b)(1)(E); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(5))
Boards must include a description of the Board's strategic vision to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. The description must include:
- *goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including early education services, and services for youth and individuals with barriers to employment; and*
- *goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators described in WIOA §116(b)(2)(A).*

The mission of the Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas Board ("the Board") is to provide resources for good jobs, strong employers, and a healthy regional economy. The Board's vision is that:

> People are more self-sufficient and better educated, thereby
> achieving full employment. Convenient, easy access to all services
> is provided through consolidation in a centralized 1-stop system.
> The citizens of our communities are aware of available services.
> A skilled workforce is in place which enables businesses to be
> competitive in the ever-changing global economy.

In West Central, economic development involves participating in broader community initiatives to promote an educated and skilled workforce to meet the needs of employers. While the Board views as its responsibility the effective operation of program and frontline services, the maintenance of this task is left largely to the staff of the Board. Board members regard their role as that of more extensively impacting the economic well-being of West Central Texas. Employers are seen as the primary customer of the workforce system and the Board is the lead in working with business, economic development, and education partners. The Board utilizes committees to accomplish its initiatives. The committees are comprised largely of Board members, but also include Board staff as well as applicable representation from subrecipient staff (other non-Board members may be engaged as needed for their requisite expertise). The committees are tasked with developing and executing action plans for the accomplishment of the Board's overall goals.

Board Goals
Board members participated in a strategic planning session on November 18, 2020 to develop three-year Board goals for 2021-2023. Members identified a single goal with four key strategies/focus areas as follows:

Provide resources for businesses, employees and job seekers of the present and future through partnerships; assisting X number in the next 36 months.
- Business (grants, hiring events, best practice sharing)
- Employee (training, education, externships)
- Job-seeker (hiring events, aptitude/interest assessment, training and education, work-based learning)
- Student/parents (aptitude/interest assessment, work-based learning, CEO program, internships)

These were further refined into two goals with four corresponding strategies for each. The goals/strategies were voted on and approved by the Board Executive Committee at its December 2nd meeting, and by the full Board at its December 16th meeting. Committees are currently being formed to address the two goals. Once they start meeting, they will have latitude to further refine the strategies

and determine the actions they will take to accomplish the goals. It should be noted that the strategies as they are currently written are subject to change, pending the determinations each committee makes. The following tables outline the goals, strategies, and corresponding WIOA performance measures.

Note: The abbreviations listed in the last column of each of the tables represent the WIOA performance indicators as follows:
- EmpQ2 = Employed Q2 Post-Exit
- EmpQ4 = Employed Q4 Post-Exit
- MedEarnQ2 = Median Earnings Q2 Post-Exit
- CR = Credential Rate
- MSG = Measurable Skills Gain
- ESE = Effectiveness in Serving Employers
- Emp/Ed Q2 = Youth Employed/in Education Q2 Post-Exit
- Emp/Ed Q4 = Youth Employed/in Education Q4 Post-Exit

Table 1

Goal One: Serve as the primary resource for business to meet their workforce needs by: (Note: "x" is a yet to be determined number.)		
Strategies	**Planned Activities**	**Correlation to Performance**
Assisting X number of businesses obtain training services by December 2023	To be determined (TBD)	Providing resources to businesses to help meet their workforce needs supports performance measures related to employer services and to job seeker employment. WIOA measures supported by this goal include:
Assisting X number of current employees enhance their technical and/or employability skills	TBD	
Facilitating sharing of successful strategies to X employers within the region	TBD	
Facilitate X connections between employers and education partners within the region	TBD	- EmpQ2 - EmpQ4 - MedEarnQ2 - ESE - Emp/Ed Q2 - Emp/Ed Q4

Table 2

Goal Two: Serve as primary resource for students, parents , educators and job-seekers to access career awareness, career preparation and/or career pathways by: (Note: "x" is a yet to be determined number.)		
Strategies	**Planned Activities**	**Correlation to Performance**
Providing career awareness, career preparation and/or career pathway information to X students by 2023	To be determined (TBD)	Providing resource for students, parents , educators and job-seekers to access career awareness, career preparation and/or career pathways supports performance measures related to jobseeker upskilling and employment. WIOA measures supported by this goal include: • EmpQ2 • EmpQ4 • MedEarnQ2 • CR • MSG • Emp/Ed Q2 • Emp/Ed Q4
Providing career awareness, career preparation and/or career pathway information to X parents by 2023	TBD	
Providing career awareness, career preparation and/or career pathway information to X educators by 2023	TBD	
Providing career awareness, career preparation and/or career pathway information to X job-seekers by 2023	TBD	

Update

Following approval by Board vote of the committees' goals and strategies at the December 2020 meeting, pre-planning activities took place in the early part of 2021 to lay the groundwork for committee formation. Inaugural meetings for both committees occurred in April of 2021, and for the remainder of the calendar year, they formulated activities and objectives to support each committee's respective goal and strategies. "Goal One Committee" was renamed to the "Integrated Education and Training (IET) Committee", and "Goal Two Committee" was renamed to the "Pathways Committee". Activities that have been accomplished that further the goal and strategies of the IET Committee include:

- **Strategy One: Assisting businesses obtain training services**
  - **Development and execution of an employer survey to determine their training needs**
  - **Development of a draft training catalog showing the options offered by area training providers**
  - **The Board partnered with Georgia-Pacific Gypsum, LLC, to obtain a Skills Development Fund grant to train 69 new and 66 current employees under 20 different SOC titles**
  - **The Board introduced a new tool for career exploration in the fall of 2021 with the acquisition of virtual reality headsets. However, they are not just for job seekers since employers can use them as a staff training tool or as a screening tool for applicants. In BCY22 the Board's workforce subrecipient began providing demonstrations on-site with employers. Thirteen demonstrations were held for six employers, with two requesting to use the headsets for staff training or applicant screening.**
- **Strategy Two: Assisting current employees enhance their technical and/or employability skills**
  - **The Board's partnership with Georgia-Pacific Gypsum, LLC, to obtain a Skills Development Fund grant to train 66 current employees resulted in higher skilled workers who received pay raises upon completion of training**

- **Strategy Three: Facilitating sharing of successful strategies to employers**
  - The Board serves as the backbone organization for the Big Country Manufacturing Alliance (BCMA—discussed in detail in Section 3.B.). BCMA activities include, but are not limited to, industry tours, task force meetings, and participation in employer and job seeker events where successful strategies are shared openly; total attendance at these events for calendar year 2022 (thru 11/30/22) is 1703 individuals from various partners, 234 of which represent 43 distinct employers.
  - The Board sends out a monthly newsletter with updates on Board initiatives, programs/services, events, labor market data, and TWC news to many partners including 160 employers currently on the mailing list. That reach is multiplied due to the fact that the newsletter is forwarded to other entities by chambers, EDCs, and other information-sharing partners. In addition, hundreds of additional businesses/organizations receive targeted outreach on opportunities to engage with the Board via events, initiatives, or programs.
  - The Board conducts outreach to hundreds of employers annually with a vendor booth and person-to-person networking at Business Expo in Abilene and Brownwood, Business Mercado, Texas Midwest Community Network* (TMCN) Annual Conference, and TWC's Texas Conference for Employers (TCE). The Board Director of Business Services presents at TCE to share directly with employers in attendance the many ways the Board provides comprehensive workforce development support to further the success of businesses across West Central Texas.
    *TMCN hosts events designed to address, in part, leadership development, municipal needs, economic sustainability and tourism marketing for the overall region.
  - During 2021-2022 the Board conducted regional convening events that were attended by 10 communities across the area to talk to local partners and employers about their most pressing workforce and training needs. The Board is evaluating how it can follow-up on this work to provide further engagement on new topics/initiatives such as work-based learning, registered apprenticeships, upskilling/reskilling, etc.
  - Board staff make presentations about solutions for businesses to area partners/events, such as SHRM chapters, community service groups, and industry associations.
- **Strategy Four: Facilitating connections between employers and education partners**
  - For the '21 – '22 school year, the Board partnered with school districts in Hamlin, Roscoe, and Throckmorton and received a Texas Internship Initiative grant that resulted in 12 students participating in internships that allowed them to gain experience in an industry that might interest them and to further explore possible careers. The Board was awarded a subsequent Texas Internship Initiative grant and is currently building connections between the high schools in Sweetwater, Clyde, Deleon, and Baird, and the following employers (with more connections being planned): Eagle Rail Car, Homestead Nursing Center, Rigs Machine and Welding, and James McCoy Drugstore. High school students are being matched with employers for internships for career exploration. More information is located in Section 3.B.
  - The Board just entered into a contract to administer the Texas Regional Pathways Network (TRPN) grant that will, in part, connect Hawley, Merkel, and Wylie high schools with employers for the purpose of providing job shadowing, mentoring, and internship opportunities for 11th and 12th grade students from those schools. This grant will also help these schools build out career pathways related to high demand careers in the manufacturing sector.

- BCMA is working with manufacturers and post-secondary providers to align training curriculum to the needs of area employers. More information is available in Section 3.B.
- Through the Never2Late Project, the Board is working with employers, economic development, post-secondary, and other community partners to build a regional reskilling and upskilling model. This will assist individuals with significant barriers to enter the manufacturing and automotive industries through various pathways. More information about this project is in Section 3.B.
- The Teacher Externship Initiative places high school teachers side-by-side with industry peers during a three-day paid externship in the summer. Through the externship program, teachers can build lasting partnerships with local employers and gain experience that translates back to the classroom. More information is in Section 5.D.
- The Board began hosting a Career Education Winter Summit to provide an opportunity for partners from industry, education, and workforce development to collaborate around regional career and technical education initiatives. The first summit was held in February of 2022 and saw representatives from 12 businesses and 5 industries. The second summit was held in December 2022 and saw attendance from 18 secondary educators, 4 postsecondary institutions, and 5 businesses.

Activities that have been accomplished that further the goal and strategies of the Pathways Committee include:

- **Strategy One:** Providing career awareness, career preparation and/or career pathway information to students
    - The Board sponsors World of Work (WOW), an annual career fair that provides career exploration, college planning, and job readiness skills, to students from school districts across the 19-county workforce development area. In 2022 over 1990 students from 43 schools attended the event which featured 142 mock interviews and booths by over 80 exhibitors (including businesses, education and training providers, and workforce readiness).
    - The Board sponsors What's Next, an annual event held in spring focused on high school seniors who still are trying to decide what's next in their journey. This event features budgeting, WorkInTexas, filling out the FAFSA, information about high demand jobs, connecting to Vocational Rehabilitation services, workforce youth programs, and more. Students also receive one-on-one career coaching and the goal is for all students to leave with an action plan. In 2022 over 100 seniors from 15 high schools attended and participated in interactive workshops, and met with education and training providers, military representatives, employers, and community organizations.
    - The Board collaborates with Region 14 ESC and Vocational Rehabilitation staff to provide Charting the Course, an annual event for students with disabilities in 8th – 11th grades. This is a day full of activities and sessions that focuses on Pre-ETS (Career Exploration, Self-Advocacy, Planning for Post- Secondary, and Workplace Readiness skills). The students are grouped by grade level and are able to experience team building activities and learn about VR before going to sessions that focus on their needs.
    - The Student HireAbility Navigator coordinated with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) staff to provide the HireAbility Connection event at the Mall of Abilene in August 2022. There were 15 VR customers and 10 businesses participating, as well as 10 to 15 more mall walkers who had conversations with VR and employers on site. Many connections

were made for VR staff and customers with possible job sites. Applications were filled out at the event and interviews for jobs were offered.

- o The Board made over 11,500 connections with students in the 2021-2022 school year. These student engagements included in-school career information presentations, individual career conversations, and guidance on employability skills.
- o The Board's new virtual reality career exploration headsets allow students and adults alike to get a glimpse into a vast array of occupations and to experience simulated job tasks. In the 2021-2022 school year 493 students experimented with virtual reality career exploration.
- o The Board's career education services include work-based learning activities that connect students and educators with employers and provide career awareness through job shadowing, internships, mentorships, and industry tours.

- • Strategy Two: Providing career awareness, career preparation and/or career pathway information to parents
    - o The Board's WOW event includes a parent-teacher session that provides information about services offered through Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas, VR and other community partners.
    - o The Board's Studenty HireAbility Navigator ("Navigator") makes presentations to educators, students, and parents at schools to provide information that helps students with disabilities access vocational rehabilitation and other services that will empower them to pursue additional training, postsecondary education, or employment following graduation.
    - o The Navigator also works with Region 14 ESC to host the Autism Extravaganza which provides information and resources to families, educators, community partners, and students to learn about how to face and overcome the challenges of autism.

- • Strategy Three: Providing career awareness, career preparation and/or career pathway information to educators
    - o The Teacher Externship program mentioned above provides real-life career awareness experience to teachers. As part of their commitment, teachers agree to incorporate the information they learn into lesson plans, projects, or other material for their students.
    - o The Board's WOW event includes a parent-teacher session that provides information about services offered through Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas, VR and other community partners.
    - o The Board provides area educators with the Celebrate Careers Kit which contains material to help them engage students in discussions around career awareness.
    - o The Board is in the process of implementing the "I Generate Rural Opportunities for Work" (iGROW) initiative. This will provide pre-employment training and workplace readiness activities that will support students with disabilities in rural areas. This project is scheduled to be implemented in the summer of 2023 and will train teachers and other school district leaders so they can administer the work skills training.

- • Strategy Four: Providing career awareness, career preparation and/or career pathway information to job-seekers
    - o The Board's workforce subrecipient has incorporated use of the virtual reality career exploration headsets into their assessment and career guidance activities for job seekers. For BCY22, 13 customers used the headsets as part of their career development plan for either assessment or upskilling.

- o **The Board's workforce subrecipient conducts demonstrations of the virtual reality headsets for employers and job seekers at workforce offices and on-site with employers. Demonstrations were held with 140 job seekers during BCY22.**
- o **The Board's workforce subrecipient provides virtual career preparation workshops for job-seekers on topics such as resumes, interviews, and career exploration. Other virtual workshops cover subjects like financial literacy, leadership, and labor market information. These workshops were recently moved to a platform that will allow the subrecipient to track completions, so data on counts will be available moving forward.**

Based on committee activities and progress toward previously set goals, the Board decided to conduct a new strategic planning session in early 2023, sooner than previously planned.

B. Board Strategies
(WIOA §108(b)(1)(F); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(6))
Boards must include a description of the Board's strategy to work with the entities carrying out the core programs and with the required partners to align resources available to the local workforce development area (workforce area) to achieve the vision and goals.

The Board contracts with a subrecipient entity, CECT, to operate the workforce center system, through which core and other program services are provided, including: WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs; Wagner-Peyser Employment Services Program, services to Unemployment Insurance recipients, TAA, TANF/Choices Program, SNAP E&T Program, and Choices Noncustodial Parent Program. The service delivery system consists of one full-service workforce center in Abilene; three branch offices in Brownwood, Sweetwater and Snyder; and one itinerant office in Eastland. The Abilene Workforce Center serves as the hub for the region and, in addition to workforce services, houses staff from the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) and the Texas Veterans Leadership Program. Staff from Texas Workforce Solutions – Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWSVRS) is co-located in the Abilene and Brownwood centers. In addition, workforce staff participate in partner meetings and events to coordinate services to common customers.

The workforce subrecipient has primary responsibility for job seeker and employer services. The Board does not directly provide services to job seekers, but does provide oversight of those activities in the form of contract management, monitoring, and policy maintenance. The Board places contractual requirements on the workforce subrecipient to develop and execute concrete plans for expanding services to customers and collaborating with partners. With regard to serving employers, the Board's model identifies the subrecipient's role as employer services and the Board's role as business services. Workforce Center staff who serve employers focus on those services related to hiring, assessment, job matching, job referral, job requirements, job postings and assistance related to immediate needs of the business such as prevailing wage rates and screening. The Board's business service function encompasses industry sectors, economic development, labor market trends, and projected skill needs. The Board's Director of Business Services meets regularly with Workforce Center employer service staff to discuss any issues identified as a result of Board interaction with employers and to provide information on emerging issues, events and activities resulting from the Board's interaction with economic development, business associations, businesses, and/or other community agencies and leaders. These meetings also incorporate a degree of accountability to ensure the Workforce Center employer service staff is meeting the needs of local employers.

The Board is currently developing a pilot program for providing focused outreach to employers in West Central. This method is being developed based on an employer service strategy shared by the Workforce Solutions Capital Area Board, which delineates a data-driven approach to business services. The strategy being used by West Central undertakes to analyze regional industry and occupation labor market information to determine the industries that appear to have the greatest needs. Beyond simply asking about openings or marketing our job matching services, this approach seeks to first understand the employer's needs to determine their objectives and the issues that are impacting their success. We then want to serve as an intermediary to find and connect resources to meet those needs. The following questions are guiding the development of the methodology.

- What skill gaps is the employer experiencing?
  - What is contributing to the gaps?
  - Are workers exiting the industry?
    - Does the workforce area have an adequate supply of skilled workers to replace exiters? Or, do we need to determine how to help meet this worker supply shortage?
  - Are industry technological or business requirements necessitating upskilling of incumbent workers?
    - How is the employer trying to address needed upskilling?
    - Is the employer able to provide in-house training or do they need to outsource it?
    - Are area training providers able to meet those upskilling needs?
    - How can the Board serve as a connector between providers and employers?
- What industries or businesses are in their supply chain?
  - Are supply chain linkages experiencing issues that impact the employer's success?
- What business changes does the employer anticipate over the next 12-18 months based on foreseeable economic conditions?
- What level of engagement has the employer had with us? Note: All of the sub-bullets below are intended to paint a picture and help us to frame our approach to the employer. It makes a difference if an employer is a current customer, a previous dissatisfied customer, or someone who does not know about us. For current customers, it also helps to analyze their use and success rate of our services vs. what labor market reports say about industry need.
  - Are they a current customer?
    - Analyze the services they have used (meaning we do the research)
    - How often do they post jobs?
    - What is the success rate of postings filled (meaning, what percentage of openings do we fill in a certain time period; this is just based on data—we won't know how well those matches met their needs until we ask)
    - Does the frequency of their postings appear to match the level of demand reflected in LMI reports?
    - Do their postings correlate with industry and occupational demand in labor market reports? In other words, are they posting for the same types of occupations or does their need seem to be different than what appears in labor market reports?
    - Are they satisfied with the services they have received?
    - We want to find out from the employer about their needs that we have not addressed—what other needs do they have that would help their business be successful
  - Are they a former customer?

- ▪ Can we find any historical data on the services they used? Success rates?
- ▪ We want to find out why they stopped using us. Were they dissatisfied with the services we provided? Did they find better/easier ways of getting their needs met?
  - o If they have never used our services…
    - ▪ Are they aware of us?
    - ▪ Have we ever outreached the employer and offered services previously? If so, what was their response at that time?
    - ▪ Are they using other resources to meet their needs (and what are those resources)?
    - ▪ Do they have needs that go unmet because they have not found a resource to address them?

The procedure that has been developed thus far is provided below (this pilot is currently in the first two steps of development).

<u>Data-Driven Service to Businesses</u>

Step One: Labor Market Analysis to Determine Targeted Industries
- • Run labor market data from Chmura, Burning Glass, other sources as relevant
- • Review industry analytics to determine which area businesses may have the greatest need
- • Focus initially on one or two industries

Step Two: Development of Approach to Employers
- • What is our outreach strategy? What questions do we ask? What questions are relevant to employers?
- • How will the approach be different for current employer customers vs. those who have never used our services?
- • Note: We will conduct training to ensure staff are aware of tools/resources—both those that we can offer and external resources, where we can make referrals—i.e. Texas Tech Small Business Development Center, TWC state office, economic development or higher education partners, etc.

Step Three: Talk to Employers
- • Gather information from employers to identify their needs.
  - o What are the answers to the questions above? What are the employers currently experiencing?
  - o Note: This will include the use of a platform that will allow sharing of information, so all appropriate staff can access and add to it—reducing the potential for duplication.

Step Four: Analysis of Needs
- • Analyze applicable labor market data and area resources in relation to the needs.
- • What internal resources does workforce solutions have that could address the needs?
- • What community resources (training providers, other agencies/entities) are available that could address the needs? Is the employer already connected to them? If not, how can we serve as that conduit?
- • Engagement of training providers—develop a strategy for informing providers about the focused outreach and determining how they want to engage in that process

Step Five: Connecting Employers with Resources that Address their Needs
- Are we connected to community resources that can address those needs? If not, we need to try to form partnerships with those resources (so we can be the conduit).
- Is this a training issue that requires the participation of area providers? If so, connect with providers to determine the correlation with their current programs.
  - Do they have current programs that could address the needs?
  - If not, does this require development of a new program?
  - Does it require an upgrade of current programs?

Step Six: Evaluation
- Did we help to meet the employer's needs? Was the pilot successful? Should it be repeated?
- Did the data prove to be accurate? Outdated?
- Was the data analysis approach a good method for targeting industries/employers?
- Lessons learned? How can we improve?
- Changes needed to our approach? Did we ask the right questions?
- How did the employer (and any other entity involved) feel about our handling of the situation? Do they recommend us to others?

It should be noted that the plan for providing data-driven service to businesses is fluid and very much in the developmental stages. The steps, and the plan overall, are expected to evolve as we move further through the process.

Child care is both a required partner and is essential to the success of many parents who work and/or attend school. The Board contracts with a subrecipient, SERCO, to administer the federally-funded child care program. SERCO is co-located with workforce services in Abilene. Workforce and childcare staff meet periodically to discuss shared customers and have established processes for ensuring customer services are coordinated, as appropriate. The Board employs two Early Childhood Specialists to:
- plan and manage quality activities, which includes mentoring and providing technical assistance for Texas Rising Star Providers (TRS),
- assess providers seeking initial TRS certification as well as those desiring continued (advanced) TRS certification,
- maintain awareness of best practices in child care quality, and
- partner with other organizations to enhance and expand the availability of quality child care and early learning experiences.

Alignment of core programs and activities with the overall West Central Texas community is achieved through engaging in collaboratives that bring together partners who share common customers with the workforce system.   One example of this is participation by Board and subrecipient staff (from both workforce and child care entities) in the Basic Needs Network (BNN). Hosted by 2-1-1, the BNN is a regional consortium of resource agencies covering the same service delivery area as the Board area that provide assistance for various types of needs. Board staff participates on the Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan committee, which considers transportation needs and resources across the region, including the 5310 federal funding for the elderly and individuals with a disability.   Board staff also participates in the Military Partnership of West Central Texas, which is made up of 21 community organizations that directly support area veterans by providing specific health, housing, and transportation services.   The Board Executive Director serves on the Advisory Committee for 2-1-1 and Chairs the

Cooperative Relationships Committee, which encompasses the Military Partnership, Abilene Hunger Coalition, West Texas Homeless Network, ThriveABI, Big Country ReEntry Coalition, RCTP and several mental health initiatives. In addition, the Board actively participates in workshops, events, and conferences with the Texas Midwest Community Network, a regional organization focused on providing support and networking opportunities for individuals engaged in economic development or chamber of commerce activities as staff or board members. While not all-inclusive, the following list of partnerships also demonstrates Board coordination with industry sector, economic development, and community service partners to enhance system alignment, develop a culture of collaboration, and ensure a "no wrong door" approach to the provision of workforce programs and services: Abilene Adult Education, Big Country Manufacturing Alliance, Texas Workforce Solutions – Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Office of the Attorney General, United Way, Abilene Chamber of Commerce, Senior Community Service Employment Program, Hispanic Business Executive Council, Texas Economic Development Council (TEDC), Child Care Licensing Advisory Council, Work Again West Texas, Re-Entry Coalition, 2-1-1 Advisory Committee, the advisory committees of several educational entities, and several area chambers of commerce. Participation in these entities provides a method to inform Board subrecipients regarding local service initiatives; helps to ensure, to the extent possible, that internal services are not duplicative of those provided by other organizations; and enables the Board to align its service strategies with those of partner entities.

One of the primary functions of the Board's Student HireAbility Navigator ("Navigator") is to promote alignment of services between TWSVRS, school districts, and community partners for students with disabilities. The Navigator works to strengthen the infrastructure that serves those students, improve communication and relationships between employers and TWSVRS, and foster access and usage of services by students with disabilities, all for the purpose of increasing employment opportunities for students with disabilities. Some of the many collaborative activities in which the Navigator engages to align services for these students include:
- presentations at area schools to students and teachers regarding available services;
- informing employers about the advantages of working with students with disabilities, and making connections between employers and school district special education personnel, students, and TWSVRS;
- promoting Workforce and TWSVRS services at area events and resource fairs; and
- hosting training events for all stakeholders.

C. High-Performing Board
(WIOA §108(b)(18); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(17))
Boards must include a description of the actions the Board will take toward becoming or remaining a high-performing Board, consistent with the factors developed by the Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC).

TWC evaluates Board performance based, in part, on contracted measures. Where these standards of evaluation are concerned, the Board believes it has performed very well. As reflected in the table below, the Board met or exceeded at least 88% of its contracted performance measures for the last three years. It should be noted that one of the missed WIOA measures for BCY20 was directly related to a special initiative funded with WIOA alternative funds. This initiative involves serving a population with more risk factors and that tends to have more challenging employment outcomes. However, the WIOA measures for BCY21 and forward will not be impacted by that population since targets will only include formula-funded individuals.

Year	# Failed	# Met	# Exceeded	# Total	% Met/Exc.
BCY18	2	6	11	19	89%
BCY19	1	12	4	17	94%
BCY20	2	12	3	17	88%

BCY21 WIOA targets and current performance as of 1/14/21, are as follows. These figures indicate the Board is missing only one measure.

Measure	Target	Current Performance
Employed Q2 Post Exit - Adult	76.5%	76.19%
Employed Q4 Post Exit – Adult	68.3%	91.67%
Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit – Adult	$5000	$8804.91
Credential Rate – Adult	65.4%	77.78%
Measurable Skills Gains – Adult	45.8%	n/a
Employed Q2 Post Exit – DW	85.8%	92.86%
Employed Q4 Post Exit – DW	82.1%	80%
Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit – DW	$6600	$6793.88
Credential Rate – DW	87.5%	50%
Measurable Skills Gains – DW	61.3%	n/a
Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit - Youth	69.9%	72.73%
Employed/Enrolled Q4 Post Exit - Youth	71.1%	77.78%
Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit – Youth	$3300	n/a
Credential Rate – Youth	28.5%	n/a
Measurable Skills Gains – Youth	20%	n/a

TWC also evaluates Board performance through annual monitoring reviews and capacity oversight assessments that result in reports detailing any policy violations and assessment scores. For the last three years (2017-2019), final monitoring reports from TWC indicated the Board had no findings or questioned costs. In addition, the latest capacity oversight evaluation indicates the Board is meeting state standards.

To maintain high levels of performance, the Board regularly evaluates the effectiveness of the service delivery system, the responsiveness of activities, and the impact or outcomes. Board staff meets monthly to review performance for all programs and services. While the review primarily focuses on contractor performance and financial management, it also includes an assessment of the Board's activities related to oversight, management and technical assistance. Board staff also actively engages the subrecipients on all aspects of service delivery.   Board staff meets monthly with the local workforce subrecipient management team, and the Board Workforce Contract Manager meets weekly with the contractor's leadership team.   The Board Workforce Contract Manager and the Board Executive Director meet quarterly with the executive leadership of CECT. These meetings are used as an opportunity to review performance, discuss current and planned initiatives, and dialog about issues and opportunities. The various levels of collaboration allow for more streamlined communication and ensure continuous improvement at all levels. The workforce center subrecipient also hosts regular "partner" meetings that include the childcare subrecipient, as well as other partners. This meeting focuses primarily on operational rather than strategic issues. Additionally, the workforce contractor is required to submit monthly reports to the Board Workforce Contract Manager that relate information on issues such as staffing changes, staff training, quality assurance activities, financial status and projections, and emerging issues. Those reports also contain information about the status of performance measures, strategies the contractor is using to improve deficiencies, and customer success stories.

While providing subrecipient oversight is a key strategy for being a high-performing board, the Board uses other strategies to positively impact the job-seekers, employers, and overall community of the West Central Texas area. Some of those strategies include strategically seeking, developing and adapting approaches to address local needs, such as retaining skilled workers in rural communities, developing and/or participating in regional partnerships to leverage limited resources, and consistent messaging across multiple platforms and audiences. The examples below demonstrate the Board's willingness to take these types of actions as a high-performing board.

- WSWCTB staff networks with and attends meetings, conferences, and webinars hosted by various entities (such as, DOL, TAWB, NAWB, other boards in and outside Texas, and TWC) that promote workforce industry best practices. Those that appear to be promising for West Central are incorporated into the service delivery structure. For example:
  - o The Board has engaged with Talent Pipeline Management (TPM), and sponsored a staff member to complete the TPM Academy in 2020. TPM is a demand-driven, employer-led approach to closing skills gaps. The TPM Academy provides training to learn to drive partnerships with employers and education and training providers based on industry need. Board staff continues to participate in TPM meetings and webinars to collaborate with partner entities on industry best practices.
  - o The Board has established connections with Educate Texas and the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas. Through these connections the Board can access information about service strategies, programs, and resources. Educate Texas analyzes data and insights from a variety of sources to determine the people, systems, and processes that need support. Through this connection, the Board can access information about evidence-based programs and service strategies. Connections with Educate Texas and the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas have resulted in the Board being invited to apply for opportunities that are available on an invitation-only basis.
    - ▪ The first of these is Advance Together (AT), an accelerator program that uses a model designed by the Dallas Fed's Community Development team. AT is based on models developed by Federal Reserve Boards in other regions, such as Working Cities Challenge in Boston and SPARK in San Francisco. It supports community partnerships in Texas that are tackling education and workforce challenges. The Board was awarded both the Design Grant in February, 2020, and the three-year Implementation Grant, which will begin in early 2021. In partnership with Big Country Manufacturing Alliance (BCMA), the implementation phase of the program will work to increase regional employment in middle-skill, high-wage manufacturing careers by 10% by 2030. Over the next 3 years, the Board and BCMA will lay the foundation and start building toward the long-term goal.
    - ▪ The second is WE CAN TX, a statewide network of regional education-workforce partnerships collaborating to develop innovative, modern apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities for underrepresented students while meeting the needs of employers. The Board is looking to develop its capacity as a backbone organization to support work-based learning within an industry-sector context. Educate Texas will launch WE CAN TX in 2021 with a cohort of approximately 10 regional partnerships – comprised of K-12, community college, employers, and workforce organizations – that will receive technical assistance and engage in peer learning. Innovations that will be deployed include: expanding dual credit and CTE course sequences, introducing innovative work-based course structures that use jobs as a learning lab, and leveraging virtual

learning tools to expand access to apprenticeships. The work-based courses are based on similar programs launched in Kentucky by Jobs for the Future.

Update
Through collaboration with WE CAN TX and the Big Country Manufacturing Alliance (BCMA), employer and educator guides have been developed for work-based learning (WBL). BCMA members formed a Work-Based Learning Task Force that included representatives of three employers, three school districts and workforce. They discussed barriers to participation in WBL activities for students and employers, created a framework for WBL for students and created guides for employers and educators. These will be available via the BCMA website and directly distributed. The employer guide is focused on five areas: 1) recruiting practices, 2) hiring practices, 3) workplace culture and environment, 4) training and advancement, and 5) wages and benefits. Along with the guide, a self-assessment tool was created that can be used by employers in any sector to compare their practices with research-based best practices. The guide and tool will assist employers in identifying both best practices and potential blind spots that may be impacting their attraction and retention of workers, especially individuals of color, young people, and other marginalized populations. Another tool was developed—the Roadmap for Employer Engagement: How Manufacturers Can Contribute to a Strong Workforce Talent Pipeline. The map identifies three levels of engagement: Build Interest (increasing awareness through activities such as plant tours) Build Skills (providing direct input to ensuring right training and education programs are in place) and Build Experience (providing work-based learning opportunities). This tool can guide educators and employers in identifying expected outcomes, time commitments, resources, and appropriate staff. This project is still in progress and will be completed during the next year.

- The third is a grant from rootEd Alliance, Inc. a collaborative philanthropic effort that seeks to clear the path to a stronger future for students in rural America. Through a network of partners, rootEd provides advice, exposure and access to college and career opportunities to students in high school and college. rootEd Alliance partners with local and national organizations working to meaningfully improve postsecondary and career outcomes, so that all students in rural areas and towns can pursue their dreams. In 2020, the Board applied for and received a $1.5M grant from the rootEd Alliance for a 3-year program to place college and career advisors on the campuses of area high schools for the purpose of providing postsecondary education and training support, early exposure to education pathways and careers, and strengthening connections between education and local industry. Students are also connected with sources of financial aid and opportunities for internships.
- WSWCTB applied for the Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialist Pilot Project in 2019 and received a grant to hire and strategically locate a team of five Career and Education Outreach Specialists ("CEO Team" or "Specialists") throughout the region. In the 2019-2020 school year, the CEO Team had a presence in middle and high school classrooms in 25 partner school districts across the 19-county region. Six school districts were added, for a total of 31, in the 2020-2021 school year. The Specialists expose, educate, and engage students in career

exploration and career decision making through classroom presentations, workshops, individual meetings, guest speakers from business, education and community partners, and visits to local businesses and college campuses. In addition to direct services to partner school districts, the CEO Team supports several regional initiatives and events for all regional school districts including:

- o WOW Youth Expo – a regional career exploration event that gathers over 3,000 students from 50 school districts annually to explore regional college and career opportunities; in 2020 this initiative moved a virtual platform;
- o Careers in Action Video Contest – provides prizes to the classrooms of winning student-led video projects in the form of education tools and resources. The videos highlight a career pathway of one of the regional demand occupations;
- o Teacher Summer Externship Program - places over 50 educators into industry for a 3-day summer job shadowing experience;
- o What's Next?! Senior Event - supports seniors who are preparing to graduate, but do not have a post-secondary plan in place, to connect them to resources and post-secondary training providers to help finalize a plan before graduation;
- o Student Ambassadors program – 11th-12th grade student representatives from schools across West Central Texas serve as peer advisors and support for the Career and Education Outreach program. The students are trained in demand occupations, current labor market trends, and employability skills to support their career;
- o Celebrate Careers kit – provides teachers activities, tools, and resources to support career exploration and development in 6th-12th grade classrooms;
- o Career Signing Day – supports and promotes Career Signing Days at partner school districts across the region, providing key note speakers, promotional materials, and technical support

In the 2019-2020 school year, the CEO Team provided 1,498 career awareness presentations for partner school districts, 481 individual student career exploration and planning consultations, 96 partner presentations, and 32,510 student engagements. When the pandemic hit in the latter part of this school year, the CEO Team developed virtual resources—tutorials and presentations on the Board's website—that can be used by students, parents, and teachers. They also developed six weeks of lesson plans covering employability skills and high demand occupations for use by teachers, which are currently being updated. (Note: These presentations were not originally captioned due to the quick timing and availability of services, but the Board has plans to add captioning to all of them in 2021.) So far in 2020-2021 school year, August through October 31 2020, the CEO Team provided 397 career awareness presentations for partner school districts, 29 individual student career exploration and planning consultations, 10 partner presentations, and 7,077 student engagements.

- The Board is currently developing a pilot program for providing focused outreach to employers in West Central. This method is being developed based on an employer service strategy shared by the Workforce Solutions Capital Area Board, which delineates a data-driven approach to business services. The strategy involves analyzing regional industry and occupation labor market information to determine the industries that appear to have the greatest needs. Beyond simply asking about openings or marketing our job matching services, this approach seeks to first understand the employer's needs to determine their objectives and the issues that are impacting their success. The Board then wants to serve as an intermediary to find and connect resources to meet those needs. The Capital Area Board has found this to be a successful approach, and West Central looks to have a successful implementation as well. Implementation is scheduled for early 2021.

- Board staff participate in several partnerships whose purpose is, in part, to exchange information on best practices, collaborate on common issues, and share resources/tools to address those issues. Those partnerships include:
    - Texas Association of Workforce Boards
    - Texas Rural Funders Collaborative
    - Workforce Innovators
    - Rural Workforce Network
    - Texas Midwest Community Network
    - Texas Economic Development Council

In recognition of its efforts to provide excellent quality service while meeting the needs of targeted customer groups, the Board has received the following awards over the last two years.
- December, 2018:
    - TWC Youth Inspiration and Awareness Award
    - TWC Texas Rising Star Child Care Award
- December, 2019:
    - TWC Service to Community Award

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:
• The economic conditions, including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations
• The employment needs of employers in existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations

Through the work of the Board's committees, engagement with industry and economic development entities, and utilization of intelligence produced by various entities, the Board maintains a constant awareness of regional economic conditions. The following analysis was constructed from a combination of those resources.

Regional Economic Conditions
Note: Updates (noted in bold font) have been made throughout the following section to reflect current economic conditions.
This workforce development area consists of 19 counties covering 17,000+ square miles with a labor force of **147,966**, and encompasses **8890** employers*. (*Note: This is the number of employer reporting units registered with Texas Workforce Commission in this area.) The six largest industries (in terms of numbers of employees) are: Healthcare, Retail, Education, Hospitality, Manufacturing, and Construction. When this expansive region is subdivided, it becomes clearer where certain industries are dominant, and that Agriculture plays a key role in particular areas. In the northern and eastern counties the top two industries are Agriculture and Healthcare, while in the southern counties it is Healthcare followed by Manufacturing. In the central **and western** counties Healthcare is followed by Retail. This is a marked change for the western counties where Mining **once** dominated the economy, but is now the **5th** largest industry in terms of employment numbers. However, positive indicators **continue** for the oil and gas sector in West Central and the Permian Basin oil area overall. Per the **2022 3rd** quarter Dallas Fed Energy Survey (https://www.dallasfed.org/research/surveys/des):

- The business activity index-the survey's broadest measure of conditions facing Eleventh District energy firms **is now at 46, indicating a good pace of expansion**.
- According to E&P executives, **the** oil production **index is now at 31.7**.
- **The aggregate employment index posted a seventh consecutive positive reading, increasing from 22.6 in the second quarter to a record 30.0. The aggregate employee hours index was 33.3, close to its historical high. The aggregate wages and benefits index remained elevated and was largely unchanged at 47.3.**
- **While it fell somewhat from the previous quarter, the company outlook index posted a ninth consecutive positive reading at 33.1.**

(The following information was obtained from a regional economic analysis obtained from Chmura**/JobsEQ** on **12/13/22**.) Over the next 10 years, employment in the West Central WDA is projected to expand by **6,021** jobs. The fastest growing sector in the region is expected to be Health Care and Social Assistance with a **+1.1%** year-over-year rate of growth. The strongest forecast by number of jobs over this period is expected for Health Care and Social Assistance **+2,610** jobs), Accommodation and Food Services (**+2,403**), and **Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction** (**+662**). The largest sector in the West Central WDA is Health Care and Social Assistance, employing **22,891** workers. The next-largest sectors in the region are Retail Trade (**17,039** workers) and Educational Services (**14,089**). The industries with the highest location quotients overall for this region are Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction (LQ = **8.82**), Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (**4.05**), and Utilities (**1.93**). Sectors in the West Central WDA with the highest average wages per worker are **Management of Companies and Enterprises ($90,015),** Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction ($**82,993**), **and** Utilities ($**81,536**). Regional sectors with the best job growth (or most moderate job losses) over the last 5 years are **Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services (+1,753), Manufacturing (+850), and Construction (+715).**

Regionally there continues to be expansion in construction and manufacturing that requires skills already in shortage. For example, there are several projects related to replacing turbines on wind farms, **some expansion of wind farms**, and a **nearly completed** $285M expansion project for an area gypsum plant. In addition, **numerous residential projects as well as ongoing** road and bridge infrastructure projects will **continue to** require a large number of skilled workers.

There have been numerous businesses starting, relocating, or expanding in West Central. These include:
- **Primal Pet—In August of 2021 the company broke ground on a $31.6M expansion of its Abilene plant. When it is complete, the expansion is expected to create and maintain an additional 250 jobs.**
- **Amazon—The company opened a 71,000 square foot warehouse in Abilene in 2022, creating several dozen new jobs with a minimum starting wage of $15/hour.**
- **Lancium—The company is currently building a large-scale, renewable energy powered data center campus in Abilene. Lancium plans to invest $2.4 billion over 20 years, create 57 full-time jobs, and build their Clean Compute Campus on approximately 800 acres. This new development is expected to solidify the region as a major provider of renewable energy, while simultaneously hosting Bitcoin mining and other energy-intensive applications.**
- **Broadwind Heavy Fabrications—The company is investing $3M to upgrade and reconfigure their current Abilene facility to enhance their operations and help them retain 174 employees.**
- **Bridgestone Bandag—The company is expanding operations in Abilene with a $60 million**

investment to build 50,000 square feet adding to an existing 200,000 square foot facility. The project is expected to retain 179 employees while creating an additional 25 jobs.

- **Great Lakes Cheese**—In 2022 the company built and opened a new, state-of-the-art cheese packaging plant in Abilene and plans to employ over 500 people.
- **GEM Equipment of Oregon**—In 2022 the company, which builds custom food processing equipment, expanded into Texas, purchasing an existing facility in Abilene.
- **Hendrick Health System**—Hendrick Health is expanding its back office and warehousing facility in the Mall of Abilene, which is expected to retain 317 employees while creating an additional 74 jobs.
- **NEXT Lab**—Abilene Christian University (ACU) is expanding its Nuclear Energy eXperimental Testing (NEXT) Lab at the location of a former elementary school in Abilene, adjacent to the ACU campus. In collaboration with the Georgia Institute of Technology, Texas A&M University, and The University of Texas at Austin – NEXT Lab will design, license and commission a molten salt research reactor to be hosted on ACU's campus.
- **Tige Boats**—In December 2022 the company announced a $12M expansion at its Abilene facility that will result in 45% increase in production and the addition of over 200 jobs.
- **DoubleTree**—Construction on this new $80M hotel located in downtown Abilene is set to be completed in 2023 and is expected to be an economic game-changer for tourism, tax revenue, and subsequent business development and attraction. The hotel already has conventions booked out to 2026.
- **Georgia Pacific**—The company is building a state-of-the-art gypsum wallboard production facility next to its existing gypsum plant in Sweetwater. Once it is operational, the new plant will employ approximately 120 full-time employees.
- **Buckstop Truckware**—This Oregon company is currently planning to expand into Coleman. Plans are currently underway to renovate an existing facility.
- **Road Ranger**—This business recently built and opened a new $8M location in Cisco, creating 80 jobs.

The list above reflects the larger businesses impacting the area economy and does not include many small businesses that have opened or expanded across West Central.

Abilene is the largest city in this region, with a population (**124,691**) over six times that of the next largest city, and is home to over **50** businesses[1] that employ 100 or more workers, including the following industries: military, education, healthcare, government, manufacturing, energy, engineering, telecommunications, aviation, and banking. The following analysis was obtained from Chmura**/JobsEQ**, and examines Taylor County (roughly 90% of the county population lives in Abilene). "The largest sector in Taylor County, Texas is Health Care and Social Assistance, employing **13,172** workers. The next-largest sectors in the region are Retail Trade (**8,642** workers) and Educational Services (**7,104**). The sectors with the largest LQs in the region are Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction (LQ = **3.94**), Utilities (**1.58**), and **Health Care and Social Assistance (1.29)**. Over the next 10 years, employment in Taylor County, Texas is projected to expand by **5,847** jobs. The fastest growing sector in the region is expected to be **Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation with a +3.2%** year-over-year rate of growth. The strongest forecast by number of jobs over this period is expected for Health Care and Social Assistance (**+1,983** jobs), Accommodation and Food Services **(+1,580**), and **Educational Services (+650)**."

[1]Note: Information obtained from **Chmura/JobsEQ employer database**.

*Note: Chmura**/JobsEQ** uses the QCEW as its source and, as of the update of this report, its data were updated through **2022Q1** with preliminary estimates updated to **2022Q2**.

COVID-19 Impact
The West Central regional economy has not been immune to the effects of the pandemic that hit the country in 2020. The indices below show the economic impact to this workforce development area over the course of the year.

Update:
New charts and data for 2022 are inserted below each original 2020 entry to provide perspective on the recovery seen in West Central over the past two years.

Labor Force Data 2020

Labor Force Data 2022

Unemployment Numbers, Rates 2020

Unemployment Numbers, Rates
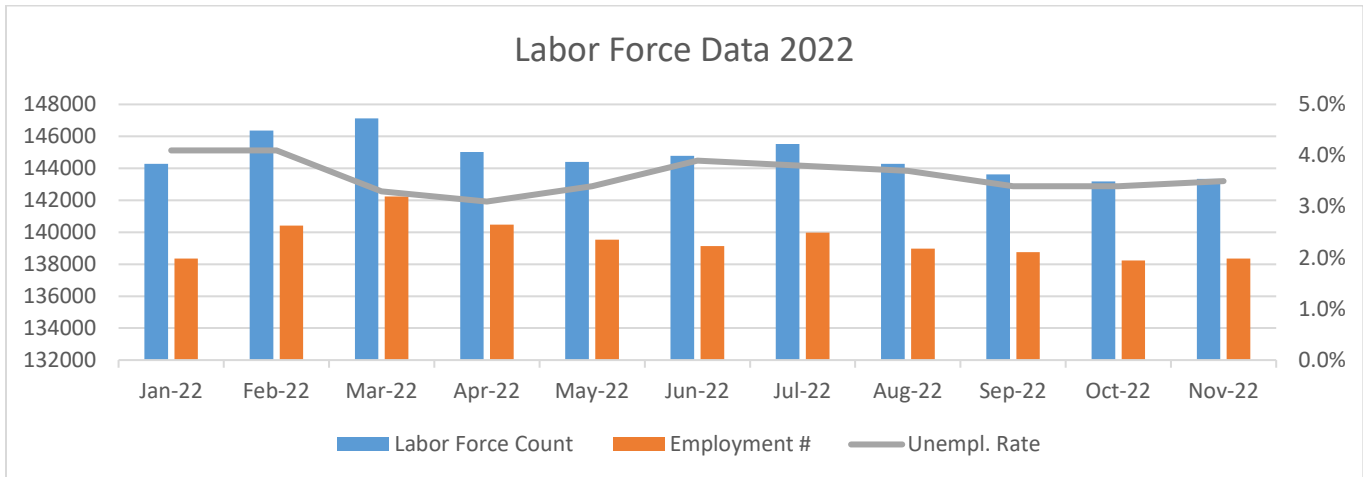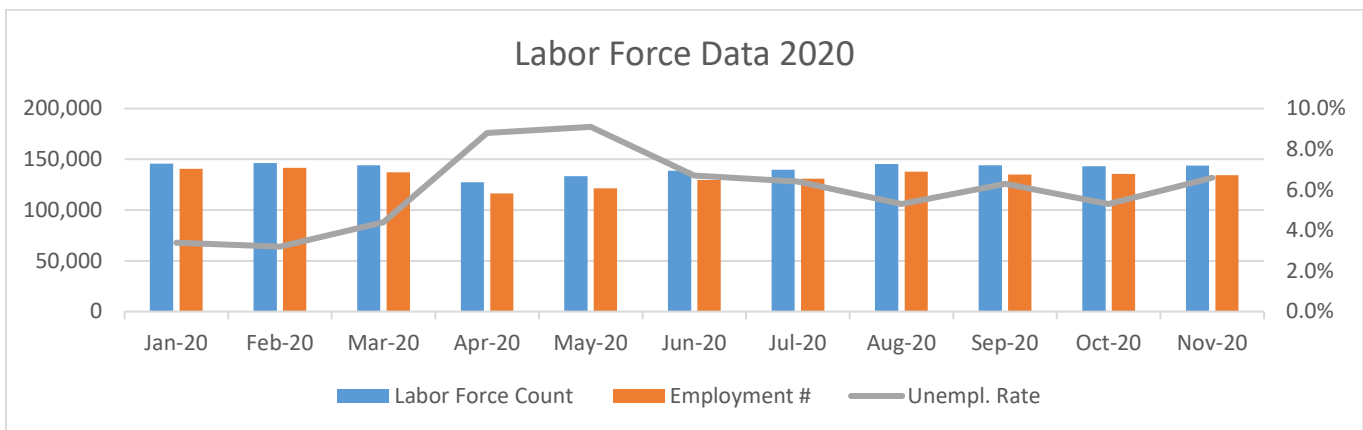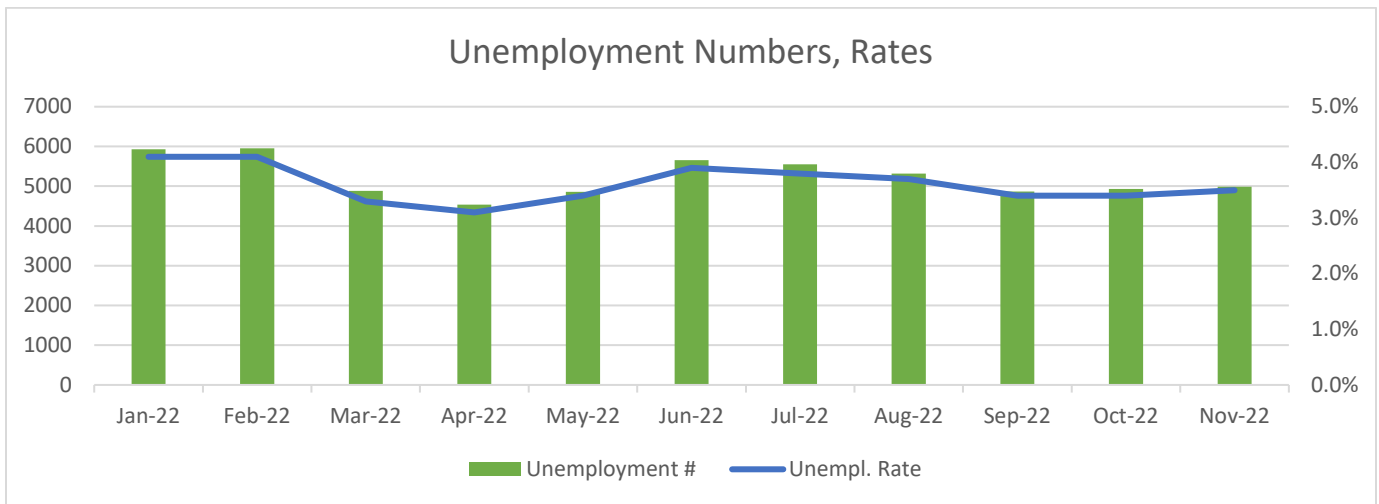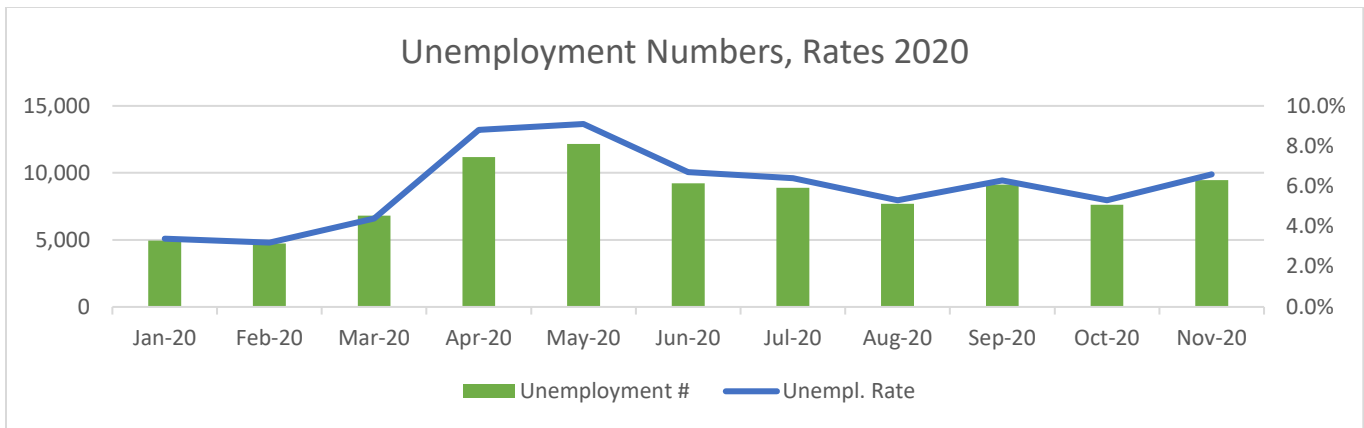
Note: The chart below reflects claims for weeks ending 3/7/20-12/12/20, and indicates April was the peak period for filing unemployment claims, with another bump in December

2020 Claims for Taylor County and Overall WDA
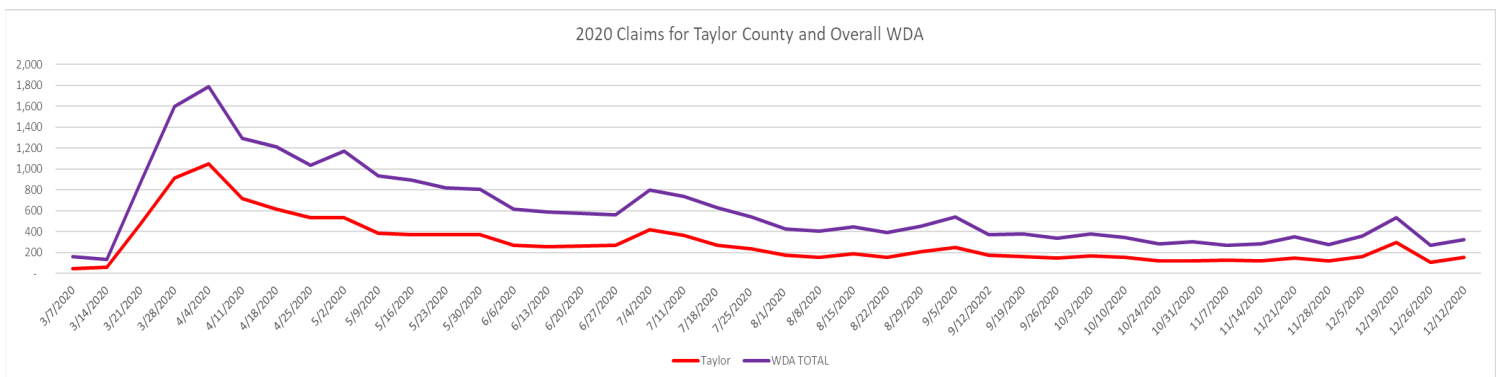
Weekly average claims began falling back to pre-pandemic levels in the latter part of 2021. Weekly averages for 2019 through 2022 (as of week ending 12/3/22) are provided below.

- **2019—47**
- **2020—245**
- **2021—109**

- **2022--55**

The chart below was obtained from the Texas Department of State Health Services website (https://tabexternal.dshs.texas.gov/t/THD/views/COVIDExternalQC/COVIDTrends?%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&%3Aembed=y).
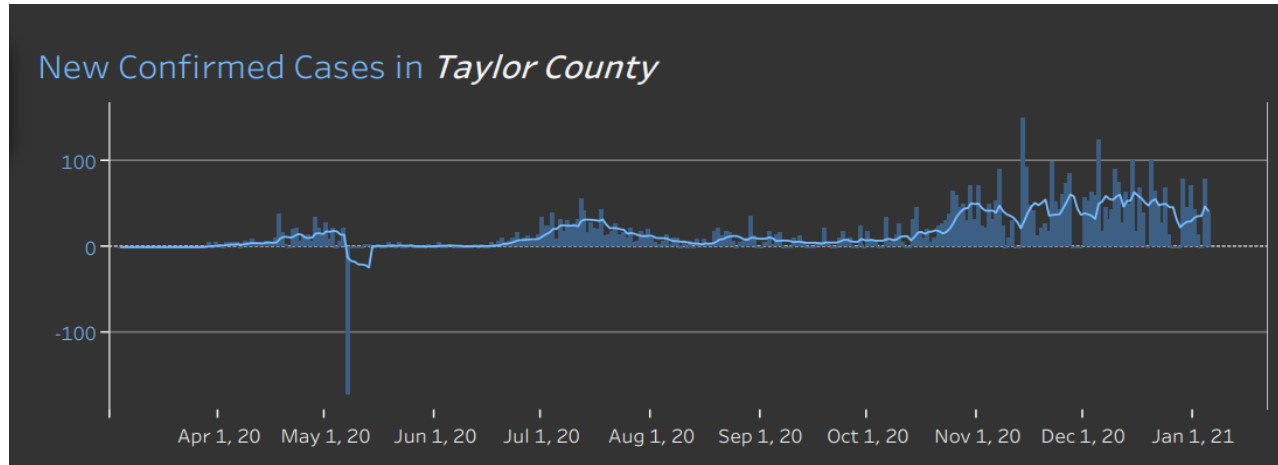
The data below shows the number of newly confirmed COVID cases, by month, in Taylor County for the year 2022 through November (the latest month currently available).
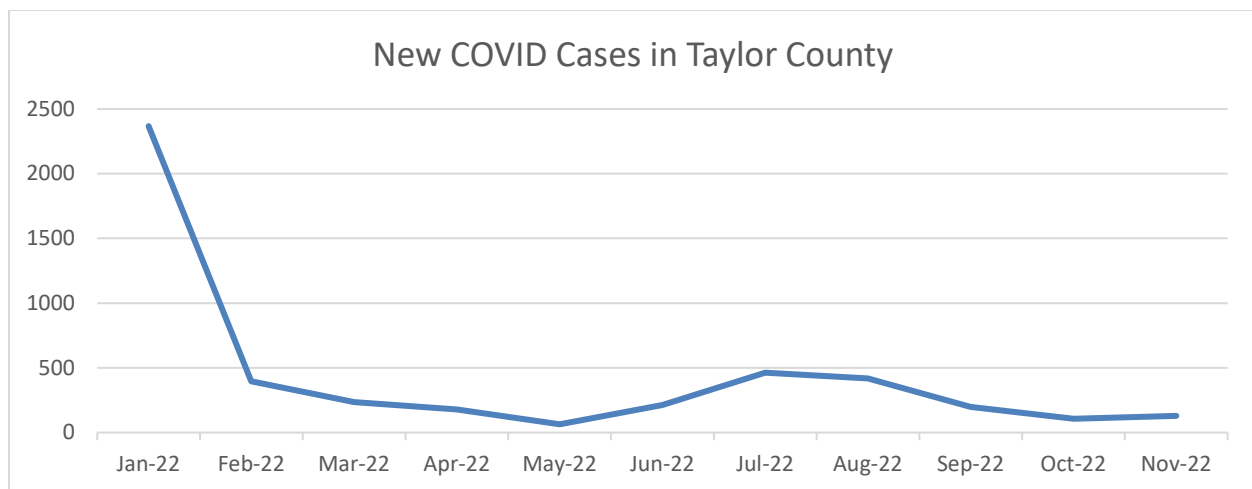
To summarize, while West Central has seen great improvement in economic indices since last March, new cases of COVID and high rates of hospitalizations continue to flare up, resulting in mandatory restrictions on businesses and adverse impacts to workers. It is anticipated that West Central will continue to struggle before we see the economy resemble pre-pandemic conditions, as will likely happen with the rest of the state and country.

Although COVID is still affecting individuals and businesses, far fewer infections are resulting in serious illness, hospitalizations, and death. This decline in the pandemic has provided relief to workers,

businesses, and many sectors of the economy. In addition, the significant business activity taking place in West Central, as noted previously in this section, has in many ways allowed the economy to meet or exceed pre-pandemic expectations noted in the original analysis of this plan.

In-Demand Industries, Demand/Target Occupations
The following table provides the list of in-demand industry sectors and occupations, as well as targeted occupations.

Update: Changes in the table below reflect the additions/removals in the three lists and are represented with the tracked change feature.

In-Demand Industries	In-Demand Occupations	Targeted Occupations
2111-Oil and Gas Extraction	13-2011 – Accountants and Auditors	49-3023 – Automotive Service Tech.
2131-Support Activities for Mining	49-3023 – Automotive Service Tech.	49-3031 – Bus/Truck Mech./Diesel Spec.
2211-Power Generation and Supply	43-3031 – Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	49-9051 – Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers
2371-Utility System Construction	49-3031 – Bus/Truck Mech./Diesel Spec.	47-2111 – Electricians
2373-Highway, Street, and Bridge Construction	47-2061 – Construction Laborers	
2382-Building Equipment Contractors	33-3012 – Correctional Officers and Jailers	25-2021 – Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education
3323-Architectural and Structural Metals	49-9051 – Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	29-2042 – Emergency Medical Technicians
4841-General Freight Trucking	47-2111 – Electricians	49-9021 – Heating AC and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers
6111-Elementary and Secondary Schools	17-3024 – Electro-Mechanical and Mechatronics Technologists and Technicians (proxy for Drone Pilots)	53-3032 – Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers
6211-Offices of Physicians	25-2021 – Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	49-9041 – Industrial Machinery Mechanics
6221-General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	29-2042 – Emergency Medical Technicians	29-2061 – LVNs
8111-Automotive Repair and Maintenance	43-1011 – First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	
9221- Justice, Public Order, and Safety Activities	49-9021 – Heating AC and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	25-2022 – Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education
2361 – Residential Building Construction	53-3032 – Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	47-2152 – Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters
2381 - Foundation, Structure, and Building Exterior Contractors	49-9041 – Industrial Machinery Mechanics	29-1141 – Registered Nurses
3274 - Lime and Gypsum Product Manufacturing	29-2061 – LVNs	25-2031 – Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education
5412 - Accounting, Tax Preparation, Bookkeeping, and Payroll Services	31-9092 – Medical Assistants	51-4121 – Welders/Cutters
5413 - Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services	25-2022 – Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	49-9081 – Wind Turbine Service Technicians

	47-2073 – Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	51-4041 - Machinists
	47-2152 – Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	49-9071 - Maintenance and Repair Workers, General
	33-3051 – Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	
	29-1141 – Registered Nurses	
	25-2031 – Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	
	25-2056 – Special Education Teachers, Elementary School	
	25-2057 – Special Education Teachers, Middle School	
	25-2058 – Special Education Teachers, Secondary School	
	51-4121 – Welders/Cutters	
	49-9081 – Wind Turbine Service Technicians	
	11-1021 - General and Operations Managers	
	51-4041 - Machinists	
	49-9071 - Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	
	13-1082 - Project Management Specialists	
	49-9052 - Telecommunications Line Installers and Repairers	

Update Note: There is a discrepancy in the SOC code/title for the Special Education Elementary Teachers between this document and the attached spreadsheet. Elementary and Kindergarten were a combined occupational title/code under the 2010 SOC structure (25-2052). In the 2018 SOC structure, these are separate occupations/codes—25-2055 for kindergarten level, 25-2056 for elementary level. West Central uses the elementary level occupation title/code, and not the kindergarten level code. However, since the 2019 OES Estimate Title for these combines them both under 25-2052 and is how they are currently being reported in some databases the code/title in the attached spreadsheets uses the Estimate Title.

Regional Employment Needs

The needs of employers in the in-demand industry sectors are provided in the matrix below. While each industry employs a wide variety of occupations, this analysis looks at the jobs that will have up to the four highest employment needs* (the sum total of growth and replacement needs) over the next 10 years. (*Note: These figures will not match numbers provided for the same occupations in other places/spreadsheets throughout this plan due to the timing with which each data set was obtained, and because these occupation numbers are specific to the demand of these particular industries. In addition, while an occupation may represent a particular need for a specific industry, it is not necessarily a demand occupation for the region.)   Data for these matrices was obtained from Chmura.

The previous table was removed and an updated table is provided below, using the same methodology.

In-Demand Industry Sector	Highest Need Occupations	Projected Employment Needs
2111-Oil and Gas Extraction	53-7073 - Wellhead Pumpers	131
	47-5013 - Service Unit Operators, Oil and Gas	56
2131-Support Activities for Mining	47-5071 - Roustabouts, Oil and Gas	535
	47-5013 - Service Unit Operators, Oil and Gas	425
	53-3032 - Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	273
	47-1011 - First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	226
2211-Electric Power Generation	49-9081 - Wind Turbine Service Technicians	364
	49-9051 - Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	65
2361 - Residential Building Construction	47-2031 - Carpenters	166
	47-2061 - Construction Laborers	142
	11-9021 - Construction Managers	135
	13-1082 - Project Management Specialists	62
2371-Utility System Construction	47-2061 - Construction Laborers	191
	47-2073 - Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	90
	47-1011 - First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	86
	49-9051 - Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	84
2373-Highway, Street, and Bridge Construction	47-2061 - Construction Laborers	253
	47-2073 - Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	147
	53-3032 - Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	103
	47-1011 - First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	95
2381 - Foundation, Structure, and Building Exterior Contractors	47-2061 - Construction Laborers	152
	47-2181 - Roofers	122
	47-2031 - Carpenters	106
	47-1011 - First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	79
2382-Building Equipment Contractors	47-2111 – Electricians	581
	47-2152 - Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	399
	49-9021 - Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	310
	47-3013 - Helpers--Electricians	121
3274 - Lime and Gypsum Product Manufacturing	53-3032 - Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	86
3323-Architectural and Structural Metals	51-4121 - Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	164
	51-2092 - Team Assemblers	59
4841-General Freight Trucking	53-3032 - Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	664
	53-7062 - Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	76
5412 - Accounting, Tax Preparation, Bookkeeping, and Payroll Services	13-2011 - Accountants and Auditors	230
	13-2082 - Tax Preparers	90
	43-3031 - Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	80
5413 - Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services	17-2051 - Civil Engineers	43
6111-Elementary and Secondary Schools	25-2021 - Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	1225
	25-9045 - Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	941

	25-2031 - Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	865
	25-3031 - Substitute Teachers, Short-Term	726
6211-Offices of Physicians	31-9092 - Medical Assistants	564
	43-6013 - Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	241
	43-4171 - Receptionists and Information Clerks	227
	29-1171 - Nurse Practitioners	123
6221-General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	29-1141 - Registered Nurses	998
	31-1131 - Nursing Assistants	424
	43-6013 - Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	227
	31-9092 - Medical Assistants	196
8111-Automotive Repair and Maintenance	49-3023 - Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	282
	53-7061 - Cleaners of Vehicles and Equipment	273
	49-3021 - Automotive Body and Related Repairers	122
	53-6031 - Automotive and Watercraft Service Attendants	57
9221- Justice, Public Order, and Safety Activities	33-3012 - Correctional Officers and Jailers	743
	33-3051- Police and Sheriffs Patrol Officers	323
	33-2011 – Firefighters	135
	43-4031 - Court, Municipal, and License Clerks	91

The following matrix provides the employment needs (the sum of growth and replacement) for each of the demand occupations for the next 10 years (occupations that are included on the Board's Target Occupations List/TOL are indicated with a check mark in the middle column). These figures represent employment across industries. Data was obtained from a Chmura Snapshot report. **The previous table was removed and an updated matrix is provided below, using the same methodology from a report generated on 12/22/22.**

In-Demand Occupations	TOL	Projected Employment Needs
13-2011 – Accountants and Auditors		904
49-3023 – Automotive Service Tech.	✓	740
43-3031 – Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks		1422
49-3031 – Bus/Truck Mech./Diesel Spec.	✓	313
47-2061 – Construction Laborers		1700
33-3012 – Correctional Officers and Jailers		885
49-9051 – Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	✓	168
47-2111 – Electricians	✓	760
17-3024 – Electro-Mechanical and Mechatronics Technologists and Technicians (UAV/Drone Pilots)		10
25-2021 – Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	✓	1240
29-2042 – Emergency Medical Technicians	✓	152
43-1011 – First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers		1321
11-1021 – General and Operations Managers		2820
49-9021 – Heating AC and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	✓	387
53-3032 – Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	✓	2787
49-9041 – Industrial Machinery Mechanics	✓	537
29-2061 – LVNs	✓	758
51-4041 – Machinists	✓	221
49-9071 – Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	✓	1349

In-Demand Occupations	TOL	Projected Employment Needs
31-9092 – Medical Assistants		993
25-2022 – Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	✓	580
47-2073 – Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators		598
47-2152 – Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	✓	517
33-3051 – Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers		742
13-1082 – Project Management Specialists		517
29-1141 – Registered Nurses	✓	1841
25-2031 – Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	✓	882
25-2052 – Special Education Teachers, Kindergarten and Elementary School		162
25-2057 – Special Education Teachers, Middle School		77
25-2058 – Special Education Teachers, Secondary School		121
49-9052 – Telecommunications Line Installers and Repairers		130
51-4121 – Welders/Cutters	✓	619
49-9081 – Wind Turbine Service Technicians	✓	415

B. Knowledge and Skills Analysis
(WIOA §108(b)(1)(B); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(2))
Boards must include an analysis of the knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region, including employment needs for in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations.

Many of the occupations in this region require knowledge and skills in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) subjects. This is a recurring theme, not only for in-demand occupations, but also for in-demand industries, with many STEM-oriented occupations and knowledge/skill sets crossing industries (see the second table in section 2.A. and the second table in this section for additional data). The table below delineates a sample of the knowledge and skills needed for each in-demand occupation, as obtained from O*NET Online. The occupations included in the Board's Target Occupations List are indicated in the second column.

Update
O*NET Online was reviewed for the current demand occupations and updates were made to the table below as needed and are reflected using the tracked change feature.

Occupation	TOL	Knowledge Needed	Skills Needed
13-2011, Accountants and Auditors		-Economics and Accounting -Mathematics -Administration and Management	-Active Listening -Reading Comprehension -Critical Thinking
49-3023, Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	✓	-Mechanical -Computers and Electronics -Engineering and Technology	-Repairing -Troubleshooting -Operation Monitoring -Equipment Maintenance
43-3031, Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks		-Mathematics -Economics and Accounting -Computers and Electronics	-Critical Thinking -Reading Comprehension

Occupation	✓	Knowledge	Skills
49-3031, Bus/Truck Mech./Diesel Specialist	✓	-Mechanical -Public Safety and Security -Mathematics	-Repairing -Troubleshooting -Operation and Control -Operation Monitoring
47-2061, Construction Laborers		-Building and Construction -Public Safety and Security -Mechanical	-Operation and Control -Operation Monitoring
33-3012, Correctional Officers and Jailers		-Public Safety and Security -Law and Government	-Social Perceptiveness -Active Listening -Critical Thinking
49-9051, Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	✓	-Mechanical -Building and Construction -Public Safety and Security	-Monitoring -Critical Thinking -Operation Monitoring -Troubleshooting
47-2111, Electricians	✓	-Building and Construction -Mechanical -Mathematics -Design	-Troubleshooting -Installation -Complex Problem Solving -Equipment Maintenance
17-3024, Electro-Mechanical and Mechatronics Technologists and Technicians (UAV/Drone Pilots)		-Computers and Electronics -Engineering and Technology -Production and Processing	-Quality Control Analysis -Operation and Control -Judgment and Decision Making -Equipment Maintenance -Coordination
25-2021, Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	✓	-Education and Training -English Language -Mathematics -Psychology -Computers and Electronics	-Instructing -Speaking -Learning Strategies -Active Listening -Critical Thinking
29-2042, Emergency Medical Technicians	✓	**Note**: Knowledge and Skills were not listed in ONET. The webpage stated it is an occupation for which data collection is currently underway. List of skills obtained from Burning Glass.	-Patient Care -CPR -Medical Assistance -Traffic Laws -Community Relations
43-1011, First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers		-Administration and Management -Customer and Personal Service -Administrative -Computers and Electronics -Personnel and Human Resources	-Reading Comprehension -Social Perceptiveness -Instructing -Judgment and Decision Making -Management of Personnel Resources
11-1021, General and Operations Managers		- Administration and Management -Customer and Personal Service -Mathematics -Personnel and Human Resources	-Active Listening -Social Perceptiveness -Negotiation -Complex Problem Solving -Management of Material Resources
49-9021, Heating AC and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	✓	-Mechanical -Building and Construction -Computers and Electronics -Engineering and Technology -Mathematics	-Equipment Maintenance -Installation -Operation Monitoring -Repairing -Troubleshooting
53-3032, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	✓	-Public Safety and Security -Transportation -Customer and Personal Service -Law and Government	-Operation Monitoring -Operation and Control -Critical Thinking -Troubleshooting
49-9041, Industrial Machinery Mechanics	✓	-Engineering and Technology -Mathematics -Mechanical	-Equipment Maintenance -Operation Monitoring -Operation and Control

		-Computers and Electronics -Production and Processing	-Quality Control Analysis -Repairing -Troubleshooting
29-2061, Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	✓	-Medicine and Dentistry -Customer and Personal Service -Psychology -Therapy and Counseling -Mathematics	-Service Orientation -Social Perceptiveness -Reading Comprehension -Critical Thinking -Judgment and Decision Making
51-4041, Machinists	✓	-Mathematics -Mechanical -Production and Processing -Design	-Operation and Control -Critical Thinking -Monitoring -Operation Monitoring -Quality Control Analysis
49-9071, Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	✓	-Mechanical -Building and Construction -Mathematics -Production and Processing	-Equipment Maintenance -Repairing -Trouble Shooting -Critical Thinking -Active Listening
31-9092, Medical Assistants		-Medicine and Dentistry -Customer and Personal Service -Administrative -Computers and Electronics	-Active Listening -Reading Comprehension -Critical Thinking -Service Orientation -Judgment and Decision Making
25-2022, Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	✓	-Education and Training -English Language -Customer and Personal Service -Psychology -Computers and Electronics	-Instructing -Speaking -Active Listening -Learning Strategies -Reading Comprehension
47-2073 – Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators		-Mechanical -Public Safety and Security -English Language	-Operation and Control -Equipment Maintenance -Operation Monitoring -Monitoring -Active Listening
47-2152 – Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	✓	-Mechanical -Building and Construction -Design -Mathematics -Engineering and Technology	-Critical Thinking -Judgment and Decision Making -Complex Problem Solving -Operation Monitoring -Repairing
33-3051 – Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers		-Public Safety and Security -Law and Government -Psychology -Customer and Personal Service	-Active Listening -Critical Thinking -Speaking -Social Perceptiveness -Negotiation
13-1082, Project Management Specialists		**Note**: Knowledge and Skills were not listed in ONET, JobsEQ, or Burning Glass. The ONET webpage stated it is an occupation for which data collection is currently underway. Utilized Technology Skills list from ONET.	-Project Management Software -Video Conferencing Software -Video Creation and Editing Software -Word Processing Software
29-1141, Registered Nurses	✓	-Medicine and Dentistry -Customer and Personal Service -Psychology -Therapy and Counseling -Biology	-Service Orientation -Social Perceptiveness -Reading Comprehension -Critical Thinking -Judgment and Decision Making

25-2031, Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	✓	-Education and Training -English Language -Psychology -Computers and Electronics -Customer and Personal Service	-Instructing -Speaking -Active Listening -Learning Strategies -Reading Comprehension
25-2052[1] – Special Education Teachers, Kindergarten and Elementary School		-Education and Training -English Language -Psychology -Computers and Electronics -Customer and Personal Service	-Instructing -Speaking -Active Listening -Learning Strategies -Active Learning
25-2057 – Special Education Teachers, Middle School		-Education and Training -English Language -Psychology -Mathematics -Customer and Personal Service	-Instructing -Speaking -Active Listening -Learning Strategies -Active Learning
25-2058 – Special Education Teachers, Secondary School		-Education and Training -English Language -Psychology -Computers and Electronics -Customer and Personal Service	-Instructing -Speaking -Active Listening -Learning Strategies -Active Learning
49-9052, Telecommunications Line Installers and Repairers		-Telecommunications -Public Safety and Security -Computers and Electronics -Mechanical -Communications and Media	-Complex Problem Solving -Critical Thinking -Equipment Maintenance -Operation and Control -Trouble Shooting
51-4121, Welders/Cutters	✓	-Production and Processing -Mechanical	**Note**: Limited skills were listed in ONET. List of skills obtained from Burning Glass. -Welding -Arc welding -Mig and tig welding -Welding Equipment -Machinery
49-9081, Wind Turbine Service Technicians	✓	-Mechanical -Computers and Electronics -Engineering and Technology -Buildings and Construction -Physics	-Equipment Maintenance -Operation Monitoring -Repairing -Troubleshooting -Quality Control Analysis

1-Note: There are discrepancies between the code listed in SOC/ONET (which ends with 2056 and only includes elementary level teachers) and the code being used in labor market databases (which ends with 2052 and includes both kindergarten and elementary level teachers)—JobsEQ, Burning Glass, and TWC LMI. Knowledge and skills information could not be located under either of these codes in SOC/ONET, so no changes were made to those in this table.

The table below provides a sample of the knowledge and skills needed for the highest demand occupation within each in-demand industry, as obtained from O*NET Online.

Update: The table below was updated to include the current list of in-demand industries, with changes noted using the tracked change feature.

In-Demand Industry Sector	Occupation in Highest Demand	Knowledge Needed	Skills Needed

2111-Oil and Gas Extraction	53-7073 – Wellhead Pumpers	-Mechanical -Mathematics	-Critical Thinking -Complex Problem Solving -Operations Monitoring -Judgment and Decision Making -Operation and Control
2131-Support Activities for Mining	47-5071, Roustabouts	-Public Safety and Security -Mechanical	-Critical Thinking -Judgment and Decision Making -Operation Monitoring -Quality Control Analysis -Troubleshooting
2211-Electric Power Generation	49-9081, Wind Turbine Service Technicians	-Mechanical -Computers and Electronics -Engineering and Technology -Buildings and Construction -Physics	-Equipment Maintenance -Operation Monitoring -Repairing -Troubleshooting -Quality Control Analysis
2361 - Residential Building Construction	47-2031 - Carpenters	-Building and Construction -Mathematics -Design -Engineering and Technology -Mechanical	-Active Listening -Critical Thinking -Monitoring -Coordination -Quality Control Analysis
2371-Utility System Construction	47-2061, Construction Laborers	-Building and Construction -Public Safety and Security -Mechanical	-Operation and Control -Operation Monitoring
2373-Highway, Street, and Bridge Construction	47-2061, Construction Laborers	-Building and Construction -Public Safety and Security -Mechanical	-Operation and Control -Operation Monitoring
2381 - Foundation, Structure, and Building Exterior Contractors	47-2061, Construction Laborers	-Building and Construction -Public Safety and Security -Mechanical	-Operation and Control -Operation Monitoring
2382-Building Equipment Contractors	47-2111, Electricians	-Building and Construction -Mechanical -Mathematics -Design	-Troubleshooting -Installation -Complex Problem Solving -Equipment Maintenance
3274 - Lime and Gypsum Product Manufacturing	53-3032 - Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	-Public Safety and Security -Transportation -Customer and Personal Service -Law and Government	-Operation Monitoring -Operation and Control -Critical Thinking -Troubleshooting
3323-Architectural and Structural Metals Manufacturing	51-4121, Welders/Cutters	-Production and Processing -Mechanical	**Note**: Limited skills were listed in ONET. List of skills obtained from Burning Glass. -Welding -Arc welding -Mig and tig welding -Welding Equipment -Machinery
4841-General Freight Trucking	53-3032, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	-Public Safety and Security -Transportation -Customer and Personal Service	-Operation Monitoring -Operation and Control -Critical Thinking -Troubleshooting

		-Law and Government	
5412 - Accounting, Tax Preparation, Bookkeeping, and Payroll Services	13-2011 – Accountants and Auditors	-Economics and Accounting -Mathematics -Administration and Management	-Active Listening -Reading Comprehension -Critical Thinking
5413 - Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services	17-2051 - Civil Engineers	-Design -Engineering and Technology -Building and Construction -Mathematics -Physics	-Active Listening -Complex Problem Solving -Critical Thinking -Mathematics -Reading Comprehension
6111-Elementary and Secondary Schools	25-2021, Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	-Education and Training -English Language -Mathematics -Psychology -Computers and Electronics	-Instructing -Speaking -Learning Strategies -Active Listening -Critical Thinking
6211-Offices of Physicians	31-9092, Medical Assistants	-Medicine and Dentistry -Customer and Personal Service -Administrative -Computers and Electronics	-Active Listening -Reading Comprehension -Critical Thinking -Service Orientation -Judgment and Decision Making
6221-General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	29-1141, Registered Nurses	-Medicine and Dentistry -Customer and Personal Service -Psychology -Therapy and Counseling -Biology	-Service Orientation -Social Perceptiveness -Reading Comprehension -Critical Thinking -Judgment and Decision Making
8111-Automotive Repair and Maintenance	49-3023, Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	-Mechanical -Computers and Electronics -Engineering and Technology	-Repairing -Troubleshooting -Operation Monitoring -Equipment Maintenance
9221- Justice, Public Order, and Safety Activities	33-3012, Correctional Officers and Jailers	-Public Safety and Security -Law and Government	-Social Perceptiveness -Active Listening -Critical Thinking

C. Labor Force Analysis and Trends
(WIOA §108(b)(1)(C); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(3))
Boards must include an analysis of the regional workforce, including current labor force employment and unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment.

The following labor force information was obtained from Chmura/JobsEQ. **Updated information has been incorporated in each section (using bold font), with current tables/charts inserted beneath the ones originally provided.**

Demographic Profile
The population in the West Central Texas Region was 328,881 per American Community Survey data for 2014-2018.
The region has a civilian labor force of 143,589 with a participation rate of 55.9%. Of individuals 25 to 64 in the West Central Texas Region, 19.3% have a bachelor's degree or higher which compares with 32.9% in the nation.

The median household income in the West Central Texas Region is $47,657 and the median house value is $94,446.

Summary[1]

	Percent			Value		
	West Central Texas Region	Texas	USA	West Central Texas Region	Texas	USA
Demographics						
Population (ACS)	—	—	—	328,881	27,885,195	322,903,030
Male	51.0%	49.7%	49.2%	167,807	13,849,775	158,984,190
Female	49.0%	50.3%	50.8%	161,074	14,035,420	163,918,840
Median Age[2]	—	—	—	37.3	34.4	37.9
Under 18 Years	23.3%	26.2%	22.8%	76,564	7,292,686	73,553,240
18 to 24 Years	11.2%	10.0%	9.6%	36,911	2,777,150	30,903,719
25 to 34 Years	13.3%	14.7%	13.8%	43,715	4,094,297	44,567,976
35 to 44 Years	11.3%	13.5%	12.6%	37,307	3,767,582	40,763,210
45 to 54 Years	11.4%	12.6%	13.2%	37,415	3,511,040	42,589,573
55 to 64 Years	12.3%	11.1%	12.8%	40,583	3,104,626	41,286,731
65 to 74 Years	9.4%	7.2%	8.8%	30,902	2,000,715	28,535,419
75 Years, and Over	7.7%	4.8%	6.4%	25,484	1,337,099	20,703,162
Race: White	83.2%	74.3%	72.7%	273,731	20,720,689	234,904,818
Race: Black or African American	6.1%	12.1%	12.7%	19,928	3,365,783	40,916,113
Race: American Indian and Alaska Native	0.7%	0.5%	0.8%	2,247	136,061	2,699,073
Race: Asian	1.2%	4.7%	5.4%	4,002	1,308,257	17,574,550
Race: Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	87	23,672	582,718
Race: Some Other Race	6.3%	5.7%	4.9%	20,731	1,600,234	15,789,961
Race: Two or More Races	2.5%	2.6%	3.2%	8,155	730,499	10,435,797
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	25.1%	39.2%	17.8%	82,708	10,921,556	57,517,935
Population Growth						
Population (Pop Estimates)[4]	—	—	—	329,716	28,995,881	328,239,523
Population Annual Average Growth[4]	0.1%	1.6%	0.7%	439	419,412	2,146,799
People per Square Mile	—	—	—	18.5	111.0	92.9
Economic						
Labor Force Participation Rate and Size (civilian population 16 years and over)[5]	55.9%	64.4%	63.2%	143,589	13,728,630	162,248,196
Prime-Age Labor Force Participation Rate and Size (civilian population 25-54)[5]	71.9%	80.4%	81.8%	83,879	9,095,705	104,136,254
Armed Forces Labor Force[5]	1.5%	0.4%	0.4%	3,867	89,701	1,028,133
Veterans, Age 18-64[5]	6.5%	5.0%	4.7%	12,516	862,771	9,398,789
Veterans Labor Force Participation Rate and Size, Age 18-64[5]	73.3%	77.8%	76.3%	9,172	671,366	7,168,168
Median Household Income[2,5]	—	—	—	$47,657	$59,570	$60,293
Per Capita Income[5]	—	—	—	$24,979	$30,143	$32,621
Mean Commute Time (minutes)[5]	—	—	—	18.3	26.4	26.6
Commute via Public Transportation[5]	0.4%	1.4%	5.0%	530	184,848	7,602,145
Educational Attainment, Age 25-64						
No High School Diploma	14.0%	15.7%	11.2%	22,314	2,274,547	18,885,967
High School Graduate	33.3%	24.7%	25.8%	53,027	3,571,759	43,699,272
Some College, No Degree	25.4%	22.1%	21.0%	40,396	3,193,349	35,525,113
Associate's Degree	7.9%	7.5%	9.1%	12,552	1,088,717	15,389,737
Bachelor's Degree	14.0%	20.0%	20.8%	22,307	2,894,532	35,261,652
Postgraduate Degree	5.3%	10.0%	12.1%	8,424	1,454,641	20,445,749

Summary[1]

	Percent			Value		
	West Central Texas Region	Texas	USA	West Central Texas Region	Texas	USA
Housing						
Total Housing Units	—	—	—	153,674	10,769,900	136,384,292
Median House Value (of owner-occupied units)[2]	—	—	—	$94,446	$161,700	$204,900
Homeowner Vacancy	2.7%	1.6%	1.7%	2,268	95,712	1,304,850
Rental Vacancy	8.8%	7.7%	6.0%	3,762	308,747	2,822,053
Renter-Occupied Housing Units (% of Occupied Units)	31.9%	38.1%	36.2%	37,726	3,635,275	43,285,318
Occupied Housing Units with No Vehicle Available (% of Occupied Units)[5]	5.3%	5.4%	8.7%	6,292	512,772	10,424,934
Social						
Poverty Level (of all people)[5]	15.7%	15.5%	14.1%	48,054	4,213,938	44,257,979
Households Receiving Food Stamps/SNAP	12.3%	12.2%	12.2%	14,569	1,167,725	14,635,287
Enrolled in Grade 12 (% of total population)	1.4%	1.5%	1.4%	4,768	405,822	4,442,295
Disconnected Youth[3,5]	5.9%	2.9%	2.6%	1,140	46,016	438,452
Children in Single Parent Families (% of all children)[5]	33.3%	34.6%	34.3%	23,483	2,402,953	23,973,249
Uninsured	15.1%	17.4%	9.4%	46,622	4,764,897	29,752,767
With a Disability, Age 18-64[5]	14.0%	9.6%	10.3%	25,062	1,618,704	20,240,504
With a Disability, Age 18-64, Labor Force Participation Rate and Size[5]	42.6%	44.3%	41.6%	10,674	717,826	8,421,018
Foreign Born	5.4%	17.0%	13.5%	17,605	4,736,692	43,539,499
Speak English Less Than Very Well (population 5 yrs and over)	4.8%	14.0%	8.5%	14,827	3,617,887	25,647,781

Source: JobsEQ®
1. American Community Survey 2014-2018, unless noted otherwise
2. Median values for certain aggregate regions (such as MSAs) may be estimated as the weighted averages of the median values from the composing counties.
3. Disconnected Youth are 16-19 year olds who are (1) not in school, (2) not high school graduates, and (3) either unemployed or not in the labor force.
4. Census 2019, annual average growth rate since 2009
5. See Rio Arriba errata note in the Data Dictionary.

The population in the West Central Texas, TX WDA was 329,163 per American Community Survey data for 2016-2020.

The region has a civilian labor force of 147,966 with a participation rate of 57.5%. Of individuals 25 to 64 in the West Central Texas, TX WDA, 21.5% have a bachelor's degree or higher which compares with 34.3% in the nation.

The median household income in the West Central Texas, TX WDA is $51,515 and the median house value is $106,379.

Summary[1]

	Percent			Value		
	West Central Texas, TX WDA	Texas	USA	West Central Texas, TX WDA	Texas	USA
Demographics						
Population (ACS)	—	—	—	329,163	28,635,442	326,569,308
Male	50.9%	49.7%	49.2%	167,663	14,221,720	160,818,530
Female	49.1%	50.3%	50.8%	161,500	14,413,722	165,750,778
Median Age[2]	—	—	—	37.3	34.8	38.2

	Percent			Value		
	West Central Texas, TX WDA	Texas	USA	West Central Texas, TX WDA	Texas	USA
Under 18 Years	23.2%	25.8%	22.4%	76,287	7,381,482	73,296,738
18 to 24 Years	11.0%	9.8%	9.3%	36,132	2,804,109	30,435,736
25 to 34 Years	13.3%	14.7%	13.9%	43,915	4,210,488	45,485,165
35 to 44 Years	11.8%	13.6%	12.7%	38,740	3,888,044	41,346,677
45 to 54 Years	10.9%	12.4%	12.7%	35,737	3,542,967	41,540,736
55 to 64 Years	12.4%	11.2%	12.9%	40,677	3,214,983	42,101,439
65 to 74 Years	9.7%	7.6%	9.4%	31,803	2,166,863	30,547,950
75 Years and Over	7.9%	5.0%	6.7%	25,872	1,426,506	21,814,867
Race: White	81.2%	69.2%	70.4%	267,422	19,805,623	229,960,813
Race: Black or African American	5.8%	12.1%	12.6%	19,252	3,464,424	41,227,384
Race: American Indian and Alaska Native	0.6%	0.5%	0.8%	1,860	137,921	2,688,614
Race: Asian	1.3%	4.9%	5.6%	4,141	1,415,664	18,421,637
Race: Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	53	25,328	611,404
Race: Some Other Race	6.1%	6.2%	5.1%	19,921	1,788,398	16,783,914
Race: Two or More Races	5.0%	7.0%	5.2%	16,514	1,998,084	16,875,542
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	25.7%	39.4%	18.2%	84,624	11,294,257	59,361,020
Population Growth						
Population (Pop Estimates)[4]	—	—	—	330,632	29,360,759	329,484,123
Population Annual Average Growth[4]	0.1%	1.5%	0.6%	294	411,886	2,015,698
People per Square Mile	—	—	—	18.5	111.0	92.9
Economic						
Labor Force Participation Rate and Size (civilian population 16 years and over)	57.5%	64.7%	63.2%	147,966	14,214,242	164,759,496
Prime-Age Labor Force Participation Rate and Size (civilian population 25-54)	74.5%	81.0%	82.4%	86,671	9,378,835	105,137,520
Armed Forces Labor Force	1.6%	0.4%	0.4%	4,081	94,824	1,143,342
Veterans, Age 18-64	6.3%	4.7%	4.5%	12,124	832,547	8,920,267
Veterans Labor Force Participation Rate and Size, Age 18-64	75.5%	78.5%	76.8%	9,156	653,740	6,853,673
Median Household Income[2]	—	—	—	$51,515	$63,826	$64,994
Per Capita Income	—	—	—	$26,491	$32,177	$35,384
Mean Commute Time (minutes)	—	—	—	18.8	26.6	26.9
Commute via Public Transportation	0.4%	1.3%	4.6%	577	166,825	7,044,886
Educational Attainment, Age 25-64						
No High School Diploma	12.5%	14.6%	10.5%	19,934	2,171,844	17,929,220
High School Graduate	33.0%	24.4%	25.4%	52,539	3,627,667	43,289,555
Some College, No Degree	24.4%	21.6%	20.5%	38,761	3,213,443	34,959,338
Associate's Degree	8.6%	7.8%	9.3%	13,621	1,163,242	15,776,790
Bachelor's Degree	15.2%	20.8%	21.6%	24,130	3,089,698	36,888,244
Postgraduate Degree	6.3%	10.7%	12.7%	10,084	1,590,588	21,630,870
Housing						
Total Housing Units	—	—	—	154,502	11,112,975	138,432,751
Median House Value (of owner-occupied units)[2]	—	—	—	$106,379	$187,200	$229,800
Homeowner Vacancy	2.3%	1.4%	1.4%	1,974	87,068	1,129,755
Rental Vacancy	7.4%	7.8%	5.8%	3,120	319,748	2,704,553
Renter-Occupied Housing Units (% of Occupied Units)	31.3%	37.7%	35.6%	38,049	3,737,262	43,552,843

Summary[1]

	Percent			Value		
	West Central Texas, TX WDA	Texas	USA	West Central Texas, TX WDA	Texas	USA
Occupied Housing Units with No Vehicle Available (% of Occupied Units)	5.4%	5.2%	8.5%	6,617	518,950	10,344,521
Social						
Poverty Level (of all people)	13.9%	14.2%	12.8%	42,576	3,984,260	40,910,326
Households Receiving Food Stamps/SNAP	11.9%	11.5%	11.4%	14,400	1,137,919	13,892,407
Enrolled in Grade 12 (% of total population)	1.6%	1.4%	1.3%	5,218	414,927	4,358,865
Disconnected Youth[3]	4.9%	2.9%	2.5%	955	46,974	433,164
Children in Single Parent Families (% of all children)	33.0%	34.3%	34.0%	23,189	2,407,343	23,628,508
Uninsured	15.6%	17.3%	8.7%	48,449	4,877,069	28,058,903
With a Disability, Age 18-64	14.2%	9.5%	10.3%	25,325	1,635,809	20,231,217
With a Disability, Age 18-64, Labor Force Participation Rate and Size	47.0%	46.3%	43.2%	11,901	757,894	8,740,236
Foreign Born	5.7%	16.8%	13.5%	18,633	4,822,952	44,125,628
Speak English Less Than Very Well (population 5 yrs and over)	4.8%	13.3%	8.2%	14,738	3,531,850	25,312,024

Source: JobsEQ®

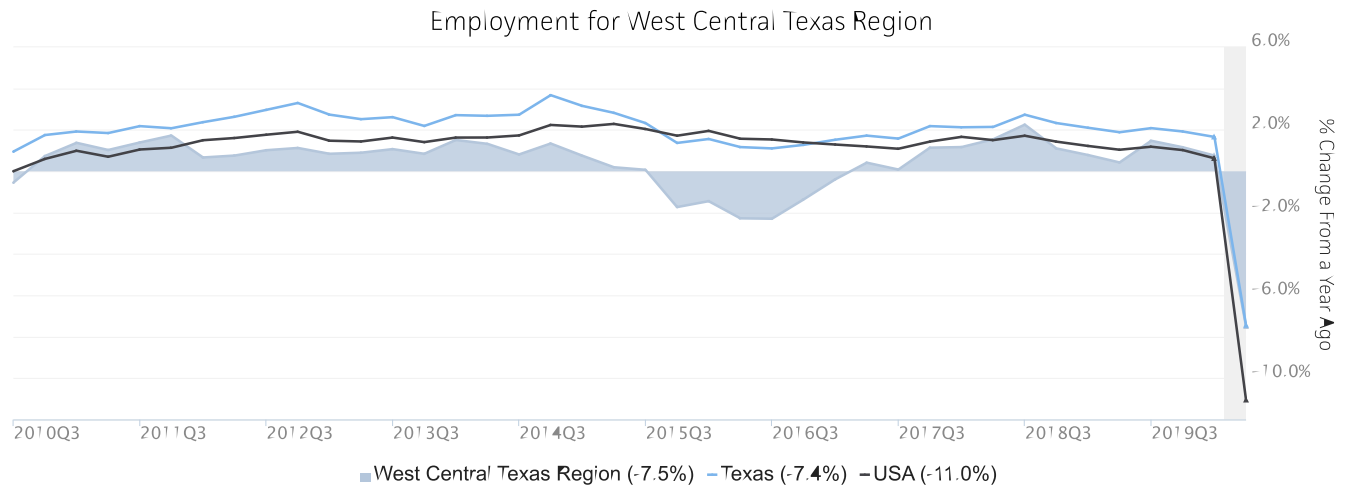1. American Community Survey 2016-2020, unless noted otherwise
2. Median values for certain aggregate regions (such as MSAs) may be estimated as the weighted averages of the median values from the composing counties.
3. Disconnected Youth are 16-19 year olds who are (1) not in school, (2) not high school graduates, and (3) either unemployed or not in the labor force.
4. Census Population Estimate for 2020, annual average growth rate since 2010.
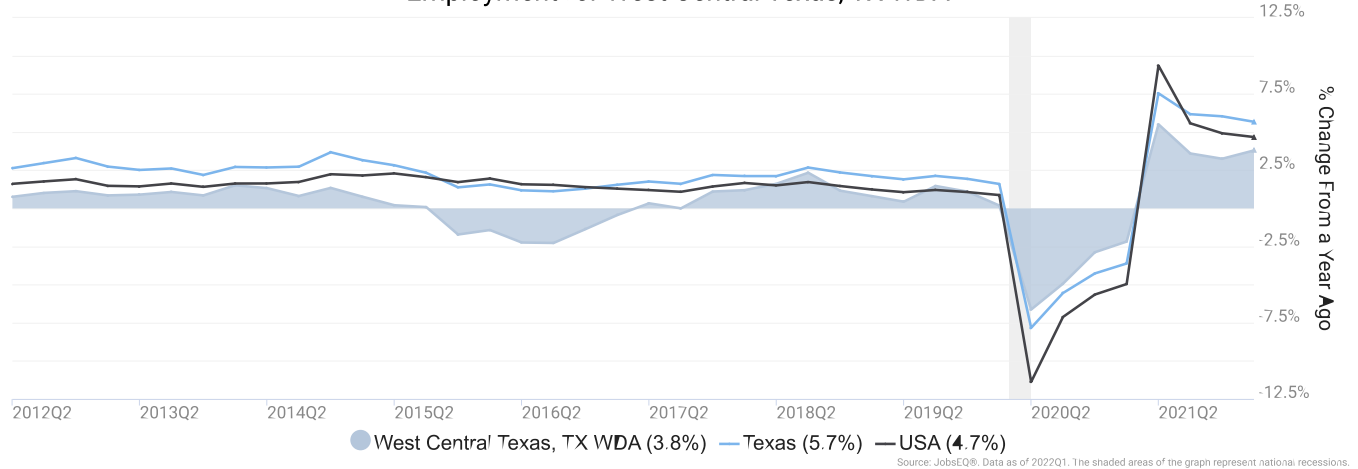
Employment Trends

As of 2020Q2, total employment for the West Central Texas Region was 140,416 (based on a four-quarter moving average). Over the year ending 2020Q2, employment declined 7.5% in the region.

Employment for West Central Texas Region

Source: JobsEQ®. Data as of 2020Q2. The shaded areas of the graph represent national recessions.

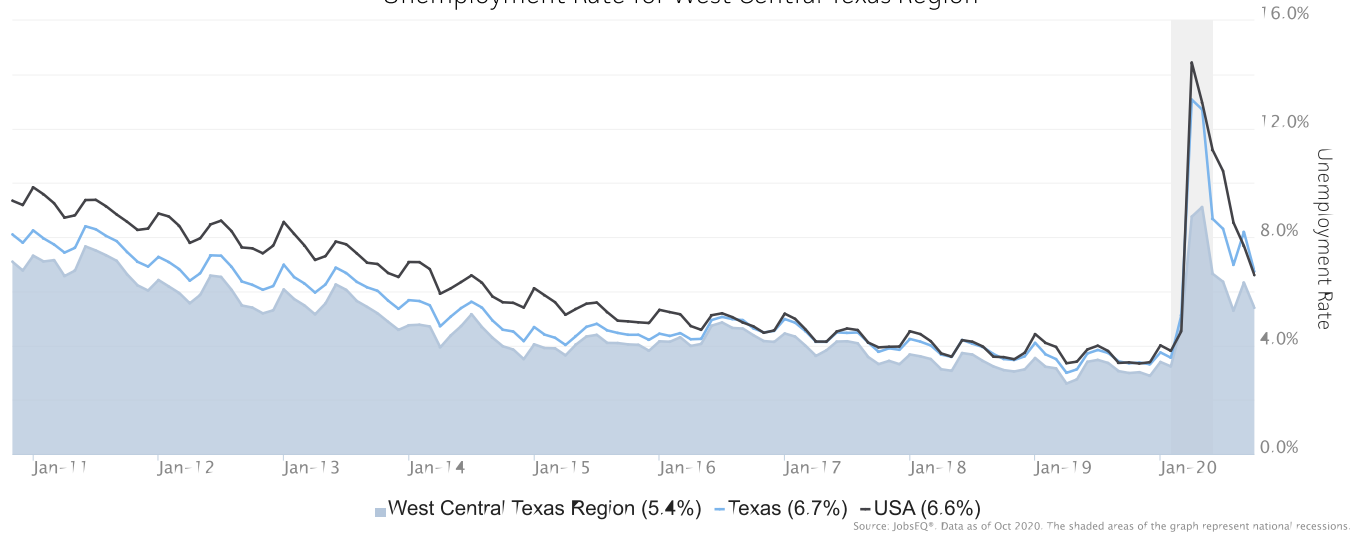■ West Central Texas Region (-7.5%)   ─ Texas (-7.4%)   ─ USA (-11.0%)

Employment data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data are updated through 2019Q4 with preliminary estimates updated to 2020Q2.

As of 2022Q1, total employment for the West Central Texas, TX WDA was 142,513 (based on a four-quarter moving average). Over the year ending 2022Q1, employment increased 3.8% in the region.

Employment for West Central Texas, TX WDA

West Central Texas, TX WDA (3.8%) — Texas (5.7%) — USA (4.7%)

Source: JobsEQ®. Data as of 2022Q1. The shaded areas of the graph represent national recessions.

Employment data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data are updated through 2021Q4 with preliminary estimates updated to 2022Q1

Unemployment Rate

The unemployment rate for the West Central Texas Region was 5.4% as of October 2020. The regional unemployment rate was lower than the national rate of 6.6%. One year earlier, in October 2019, the unemployment rate in the West Central Texas Region was 3.0%.
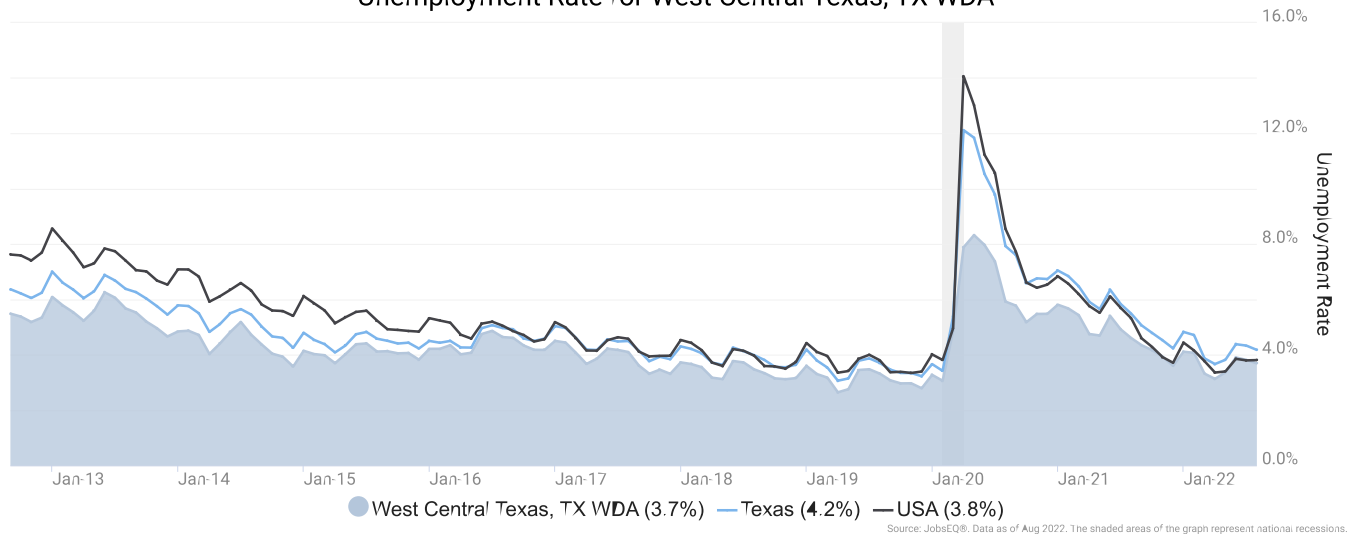
Unemployment Rate for West Central Texas Region

West Central Texas Region (5.4%) — Texas (6.7%) — USA (6.6%)

Source: JobsEQ®. Data as of Oct 2020. The shaded areas of the graph represent national recessions.

Unemployment rate data are from the Local Area Unemployment Statistics, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and updated through October 2020.

The unemployment rate for the West Central Texas, TX WDA was 3.7% as of August 2022. The regional unemployment rate was lower than the national rate of 3.8%. One year earlier, in August 2021, the unemployment rate in the West Central Texas, TX WDA was 4.6%.

Unemployment Rate for West Central Texas, TX WDA

West Central Texas, TX WDA (3.7%) — Texas (4.2%) — USA (3.8%)

Source: JobsEQ®. Data as of Aug 2022. The shaded areas of the graph represent national recessions.
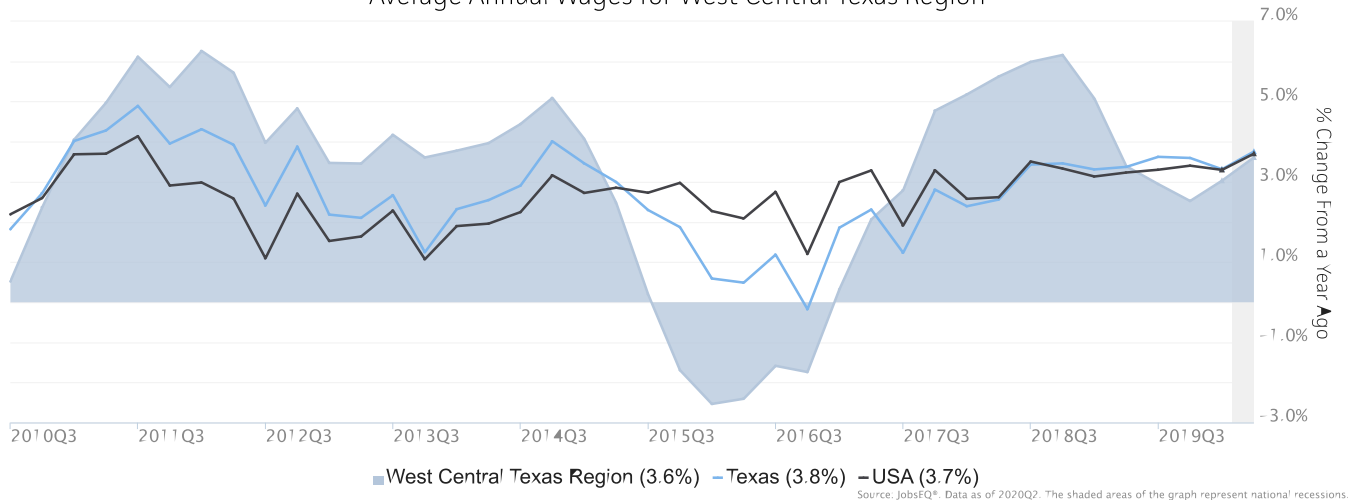
Unemployment rate data are from the Local Area Unemployment Statistics, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and updated through August 2022.

Wage Trends

The average worker in the West Central Texas Region earned annual wages of $42,469 as of 2020Q2. Average annual wages per worker increased 3.6% in the region over the preceding four quarters. For comparison purposes, annual average wages were $58,849 in the nation as of 2020Q2.
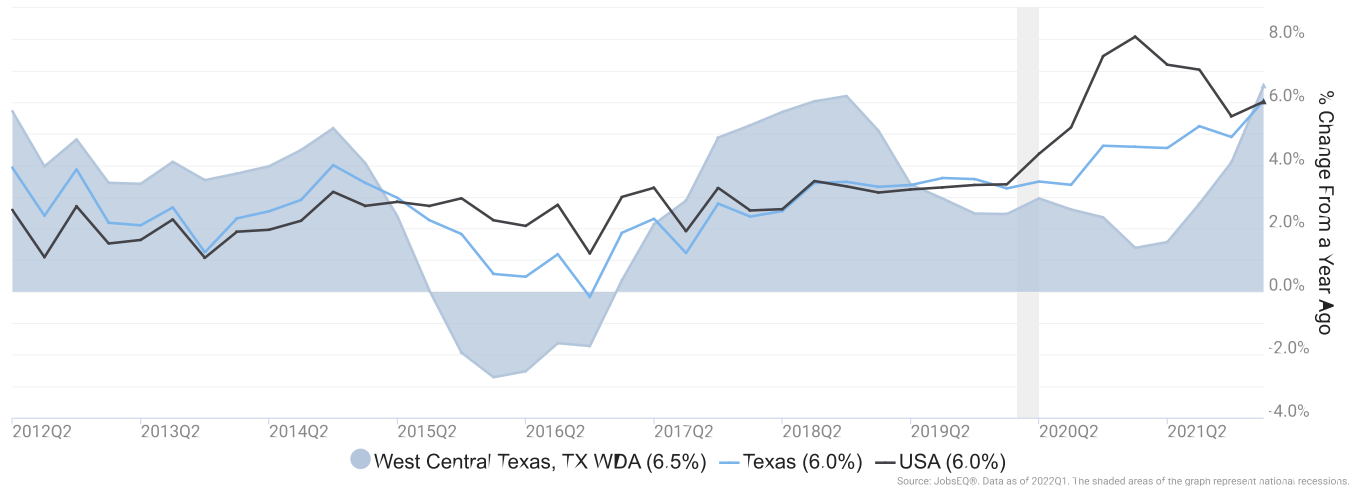
Average Annual Wages for West Central Texas Region

West Central Texas Region (3.6%) — Texas (3.8%) — USA (3.7%)

Source: JobsEQ®. Data as of 2020Q2. The shaded areas of the graph represent national recessions.

Annual average wages per worker data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data are updated through 2019Q4 with preliminary estimates updated to 2020Q2.

The average worker in the West Central Texas, TX WDA earned annual wages of $45,202 as of 2022Q1. Average annual wages per worker increased 6.5% in the region over the preceding four quarters. For comparison purposes, annual average wages were $66,637 in the nation as of 2022Q1.

Average Annual Wages for West Central Texas, TX WDA

West Central Texas, TX WDA (6.5%)   —Texas (6.0%)   —USA (6.0%)

Source: JobsEQ®. Data as of 2022Q1. The shaded areas of the graph represent national recessions.

Annual average wages per worker data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data are updated through 2021Q4 with preliminary estimates updated to 2022Q1.

D. Workforce Development Analysis
(WIOA §108(b)(1)(D); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(4))
Boards must include an analysis of workforce development activities in the region, including education and training.

Note: This analysis must include the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities and an evaluation of the effectiveness of programs and services. It must evaluate the Board's capacity to provide workforce development activities to address the identified education and skills needs of the workforce. The analysis must include individuals with barriers to employment. The analysis also must address the employment needs of employers.

Workforce Development Activities—Core Program Services
The following programs are made available to the region through contracts with the Board's subrecipients, CECT (for workforce services—all except the last bullet) and SERCO (for child care services).

- Wagner-Peyser-funded employment services
- Trade Adjustment Assistance
- Choices Program
- Choices NCP Program
- SNAP E&T Program
- WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Title I services
- WIOA Youth services
- National Dislocated Worker Grant
- Military Family Support Pilot Program
- Child Care services

Funding from the workforce programs is funneled into a service delivery structure that serves customers according to their needs, as opposed to categorizing them by program. The Board believes the traditional structure for "case management" programs where all aspects of the program are delivered by a single staff person is inefficient. The two primary weaknesses of this approach are:

- Staff is expected to perform all functions from interviewing to file management to interaction with external partners, and possibly including group presentations.
- Customers tend to be labeled and served by program design rather than being served according to their needs. For example, TANF recipients tend to be labeled as "Choices customers" and served only within the confines of Choices program funds.

The Board believes it is more efficient to engage staff according to their strengths and aptitudes rather than assigning them all of the tasks that need to be performed in a linear case management model. The Board also believes that serving (and perceiving) customers according to their needs results in more successful outcomes for them. To this end, the Board requires the subrecipient to use a function-based service delivery structure that optimizes staff strengths and focuses on addressing customers' needs, and where job seekers are served as follows.

- The Job Attainment unit is responsible for working with customers seeking assistance in the resource room. The staff in this unit provide job matching services for customers seeking employment. Staff helps customers complete online applications and update their WIT portfolios to ensure good matches. They show customers online career exploration tools. They help customers brush up their application and resume skills, and boost their confidence in finding a job. This unit is also responsible for providing labor market information and other local job-related information to customers. Staff may also refer customers to other staff in the Center or outside resources as appropriate.
- The Intake unit is responsible for interviewing customers interested in services beyond those provided in the resource room. Intake staff listen to what the customer tells them and assesses work history, skills, education level, job search skills and support needs. Once this general assessment is complete, Intake staff determine next steps which may include a variety of actions:
  - Referral to outside resources for services not provided by Workforce Solutions
  - Gathering documents and information to determine eligibility for WIOA funds
  - Verifying eligibility for Choices and SNAP E&T programs
  - Conducting orientations
  - Determining with the customer the best course of action, which could include referral to other units for customized services:
    - Job Attainment
    - Training
    - Career Counseling
- The Career Counseling unit is responsible for working with customers who have been determined eligible for certain Workforce Solutions programs, but who are primarily interested in receiving intensive help to find a job. Staff in this unit work with customers to help them find a job and meet any programmatic requirements they may have. They conduct comprehensive needs assessments, identify barriers to work and/or school and – together with the customer – develop employment plans with long-term goals. They leverage internal and external resources to provide customer support, track progress, and write counselor notes.
- The Training Unit works with education and training institutions to understand programs of study, enrollment requirements, costs, and expected outcomes. They share this information with customers interested in training and provide career advice. The Training unit schedules assessments as needed and analyzes results; they interview customers about suitability for training, potential barriers, and support needs; they use the ETPL and target occupations list to make recommendations, develop employment plans, create ITAs for training sponsorship, communicate with training institutions; provide ongoing services to customers; and conduct post-employment entry follow-up.

Employers are served by the subrecipient's Partner Relations Unit (PRU), which provides assistance related to hiring, assessment, job matching, job referral, job requirements, job postings and assistance related to immediate needs of the business such as prevailing wage rates and screening. PRU staff may also be called upon to make presentations to employers, economic development entities, partner agencies, and job seeker groups. They also develop subsidized employment/paid work experience agreements with private employers as well as non-profit/community resource entities. This functional group was named the "Partner Relations Unit" to demonstrate that staff focus more on building relationships with employers rather simply promoting workforce services to them.

Workforce Development Activities—Board-Administered Initiatives
In addition to contracted program services, the Board engages in the following initiatives to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, as well as the employment needs of employers.

In February 2008 the Board first piloted its Career Pathways program in response to discussions with local employers concerned about their workforce pipeline. In 2019 this program expanded significantly when the Board applied for and received a grant from TWC to create its Career and Education Outreach (CEO) Program (referred to as the "CEO Team" or "Specialists"). Five Specialists were hired under this program to expose, educate, and engage students in 25 school districts in the career exploration and career decision making process. Students are exposed to various career and educational options through classroom presentations, workshops, individual meetings, guest speakers from business, education and community partners, and visits to local businesses and college campuses. The Specialists make monthly presentations at area schools both in-person and virtually to provide information about labor market data; careers; tools that can assist with career decisions; and to connect students and teachers with area resources as they explore education, training, and employment options. The Specialists also connect with parents through attendance at community resource events and school career day/college prep events. The CEO Team's 2021 goals related to student, parent, and teacher outreach include the following:
- provide 100 individual career pathway exploration consultations to 8th-12th grade students in West Central Texas
- provide regional demand occupation and career preparation presentations to 60% of 6th-12th grade students in West Central Texas
- offer twelve training opportunities for educators to learn about career awareness, career preparation, and career pathway information
- utilize six community partnerships to deliver presentations to parents and guardians through equitable and inclusive outreach

The CEO Team has connections with employers through engagement with the Big Country Manufacturing Alliance (BCMA). Specialists support BCMA by attending meetings, providing labor market data to inform decision-making, connecting teacher externs with industry partners, and supporting initiatives such as the Manufacturing Day event. In addition, the Specialists give industry-focused surveys to students and convey the information to employers; they also arrange for employers to present to classes as guest speakers and for students to tour business facilities. The CEO Team's 2021 goals related to employer and community resource partnerships include the following:
- connect and collaborate with regional community partners to share resources for special populations including, but not limited to, foster youth and students with disabilities
- develop key industry partnerships in Manufacturing, Healthcare, and I.T.
- create print and digital career pathway guides for key industries including, but not limited to, Manufacturing, Healthcare, and I.T.

- develop a Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship framework in a demand industry

In the 2019-2020 school year, the CEO Team had a presence in middle and high school classrooms in 25 partner school districts across the 19-county region. In that timeframe, the CEO Team provided 1,498 career awareness presentations for partner school districts, 481 individual student career exploration and planning consultations, 96 partner presentations, and 32,510 student engagements. Six school districts were added, for a total of 31, in the 2020-2021 school year. When the pandemic hit in the latter part of this school year, the CEO Team developed virtual resources—tutorials and presentations on the Board's website—that can be used by students, parents, and teachers. They also developed six weeks of lesson plans covering employability skills and high demand occupations for use by teachers, which are currently being updated. (Note : These presentations were not originally captioned due to the quick timing and availability of services, but the Board has plans to add captioning to all of them in 2021.) The So far in 2020-2021 school year, August through October 31 2020, the CEO Team provided 397 career awareness presentations for partner school districts, 29 individual student career exploration and planning consultations, 10 partner presentations, and 7,077 student engagements. The CEO Team also leads the following regional initiatives to support local education:

- WOW Youth Expo – a regional career exploration event that gathers over 3,000 students from 50 school districts annually to explore regional college and career opportunities; in 2020 this initiative moved a virtual platform;
- Careers in Action Video Contest – provides prizes to the classrooms of winning student-led video projects in the form of education tools and resources. The videos highlight a career pathway of one of the regional demand occupations;
- Teacher Summer Externship Program - places over 50 educators into industry for a 3-day summer job shadowing experience;
- What's Next?! Senior Event - supports seniors who are preparing to graduate, but do not have a post-secondary plan in place, to connect them to resources and post-secondary training providers to help finalize a plan before graduation;
- Student Ambassadors program – 11th-12th grade student representatives from schools across West Central Texas serve as peer advisors and support for the Career and Education Outreach program. The students are trained in demand occupations, current labor market trends, and employability skills to support their career;
- Celebrate Careers kit – provides teachers activities, tools, and resources to support career exploration and development in 6th-12th grade classrooms;
- Career Signing Day – supports and promotes Career Signing Days at partner school districts across the region, providing key note speakers, promotional materials, and technical support

In 2020, the Board applied for and received a $1.5M grant from rootEd Alliance, Inc. a collaborative philanthropic effort that seeks to clear the path to a stronger future for students in rural America. Through a network of partners, rootEd provides advice, exposure and access to college and career opportunities to students in high school and college. rootEd Alliance partners with local and national organizations working to meaningfully improve postsecondary and career outcomes, so that all students in rural areas and towns can pursue their dreams. The grant is for a 3-year program to place dedicated college and career advisors on the campuses of area high schools for the purpose of providing postsecondary education and training support, early exposure to education pathways and careers, and strengthening connections between education and local industry. Students are also connected with sources of financial aid and opportunities for internships. The Board partnered with five school districts to implement the

rootEd model in 2020. Two Youth Success Advisors were hired to serve four of the school districts, while the fifth school district utilized two staff already employed by the district to provide services. Currently, 380 seniors from these five rural school districts are being served by the rootEd program.

The Board's Student Hireability Navigator ("Navigator") works with TWSVRS, community partners, area school districts, and employers to increase awareness of the services available to students with disabilities. The Navigator promotes the five Pre-Employment Transition Services that are required by WIOA and provides information and resources so students with disabilities can develop effective transition plans with the special education team. The Navigator connects students with disabilities with community partners that can increase the opportunity for integration into inclusive and competitive employment opportunities and/or post-secondary success. Navigator presentations to educators, students, and parents at schools provide information that help students with disabilities access VR and other services that will empower them to pursue additional training, postsecondary education, or employment following graduation. Navigator connections with employers help them overcome challenges and perceived barriers to working with individuals with disabilities and open new opportunities.

The Board is currently developing a pilot program for providing focused outreach to employers in West Central. This method is being developed based on an employer service strategy shared by the Workforce Solutions Capital Area Board, which delineates a data-driven approach to business services. The strategy being used by West Central undertakes to analyze regional industry and occupation labor market information to determine the industries that appear to have the greatest needs. Beyond simply asking about openings or marketing our job matching services, this approach seeks to first understand the employer's needs to determine their objectives and the issues that are impacting their success. We then want to serve as an intermediary to find and connect resources to meet those needs. The following questions are guiding the development of the methodology.

- What skill gaps is the employer experiencing?
  - What is contributing to the gaps?
  - Are workers exiting the industry?
    - Does the workforce area have an adequate supply of skilled workers to replace exiters? Or, do we need to determine how to help meet this worker supply shortage?
  - Are industry technological or business requirements necessitating upskilling of incumbent workers?
    - How is the employer trying to address needed upskilling?
    - Is the employer able to provide in-house training or do they need to outsource it?
    - Are area training providers able to meet those upskilling needs?
    - How can the Board serve as a connector between providers and employers?
- What industries or businesses are in their supply chain?
  - Are supply chain linkages experiencing issues that impact the employer's success?
- What business changes does the employer anticipate over the next 12-18 months based on foreseeable economic conditions?
- What level of engagement has the employer had with us? Note: All of the sub-bullets below are intended to paint a picture and help us to frame our approach to the employer. It makes a difference if an employer is a current customer, a previous dissatisfied customer, or someone who does not know about us. For current customers, it also helps to analyze their use and success rate of our services vs. what labor market reports say about industry need.

- Are they a current customer?
  - Analyze the services they have used (meaning we do the research)
  - How often do they post jobs?
  - What is the success rate of postings filled (meaning, what percentage of openings do we fill in a certain time period; this is just based on data—we won't know how well those matches met their needs until we ask)
  - Does the frequency of their postings appear to match the level of demand reflected in LMI reports?
  - Do their postings correlate with industry and occupational demand in labor market reports? In other words, are they posting for the same types of occupations or does their need seem to be different than what appears in labor market reports?
  - Are they satisfied with the services they have received?
  - We want to find out from the employer about their needs that we have not addressed—what other needs do they have that would help their business be successful
- Are they a former customer?
  - Can we find any historical data on the services they used? Success rates?
  - We want to find out why they stopped using us. Were they dissatisfied with the services we provided? Did they find better/easier ways of getting their needs met?
- If they have never used our services…
  - Are they aware of us?
  - Have we ever outreached the employer and offered services previously? If so, what was their response at that time?
  - Are they using other resources to meet their needs (and what are those resources)?
  - Do they have needs that go unmet because they have not found a resource to address them?

The procedure that has been developed thus far is provided below (this pilot is currently in the first two steps of development).

<u>Data-Driven Service to Businesses</u>

Step One: Labor Market Analysis to Determine Targeted Industries
- Run labor market data from Chmura, Burning Glass, other sources as relevant
- Review industry analytics to determine which area businesses may have the greatest need
- Focus initially on one or two industries

Step Two: Development of Approach to Employers
- What is our outreach strategy? What questions do we ask? What questions are relevant to employers?
- How will the approach be different for current employer customers vs. those who have never used our services?
- Note: We will conduct training to ensure staff are aware of tools/resources—both those that we can offer and external resources, where we can make referrals—i.e. Texas Tech Small Business Development Center, TWC state office, economic development or higher education partners, etc.

Step Three: Talk to Employers
- Gather information from employers to identify their needs.
    - What are the answers to the questions above? What are the employers currently experiencing?
    - Note: This will include the use of a platform that will allow sharing of information, so all appropriate staff can access and add to it—reducing the potential for duplication.

Step Four: Analysis of Needs
- Analyze applicable labor market data and area resources in relation to the needs.
- What internal resources does workforce solutions have that could address the needs?
- What community resources (training providers, other agencies/entities) are available that could address the needs? Is the employer already connected to them? If not, how can we serve as that conduit?
- Engagement of training providers—develop a strategy for informing providers about the focused outreach and determining how they want to engage in that process

Step Five: Connecting Employers with Resources that Address their Needs
- Are we connected to community resources that can address those needs? If not, we need to try to form partnerships with those resources (so we can be the conduit).
- Is this a training issue that requires the participation of area providers? If so, connect with providers to determine the correlation with their current programs.
    - Do they have current programs that could address the needs?
    - If not, does this require development of a new program?
    - Does it require an upgrade of current programs?

Step Six: Evaluation
- Did we help to meet the employer's needs? Was the pilot successful? Should it be repeated?
- Did the data prove to be accurate? Outdated?
- Was the data analysis approach a good method for targeting industries/employers?
- Lessons learned? How can we improve?
- Changes needed to our approach? Did we ask the right questions?
- How did the employer (and any other entity involved) feel about our handling of the situation? Do they recommend us to others?

It should be noted that the plan for providing data-driven service to businesses is fluid and very much in the developmental stages. The steps, and the plan overall, are expected to evolve as we move further through the process.

The Board employs two Early Childhood Specialists to:
- plan and manage quality activities, which includes mentoring and providing technical assistance for Texas Rising Star Providers (TRS),
- assess providers seeking initial TRS certification as well as those desiring continued (advanced) TRS certification,
- maintain awareness of best practices in child care quality, and
- partner with other organizations to enhance and expand the availability of quality child care and early learning experiences.

More details about how the Board supports Early Childhood Education (ECE) and K–12 education activities are contained in the following sections from the Board's FY21 Child Care Quality Plan.

Strategy	Description	FY21 Goal
Training on early learning and child development topics at in-service conferences.	TRS provider staff will be given the opportunity to attend a virtual in-service training prior to the beginning of the "school year" to receive training specific to emerging issues identified by TRS mentor staff throughout the year.	Goal is to have 150 teachers attend this event.
Training on early learning and child development topics through DAP Training.	TRS provider staff will be offered training on Developmentally Appropriate Practices and be given a copy of the new DAP handbook.	Goal is to have 150 teachers attend this virtual event over the course of the year.
Training or providing stipends toward obtaining a Child Development Associate credential through CDA Certification Courses, Certification Scholarships, and Financial Incentives.	CDA certification classes will be offered to caregivers employed by a CCS provider, with priority enrollment given to staff employed by participating TRS providers. Scholarships will be provided to cover the cost of books and certification exam. Financial incentives will be provided to caregivers passing the certification exam. Supplies to support classes will be purchased.	Goal is to have 15 teachers complete their CDA certification in FY21. To purchase notebooks and CDA books for candidates that enroll in the CDA course.
Training or providing stipends toward obtaining a Child Development Associate credential through the CDA Amnesty Program and CDA Renewal Program.	Caregivers who hold expired CDA certifications as far back as 2010 will receive technical assistance in applying for their CDA renewal and will be eligible to receive stipends to pay for the cost of renewal ($125 each). Caregivers who hold an active CDA certification will be eligible to receive stipends to pay for the cost of renewal ($125 each). First priority will be given to TRS provider staff.	Goal is to assist 3 caregivers in renewing their expired CDA certifications or renew their active CDA certifications.
Paying tuition or providing stipends to attend early education courses at local community colleges and/or universities through CDEC/ECE Scholarships/Stipends.	Caregivers who hold active CDA certifications will be given the opportunity to articulate those certifications into college credit hours by receiving a scholarship for the cost of tuition, fees and books (up to $500) to attend one class during the Spring semester at either Cisco College or Western Texas College. Upon successful completion of this class (defined as a grade of "C" or above), CC and WTC will, in turn, articulate the caregiver's CDA certification into nine credit hours, for a total of 12 credit hours earned in one semester for the cost of (1) three-hour college course. Stipend awards of $250 will be given to caregivers completing one college	Goal is to have 20 caregivers with CDA certifications articulate those certifications into 9 college credit hours by taking (1) three-hour CDEC or ECE course at Cisco College or Western Texas College.

	course and articulating their CDA certifications into college credit hours.	
Training on early learning and child development topics including business management practices; providing reimbursement, stipends, or grants to directors to attend local, state and/or national early childhood conferences.	TRS center directors will be given the opportunity to attend a variety of training opportunities designed to enhance their business and leadership skills. Business Bootcamp training will enhance a director's business management skills. Virtual attendance at the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership's Leadership Connections Conference will provide training in the three domains of Whole Leadership – Administrative Leadership, Pedagogical Leadership and Leadership Essentials for TRS providers.	Goal is to provide training in business management and leadership to at least 20 TRS directors.

To facilitate the continuation of its CDA classes, the Board is creating a lending library for child care providers and individuals who are interested in attending. Laptops that were originally purchased for in-person classes are now being loaned to individuals who do not have access to a computer to enable them to complete professional development, the CDA online course, or other needs related to furthering their professional career. This allows the Board to continue supporting early education and the professional development of the child care workforce, while maintaining social distancing standards.

Serving Individuals with Barriers to Employment
The Board uses many resources for serving individuals with disabilities. In its workforce centers, the Board employs the following assistive devices to help customers with disabilities access job search resources (each device is located in all centers unless otherwise indicated):

- Accessible workstations
- Height adjustable desks and chairs
- Screen Magnifier Software (MAGic)
- Screen Reader Software (JAWS)
- Large print and reverse color keyboards
- 19" monitor
- Headphones
- Trackball mouse
- Speech Amplification System (Pocket Talkers)
- Telephones with volume control and hearing aid compatible
- Video Relay Services (Sorenson)
- Relay Texas
- Written materials for orientations, workshops, trainings, etc.
- Automatic door openers (Abilene offices)

For customers with hearing impairments, a sign language interpreter service may be used to facilitate communication with individual staff. In addition, workshops are offered online, many of which are captioned, with the remainder in the process of being reviewed for captioning or removal.

Board EO policies communicate requirements for providing equitable service and ensuring the accessibility of facilities as well as services for individuals with disabilities, including, in part:
- The requirement to provide reasonable accommodations/modifications
- Prohibition on denying customers access to services or benefits on the basis of a disability or the need for a reasonable accommodation
- The requirement to provide services to individuals with disabilities in integrated settings, to the extent possible
- Admittance of service animals
- Use of mobility devices

The Board EO Officer reviews program and physical accessibility annually to ensure services and facilities are accessible to individuals with disabilities, and that subrecipients are in compliance with federal, state, and local EO requirements. Staff receives accessibility training during onboarding, annually, and at other times as needed.

CivicPlus, which hosts the Board's website, ensures the site's compliance with the standards of the Government-wide Section 508 Accessibility Program as well as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Working Group. CivicPlus utilizes AudioEye, which is software that delivers immediate ADA and WCAG accessibility compliance at scale, using patented technology, subject matter expertise and proprietary processes. From the CivicPlus website:

> *Web accessibility standards ensure content can be easily accessed by all citizens, which is why as an industry leader in local government web development, CivicPlus® has partnered with AudioEye, a leader in automated Web accessibility and remediation, to help our local government clients ensure their websites' continue to meet the latest compliance standards. The only technology-first digital accessibility provider, AudioEye goes beyond accessibility, to enhance the user experience for all website visitors. AudioEye's patented technology runs in the background of your CivicEngage® website to automatically detect Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA and Section 508, legacy, and 2018 refresh success criteria violations. Through AudioEye Managed, issues of accessibility are resolved as they arise.*

Board and subrecipient staff participate on area committees that address services/resource for individuals with disabilities and other barriers:
- The RCTP (Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan) committee considers transportation across the region, including the 5310 federal funding for the elderly and individuals with a disability;
- West Central Texas Aging and Disability Resource Center steering committee reviews grants and projects the agency has secured to benefit the needs of the elderly and disabled community;
- West Central Texas Council of Governments: Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities committee reviews grant applications and receives progress reviews of the programs in Brown, Coleman, Comanche, and Runnels Counties;
- Work Again West Texas, an entity that recruits and hires homeless individuals, allowing them to earn a paycheck while also assisting with other job search and basic needs; and

- West Texas Homeless Network, which is a group of local organizations and advocates working together to prevent and end homelessness in West Central Texas.

TWSVRS is co-located in the Abilene and Brownwood workforce centers and regularly collaborates with Board and workforce subrecipient staff for customer referrals and service delivery coordination. In addition, staff periodically receive training for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities.

One of the primary functions of the Board's Student HireAbility Navigator ("Navigator") is to promote alignment of services between TWSVRS, school districts, and community partners for students with disabilities. The Navigator works to strengthen the infrastructure that serves those students, improve communication and relationships between employers and TWSVRS, and foster access and usage of services by students with disabilities, all for the purpose of increasing employment opportunities for students with disabilities. Some of the many collaborative activities in which the Navigator engages to align services for these students include:
- presentations at area schools to students and teachers regarding available services;
- informing employers about the advantages of working with students with disabilities, and making connections between employers and school district special education personnel, students, and TWSVRS;
- promoting Workforce and TWSVRS services at area events and resource fairs; and
- hosting training events for all stakeholders.

The Navigator also promotes the five Pre-Employment Transition Services that are required by WIOA and provides information and resources so students with disabilities can develop effective transition plans with the special education team.

Update:
The Board's Student HireAbility Navigator ("Navigator") continues to work with TWC-VR (previously TWSVRS), school districts, and community partners to align services for students with disabilities. This position has been integral in planning career and education activities that incorporate outreach and resources for students with disabilities. Some of these activities include but are not limited to:
- **World of Work—a Board-sponsored annual career fair that provides career exploration, college planning, job readiness skills, and a Parent-Teacher session that provides information about services offered through Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas, VR and other community partners. This event is attended by students from school districts across the 19-county workforce development area. In 2022 over 1990 students from 43 schools attended the event which featured 142 mock interviews and booths by over 80 exhibitors (including businesses, education and training providers, and workforce readiness).**
- **What's Next—a Board-sponsored annual event held in spring focused on HS seniors who still are trying to decide what's next in their journey. This event features budgeting, WorkInTexas, filling out the FAFSA, information about high demand jobs, connecting to Vocational Rehabilitation services, workforce youth programs, and more. Students also receive one-on-one career coaching and the goal is for all students to leave with an action plan. In 2022 over 100 seniors from 15 high schools attended and participated in interactive workshops, and met with education and training providers, military representatives, employers, and community organizations.**
- **Autism Extravaganza—This is an opportunity for families, educators, community partners, and students to learn about how to face and overcome the challenges of autism. Region 14 ESC and**

WSWCTB partner to bring this day full of information and resources to the students, educators, and families of Region 14 ESC service area.

- **Charting the Course—This annual event is facilitated by Region 14 ESC in conjunction with WSWCTB Career and Education staff and Vocational Rehabilitation staff for students with disabilities in 8th – 11th grades. This is a day full of activities and sessions that focuses on Pre-ETS (Career Exploration, Self-Advocacy, Planning for Post- Secondary, and Workplace Readiness skills). The students are grouped by grade level and are able to experience team building activities and learn about VR before going to sessions that focus on their needs.**
- **Student HireAbility Champions Breakfast—A new fall semester event that honors and recognizes employers who hire students with disabilities, as well as school districts who are working hard to provide opportunities for their students with disabilities.**
- **iGROW—The "I Generate Rural Opportunities for Work" is a new initiative to provide pre-employment training and workplace readiness activities that will support students with disabilities in rural areas. This project is scheduled to be implemented in the summer of 2023 and will train teachers and other school district leaders so they can administer the work skills training. The training would otherwise not be available since the closest providers are at least 1 ½ hours away.**
- **The Student HireAbility Navigator coordinated with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) staff to provide the HireAbility Connection event at the Mall of Abilene in August 2022. There were 15 VR customers and 10 businesses participating, as well as 10 to 15 more mall walkers who had conversations with VR and employers on site. Many connections were made for VR staff and customers with possible job sites. Applications were filled out at the event and interviews for jobs were offered.**

The Navigator also collaborates with partner entities through ongoing planned meetings and events. Those partners include but are not limited to:
- **TWC-VR**
- **Education Service Center**
- **West Central Texas Aging and Disability Resource Center**
- **Foster Care Consortium**
- **School districts**
- **Rural Transportation Task Force**

Finally, the Navigator is working to provide work-based learning experiences to students with disabilities who meet the requirements for the Board's Texas Internship Initiative grant. The Navigator is collaborating with Special Education Directors, Transition and Employment Designees (TED), ARD Coordinators and VR Counselors to identify and recruit students for those internship opportunities. These placements will allow students to use knowledge and skills learned in the classroom in an authentic environment while also gaining employability skills. More information is provided in the update on page 62.

For individuals who have limited English proficiency (LEP), the Board uses the following strategies:
- Some staff are able to translate for Spanish-speaking persons.
- For languages other than Spanish, staff have access to a language line service.
- In the centers, staff use "I Speak" cards listing various languages to present to LEP individuals so they may identify the language required for assistance. Staff will then either use an on-site

interpreter or the Board's vendor to obtain an interpreter who is fluent in the customer's language.

- A Babel Notice tagline is included with vital information on social media as well as on required documents in the Board's designated languages to communicate language services are available free of charge.

Effectiveness of Services
The Board believes the services and activities available through subrecipients, as well as from the Board, are effective in addressing local needs; however, the Board believes there is always opportunity for improvement. The Board regularly considers the effectiveness of the service delivery system, the responsiveness of activities, and the impact or outcomes. To this end, the following strategies are employed to regularly evaluate the local system and make improvements. Board staff meets monthly to review performance for all programs and services. While the review primarily focuses on subrecipient performance and financial management, it also includes an assessment of the Board's activities related to oversight, management and technical assistance. Board staff also meets monthly with the local workforce subrecipient management team, and the Board Workforce Contract Manager meets weekly with the subrecipient's leadership team. These meetings are used as an opportunity to review performance, discuss current and planned initiatives, and dialog about issues and opportunities. The workforce subrecipient also hosts regular "partner" meetings that include the childcare subrecipient, as well as other partners. This meeting focuses primarily on operational rather than strategic issues. Additionally, the workforce subrecipient is required to submit monthly reports to the Board Workforce Contract Manager that relate information on issues such as staffing changes, staff training, quality assurance activities, financial status and projections, and emerging issues. Those reports also contain information about the status of performance measures, strategies the subrecipient is using to improve deficiencies, and customer success stories. Formalized methods of ensuring services meet customer needs and are provided appropriately include monitoring reviews of all programs no less often than annually. The Board contracts with an external consultant to conduct annual program and financial reviews. The Board EO Officer reviews program and physical accessibility annually to ensure services and facilities are accessible to individuals with disabilities.

The performance measures contracted by TWC to the Board are also contracted by the Board to the subrecipient. These measures gauge how many job seekers and employers receive workforce development services and how well they benefited from those services (successfully completed training, obtained employment, received assistance with filling job openings, etc.). This provides an objective evaluation of the effectiveness of programs and services. For the last three years the Board met or exceeded at least 88% of its contracted performance measures.

In addition to the Board's local review of workforce services and operations, TWC performs a review of the Board's capacity to oversee and manage local funds and the delivery of local workforce services, related to:

- Developing, maintaining and upgrading comprehensive fiscal management and accountability systems
- Hiring, training and retraining qualified staff to carry out the Board's oversight function
- Selection and oversight of local contractors to improve delivery of workforce services
- Oversight and improvement of operation of local Workforce Solutions offices in the area served by the Board
- Managing contractors' performance across multiple Board programs and achieving required performance standards

- Identifying and resolving long-standing oversight problems of the Board and performance problems of contract providers

The results of the latest review of West Central are located on the TWC website, here, and indicate the Board meets the required standards. (Note: The one indicator showing as "below" was resolved and the Board was found to be meeting, though the rating was not changed to reflect the resolution.)

Update:
No changes are needed with regard to oversight activities—the use of reporting and data analysis in the management of operations and service delivery still occurs as described. The following provides an update on the latest performance and Board Oversight Capacity status:
- **Over the past two years, the Board has met an average of 94% of performance measures.**
- **The latest Board Oversight Capacity ratings, indicating the Board meets required standards, is located here.**

The effectiveness and capacity for providing services can also be seen in the following accomplishments from the past year.
- **High Profile Statistics:**
  - Job-seekers served: 3,529
  - Employers served: 1,826
  - Average Number of children served per day: 1,634
  - No. of children of essential workers served: 315

- **Assistance to Employers and Job-seekers**
  Creating connections between employers and qualified job-seekers.
  - Launched Jobs Now webpage that allowed over 60 employers to post over 250 immediate and high-need positions impacted by COVID-19 and allowed job-seekers to directly connect and apply for positions.
  - Provided layoff aversion and Rapid Response services to 58 employers, representing 1,470 workers during calendar year 2020. Of this number, 25 were expected to be temporary layoffs impacting 654 workers.
  - Hosted The Right Jobs Right Now—in person and virtual hiring event in June 2020 in partnership with the City of Abilene and Abilene ISD. Event included assistance with WIT registration as well as a virtual hiring event that was attended by over 225 job-seekers and 33 unique employers, representing 113 different job opportunities and 5,532 job openings.
  - The annual Hiring Red White and You veterans job fair in November 2020 included 42 employers, 42 veterans and 82 non-veteran job-seekers for a total of 124 total job-seekers.
  - Partnered with Eastland Economic Development Corporation to open a satellite site in Eastland, expanding in-person access to employers and job-seekers in the eastern part of the region.
  - Hosted a town hall meeting in April 2020 with TWC Commissioner Representing Employers, Aaron Demerson that was attended by approximately 90 individuals from across the region.

- Partnered with Dyess AFB to host a virtual job fair targeted to veterans, transitioning personnel and family in September. The event connected 42 employers with 124 job-seekers and provided an opportunity for video and live chat. Workforce Solutions provided use of our virtual job fair platform at no cost and assisted with employer recruitment. This event was a first of its kind for the USAF, who had not hosted a virtual hiring event prior to this one.

- **Business and Education Partnerships**
  Building relationships between business and education to improve alignment.
    - Continued support for industry sector partnership, Big Country Manufacturing Alliance (BCMA), that was launched in 2017. BCMA was invited to apply for the Advance Together Design Grant, an initiative of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas. BCMA received a $15,000 Design Grant from the Dallas Foundation and has applied for a three-year Implementation Grant. The BCMA in conjunction with the Abilene Industrial Foundation, Region XIV Education Service Center and Workforce Solutions hosted a virtual and in-person Manufacturing Day event on October 1, which included premiering of a professionally-produced video highlighting manufacturing career opportunities in West Central Texas as well as a keynote by an economist from the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas.
    - Received a three-year grant totaling $1.5 million from the rootED Alliance to improve postsecondary outcomes for students in rural communities. This grant will place Youth Success Advisors in five rural school districts.
    - Partnered with Roscoe Industrial Board and Roscoe Collegiate ISD on a $164,547 High Demand Job Training Grant to purchase equipment, supplies and make minor renovations to facilitate provision of services to large animals on-site at training facility as well as off-site farmers/ranchers' locations.

- **Career Pathways**
  Promoting awareness of and preparing students for local quality career opportunities.
    - The seventh annual regional World of Work Youth Expo in November 2020 was conducted virtually for the first time. Twenty-two sessions were provided highlighting regional demand industries by 12 employer partners, employability skills, post-secondary highlights, and military and were attended by over 3,300 students in grades 8 – 12 from 38 schools. Student Ambassadors from across the region served as spokespersons and provided event support.
    - A total of 57 videos from area school districts were submitted for the 2020 Careers in Action Video Contest, which was held virtually for the first time. The videos were one to three minutes in length and highlighted the career pathways to jobs in local communities. Over $23,000 in prizes were awarded in various middle and high school categories. Eula High School was the overall winner with their video about Loan Officers.
    - The team of Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialists served 25 school districts during the 2019 – 2020 school year. During the year, the team provided 1,498 career awareness presentations to schools, 481 individual student consultations, 96 presentations to partners and had a total of 32,510 engagements with students. So far in 2020-2021 school year, August through October 31 2020, the CEO Team provided 397 career awareness presentations for partner school districts, 29 individual student career exploration and planning consultations, 10 partner presentations, and 7,077 student engagements.

- **Promoting Quality Child Care**
  Improving the quality of affordable child care for families who are working or attending school.
    o Provided scholarships for 18 early childhood professionals to virtually attend the Texas Association for Education of Young Children Annual conference.
    o A total of 65 child care registered homes and centers received one-year licenses to access virtual professional development training in response to COVID-19 and the inability to provide in-person training.
    o Invested over $45,000 to assist 38 Texas Rising Star providers mitigate COVID-19 hazards by purchase of additional materials, supplies and equipment that supported more outdoor learning and social distancing.
    o Provided approximately $15,000 in hazard pay stipends to 95 early childhood teachers at 15 different locations.
    o Purchased PPE for 72 providers and electrostatic sprayers and disinfectant for 24 providers to ensure health and safety of workers and children.
    o To support back office operations and general business management, the Board provided licenses to Texas Child Care Tools for 80 providers.
    o On-site mentoring was provided until the onset of the pandemic, then staff transitioned to providing virtual support to early childhood professionals in both group and individual settings.

Training

Although the Board sponsors training through ITAs and special initiatives, the actual provision of education and classroom training ("CRT", which also includes distance learning environments) is conducted by local training providers. A matrix showing the area providers' capacity to address training needs for demand occupations is provided below.

In-Demand Occupation	Average Annual Demand	Annual Regional Training Capacity
13-2011 – Accountants and Auditors	98	137[1]
49-3023 – Automotive Service Tech.	67	29[1]
43-3031 – Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	139	A
49-3031 – Bus/Truck Mech./Diesel Spec.	30	24[2]
47-2061 – Construction Laborers	220	A
33-3012 – Correctional Officers and Jailers	102	A
49-9051 – Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	13	16[1]
47-2111 – Electricians	104	A
17-3024 – Electro-Mechanical Technicians (proxy for Drone Pilots)	2	B
25-2021 – Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	114	21[1]
29-2042 – Emergency Medical Technicians	13	32[2]
43-1011 – First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	119	A
49-9021 – Heating AC and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	37	13[1]
53-3032 – Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	266	96[3]
49-9041 – Industrial Machinery Mechanics	57	7[3]
29-2061 – LVNs	88	92[2]

31-9092 – Medical Assistants	91	14[1]
25-2022 – Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	53	21[1]
47-2073 – Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	86	A
47-2152 – Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	64	A
33-3051 – Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	64	A
29-1141 – Registered Nurses	203	238[2]
25-2031 – Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	82	21[1]
25-2056 – Special Education Teachers, Elementary School	15	1[1]
25-2057 – Special Education Teachers, Middle School	7	0[1]
25-2058 – Special Education Teachers, Secondary School	12	0[1]
51-4121 – Welders/Cutters	67	157[2]
49-9081 – Wind Turbine Service Technicians	17	13[3]

1. Note: Source is Chmura Awards Data. Data as of the 2018-2019 academic year; obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). This data excludes any awards from Action Career Training or TSTC.
2. Note: For programs offered by TSTC, data was retrieved from the THECB database for academic year 2018-2019 and added to the Chmura data.
3. Note: These programs did not appear in Chmura, therefore data was retrieved from the latest available ETPL performance report (for biennium 7/1/18-6/30/20) and divided in half (since the data represents 2 years).
4. Note: The "A" indicates occupations that do not require formal classroom training, and therefore no training program exists.
5. Note: The "B" indicates an occupation/training program for which no data exists. This is an emerging occupation.

Part 3: Core Programs
A. Workforce Development System
(WIOA §108(b)(2); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(1))
Boards must include a description of the workforce development system in the workforce area that identifies:

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

The Board contracts with a subrecipient entity, CECT, to operate the workforce center system through which core and other program services are provided, including: WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs; Wagner-Peyser Employment Services Program; services to Unemployment Insurance recipients; TAA; TANF/Choices Program; SNAP E&T Program; and Choices Noncustodial Parent Program. The service delivery system consists of one full-service workforce center in Abilene; three branch offices in Brownwood, Sweetwater and Snyder; and one itinerant office in Eastland. The Abilene Workforce Center serves as the hub for the region and, in addition to workforce services, houses staff from the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) and the Texas Veterans Leadership Program. TWSVRS is also co-located in the Abilene and Brownwood workforce centers and regularly collaborates with Board and workforce

subrecipient staff for service delivery coordination.   This co-location allows for greater ease of referrals as well as immediate consultations for workforce customers who may require those services.

Update
One branch office relocated in October 2022 (the Brownwood office), with the exception of VR staff (they will move in the first few months of 2023), and another office (Sweetwater) is moving to a new location in the early part of 2023. After multiple procurement efforts, one of the Board's postsecondary providers offered rent-free space to the Board (the Board is paying for utilities, janitorial service, and phone/internet service).   Both the Brownwood and Sweetwater offices are being housed on TSTC campuses, offering workforce customers greater access to a training provider. In addition, the change of location will open new onsite space for hiring events, which will benefit both employers and job seekers. The Board plans to discontinue providing in-person services in Snyder once the relocation of the Sweetwater office is complete.   Since staff are only in Snyder two days a week and services are available virtually every day, the Board anticipates the change will be minimal.

The Board supports the Commission's integrated service delivery strategy by conveying those expectations contractually with subrecipients. The Board has taken this further by requiring the workforce subrecipient to maintain an integrated, function-based service delivery structure that better utilizes staff strengths and that serves customers based on their needs. In essence, job tasks are aligned according to similarities of actions and the needed skills and aptitudes, and staff are assigned to functional positions. Workflows are also structured around the function-based design. This model was developed in the interest of better alignment of staff responsibilities with their natural strengths and aptitudes (resulting in greater staff performance and satisfaction), and in eliminating program barriers to the degree allowable in serving customers, resulting in better outcomes for customers.

In WIOA regulations, adult education/literacy (AEL) is also a core program. The Board has a long-standing partnership with Abilene Adult Education (AAE; the AEL provider for the entire West Central area) to serve mutual customers. CECT coordinates with AAE to provide services to workforce customers seeking GED, ESL, or basic education, as well as tutoring assistance.

There are four technical/community colleges in this area that provide training to address the employment needs of employers. The Board works with all of these providers to coordinate services for job seekers and to ensure training meets the needs of employers. In fact, the Board has long-standing relationships with these entities and partners with all of them to list their training programs on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).

The Board also works directly with VR services through its Student HireAbility Navigator Program ("Navigator"). The Navigator engages area school districts, employers, TWSVRS, and community partners to promote and align services for students with disabilities. The Navigator works to strengthen the infrastructure that serves those students, improve communication and relationships between employers and TWSVRS, and foster access and usage of services by students with disabilities, all for the purpose of increasing employment opportunities for students with disabilities.

B.   Core Programs—Expand Access, Facilitate Development, and Improve Access
(WIOA §108(b)(3); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(2))
Boards must include a description of how the Board will work with entities carrying out core programs to:

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

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

The Board contracts with a subrecipient entity, CECT, to operate the workforce center system, through which core and other program services are provided, including: WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs; Wagner-Peyser Employment Services Program, services to Unemployment Insurance recipients, TAA, TANF/Choices Program, SNAP E&T Program, and Choices Noncustodial Parent Program. The Board collaborates with the subrecipient to maintain an optimum service delivery design that best meets the needs of job seekers and employers, including individuals with barriers to employment. The Board conducts monthly meetings with the subrecipient to evaluate current systems and determine ways to more effectively provide services.

The Board's Student Hireability Navigator ("Navigator") works with TWSVRS , community partners, area school districts, and employers to increase awareness of the services available to students with disabilities. The Navigator promotes the five Pre-Employment Transition Services that are required by WIOA and provides information and resources so students with disabilities can develop effective transition plans with the special education team. The Navigator connects students with disabilities with community partners that can increase the opportunity for integration into inclusive and competitive employment opportunities and/or post-secondary success. Navigator presentations to educators, students, and parents at schools provide information that help students with disabilities access VR and other services that will empower them to pursue additional training, postsecondary education, or employment following graduation. Navigator connections with employers help them overcome challenges and perceived barriers to working with individuals with disabilities and open new opportunities.

Update:
Subsequent to the development of this plan, the Board received a three-year grant from the Trellis Foundation starting June 2021 and that will end in May 2024 to build a regional reskilling and upskilling model, locally called Never2Late, built on core competencies that offer equitable access, accelerate learning, and promote entry into economically stable employment. In the first year of the project, the Board conducted a needs assessment by interviewing 75 individuals who were unemployed or underemployed to gain their valuable insight into how best to structure a program that will serve their needs and allow them to successfully complete a pathway to a better job. The Board was able to connect with these individuals through its various community partnerships. The Board also conducted a landscape analysis for targeted industries (manufacturing and automotive) to evaluate relevant post-secondary programs of study, compare industry needs with existing pathways to identify misalignment,

and develop strategies to create alignment. To date in the second year, the job seeker data has been utilized to create personas and landscape analysis is being used to develop pathways. These models and pathways will be tried and tested as cohorts are developed using the persona characteristics to recruit and identify those individuals seeking opportunities and life sustaining wages. The personas have extensive value and have been leveraged by BCMA in its Advance Together initiative (more information is located in Section 3.B. starting on page 66). Oversight for this project is provided by a steering committee consisting of community partners from secondary and post-secondary education, employers, economic development, resource agencies (faith-based and nonprofit agencies), and community representatives. The steering committee conclusions also reaffirmed the need for a mentor or navigator who could coordinate services for the target population; the committee is currently researching ways to employ this position.

The Board collaborates with community-based, education, economic development, and industry-based entities to stay abreast of the needs of employers and to work strategically to meet those needs. In addition to partnering with training providers to list their training programs on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), the Board has on many occasions partnered with providers, economic development entities, school districts, and community-based organizations to provide training opportunities to address skill shortages in the West Central Texas area. In BCY20, the Board partnered with the Roscoe Industrial Board and Roscoe Collegiate Independent School District (RISD) to provide a High Demand Job Training Grant (HDJT) to train RISD students in commercial veterinary service leading to certifications as Texas Certified Veterinary Assistant (CVA) level 1. The Board also partnered with the Development Corporation of Abilene, the Development Corporation of Haskell, and Knox City Community Development Corporation, (the "EDCs") and Haskell Consolidated Independent School District, and Hamlin Independent School District (the "ISDs") to provide a High Demand Job Training Grant to train students to attain certifications as a Certified Nursing Aid (CNA) or American Welding Society (AWS). Both HDJT grants prepared students for career pathway occupations leading to careers in bio-tech/life sciences and advanced technology/manufacturing. These were all dual-credit programs supported by partnerships between the ISD, local economic development and workforce. The following initiatives are examples of current Board strategies to expand access to training, facilitate career pathways and co-enrollment, and increase the number of skilled workers with recognized credentials. First, the Board is partnering with three rural school districts (Hamlin, Roscoe, and Throckmorton Collegiate High Schools) to apply for the Texas Internship Initiative grant. This will involve training high school students in middle-skill STEM occupations offering both growth opportunities and good wages. Both secondary and post-secondary providers provide education and training programs that lead to portable, stackable, industry-recognized certifications aligned with these sectors. Students will also be placed in corresponding internships with area employers. These placements will allow the interns to use knowledge and skills learned in the classroom in an authentic environment while also gaining employability skills including but not limited to work ethic, professionalism, safety, collaboration, effective communication, and critical thinking. Second, the Board is partnering with the Development Corporation of Baird, the Community Development Corporation of Baird, and Baird ISD, to apply for a HDJT grant to serve approximately 20 students who will participate in welding training. The funds would be used to purchase equipment, materials, supplies and install appropriate ventilation necessary to provide training to meet current welding industry standards. Equipment will include purchase of virtual welding machines, which provides a safe learning environment in a cost-effective manner for students ranging from middle school to high school age. Students will receive industry-recognized certifications (American Welding Society) to prepare them for continuation into post-secondary education or entry into the workforce. Third, the Board is partnering with the Abilene Industrial Foundation to apply for a Texas Industry Partnership Grant to conduct a cluster analysis of the following industry sectors: advanced technology and manufacturing

(NAICS 311-339), aerospace (NAICS 48); bio-technology/life science (NAICS 5417), information technology (NAICS 5415) and energy (NAICS 221) in the Abilene MSA to identify workforce trends, skill requirements, training availability and other factors relevant to the preparation, attraction and retention of workers for these industries.. The study will identify the labor shed for these clusters, workforce trends, participation rates and skill requirements as well as an assessment of training availability, viability and the correlation between existing training offerings and business needs. Information will be shared with K-12, post-secondary and workforce partners to enhance and expand demand-driven training, programs and services for these sectors. A third-party knowledgeable in economic development and labor market analysis has been identified by the industry partner and will be hired to conduct the cluster analysis. The Board chooses to use services such as the ones listed in this section, as well as subsidized employment, OJT, internships, etc. as opportunities for individuals to learn about and explore career pathways. Since the Board's Target Occupations List is primarily focused on mid-level occupations, these types of services and opportunities serve as an entry point before moving individuals into training to prepare them for mid-level positions.

Update

The Texas Internship Initiative Grant mentioned above resulted in 12 students participating in internships that allowed them to gain experience in an industry that might interest them and to further explore possible careers. The Board was awarded a subsequent Texas Internship Initiative grant from TWC and is now working with six ISDs (independent school districts) in six rural communities across four counties. As with the initiative described above, this will involve training high school students in middle-skill STEM occupations offering both growth opportunities and good wages. Both secondary and post-secondary providers provide education and training programs that lead to portable, stackable, industry-recognized certifications aligned with these sectors. Students will also be placed in corresponding internships with area employers. These placements will allow the interns to use knowledge and skills learned in the classroom in an authentic environment while also gaining employability skills including but not limited to work ethic, professionalism, safety, collaboration, effective communication, and critical thinking. In addition, students with disabilities will be identified by reviewing and consulting with regional Education Service Center transition personnel, TWC-VR and Vocational Rehab Transition Counselors, and their records so appropriate students can be addressed. The Student HireAbility Navigator is being utilized to communicate and collaborate with Special Education Directors, Transition and Employment Designees (TED), ARD Coordinators and VR Counselors to recruit students that have been identified and meet the requirements for work-based learning experiences. The Board is providing an internship model that includes a diversity of middle-skill STEM course offerings and participation by small businesses, which makes the model replicable across the state in both larger, urban communities and small, rural communities. The Board has a long history of partnership with all six school districts through participation on advisory councils and partnership on past grant applications for private and public funds, including High Demand Job Training Grant applications. All six school districts have actively participated in events and activities hosted by the workforce board and there is a long history of collaboration between the workforce board and community leaders. These grants help mitigate barriers of opportunity and resources particularly in rural areas. The Board plans to continue utilizing these grants as long as they are made available to address rural obstacles existing in much of the 19-county area of West Central.

The Board has a long-standing history of coordinating with area chambers and economic development entities to analyze barriers for employers and job seekers, and to ensure alignment of strategies to address those issues. The Texas Industry Partnership Grant mentioned above funded a cluster analysis in fall 2021 of the following industry sectors in Abilene: advanced technology and manufacturing,

aerospace, biotech/life sciences, information technology and energy. The evaluation was conducted by Site Selection Group and resulted in a Workforce Analysis that identified access to childcare as a key challenge impacting the community and employers in those targeted industry sectors. The following excerpts from the report provide additional analysis and information:

Affordable and available childcare is a significant problem across the country, and Abilene is not immune to the challenge. Several employers and other stakeholders noted how lack of childcare was hindering efforts to attract workers.

Again, we conducted a simple industry concentration analysis to identify the relative concentration of childcare employment in Abilene and the comparison markets. Because there can be a large informal childcare market in many communities, this is certainly not a comprehensive assessment. However, all things being equal, the data below points to Abilene having a low concentration of employment in this sector. SSG highly encourages the community and key stakeholders to identify ways to confront this challenge.

Abilene	***1.82***
Longview	*1.71*
Lubbock	*1.60*
Amarillo	*1.59*
Tulsa	*1.53*
San Angelo	*1.52*
Oklahoma City	*1.51*
Sherman	*1.37*
Wichita Falls	*1.30*
Burleson	*1.29*
Waco	*1.28*
Temple	*1.27*
San Antonio -North	*1.03*

Childcare is a challenge everywhere, but given [the] presence of stakeholders, are there creative opportunities? Examples of solutions we see are support for off-hour day care, locating childcare in training facilities, creative school bus stop locations, formally engaging church and university partners, supporting direct day care options in industrial parks, etc.

Based on this identified barrier, the Development Corporation of Abilene (DCOA) and the Community Foundation of Abilene (CFA) are securing an experienced third-party contractor to conduct an environmental analysis and needs assessment. The contractor will engage targeted employers and other key stakeholders to develop a comprehensive report that identifies potential strategies to

alleviate the child care challenges in Abilene, with specific emphasis on challenges and strategies unique to the targeted sectors. Additionally, as a result of the survey, the United Way of Abilene established a Coalition of Quality Child Care that consists of providers, representatives of public and higher education, community organizations, parents, economic development, employers, and the Board. This effort is coordinated with DCOA/CFA and will focus on identification of strategies to address local challenges identified through the study. Utilizing study results, the Coalition seeks to achieve the following outcomes:

- **Form connections among Abilene community organizations, businesses, and people**
- **Investigate issues related to childcare including the potential need for extended day and weekend childcare**
- **Recommend solutions to childcare issues in the Abilene community**
- **Report on the issues and recommendations discovered by the Abilene community**
- **Develop a list of organizations to operationalize the recommendations**
- **Motivate the larger Abilene community around childcare issues and solutions**

The Board's workforce subrecipient collaborates with TWSVRS and the AEL provider (AAE) to coordinate services to common and potential customers. CECT works with AAE to provide services to workforce customers seeking GED, ESL, or basic education, as well as tutoring assistance. TWSVRS is co-located in the Abilene and Brownwood workforce centers and regularly collaborates with Board and workforce subrecipient staff for service delivery coordination.   This co-location allows for greater ease of referrals as well as immediate consultations for workforce customers who may require those services.

<u>Update</u>
In addition to the partner collaboration described above, the Board requires the workforce subrecipient to develop an annual Expansion Plan for the purpose of creating and maintaining strong, mutually beneficial relationships with employers, training providers and community partners. Expansion Plan objectives include: developing methods for providing customers with a wide variety of workforce service delivery options, increasing employer engagement, and connecting with training providers and community partners to foster reciprocal relationships that increase customer access to workforce and related services. Activities that further these objectives include, but are not limited to:

- **introduction and continued facilitation of virtual service delivery methods (for proctored assessments, orientations, workshops, hiring events, communication with staff, document submission, etc.):**
- **increasing the use of technology for career exploration and preparation for employment and work-based learning placements (such as use of virtual reality headsets);**
- **"open house" opportunities to engage job seekers and employers in-person; and**
- **increased outreach of and communication with community partners.**

The Expansion Plan activities are intended to promote awareness and alignment of workforce and related services, prevent duplication (and therefore waste) of services, and to interactively address barriers experienced by both employers and job seekers.

The Board works intricately with one of the Governor's industry clusters through its collaboration with the Big Country Manufacturing Alliance (BCMA). BCMA was formed in early 2017 through the efforts of the Board and area manufacturers. The Board serves as the backbone organization for BCMA and has established a dba for BCMA under the Board's Corporation, which allows contributions to BCMA as a non-

profit organization. The Board is developing a fiscal services agreement for BCMA with Region XIV and manages all of BCMA's funding. The Board Executive Director serves as a non-voting member of the BCMA Board of Directors, and Board staff lead the Communications Committee for BCMA, which sets up and manages Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram accounts as well as the BCMA website. The Board provides meeting space and manages all meeting logistics for BCMA, including setting meetings, assisting with agenda preparation, taking meeting minutes and sending meeting notifications. Board staff also provide labor market research and analysis support, such as: identifying middle-skill jobs in manufacturing that pay above a certain wage level; exploring best practices in recruitment, onboarding and retention; and conducting a survey to identify how the manufacturers in our region align with these best practices

BCMA has created two committees around its priorities: Business Partnership Committee, and Business to Education Partnership Committee. Accomplishments of these committees and the overall organization include:
- Expanded membership of the BCMA;
- Created a professionally produced video highlighting local manufacturers as well as providing key information about the sector, such as wages, number of jobs, employers, etc. in the region;
- Implementation of teacher externships at manufacturing facilities;
- Industry tours for students in rural, underserved communities;
- Established communication with the education community, including collection of student perception data about manufacturing, coordination between manufacturers and educators to develop applied learning sessions, and social media interaction between students and manufacturers;
- Hosted the first Manufacturing Day Event in October 2020 in partnership with the Board and Abilene Chamber of Commerce to promote manufacturing as a career choice for high school seniors; and
- Creation of two $1000 scholarships, 1 for a secondary student and 1 for a post-secondary student; the first awards will be announced in Spring 2021.

Another accomplishment of BCMA has been pursuit of Advance Together, an accelerator program offered by Educate Texas that uses a model designed by the Dallas Fed's Community Development team, which is based on models developed by Federal Reserve Boards in other regions, such as Working Cities Challenge in Boston and SPARK in San Francisco. It is a two-part grant that supports community partnerships in Texas that are tackling education and workforce challenges. In partnership with BCMA, the Board's 501(c)(3) corporation is functioning as the lead applicant and successfully applied for and was awarded both the Design Grant in February, 2020 and the three-year Implementation Grant, which will begin in early 2021. The implementation phase of the program will work to increase regional employment in middle-skill, high-wage manufacturing careers by 10% by 2030. Over the next 3 years, the Board and BCMA will lay the foundation and start building toward the long-term goal.

BCMA has additionally identified the following long-term priorities:
- Expanding employer engagement with BCMA to more companies;
- Working with education partners to develop career pathway models that encompass the courses most relevant to manufacturers in the Big Country;
- Establishing mentoring programs between current employees and students at secondary and post-secondary level;
- Implementing internship and work-based learning programs, especially for high school students; and

- Partnering with legislators and other organizations to address liability barriers associated with bringing younger students into manufacturing workplaces.

<u>Update</u>

BCMA developed the following three strategies to achieve the overall goal for the Advance Together grant (increasing regional employment in middle-skill, high-wage manufacturing careers by 10% by 2030). These strategies align with BCMA's long-term priorities. Beneath each goal, the actions taken to date are outlined.

1. **Improve awareness about and enrollment in manufacturing career education, training, and development for job seekers and incumbent workers.**
   - **Through presentations, workshops, facility tours, advisory councils, and teacher externships BCMA has engaged directly with residents of our community. This engagement is an opportunity for two-way conversation with our community. In the first year of the implementation grant:**
     - **Advance Together committee meetings included over 500 hours of volunteer time from our local employers, education, economic development, and community members to lead the Advance Together effort.**
     - **A total of 45 presentations were provided to student and education leaders, as well as community representatives.**
     - **A total of 19 facility tours were provided to students and community leaders.**
   - **In the second year of the implementation grant:**
     - **K-12 participation was expanded to include schools creating CTE pathways for manufacturing careers.**
     - **Approximately 110 individuals participated in industry tours of which 20 represented community organizations that included Goodwill, International Rescue Committee, two churches, Hispanic Leadership Council and several local non-profits. Non-manufacturing committee members found these tours to be especially useful as they learned about the variety of careers, workplace environments and skills available in the manufacturing sector. It also allowed members to see the diversity of the workforce and to hear directly from employees about how they got into the industry and their career advancement stories.**
     - **Implemented a student feedback/perception survey as part of industry tours on Manufacturing Day. This will provide a baseline of data and can be repeated annually. Over 300 students from 15 different school districts toured 11 different manufacturers located in Abilene, Breckenridge, Cisco, Maryneal, Sweetwater and other communities.**
     - **The committee plans to utilize career pathway models developed through complimentary projects as guides for development of manufacturing pathway models.**
2. **Engage directly with community residents, especially people of color and rural residents.**
   - **In the second year of the implementation grant:**
     - **Two community members representing underserved populations were added to the team.**

- Interviewed unemployed and under-employed adults gathered through a complimentary project to identify barriers to work-based learning, especially in the employment of students, women and younger workers.
3. Reduce barriers to manufacturing careers for underserved residents by shifting mindsets and aligning education and employer systems and practices.
   o In the first year of the implementation grant:
     - Two task forces were formed to identify systemic barriers within education and within manufacturing companies that may prevent residents from entering into or advancing through well-paying middle-skill manufacturing careers.
     - Seven learning events were attended by committee members to gain a deeper understanding of how to effect change within our community and how to lead this effort forward.
     - Eleven teacher externships were provided over the summer where teachers were able to job shadow local manufacturing employers for 3 days to understand how manufacturers provide well-paying career opportunities that do not require a college degree but do require education and training beyond high school.
   o In the second year of the implementation grant:
     - Created general informational slide presentation for use with parents, educators, students and community audiences. This is part of a resource toolkit that will allow consistency in messaging.
     - Increased focus and understanding of equity through open dialogue among committee members.
     - Using data from the interviews (mentioned under #2), five personas representative of the targeted populations were developed. This information should be useful in developing strategies and supports essential for ensuring successful connections and advancement in manufacturing careers by under-represented populations.

BCMA membership is comprised of representatives from employers, chambers, post-secondary training providers, secondary education systems, community-based resource and support groups, and private funding entities. Members formed two task forces to inform decision-making and strategy development as follows.

Work-based Learning (WBL) Task Force:
- Included representatives of three employers, three school districts and workforce.
- Discussed barriers to participation in WBL activities for students and employers.
- Created a framework for WBL for students.
- Created guides for employers and educators.

Events Task Force:
- Included representatives of economic development, employers, education, and workforce. Used input to build an annual calendar as follows:
  o Cybersecurity Awareness learning event on August 30, 2022
  o Manufacturing Day (student tours and partner networking event) on October 12, 2022

- o **Winter Summit on December 7, 2022 (building awareness and connections between educators and employers)**
- o **Networking/holiday social as outreach event targeted to manufacturers hosted by economic development on December 7, 2022**
- o **Participation in Hispanic Leadership Council Planning for College and Career workshop on January 28, 2023, at TSTC – Abilene Campus**
- o **Participation in What's Next? Senior Event on March 29, 2023, at Cisco College – Abilene Campus (providing one-on-one career planning for high school seniors without a clear post-graduation plan)**
- o **Work-based learning/talent pipeline development seminar in April 2023**
- o **Summer student internship experience (launch of work-based learning opportunities for high school students ages 16+ years**

Additionally, BCMA utilizes data collection to monitor its progress toward objectives and to increase understanding. For example:

- **Reporting from economic development, education, employer and workforce partners about events and activities that they participated in or hosted. The reporting typically included identification of type of event (tour, presentation, advisory committee meeting, consultations, etc.) the number of attendees, type of attendee (education, economic development, employers, community, parents and/or students) and the date and location of event. During 2022, information was reported on 53 unique events attended by 1,859 individuals as follows: 277 employers, 911 ISD (students or educators), 204 post-secondary, 49 other education partners, 151 workforce, 29 economic development and 238 community attendees.**

- **Student survey data: 89 students participated in a brief survey after an industry tour on Manufacturing Day. The average rating of the tour experience was 4.5 on a 5-point scale with 94% of students reporting having a better understanding of manufacturing, 57% reporting a growth in interest in a career in manufacturing and 62% identifying seeing the product created as the most interesting aspect of the tour. Additional focus will be placed on collecting student responses in future years, with 2022 data serving as a baseline in identifying student interest and perceptions.**

As data collection has progressed, the team's perspective on methods and types of collection has evolved. Initially, the team focused on collecting as much data as possible that relied heavily on ad hoc collection of data or self-reporting by partners. Members then determined that much of data being collected was more quantitative rather than qualitative--I.e., how many individuals attended an event vs. If there was an impact because of the event. The team then actively engaged in conversations with consulting entities around data collection and how to define and refine what is collected, build data analysis skills to guide decision-making, and share the data with partners and the community in compelling and impactful stories. In its work with partners and consultants, BCMA is now focusing more on the why of what is collected-why is the information needed, does it inform the strategies of the logic model, and how the data will be shared. Consequently, the team has seen a shift in perspective to recognize that fewer measures or less frequency of measurement may be more impactful. Members are also seeing a deepening of trust among partners—both employer and educator partners—who are now expressing a willingness to share internal data, such as demographics of students/workers, that are essential to evaluating impact.

With regard to its focus on serving rural and underserved communities, BCMA's work on the Advance Together initiative has seen the following results.

- The team has had more open dialogue related to racial equity with the inclusion of more community members who represent the targeted populations. The team plans to expand membership to include additional individuals of color and individuals who represent targeted populations, such as students, parents, and underserved workers.
- In the first year when equity training was suggested, the response was somewhat negative from employer partners. Due to growing trust and relationship building over the past year, employers have expressed interest in equity training. The team plans to engage in equity training as a group and participate in coaching from Race Forward.
- The development of an employer assessment tool to identify readiness to engage in WBL (Work Based Learning) created more discussion about equity. The consultant who developed the survey conducted extensive research on best practices related to talent recruitment, development, and retention with a focus on equity. Most employers engaged in providing feedback on the survey were supportive of survey's equity focus with only one employer expressing some concerns.
- There is shared agreement by partners that an equity lens is foundational to all actions and activities as the team moves forward.

Part 4: One-Stop Service Delivery
A. One-Stop Service Delivery System
(WIOA §108(b)(6); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(5))
Boards must include a description of the one-stop delivery system in the workforce area, including explanations of the following:
• How the Board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers and how providers will meet the employment needs of local employers, workers, and job seekers
• How the Board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including to remote areas, through the use of technology and other means
• How entities within the one-stop delivery system, including the one-stop operators and the one-stop partners, will comply with WIOA §188 (related to Non-Discrimination), if applicable, and with applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals who have disabilities
• The roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners

Description of System
The Board contracts with a subrecipient entity, CECT, to operate the workforce center system, through which core and other program services are provided, including: WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs; Wagner-Peyser Employment Services Program, services to Unemployment Insurance recipients, TAA, TANF/Choices Program, SNAP E&T Program, and Choices Noncustodial Parent Program. The service delivery system consists of one full-service workforce center in Abilene, three branch offices in Brownwood, Sweetwater and Snyder, and one itinerant office in Eastland. The Abilene Workforce Center serves as the hub for the region and, in addition to workforce services, houses staff from the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) and the Texas Veterans Leadership Program. The Texas Workforce Solutions – Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWSVRS) is housed in the Abilene and Brownwood offices. This co-

location allows for greater ease of referrals as well as immediate consultations for workforce customers who may require those services.

The workforce subrecipient has primary responsibility for job seeker and employer services. With regard to serving employers, the Board's model identifies the subrecipient's role as employer services and the Board's role as business services. Workforce Center staff involved in serving employers focus on those services related to hiring, assessment, job matching, job referral, job requirements, job postings and assistance related to immediate needs of the business such as prevailing wage rates and screening. The Board's business service function encompasses industry sectors; economic development; labor market trends; and projected skill needs. The Board's Director of Business Services meets regularly with Workforce Center employer service staff to discuss any issues identified as a result of Board interaction with employers and to provide information on emerging issues, events and activities resulting from the Board's interaction with economic development, business associations, businesses, and/or other community agencies and leaders. These meetings also incorporate a degree of accountability to ensure the Workforce Center employer service staff is meeting the needs of local employers.

The initial contact for most job-seekers is with a Career Specialist in the Triage function. Career Specialists in Triage identify the individual's reason for contacting the center and provide appropriate information, which may include a referral to a partner agency, a basic overview of services, or referral to a service within the center, and/or referral to a Career Specialist in the Intake function.   Job seekers may, depending on their needs, individual circumstances, and eligibility, access basic career services, individualized career services (including services received from programs such as Choices and SNAP E&T), or training services.   There is no prescribed pathway for job-seekers to access training services. Some job-seekers enter the center already knowing they want to attend training, while other job-seekers may participate in a variety of other services and activities before they decide to pursue training.

Although the Board sponsors training through ITAs and special initiatives, the actual provision of education and classroom training ("CRT", which also includes distance learning environments) is conducted by local training providers. The region has three community colleges, one technical college, and one career school. Among these five entities, training is available in Abilene, Breckenridge, Brownwood, Cisco, Early, Ranger, Snyder and Sweetwater. The Board communicates regularly with area colleges and schools to provide information on labor market trends, and discuss issues and concerns related to training and workforce preparation. The Board also works closely with businesses to connect them to training providers when a business has identified a training need that the provider is capable of addressing. When an employer, economic development organization or chamber of commerce contacts the Board for training assistance, the Board identifies potential providers and may contact the providers to assess their level of interest, capacity and capability to meet the requested needs.

The Board also has a well-established partnership with Abilene Adult Education (AAE; the AEL provider for the entire West Central area); both entities have a history of collaborating to serve mutual customers. AAE staff refer their customers to Workforce Solutions if they are in need of services they could potentially receive from Workforce. Likewise, workforce staff refer customers needing adult education services to AAE. Workforce staff also coordinate customer schedules with AAE and employers for those individuals attending AEL classes and participating in work-based learning.

Child care assistance is essential to the success of many parents who work and/or attend school. The Board contracts with a subrecipient, SERCO to administer the federally-funded child care program. SERCO is co-located with workforce services in Abilene. Workforce and childcare staff meet periodically to

discuss shared customers and have established processes for ensuring customer services are coordinated and information is shared, as appropriate.

Access to services in remote areas is accomplished through several methods: itinerant staffing, availability of a toll-free phone number, and technology-facilitated services (these are discussed later in this section). Staff may travel to locations in counties that are not served by a workforce center on a regular basis. In these instances, staff may share space with community agencies that are established and known to the residents, including community centers, libraries, and chambers of commerce. The Abilene Workforce Center's toll-free number is publicized along with the website address to allow customers to access services when staff is not available on-site.

Ensuring Continuous Improvement
The Board believes the services and activities available through subrecipients, as well as from the Board, are effective in addressing local needs; however, the Board believes there is always opportunity for improvement. The Board regularly considers the effectiveness of the service delivery system, the responsiveness of activities, and the impact or outcomes. To this end, the following strategies are employed to regularly evaluate the local system and make improvements. Board staff meets monthly to review performance for all programs and services. While the review primarily focuses on subrecipient performance and financial management, it also includes an assessment of the Board's activities related to oversight, management and technical assistance. Board staff also meets monthly with the local workforce subrecipient management team, and the Board Workforce Contract Manager meets weekly with the subrecipient's leadership team. These meetings are used as an opportunity to review performance, discuss current and planned initiatives, and dialog about issues and opportunities. The workforce subrecipient also hosts regular "partner" meetings that include the childcare subrecipient, as well as other partners. This meeting focuses primarily on operational rather than strategic issues. Additionally, the workforce subrecipient is required to submit monthly reports to the Board Workforce Contract Manager that relate information on issues such as staffing changes, staff training, quality assurance activities, financial status and projections, and emerging issues. Those reports also contain information about the status of performance measures, strategies the subrecipient is using to improve deficiencies, and customer success stories.   Formalized methods of ensuring services meet customer needs and are provided appropriately include monitoring reviews of all programs no less often than annually. The Board contracts with an external consultant to conduct annual program and financial reviews. The Board EO Officer reviews program and physical accessibility annually to ensure services and facilities are accessible to individuals with disabilities.

As part of the responsibility to maintain an Eligible Training Provider System (ETPS), the State and local boards must establish local program performance standards for use in reviewing initial training provider applications and in determining eligibility of a certified program to receive WIOA funds. The Texas Workforce Commission requires local boards to adopt local performance standards that meet or exceed state performance standards, after TWC's annual publication of state performance standards.   The Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas Board has previously adopted TWC's performance standards as the local performance standards and maintained them on the Board's website. However, TWC has currently removed the minimum performance standards from the criteria for determining the initial and continued eligibility of training providers. Pursuant to TWC's recommendation, the Board has removed its performance requirements until TWC issues additional guidance and technical assistance related to performance evaluations for ETP programs.

Technology-Facilitated Services

The Board utilizes the following technology-facilitated systems to serve customers, which were initiated prior to the onset of the 2020 pandemic. The Board's website has features that facilitate customers' access to information about workforce services, as well as links to partner agencies. Along with many resources, the website provides opportunities for customers to link to WorkInTexas.com and other related sites, ask questions about services, participate in online orientations, apply for services and report changes online (for child care customers) in a secure format, explore the local Target Occupations List and link to the Eligible Training Provider List, and participate in customer satisfaction surveys. The newsflash feature highlights important information, updates, and current opportunities in the workforce system under "Workforce Solutions News" on the homepage. The "Stay Connected With Us" section on the homepage features links to Board social media feeds, an option to subscribe to the Board's newsletter or view current/past issues, and quick links for partners to connect with the Board's system. The live chat feature allows customers to interact with staff, and the forms feature allows customers to download or complete and submit forms virtually. The website also allows individuals/organizations to become vendors and receive automatic notification any time the Board posts a bid on the website. Customers may set preferences to be notified when changes or updates occur (such as in the calendar, newsflash, etc.). The website utilizes an integrated payment gateway to process training registrations, event payments, sponsorship submissions, etc. online. In addition, hiring events, workshops, etc. are posted to the calendar so customers can receive notification of these events. Events and information are also posted in WIT as a means of communication. In 2020, the following enhancements were made to improve navigation and make the site more customer-friendly:

- Moved hosting to a server with platinum security to encrypt sensitive customer data that is submitted online. This allows customers to complete forms for services, eligibility, etc. containing PII on the website instead of having to physically come to the Center, mail hard copies, etc.
- Enhanced the homepage to make key items/areas of content more visible.
- Restructured the homepage, global navigation, mega-menu and internal/sub-page navigation to better align with what the analytics revealed about customer use.
- Added more "call to action" buttons on internal pages as a visual way for customers to find applications, registrations, tools, etc.
- Integrated appointment scheduling on the website, Facebook page, and Google business profiles.

The Board has a mobile app through which customers may access website information and services. The Board and its subrecipients use DocuSign to digitally sign documents, both internally for staff and externally with customers.

The Board's Career and Education Outreach (CEO) Program (referred to as the "CEO Team" or "Specialists") engages students in area school districts in the career exploration and career decision making process. Students are exposed to various career and educational options through classroom presentations, workshops, individual meetings, guest speakers from business, education and community partners, and visits to local businesses and college campuses. The Specialists make monthly presentations at area schools both in-person and virtually to provide information about labor market data; careers; tools that can assist with career decisions; and to connect students and teachers with area resources as they explore education, training, and employment options. When the pandemic hit in the latter part of the 2019-2020 school year, the CEO Team developed virtual resources—tutorials and presentations on the Board's website—that can be used by students, parents, and teachers. They also developed six weeks of lesson plans covering employability skills and high demand occupations for use by teachers, which are currently being updated. (Note : These presentations were not originally captioned due to the quick timing and availability of services, but the Board has plans to add captioning to all of them in 2021.)

Additionally, the Board's subrecipients continue to use technological means of serving customers that were implemented prior to the pandemic. CECT utilizes Transcard debit card services for the disbursement of support services to customers. This enables disbursement of funds in a fast and efficient manner—funds can be loaded the same day they are requested. SERCO utilizes the Board's website to securely maintain the waiting list, as well as to accept child care applications from parents. Once a parent's name is retrieved from the waiting list, all communication and interaction takes place through phone calls, text messages, emails, and the use of DocuSign to digitally complete and sign forms (document completion is not limited to digital methods—parents who choose to use paper copies may do so). DocuSign is also used to complete agreements with providers.

With the onset of COVID-19 and resulting lockdowns of citizen movement and shutdowns of schools and businesses, the Board implemented additional technology-based methods of remotely conducting business and serving customers. All system staff received laptops and GoToMyPC licenses to work from home, and many received Board-issued cell phones or had Google Voice enabled. Microsoft Teams was implemented to facilitate virtual staff meetings. In addition, the following programs were implemented to facilitate virtual services to customers, as described below.

- Zoom—Facilitates virtual appointments with customers. This is also used to conduct online group orientations.
- GoToAssist—Provides virtual services by allowing staff to access a customer's computer to provide assistance with websites like WorkinTexas.
- Premier Virtual—Provides an online hosting platform for job fairs and hiring events. Customers can upload resumes and chat or meet virtually with employers.
- Nepris—A cloud-based platform that was used to virtually host the 2020 World of Work youth career fair.
- ClickSend—Allows staff to communicate with customers via text, and also functions as a fax service.

When the Board reopened centers (by appointment only), the following tools were implemented to facilitate safe delivery of services.

- SimplyBook.me—Allows customers to schedule appointments with staff that are either in person or virtual appointments.
- Connect to Resource PC—Allows staff to log into resource room computers to provide remote assistance to on-site customers while maintaining social distancing.
- Use of iPads to allow customers who do not have personal computers to attend virtual job interviews or appointments outside the Center
- Online program orientations as well as a more robust library of customer forms were added to the Board's website

The Board is creating a lending library for child care providers and individuals interested in attending the Board's CDA classes. Laptops that were originally purchased for in-person classes are now being loaned to individuals who do not have access to a computer to enable them to complete professional development, the CDA online course, or other needs related to furthering their professional career. This allows the Board to continue supporting the professional development of the child care workforce, while maintaining social distancing standards.

The Board has procured a new document management system, Laserfiche, that will maintain customer files digitally and provide a workflow system for the efficient operation of customer service delivery and administrative functions. The new system will replace the one currently being used in order to resolve end-of-life equipment issues and provide enhanced functionality. Laserfiche will be implemented in early 2021.

Accessibility
The Board uses many resources for serving individuals with disabilities. In its workforce centers, the Board employs the following assistive devices to help customers with disabilities access job search resources (each device is located in all centers unless otherwise indicated):
- Accessible workstations
- Height adjustable desks and chairs
- Screen Magnifier Software (MAGic)
- Screen Reader Software (JAWS)
- Large print and reverse color keyboards
- 19" monitor
- Headphones
- Trackball mouse
- Speech Amplification System (Pocket Talkers)
- Telephones with volume control and hearing aid compatible
- Video Relay Services (Sorenson)
- Relay Texas
- Written materials for orientations, workshops, trainings, etc.
- Automatic door openers (Abilene offices)

For customers with hearing impairments, a sign language interpreter service may be used to facilitate communication with individual staff. In addition, workshops are offered online, many of which are captioned, and the remainder are in the process of being reviewed for captioning or removal.

Board EO policies communicate requirements for providing equitable service and ensuring the accessibility of facilities as well as services for individuals with disabilities, including, in part:
- The requirement to provide reasonable accommodations/modifications
- Prohibition on denying customers access to services or benefits on the basis of a disability or the need for a reasonable accommodation
- The requirement to provide services to individuals with disabilities in integrated settings, to the extent possible
- Admittance of service animals
- Use of mobility devices

The Board EO Officer reviews program and physical accessibility annually to ensure services and facilities are accessible to individuals with disabilities, and that subrecipients are in compliance with federal, state, and local EO requirements. Staff receives accessibility training during onboarding, annually, and at other times as needed.

CivicPlus, which hosts the Board's website, ensures the site's compliance with the standards of the Government-wide Section 508 Accessibility Program as well as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Working Group. CivicPlus utilizes AudioEye, which is software that delivers immediate ADA and WCAG

accessibility compliance at scale, using patented technology, subject matter expertise and proprietary processes. From the CivicPlus website:

> *Web accessibility standards ensure content can be easily accessed by all citizens, which is why as an industry leader in local government web development, CivicPlus® has partnered with AudioEye, a leader in automated Web accessibility and remediation, to help our local government clients ensure their websites' continue to meet the latest compliance standards. The only technology-first digital accessibility provider, AudioEye goes beyond accessibility, to enhance the user experience for all website visitors. AudioEye's patented technology runs in the background of your CivicEngage® website to automatically detect Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA and Section 508, legacy, and 2018 refresh success criteria violations. Through AudioEye Managed, issues of accessibility are resolved as they arise.*

Partner Roles and Resource Contributions

The two one-stop partners who have an on-going presence in the center are TVC and TWC—Texas Veterans Leadership Program (TVLP). Both of these partners serve only veterans, but are integrated into the overall operations. One TVC staff and the TVLP employee are housed with workforce staff and have access to the same resources. The other TVC staff, who works primarily with employers, is located with the Employer Services staff and works closely with that unit. Funds are allocated by TWC for the TVLP position, and TVC and the Board negotiate an annual budget that covers facilities, support services and supply costs.

TWSVRS staff in Abilene and Brownwood are co-located in those Workforce Centers. Abilene VR staff are housed on a separate floor from other Workforce staff, however the cost for their space is included in the Board's rental agreement. TWC contracts funds for rent in the Abilene office as well as other costs for both locations to the Board.

The Board does not anticipate the physical presence of other partners, even on an itinerant basis, in any of the centers for the foreseeable future due to the pandemic.

B. Cooperative Agreements
(WIOA §108(b)(14); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(13))
Boards must provide copies of executed cooperative agreements that explain how all local service providers, including additional providers, will carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the local one-stop delivery system. This includes cooperative agreements (as defined in WIOA §107(d)(11)) between the Board or other local entities described in §101(a)(11)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 USC 721(a)(11)(B)) and the local office of a designated state agency or designated state unit that administers programs that are carried out under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act (29 USC 720 et seq.) (other than §112 or part C of that title (29 USC 732, 741) and are subject to §121(f)) in accordance with §101(a)(11) of the Rehabilitation Act (29 USC 721(a)(11)) with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals who have disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts.

No response to this element is required, per email from TWC on 11/17/20.

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

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

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

• Facilitate engagement of employers in the workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations

• Support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the workforce area

• Better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development

• Strengthen links between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs

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

The Board coordinates services to the business sector by assigning certain responsibilities to the workforce subrecipient, CECT, while retaining other responsibilities at the Board level. The subrecipient staff serving employers focuses on those services related to hiring, assessment, job matching, job referral, job requirements, job postings and assistance related to immediate needs of the business such as prevailing wage rates and screening. The Board's business service function encompasses industry sectors; economic development; connecting businesses with other businesses, education or economic development; labor market trends; business development; workforce intelligence; and projected skill needs. The Board's Director of Business Services meets regularly with subrecipient staff to discuss any issues identified as a result of their interaction with employers and to provide information on emerging issues, events and activities resulting from the Board's interaction with economic development, business associations, businesses, and/or other community agencies and leaders. These meetings also incorporate a degree of accountability to ensure CECT is meeting the needs of local employers.

One of the industries the Board has recognized as a key sector for West Central is Manufacturing. At the 2-digit NAICS, this industry is the fifth largest in terms of employment, has grown 1.4% over the last five years, added 646 jobs to the region, accounted for 8.8% of the area GDP in 2019, was one of the sectors less impacted by the pandemic than many others, and is forecast to have almost 480 openings annually over the next five years. Supply chain challenges highlighted during the pandemic are resulting in increased reliance of local/US supplies vs. overseas supplies, when feasible. Unrest and leadership issues in some foreign countries is also causing some manufacturers to bring production back to the US. Based on the importance of this industry, the Board helped to form an industry sector partnership for Manufacturing in 2017, which is now called the Big Country Manufacturing Alliance (BCMA). The Board serves as the backbone organization for BCMA and has established a dba for BCMA under the Board's Corporation, which allows contributions to BCMA as a non-profit organization. The Board is developing a fiscal services agreement for BCMA with Region XIV and manages all of BCMA's funding. The Board Executive Director serves as a non-voting member of the BCMA Board of Directors, and Board staff lead

the Communications Committee for BCMA, which sets up and manages Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram accounts as well as the BCMA website. The Board provides meeting space and manages all meeting logistics for BCMA, including setting meetings, assisting with agenda preparation, taking meeting minutes and sending meeting notifications. Board staff also provide labor market research and analysis support, such as: identifying middle-skill jobs in manufacturing that pay above a certain wage level; exploring best practices in recruitment, onboarding and retention; and conducting a survey to identify how the manufacturers in our region align with these best practices

BCMA has created two committees around its priorities: Business Partnership Committee, and Business to Education Partnership Committee. Accomplishments of these committees and the overall organization include:
- Expanded membership of the BCMA;
- Created a professionally produced video highlighting local manufacturers as well as providing key information about the sector, such as wages, number of jobs, employers, etc. in the region;
- Implementation of teacher externships at manufacturing facilities;
- Industry tours for students in rural, underserved communities;
- Established communication with the education community, including collection of student perception data about manufacturing, coordination between manufacturers and educators to develop applied learning sessions, and social media interaction between students and manufacturers;
- Hosted the first Manufacturing Day Event in October 2020 in partnership with the Board and Abilene Chamber of Commerce to promote manufacturing as a career choice for high school seniors; and
- Creation of two $1000 scholarships, 1 for a secondary student and 1 for a post-secondary student; the first awards will be announced in Spring 2021.

Another accomplishment of BCMA has been pursuit of Advance Together, an accelerator program offered by Educate Texas that uses a model designed by the Dallas Fed's Community Development team, which is based on models developed by Federal Reserve Boards in other regions, such as Working Cities Challenge in Boston and SPARK in San Francisco. It is a two-part grant that supports community partnerships in Texas that are tackling education and workforce challenges. In partnership with BCMA, the Board's 501(c)(3) corporation is functioning as the lead applicant and successfully applied for and was awarded both the Design Grant in February, 2020 and the three-year Implementation Grant, which will begin in early 2021. The implementation phase of the program will work to increase regional employment in middle-skill, high-wage manufacturing careers by 10% by 2030. Over the next 3 years, the Board and BCMA will lay the foundation and start building toward the long-term goal.

BCMA has additionally identified the following long-term priorities:
- Expanding employer engagement with BCMA to more companies;
- Working with education partners to develop career pathway models that encompass the courses most relevant to manufacturers in the Big Country;
- Establishing mentoring programs between current employees and students at secondary and post-secondary level;
- Implementing internship and work-based learning programs, especially for high school students; and
- Partnering with legislators and other organizations to address liability barriers associated with bringing younger students into manufacturing workplaces.

The Board's Director of Business Services also serves as the Rapid Response Coordinator. The Coordinator establishes contact, by phone or in person, with employers and representatives of affected workers—within 48 hours of receiving a WARN notice, a public announcement of a layoff, or notification that a Trade petition has been filed—to assess employer and employee early intervention needs. Within 72 hours of notification of the layoff event, the Coordinator provides the appropriate notification to TWC and organizes a response team, including subrecipient staff, to provide the following services, as applicable, to the employer and affected workers:

- immediate and on-site contact with the employer—to the extent practical or allowed by the employer—as well as representatives of the affected workers, and the local community;
- guidance and/or financial assistance to establish a labor-management committee voluntarily agreed to by labor and management, or a workforce transition committee comprising representatives of the employer, the affected workers, and the local community that devises and oversees an implementation strategy to respond to the reemployment needs of affected workers;
- emergency assistance adapted to the particular closing, layoff, or disaster;
- development of a coordinated response to the dislocation event;
- state economic development assistance, as needed;
- an orientation on available workforce program services;
- information on and assistance with filing for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits;
- information on Trade services available through Texas Workforce Centers;
- a survey of affected workers' employment, knowledge, skills, and abilities; and
- other services, such as workshops and seminars on tools that will assist with a rapid transition to new employment.

Through the function-based service delivery system, the workforce subrecipient serves claimants in an integrated manner with other one-stop customers. The subrecipient continues to provide Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) to claimants who meet the cutoff score, however rather than separating them into isolated groups, they are integrated with other customers who are looking for employment and/or re-training. Claimants receive orientation information, assistance with WIT registration, and screening (as needed or requested) for additional services to remove barriers to employment. Claimants may be co-enrolled in WIOA Dislocated Worker Program services to receive assistance with job search or training sponsorship.

D. Coordination of Wagner-Peyser Services
(WIOA §108(b)(12); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(11))
A description of plans, assurances, and strategies for maximizing coordination, improving service delivery, and avoiding duplication of Wagner-Peyser Act services and other services provided through the one-stop delivery system.

West Central follows the Texas Model, implemented in 2003, for the delivery of Wagner-Peyser/Employment Services. Employment Service (ES) staff are integrated in the workforce center system locally and perform job tasks and functions similar to their locally-employed workforce counterparts. Most ES staff are focused primarily on direct service to employers, with secondary focus on serving job-seeker customers. Daily management and supervision of ES staff is handled by workforce center management, which ensures equity of treatment and responsiveness, and also serves to avoid duplication of Wagner-Peyser services with other one-stop services.

E. Integrated, Technology-Enabled Intake and Case Management
(WIOA §108(b)(21); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(20))
Boards must include a description of how one-stop centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under WIOA and by one-stop partners.

The Board and its subrecipients use TWC automated systems, which encompass case management, job matching, data collection/reporting, and financial reporting. For example, the two primary systems are:

- TWIST, which is the state integrated intake, eligibility, case management, and reporting system for WIOA and other onestop programs.
- WorkInTexas.com, which is the state labor exchange system whereby employers may enter and run matches for their job openings, and job seekers may enter and run matches for their own applications.

The Board is currently using an electronic file maintenance system, Docubase, across all offices for case management records. While this system allows us to eliminate paper waste and to maintain all files in one efficient location, the platform has reached an end-of-life stage and its workflow feature no longer functions. The Board has therefore procured a replacement system, Laserfiche, that will provide the advantages of Docubase, with workflow, that includes additional functionality such as an electronic signature component for internal and external users. Laserfiche will be implemented in West Central in early 2021.

With the advent of COVID-19, the Board implemented additional technology-enabled methods for conducting intake and providing services to customers. Group orientations and individual intake appointments are conducted virtually. Online orientations can be accessed individually on the Board's website or may be conducted in groups via Zoom. Zoom is also used to facilitate individual virtual appointments. Staff can assist customers with WIT registrations by using GoToAssist, which allows them to remotely connect to an individual's personal computer. In addition to phone calls and email, staff can also communicate with customers through ClickSend, which functions as both a text and fax service.

When the Board reopened centers (by appointment only), additional tools were employed to facilitate safe delivery of services. SimplyBook.me was implemented to enable customers to schedule appointments with staff that are either in person or virtual appointments. A more robust library of customer forms was added to the Board's website to allow required documents and information to be submitted virtually—the Board's website allows the secure submission of forms containing PII.

The Board's Career and Education Outreach (CEO) Program (referred to as the "CEO Team" or "Specialists") engages students in area school districts in the career exploration and career decision making process. Students are exposed to various career and educational options through classroom presentations, workshops, individual meetings, guest speakers from business, education and community partners, and visits to local businesses and college campuses. The Specialists make monthly presentations at area schools both in-person and virtually to provide information about labor market data; careers; tools that can assist with career decisions; and to connect students and teachers with area resources as they explore education, training, and employment options. When the pandemic hit in the latter part of the 2019-2020 school year, the CEO Team developed virtual resources—tutorials and presentations on the Board's website—that can be used by students, parents, and teachers. They also developed six weeks of

lesson plans covering employability skills and high demand occupations for use by teachers, which are currently being updated. (Note : These presentations were not originally captioned due to the quick timing and availability of services, but the Board has plans to add captioning to all of them in 2021.)

Part 5: Workforce Investment Activities
A. Economic Development and Entrepreneurial /Microenterprise Activities
(WIOA §108(b)(5); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(4))
Boards must include an explanation of how the Board will coordinate local workforce investment activities with regional economic development activities that are carried out in the workforce area and how the Board will promote entrepreneurial-skills training and microenterprise services.

In the WIOA Combined State Plan TWC states, "the Commission recognizes Texas' current workforce areas as their own independent regions". Accordingly, the Board engages in economic development activities that contribute to the up-skilling of current and emergent workers, filling employment gaps for employers, and promoting economic growth for all of the communities in the 19-county area. The Board has a history of partnering with other entities to coordinate local workforce investment activities with economic development activity. The following are some of the initiatives in which the Board is presently engaged.

- The Board is partnering with 3 rural districts—Roscoe Collegiate High School, Hamlin Collegiate High School, and Throckmorton Collegiate High School—to apply for the Texas Internship Initiative. This partnership, which includes area training providers and employers, is applying for funds to implement a program that combines dual-credit courses leading to industry-based certifications with internships. The objective is to assist students in obtaining the skills and certifications needed to gain self-sufficient employment in middle-skill STEM occupations, while also addressing skill gaps for rural employers.

- The Board is partnering with the Development Corporation of Baird, the Community Development Corporation of Baird, and Baird ISD, to apply for a HDJT grant to serve approximately 20 students who will participate in welding training. The funds would be used to purchase equipment, materials, supplies and install appropriate ventilation necessary to provide training to meet current welding industry standards. Students will receive industry-recognized certifications (American Welding Society) to prepare them for continuation into post-secondary education or entry into the workforce.

- The Board is partnering with the Abilene Industrial Foundation to apply for a Texas Industry Partnership Grant to conduct a cluster analysis of the following industry sectors: advanced technology and manufacturing (NAICS 311-339), aerospace (NAICS 48); bio-technology/life science (NAICS 5417), information technology (NAICS 5415) and energy (NAICS 221) in the Abilene MSA to identify workforce trends, skill requirements, training availability and other factors relevant to the preparation, attraction and retention of workers for these industries.. The study will identify the labor shed for these clusters, workforce trends, participation rates and skill requirements as well as an assessment of training availability, viability and the correlation between existing training offerings and business needs. Information will be shared with K-12, post-secondary and workforce partners to enhance and expand demand-driven training, programs and services for these sectors.

- The Board plays a key role in the manufacturing sector partnership. Now called the Big Country Manufacturing Alliance (BCMA), this partnership was formed in early 2017 through the efforts of the Board and area manufacturers, and includes 13 manufacturers from five counties. The Board has worked with BCMA on a number of initiatives, including Implementation of teacher externships at manufacturing facilities; Industry tours for students in rural, underserved

communities; and the Big Country Manufacturing Event. The Board is currently working with BCMA on an initiative called Advance Together, an accelerator program offered by Educate Texas.

- The Board participates in the Rural Workforce Network, which involves 6 board areas and facilitates information exchange, identification of opportunities to partner, and communication about shared projects/partners.

The following are economic development initiatives that benefit smaller companies.

- The Board connects employers to community college partners to take advantage of Skills for Small Business.
- The Board utilizes virtual hiring events to assist small employers who have fewer staff resources to commit to off-site activities.
- The Board assisted small employers who are child care providers with the following resources during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic:
  - A three session virtual miniseries for Infant, Toddler and School Age teachers, as well as a session on Positive Connections, was provided to 25 attendees.
  - TRS providers were given the opportunity to apply for registration scholarships for their staff to virtually attend the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children conference. Eighteen caregivers virtually attended TxAEYC.
  - A total of 65 providers received a one-year license to access online training for them and their teachers, as a means to offer training opportunities during COVID.
  - CDA certification classes were provided by the Board (classes have been provided for the past 3 years), with scholarships, incentives, and other financial assistance offered to offset costs associated with attendance and to promote the utilization of the service. Twenty teachers received scholarships for CDA certification testing, with 19 teachers receiving stipends for passing the exam. Training was provided in workshops, and continued virtually after the onset of the pandemic.
  - Assisted with renewal of CDA certifications for four caregivers.
  - Provided 38 TRS providers with a variety of equipment, materials and supplies for TRS program enhancement and COVID mitigation.
  - Provided wage supplements to 95 teachers at 15 TRS provider locations.
  - Provided electrostatic disinfectant sprayers, disinfectant, and carrying carts to 24 TRS providers.
  - Provided 72 TRS and non-TRS providers PPE packups in order to enhance COVID mitigation.
  - Purchased HiMama licenses for 25 TRS providers and, and with the onset of COVID, purchased access to Texas Child Care Tools for 80 TRS and non-TRS providers. Both software solutions are offered to enhance business practices, operations and program management.
- The Board has implemented the following ongoing strategies to assist small employers who are child care providers:
  - CDA certification classes provided by the Board, with scholarships, incentives, and other financial assistance offered to offset costs associated with attendance and to promote the utilization of the service
  - Assistance with renewal of CDA certifications for caregivers whose certification has or is about to expire
  - TRS center directors will be given the opportunity to attend a variety of training opportunities designed to enhance their business and leadership skills.

- o TRS provider staff will be given the opportunity to attend a variety of training opportunities designed to enhance their skills and abilities.
- o Assistance with the purchase of materials/equipment/resources for infant and toddler classroom environments
- o Assistance with back office software solutions to enhance business practices, operations and program management.
- o TRS providers will be given quarterly stipends to purchase PPE supplies specific to their center's needs.

The Board supports entrepreneurship and microenterprise through its long-time support of Springboard, an entrepreneurial program hosted by the Griggs Center for Entrepreneurship and Philanthropy. Springboard is a regional business model competition for aspiring entrepreneurs and existing small businesses in colleges and communities in the 19-county region served by the Board. Founded in 2007, the program allows members of the community a chance to pitch their ideas to local investors for the chance to win thousands of dollars in startup funding and other resources. The competition is also open to existing small businesses needing assistance to grow or expand. Since its inception, the competition has awarded more than $1,000,000 to aspiring entrepreneurs across the region. Follow-up to the 2020 competition outcomes was suspended due to the pandemic. However, the competition will resume in 2021, and the focus will be on assisting businesses to pivot their service delivery due to the pandemic, with the target audience being start-up and early stage businesses. In addition, the Board plans to continue to support the competition and will focus on rural communities.

B. Rapid Response Activity Coordination
(WIOA §108(b)(8); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(7))
Boards must include a description of how the Board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the workforce area with statewide rapid response activities described in WIOA §134(a)(2)(A).

The Board follows WD Letter 01-10, Change 1 (and any subsequent issuances) in administering the Rapid Response Program, including the directive to make contact with employers within 72 hours of receiving notice of a layoff or closure. The Board has adopted the procedures in that letter as the local Board guidelines.

In addition to assisting affected workers during a layoff, the Board also provides services to impacted businesses to help them by identifying Layoff Aversion steps through the Shared Work Program to:
- Better manage human resource needs, reduce Unemployment Insurance costs, and Workers' Compensation Costs during the transition;
- Assist affected employees to return to work and to maintain their standard of living; and
- Demonstrate good corporate citizenship in the community.

The Board's service to businesses is largely accomplished through its Rapid Response Coordinator. The Coordinator is a Board-level single point of contact who works closely with the workforce center subrecipient. The Coordinator establishes contact, by phone or in person, with employers and representatives of affected workers—within 48 hours of receiving a WARN notice, a public announcement of a layoff, or notification that a Trade petition has been filed—to assess employer and employee early intervention needs. Within 72 hours of notification of the layoff event, the Coordinator provides the

appropriate notification to TWC and organizes a response team, including subrecipient staff, to provide the following services, as applicable, to the employer and affected workers:

- immediate and on-site contact with the employer—to the extent practical or allowed by the employer—as well as representatives of the affected workers, and the local community;
- guidance and/or financial assistance to establish a labor-management committee voluntarily agreed to by labor and management, or a workforce transition committee comprising representatives of the employer, the affected workers, and the local community that devises and oversees an implementation strategy to respond to the reemployment needs of affected workers;
- emergency assistance adapted to the particular closing, layoff, or disaster;
- development of a coordinated response to the dislocation event;
- state economic development assistance, as needed;
- an orientation on available workforce program services;
- information on and assistance with filing for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits;
- information on Trade services available through Texas Workforce Centers;
- a survey of affected workers' employment, knowledge, skills, and abilities; and
- other services, such as workshops and seminars on tools that will assist with a rapid transition to new employment.

C. Youth Activities and Services
(WIOA §108(b)(9); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(8))
Boards must include a description and assessment of the type and availability of workforce investment activities for youth in the workforce area, including activities for youth with disabilities. This description must include an identification of successful models of such activities.

Services for youth are fully integrated into the workforce system. Staff is located in the Abilene office, but may provide services virtually, or travel and/or coordinate with staff in other offices to make services available in all counties. Outreach for youth is conducted through partnerships with other youth-serving entities such as school districts, juvenile justice, city recreation centers, the local ministerial alliance, and foster youth agencies. In particular, the contractor has worked with 2INgage, Pregnancy Resources, Noah Project, Goodwill Industries, BCFS, 2-1-1, and the At-Risk Coordinator for Abilene ISD. CECT works closely with BCFS to serve foster youth (which is partially funded by a Texas Workforce Commission grant). This partnership began when BCFS opened its Abilene Transition Center in 2011. Both entities make referrals to the other based on the needs of the youth and each organization's services. In the subrecipient's Young Adult Plan for 2021, over 40 entities scattered throughout the 19-county area have been identified for quarterly contact to outreach potential WIOA Youth Program participants. In addition, CECT conducts outreach activities on social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Services to youth are coordinated with partner agencies and include:
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.*

2. *Alternative secondary school services, or dropout recovery services, as appropriate.*

3. *Paid and unpaid work experiences that have academic and occupational education as a component of the work experience*, which may include the following types of work experiences:

• Summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year;
• Pre-apprenticeship programs—a program or set of strategies designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a registered apprenticeship program and has a documented partnership with at least one, if not more, registered apprenticeship programs;
• Internships and job shadowing;
• OJT opportunities, as defined in WIOA §3(44).

4. *Occupational skills training, which includes priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials that align with in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the workforce area involved, if the Board determines that the programs meet the quality criteria described in WIOA §123.*
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.

5. *Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation, occupational cluster, or career pathway.*

6. *Leadership development opportunities, including community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors.*
Leadership development opportunities are opportunities that encourage responsibility, confidence, employability, self-determination, and other positive social behaviors, such as:
- exposure to postsecondary educational possibilities;
- community and service learning projects;
- peer-centered activities, including peer mentoring and tutoring;
- organizational and teamwork training, including team leadership training;
- training in decision making, including determining priorities and problem solving;
- citizenship training, including life skills training such as parenting and work behavior training;
- civic engagement activities that promote the quality of life in a community; and
- other leadership activities that place youth in a leadership role such as serving on youth leadership committees, such as a Standing Youth Committee.

7. *Support services, as defined in WIOA §3(59), which enable an individual to participate in WIOA activities.* These services include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Linkages to community services;
- Assistance with transportation;
- Assistance with child care and dependent care;
- Assistance with housing;
- Needs-related payments;
- Assistance with educational testing;
- Reasonable accommodations for youth with disabilities;
- Referrals to health care;
- Assistance with uniforms or other appropriate work attire and work-related tools, including such items as eyeglasses and protective eye gear;

- Assistance with books, fees, school supplies, and other necessary items for students enrolled in postsecondary education classes; and
- Payments and fees for employment and training-related applications, tests, and certifications.

8. *Adult mentoring for a duration of at least 12 months that may occur both during and after program participation.*
   Adult mentoring for youth must:
   - be a formal relationship between a youth participant and an adult mentor that includes structured activities in which the mentor offers guidance, support, and encouragement to develop the competence and character of the youth;
   - include a mentor who is an adult other than the assigned youth case manager; and
   - at a minimum, match the youth with an individual mentor with whom the youth interacts on a face-to-face basis.

   Group mentoring activities and mentoring through electronic means are allowable as part of mentoring activities. Mentoring may include workplace mentoring in which the local program matches a youth participant with an employer or employee of a company.

9. *Follow-up services for not fewer than 12 months after the completion of participation.*
   Follow-up services are critical services provided after a youth's exit from the program to help ensure the youth is successful in employment and/or postsecondary education and training. Follow-up services for youth may include:
   - leadership development opportunities and support services;
   - regular contact with a youth participant's employer, including assistance in addressing work-related problems;
   - assistance in securing better-paying jobs, career pathway development, and further education or training;
   - work-related peer support groups;
   - adult mentoring;
   - supportive services;
   - financial literacy education;
   - services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local workforce area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services; and
   - services necessary to ensure the success of youth participants in employment and/or postsecondary education.

10. *Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling, as well as referrals to counseling, as appropriate to the needs of the individual youth.*
    Comprehensive guidance and counseling is individualized counseling to participants that includes career and academic counseling, drug and alcohol abuse counseling, mental health counseling, and referral to partner programs, as appropriate. When referring participants to necessary counseling that cannot be provided by the Board, the Board must coordinate with the organization it refers to in order to ensure continuity of service.

11. Financial literacy education. The financial literacy education program element may include any of the following activities that:

- support the ability of participants to create budgets, initiate checking and savings accounts, and make informed financial decisions;
- support participants in learning how to effectively manage spending, credit, and debt, including student loans, consumer credit, and credit cards;
- teach participants about the significance of credit reports and credit scores, what their rights are regarding their credit and financial information, how to determine the accuracy of a credit report and how to correct inaccuracies, and how to improve or maintain good credit;
- support a participant's ability to understand, evaluate, and compare financial products, services, and opportunities and to make informed financial decisions;
- educate participants about identity theft, ways to protect themselves from identify theft, and how to resolve cases of identity theft and in other ways understand their rights and protections related to personal identity and financial data;
- support activities that address the particular financial literacy needs of non-English speaking participants, including providing support through the development and distribution of multilingual financial literacy and education materials; and
- support activities that address the particular financial literacy needs of youth with disabilities, including connecting them to benefits planning and work incentives counseling.

12. Entrepreneurial skills training. Entrepreneurial skills training provides the basics of starting and operating a small business. Such training must develop the skills associated with entrepreneurship, including, but not limited to, the ability to: take initiative; creatively seek out and identify business opportunities; develop budgets and forecast resource needs; understand various options for acquiring capital and the trade-offs associated with each option; and communicate effectively and market oneself and one's ideas.
Approaches to teaching youth entrepreneurial skills include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Entrepreneurship education that provides an introduction to the values and basics of starting and running a business.
- Enterprise development, which provides support and services that incubate and help youth develop their own businesses.
- Experiential programs that provide youth with experience in the day-to-day operation of a business.

13. Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the workforce area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services.
Career awareness activities include providing information on a variety of careers and occupations available, their skill requirements, working conditions and training prerequisites, and job opportunities across a wide range of industry sectors. Career counseling or guidance may include advice and support in making decisions about what career paths to take, providing information about résumé preparation, interview skills, potential opportunities for job shadowing, and the long-term benefits of postsecondary education and training (for example, increased earning power and career mobility).

14. *Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training.*
Postsecondary preparation and transition activities and services prepare ISY and OSY for advancement to postsecondary education after attaining a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent. Postsecondary education includes many kinds of education and training programs, including technical college degree and certification programs, apprenticeships, two- and four-year public and private colleges and universities, trade schools, and more.

Transition planning may include, but is not limited to, programs designed to expand access to college and other postsecondary institutions, particularly for youth facing barriers to enrollment. Activities may focus on improving academic readiness, identifying postsecondary strengths and interests, and helping with applying for college and institutional admission or financial aid.

Common activities include, but are not limited to:
- individualized career planning;
- career shadowing;
- postsecondary education options exploration, including technical schools, community colleges, four-year colleges and universities, and registered apprenticeship programs;
- postsecondary education admissions counseling;
- postsecondary education application assistance;
- postsecondary education financial aid assistance;
- fields of study guidance;
- postsecondary education campus visits;
- postsecondary education entrance exam (SAT/ACT) preparation; and
- study skills workshops and parent support workshops.

The Board allows use of ITAs for youth however, co-enrollment may occur between WIOA Adult and Youth programs to expand access to training and support services.

All services are made available to youth with disabilities, utilizing reasonable accommodations and modifications as requested and appropriate. Through assessment and the process of developing an individual service strategy (ISS), youth with disabilities may be provided with a referral to TWSVRS or other community entities for additional services/resources. A referral to other entities is only made when the youth requests it or agrees to explore resources that may assist in the accomplishment of ISS objectives—referrals to other services are never used to send a youth with disabilities to another service provider in lieu of services we can provide.

In addition, the Board's Student Hireability Navigator ("Navigator") works with TWSVRS, community partners, area school districts, and employers to increase awareness of the services available to students with disabilities. The Navigator promotes the five Pre-Employment Transition Services that are required by WIOA and provides information and resources so students with disabilities can develop effective transition plans with the special education team. The Navigator connects students with disabilities with community partners that can increase the opportunity for integration into inclusive and competitive employment opportunities and/or post-secondary success. Navigator presentations to educators, students, and parents at schools provide information that help students with disabilities access VR and other services that will empower them to pursue additional training, postsecondary education, or employment following graduation. Navigator connections with employers help them overcome challenges and perceived barriers to working with individuals with disabilities and open new opportunities.

The Board has progressively enhanced its services to youth/young adults through pursuit of grants that facilitate employment and post-secondary connections for secondary students, including the Career and Education Outreach (CEO) Program and the rootED Program. To create better alignment between the Board's overall strategy to youth and the WIOA Youth Program, the Board required the workforce subrecipient to develop a revised service delivery plan for BCY21. The Young Adult Plan developed by CECT incorporates elements of the [Young Adult Internship Program](#) (YAIP), which was implemented by the New York City Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity and the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development. YAIP offered work-readiness workshops; internships; educational workshops; case management; supportive services; and assistance finding work, educational, or military placements to youth who were not working or in school. While the design for West Central is not identical to the program implemented in New York City, the subrecipient's Young Adult Plan incorporates all of these elements. YAIP sample group participants experienced higher short-term and long-term wages, with the causal evidence indicating a supported impact for the higher short-term wages. Those participants also experienced increased short-term and long-term employment rates, with both outcomes being directly supported by the program impact. West Central hopes to imitate the success of the YAIP in its services to the young adults of this area.

D. Coordination with Secondary and Postsecondary Education Programs
(WIOA §108(b)(10); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(9))
Boards must include a description of how the Board will coordinate its workforce investment activities with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services.

The Board has had a Career Pathway program since 2008, when the first Board staff position was created to connect with youth in area school districts for the purpose of informing them about pathways to local, quality career opportunities. In 2019 this program expanded significantly when the Board applied for and received a grant from TWC to create its Career and Education Outreach (CEO) Program (referred to as the "CEO Team" or "Specialists"). Five Specialists were hired under this program to expose, educate, and engage students in 25 school districts in the career exploration and career decision making process. Students are exposed to various career and educational options through classroom presentations, workshops, individual meetings, guest speakers from business, education and community partners, and visits to local businesses and college campuses. The Specialists make monthly presentations at area schools both in-person and virtually to provide information about labor market data; careers; tools that can assist with career decisions; and to connect students and teachers with area resources as they explore education, training, and employment options. The Specialists also connect with parents through attendance at community resource events and school career day/college prep events. The CEO Team's 2021 goals related to student, parent, and teacher outreach include the following:
- provide 100 individual career pathway exploration consultations to 8th-12th grade students in West Central Texas
- provide regional demand occupation and career preparation presentations to 60% of 6th-12th grade students in West Central Texas
- offer twelve training opportunities for educators to learn about career awareness, career preparation, and career pathway information
- utilize six community partnerships to deliver presentations to parents and guardians through equitable and inclusive outreach

The CEO Team has connections with employers through engagement with the Big Country Manufacturing Alliance (BCMA). Specialists support BCMA by attending meetings, providing labor market data to inform

decision-making, connecting teacher externs with industry partners, and supporting initiatives such as the Manufacturing Day event. In addition, the Specialists give industry-focused surveys to students and convey the information to employers; they also arrange for employers to present to classes as guest speakers and for students to tour business facilities. The CEO Team's 2021 goals related to employer and community resource partnerships include the following:

- connect and collaborate with regional community partners to share resources for special populations including, but not limited to, foster youth and students with disabilities
- develop key industry partnerships in Manufacturing, Healthcare, and I.T.
- create print and digital career pathway guides for key industries including, but not limited to, Manufacturing, Healthcare, and I.T.
- develop a Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship framework in a demand industry

In the 2019-2020 school year, the CEO Team had a presence in middle and high school classrooms in 25 partner school districts across the 19-county region. In that timeframe, the CEO Team provided 1,498 career awareness presentations for partner school districts, 481 individual student career exploration and planning consultations, 96 partner presentations, and 32,510 student engagements. Six school districts were added, for a total of 31, in the 2020-2021 school year. When the pandemic hit in the latter part of this school year, the CEO Team developed virtual resources—tutorials and presentations on the Board's website—that can be used by students, parents, and teachers. They also developed six weeks of lesson plans covering employability skills and high demand occupations for use by teachers, which are currently being updated. (Note : These presentations were not originally captioned due to the quick timing and availability of services, but the Board has plans to add captioning to all of them in 2021.) So far in 2020-2021 school year, August through October 31 2020, the CEO Team provided 397 career awareness presentations for partner school districts, 29 individual student career exploration and planning consultations, 10 partner presentations, and 7,077 student engagements. The CEO Team also leads the following regional initiatives to support local education:

- WOW Youth Expo – a regional career exploration event that gathers over 3,000 students from 50 school districts annually to explore regional college and career opportunities; in 2020 this initiative moved a virtual platform;
- Careers in Action Video Contest – provides prizes to the classrooms of winning student-led video projects in the form of education tools and resources. The videos highlight a career pathway of one of the regional demand occupations;
- Teacher Summer Externship Program - places over 50 educators into industry for a 3-day summer job shadowing experience;
- What's Next?! Senior Event - supports seniors who are preparing to graduate, but do not have a post-secondary plan in place, to connect them to resources and post-secondary training providers to help finalize a plan before graduation;
- Student Ambassadors program – 11th-12th grade student representatives from schools across West Central Texas serve as peer advisors and support for the Career and Education Outreach program. The students are trained in demand occupations, current labor market trends, and employability skills to support their career;
- Celebrate Careers kit – provides teachers activities, tools, and resources to support career exploration and development in 6th-12th grade classrooms;
- Career Signing Day – supports and promotes Career Signing Days at partner school districts across the region, providing key note speakers, promotional materials, and technical support

In 2020, the Board applied for and received a $1.5M grant from rootEd Alliance, Inc. a collaborative philanthropic effort that seeks to clear the path to a stronger future for students in rural America. Through a network of partners, rootEd provides advice, exposure and access to college and career opportunities to students in high school and college. rootEd Alliance partners with local and national organizations working to meaningfully improve postsecondary and career outcomes, so that all students in rural areas and towns can pursue their dreams. The grant covers a 3-year program to place dedicated college and career advisors on the campuses of area high schools for the purpose of providing postsecondary education and training support, early exposure to education pathways and careers, and strengthening connections between education and local industry. Students are also connected with sources of financial aid and opportunities for internships. The Board partnered with five school districts to implement the rootEd model in 2020. Two Youth Success Advisors were hired to serve four of the school districts, while the fifth school district utilized two staff already employed by the district to provide services. Currently, 380 seniors from these five rural school districts are being served by the rootEd program. Due to this program's strong focus on post-secondary, staff have been reaching out to local community/technical colleges as well as area universities to identify opportunities and supports for students interested in pursuing post-secondary education.

Update
The original response for this section described the Board's "Career Pathway Program" and the ways in which it has grown through funding for the Career Education Outreach and Youth Success initiatives. Since then, the Board's efforts to engage with secondary schools has blossomed into a full-blown Career Education Department. What initially began with two funding sources for these initiatives has grown into a multi-faceted educational engagement model that seeks to equip the emerging workforce with information about the labor market they are entering and supply them with resources to meet the workforce challenges they will encounter. In addition to continued funding from the rootEd Alliance, TANF, and WIOA, the Board has been able to expand funding for career education initiatives by applying to or coordinating with the following entities:

- **Department of Education—$1.2M Rural Postsecondary and Economic Development (RPED) Grant, awarded to the Board for a three-year period through 2025**
- **Texas Regional Pathways Network grant—awarded to Region XIV Education Service Center, which is partnering with the Board to administer the one-year grant for the period of August 2022 through August of 2023**

The funding sources above support all of the Career Education Department programs. In addition, resource sharing agreements have been achieved with the schools that are benefitting from the Youth Success program so they can assist with the cost. Cost-sharing is tiered based on the number of years the school has participated with the program, with schools' contributions increasing each year they participate. In total, the Career Education Department currently receives funding from six sources to support the following initiatives.

Career Education Outreach Program
The Board continues to provide services to area secondary students in middle and high school classrooms through TWC funding as well as the two grants mentioned above. In the 2021-2022 school year 541 presentations were provided in 21 partner school districts with a total of 11,009 student engagements.

In addition, the CEO Team introduced a new tool for career exploration in fall of 2021 with the acquisition of virtual reality headsets. The new technology allows students to get a glimpse into a vast

array of occupations through a safe and judgment free space. Oculus goggles immerse viewers in a virtual world to experience simulated tasks in careers from welding to hospitality. Students can experience what an auto mechanic does during an oil change or what tools are needed by a carpenter to build a house. Almost 500 students (493) participated in virtual reality career exploration during the 2021-2022 school year.

Youth Success Program

The Board continues to provide individual career guidance to secondary students in rural school districts in the Youth Success Program through the grant from rootEd Alliance, Inc. as well as the grants and resource sharing agreements mentioned above. This program now utilizes over eight staff FTEs to serve 12 different high schools. Staff also continue to support graduating seniors who have moved into post-secondary education. Services have expanded to incorporate work-based learning services, which are facilitated by the Rural Partnership Coordinator (one of the eight staff) and include:

- Job shadowing, which allows students to see behind the scenes of local business and the day-to-day responsibilities of a person in a high demand career field. The Youth Success Advisor identifies potential career fields, and the Rural Partnerships Coordinator matches the students to regional industries and businesses.

- Mentoring, which matches professional adults from rural communities to high school seniors enrolled in Career Prep courses. The mentorship program follows evidence-based practices to ensure success and uses a standardized curriculum.

- Industry tours in which employers speak directly to students to explain the technical and employability skills needed to have a successful career within their industry. Industry tours give students the chance to gain firsthand knowledge of the multiple career pathways available within that industry and identify areas that are a good fit with their interests and preferences.

- Paid internship placements which increase accessibility to those who may not otherwise participate due to financial constraints and their need for a part-time job while in high school. Students have completed internships in a variety of high demand career fields such as welding, HVAC, CNA, automotive maintenance, and veterinarian medicine.

For the 2020-2021 school year, two of the West Central schools partnering in the Youth Success program (Clyde and Eula) had the highest postsecondary enrollment of all schools supported by the rootEd Alliance across the nation. This program is offered in 56 high schools in 4 states. In the coming year, the program will expand to 200 high schools. The postsecondary going rates for the rootED schools grew by 7% amidst a 9.2% decline nationwide.

Special Initiatives

The Career Education Department continues to provide the following activities, designed to stimulate students' career interests and connect educators with workforce resources.
- World of Work—In 2022 this returned to an in-person event following pandemic restrictions, and saw over 1990 students from 43 schools attend, featuring 142 mock interviews and booths by over 80 exhibitors (including businesses, education and training providers, and workforce readiness).

- **Careers in Action**—For the 2021-2022 school year, students from 18 schools rose to the challenge of creating 128 short videos highlighting careers in Banking & Finance, Healthcare, Manufacturing, Public Service, and Skilled Trades. Guest judges evaluated video submissions on key elements including video quality, career content, employer information, and more. Contest winners were announced during a Virtual Red Carpet Premiere that saw over $16,000 in classroom prizes awarded.
- **Teacher Summer Externship Program**— Twenty-three employer participants in 2022 hosted 25 educators including industries such as manufacturing, business, healthcare, public service, non-profit community based, and hospitality.
- **What's Next**—In 2022 over 100 seniors from 15 high schools attended and participated in interactive workshops and met with education and training providers, military representatives, employers, and community organizations.
- **Celebrate Careers Kit**—Staff continued to update this resource and make it available to area schools
- **Career Signing Day**—Staff continued to support and promote Career Signing Days at partner school districts across the region, providing key note speakers, promotional materials, and technical support

The Board's Student Hireability Navigator ("Navigator") works with TWSVRS, community partners, area school districts, and employers to increase awareness of the services available to students with disabilities. The Navigator promotes the five Pre-Employment Transition Services that are required by WIOA and provides information and resources so students with disabilities can develop effective transition plans with the special education team. The Navigator connects students with disabilities with community partners that can increase the opportunity for integration into inclusive and competitive employment opportunities and/or post-secondary success. Navigator presentations to educators, students, and parents at schools provide information that help students with disabilities access VR and other services that will empower them to pursue additional training, postsecondary education, or employment following graduation. Navigator connections with employers help them overcome challenges and perceived barriers to working with individuals with disabilities and open new opportunities.

E. Child Care and Early Learning
(40 TAC §809.12 Board Plan for Child Care Services)
Each Board must include a description of how the Board is strategically managing child care and early learning within its workforce system to enhance school readiness and strengthen and support the child care industry.
Note: This may include efforts to:
• Coordinate with employers, economic development, and other industry leaders to increase the awareness and importance of early learning as a workforce and economic development tool
• 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

Awareness of child care and the importance of early learning is promoted through the use of a brochure the Board developed that advocates Child Care Services as a solution for parents, employers and child

care providers. The brochure is provided to parents and providers by SERCO staff. It is also provided to employers by staff who work with them. The importance of child care is frequently discussed at Board meetings, and will be one of the needs discussed by the committee that will address the Board's FY21-23 Goal #1, since it is considered a necessary resource for employers and their workers. The Board periodically shares information electronically with higher education and economic development partners related to child care, including reports, events, and grant opportunities. Examples of this include the following.

- The Board was scheduled to host a Baby Boot Tour meeting prior to the pandemic that would have included representation from business, education, economic development, and community partners.
- The Board showed an excerpt from the documentary, "No Small Matter" following the February 2020 Board meeting and shared information about this documentary with multiple partners, including education, business and economic development.

The Board provided school readiness support in FY20 through the following tools/resources:
- A three session virtual miniseries for Infant, Toddler and School Age teachers, as well as a session on Positive Connections, was provided to 25 attendees.
- TRS providers were given the opportunity to apply for registration scholarships for their staff to virtually attend the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children conference. Eighteen caregivers virtually attended TxAEYC.
- A total of 65 providers received a one-year license to access online training for them and their teachers, as a means to offer training opportunities during COVID.

The Board plans to continue its support of school readiness through higher-quality care through the following initiatives in its FY21 Child Care Quality Plan.

Strategy	Description	FY21 Goal
Training on early learning and child development topics at in-service conferences.	TRS provider staff will be given the opportunity to attend a virtual in-service training prior to the beginning of the "school year" to receive training specific to emerging issues identified by TRS mentor staff throughout the year.	Goal is to have 150 teachers attend this event.
Training on early learning and child development topics through DAP Training.	TRS provider staff will be offered training on Developmentally Appropriate Practices and be given a copy of the new DAP handbook.	Goal is to have 150 teachers attend this virtual event over the course of the year.

The Board provided support to the child care industry in FY20 through the following tools/resources:
- CDA certification classes were provided by the Board (classes have been provided for the past 3 years), with scholarships, incentives, and other financial assistance offered to offset costs associated with attendance and to promote the utilization of the service. Twenty teachers received scholarships for CDA certification testing, with 19 teachers receiving stipends for passing the exam.
- Assisted with renewal of CDA certifications for four caregivers.
- Provided 38 TRS providers with a variety of equipment, materials and supplies for TRS program enhancement and COVID mitigation.
- Provided wage supplements to 95 teachers at 15 TRS provider locations.

- Provided electrostatic disinfectant sprayers, disinfectant, and carrying carts to 24 TRS providers.
- Provided 72 TRS and non-TRS providers PPE packups in order to enhance COVID mitigation.
- Purchased HiMama licenses for 25 TRS providers and, and with the onset of COVID, purchased access to Texas Child Care Tools for 80 TRS and non-TRS providers. Both software solutions are offered to enhance business practices, operations and program management.

In addition, Board staff served on the statewide TRS taskforce involved with the re-design of the TRS standards.

The Board plans to continue its support of the child care industry through the following initiatives in its FY21 Child Care Quality Plan.

Strategy	Description	FY21 Goal
Training or providing stipends toward obtaining a Child Development Associate credential through CDA Certification Courses, Certification Scholarships, and Financial Incentives.	CDA certification classes will be offered to caregivers employed by a CCS provider, with priority enrollment given to staff employed by participating TRS providers. Scholarships will be provided to cover the cost of books and certification exam. Financial incentives will be provided to caregivers passing the certification exam. Supplies to support classes will be purchased.	Goal is to have 15 teachers complete their CDA certification in FY21. To purchase notebooks and CDA books for candidates that enroll in the CDA course.
Training or providing stipends toward obtaining a Child Development Associate credential through the CDA Amnesty Program and CDA Renewal Program.	Caregivers who hold expired CDA certifications as far back as 2010 will receive technical assistance in applying for their CDA renewal and will be eligible to receive stipends to pay for the cost of renewal ($125 each). Caregivers who hold an active CDA certification will be eligible to receive stipends to pay for the cost of renewal ($125 each). First priority will be given to TRS provider staff.	Goal is to assist 3 caregivers in renewing their expired CDA certifications or renew their active CDA certifications.
Paying tuition or providing stipends to attend early education courses at local community colleges and/or universities through CDEC/ECE Scholarships/Stipends.	Caregivers who hold active CDA certifications will be given the opportunity to articulate those certifications into college credit hours by receiving a scholarship for the cost of tuition, fees and books (up to $500) to attend one class during the Spring semester at either Cisco College or Western Texas College. Upon successful completion of this class (defined as a grade of "C" or above), CC and WTC will, in turn, articulate the caregiver's CDA certification into nine credit hours, for a total of 12 credit hours earned in one semester for the cost of (1) three-hour college course. Stipend awards of $250 will be given to caregivers completing one college course and articulating their CDA certifications into college credit hours.	Goal is to have 20 caregivers with CDA certifications articulate those certifications into 9 college credit hours by taking (1) three-hour CDEC or ECE course at Cisco College or Western Texas College.

Training on early learning and child development topics including business management practices; providing reimbursement, stipends, or grants to directors to attend local, state and/or national early childhood conferences.	TRS center directors will be given the opportunity to attend a variety of training opportunities designed to enhance their business and leadership skills. Business Bootcamp training will enhance a director's business management skills. Virtual attendance at the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership's Leadership Connections Conference will provide training in the three domains of Whole Leadership – Administrative Leadership, Pedagogical Leadership and Leadership Essentials for TRS providers.	Goal is to provide training in business management and leadership to at least 20 TRS directors.
Providing reimbursement, stipends, or grants to attend local, state and/or national early childhood conferences.	TRS providers will be given the opportunity to apply for stipends for their staff to attend the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children virtual conference and the Early Learning Summit.	FY21 goal is to provide stipends to 18 caregivers to virtually attend the TxAEYC conference and provide stipends to 14 staff to cover costs associated with the Early Learning Summit.
Providing materials, equipment, and resources to assist in meeting TRS requirements through the development of child care professional career pathways and assessing qualifications to determine career lattice level.	Caregivers employed at TRS provider locations will be registered in the Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System (TECPDS). Funds will be used to hire temporary staff to create/populate TECPDS accounts.	Goal is to have approximately 200 caregivers across 45 TRS provider locations create a TECPDS account.
Providing one-time or periodic stipends or grants to incentivize TRS programs to obtain, maintain, or increase star levels.	TRS providers will receive one-time stipends at initial certification and/or upon achieving a higher star level certification.	FY21 goal is to incentivize 4 providers to either become TRS certified or gain at least one star level.
Providing materials, equipment, and resources specific to infant and toddler development.	TRS mentor/assessor staff will use the TRS CARF or the ITERS Rating Scale to evaluate infant and toddler classroom environments and purchase materials/equipment/resources based on needs identified during this assessment.	Classrooms at 27 TRS provider locations will be assessed and materials purchased to enhance the classroom environment.
Shared Services	TRS providers will be provided with back office software solutions to enhance business practices, operations and program management.	Hi Mama Licenses were renewed for 17 TRS providers.
Purchasing materials, equipment, and /or resources for early learning programs.	TRS providers will be given quarterly stipends to purchase PPE supplies specific to their center's needs.	34 TRS providers will receive a $250 stipend each quarter to help with the cost of PPE.

Update
Changes in funding have allowed the Board to provide or facilitate additional support to parents and child care providers through the following initiatives:

For Parents:
- **In order to help families of workers on the frontline of the pandemic, TWC implemented a special initiative for Essential Workers to provide child care assistance for parents who were**

working in those occupational categories during lockdowns. The Board spent **$377,000** to assist those families during that time.

- In order to further address the impacts of COVID-19 and to support Texas' continued economic recovery, TWC approved a new COVID-19 Service Industry Recovery (SIR) child care program to help low-wage workers in TWC-specified service industries. The Board has used SIR funds to serve approximately 182 children. Funds expended in FY22 total $753,942.69, with care continuing through March 2023.

For Providers:

- Through TWC's Child Care Relief Fund (CCRF) program, child care providers have received funds to assist with operating expenses. Round 2 of CCRF funds were distributed in FY22 and TWC awarded the following amounts in West Central:

Provider Type	Total Providers Invited to Apply	Total Number of Applications	Number of Applications Approved	Average Award Amount	Total Awarded
Licensed Child Care Center	101	76	74	$215,571	$15,952,258
Licensed Child Care Home	20	16	16	$23,436	$374,980
Registered Child Care Home	42	27	27	$20,801	$561,630
TOTAL	**163**	**119**	**117**	**$144,349**	**$16,888,868**

- TWC authorized funds to support a temporary payment increase in child care provider reimbursement rates. This enhancement started at the onset of the pandemic and continued for the next two years, with Board expenditures as follows:
  - BCY20--$1.05M
  - BCY21--$1.22M
  - BCY22--$1.8M

- In BCY22, TWC commissioners approved funding to support the child care industry by authorizing boards to identify staff members or hire new staff members to focus on child care business outreach and support. The Board applied for these funds to expand business service resources to support the child care industry. (Note: This initiative will continue through BCY24.) West Central received notification 9/28/22 that its grant application in the amount of $171,507 was approved. The workforce subrecipient's business services staff will provide targeted business outreach support to the child care industry, including assistance with the following:
  - sharing information about Workforce Services, WIT, CCS/TRS;
  - promoting expansion opportunities with employers and providers;
  - recruiting providers to participate in CCS/TRS;
  - provide TA on small business management;
  - promote state and local incentive and grant funding opportunities;
  - conduct outreach, education and TA to assist prospective new child care providers to create new child care operations.

- **Increased funds contracted to West Central have enabled the Board to expand the number of staff implementing quality initiatives from two (when the plan was originally developed) to four, supporting increased technical assistance, training, and mentoring of providers, with a focus on assisting Entry Level providers to become TRS-certified.**

The Board is collaborating with the Development Corporation of Abilene (DCOA) and Community Foundation of Abilene (CFA) in their study of childcare access in Abilene. The study is engaging employers and other key stakeholders to analyze the issues contributing to the shortage and possible resolutions. In their inaugural meeting contributing issues related to economic, educational, and workforce factors, among others were identified. In addition, the United Way of Abilene established a Coalition of Quality Child Care that consists of providers, representatives of public and higher education, community organizations, parents, economic development, employers, and the Board. Utilizing study results, the Coalition seeks to achieve the following outcomes:

- **Form connections among Abilene community organizations, businesses, and people**
- **Investigate issues related to childcare including the potential need for extended day and weekend childcare**
- **Recommend solutions to childcare issues in the Abilene community**
- **Report on the issues and recommendations discovered by the Abilene community**
- **Develop a list of organizations to operationalize the recommendations**
- **Motivate the larger Abilene community around childcare issues and solutions**

F. Transportation and Other Support Services
(WIOA §108(b)(11); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(10))
Boards must include a description of how the Board will provide transportation, including public transportation, and other appropriate support services in the workforce area in coordination with WIOA Title I workforce investment activities.

The Board contracts with CECT to administer workforce programs, including WIOA Title I workforce investment activities that provide support services to their customers. These programs are governed by federal and state guidance. In addition, the Board maintains local policies that provide minimum standards and promote safeguards against the misuse of funds. The Board's policy contains provisions that set documentation requirements and other parameters in the provision of support services for all workforce programs. It also sets parameters for the provision of specific types of support services, including:

- Transportation
  - Gas Money
  - Public Transit
  - Vehicular (including repairs)
- Basic Needs Assistance
- Work-Related Expense Assistance
- Other types of assistance as applicable to the various funding streams

West Central has a new website, www.wctxrides.com that allows individuals to book trips on-line that may require the use of multiple providers without having to contact multiple providers. This was a project of the RCTP (Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan) Committee, and Board staff played an instrumental role in the development of this resource.

G. Coordination of Adult Education and Literacy (AEL)
(WIOA §108(b)(13); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(12))
Boards must include a description of how the Board will coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with AEL activities under WIOA Title II. This description must include how the Board will carry out the review of local applications submitted under Title II consistent with WIOA §§107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA §232.

The Board has a long-standing partnership with the AEL provider, Abilene Adult Education. The director of AAE has been a member of the Board for several years, and works closely with Board staff as well as the subrecipient staff to coordinate services for mutual customers. AAE staff refer their customers to Workforce Solutions if they are in need of services they could potentially receive from Workforce. Likewise, workforce staff refer customers needing adult education services to AAE. Workforce staff also coordinate customer schedules with AAE and employers for those individuals attending AEL classes and participating in work-based learning.

With regard to applications for AEL services, the Board used the following process for the previous application review, and will use the same process for the next application review, pending any required changes from TWC. Upon notification from TWC, the Board Executive Director:

- designated a point of contact for the review and notified TWC of the contact at RFPgroup@twc.state.tx.us;
- identified one or more of the Board's members or staff members, one of whom was also the point of contact, to review the proposals of local AEL providers; and
- submitted to TWC for each identified reviewer the Nondisclosure and Conflict of Interest Statement (Attachment 1 of WD 20-17 Change 1) by sending an e-mail to TWC at RFPgroup@twc.state.tx.us.

Upon receipt from TWC of the narrative portion of proposals, designated individuals reviewed the proposals and provided feedback/recommendations using the AEL Local Service Provider Grant Review and Comment Form (Attachment 2 of WD 20-17 Change 1) for each proposal, which was submitted to TWC at RFPgroup@twc.state.tx.us.

Part 6: Adult, Dislocated Workers, and Youth Services
A. Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training
(WIOA §108(b)(7); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(6))
Boards must include a description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the workforce area. Boards must include a description and assessment of the type and availability of adult, dislocated worker and youth employment and training activities in the workforce area.

Boards must also include the list of assessment instruments (tools) used for adult, dislocated worker, and youth.

WIOA established two levels of services for adults and dislocated workers: career services and training services. Career and training services are available in each of the office locations. The types of career services established in the Notice of Proposed Rule-Making are basic, individualized, and follow-up.

Basic Career Services

These services are primarily self-help and informational in nature, but may require minimal staff assistance. Basic career services are made available to all job seekers. Customers accessing basic career services at a workforce center will generally receive them in the resource room, where a variety of equipment, information, and services exist to help them find or retain employment. These services include:

- Determination of whether the individual is eligible to receive assistance from the adult, dislocated worker, or youth programs
- Outreach, intake (such as RRES), and orientation to workforce services
- Initial assessment of skill levels (may include the use of fee-based tests)
- Labor exchange services such as:
    - Registration in WorkInTexas (WIT)—new, update, or viewing job postings (alone or with staff assistance)
    - Access to online job search resources
    - Information on in-demand occupations and nontraditional employment
- Labor market information including:
    - Job vacancy listings in labor market areas;
    - Information on job skills necessary to obtain the vacant jobs listed; and
    - Information relating to local occupations in demand and the earnings, skills requirements, and opportunities for advancement in those jobs
- Information on the availability of services such as:
    - Workforce programs
    - Child care
    - Child support
    - Health assistance available through Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program
    - Assistance through the earned income tax credit
    - Assistance from programs administered by HHSC such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Provision of information and assistance regarding filing claims for unemployment compensation
- Information on educational and financial aid resources
- Performance information on
    - Eligible training providers
    - Board and workforce system performance

Individualized Career Services

Individualized career services require staff assistance and go beyond self-service or informational activities. These services must be made available if determined to be appropriate in order for an individual to obtain or retain employment. Customers may receive personal on-going job search assistance from staff through WIOA-funded individualized career services. Those services include:

- Comprehensive and specialized assessment,
- Career planning/development of a Career Development Plan,
- Individual and group counseling,
- Short-term work readiness services,
- Short-term educational activities,
- Internships and work experience that are linked to careers,
- Financial literacy services, and

- Out-of-area job search and relocation assistance (these would currently have to be keyed as "207-other").

Short-term work readiness activities (also called prevocational services) should prepare a customer for unsubsidized employment. These services may be provided in classrooms or computer labs of Workforce Solutions. They may also be accomplished in a setting outside of the Center. This type of training may be provided in conjunction with other programs, activities and providers in order to accomplish the best mix of services for the customer.

Follow-Up Services
The goal of follow-up services is to ensure job retention, wage gains, and career progress for customers who have obtained unsubsidized employment. Staff may provide assistance to customers who experience difficulty in retaining employment, provide information on new or additional services at Workforce Solutions, and determine the potential need for post-participation support services. Follow-up services could include but are not limited to: additional career planning and counseling; contact with the customer's employer, including assistance with work-related problems that may arise; peer support groups; information about additional educational opportunities; and referral to or the provision of supportive services.

Training Services
Training services are available for individuals who, after interview, evaluation or assessment, and case management are determined to be unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment that leads to self-sufficiency or higher wages from previous employment through career services alone.

Customers may receive sponsorship for training opportunities, as locally available. Training services may include:
- occupational skills training, including training for nontraditional employment;
- on-the-job training (OJT), as described in WIOA §3(44);
- registered apprenticeship;
- incumbent worker training in accordance with WIOA §134(d)(4);
- workplace training and cooperative education programs;
- private sector training programs;
- skills upgrading and retraining;
- entrepreneurial training;
- job readiness training provided in combination with other training described above;
- adult education and literacy activities, including activities of English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs, in combination with training; and
- customized training.

Youth Activities
Under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, formula funds are provided to deliver a comprehensive array of youth services that focus on assisting out-of-school youth and in-school youth with one or more barriers to employment prepare for post-secondary education and employment opportunities, attain educational and/or skills training credentials, and secure employment with career/promotional opportunities. Federal rules require states and boards to focus program funds on out-of-school youth. Per WIOA regulations at §681.460, the Board makes each of the following 14 program elements available to youth participants.

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.*

2. *Alternative secondary school services, or dropout recovery services, as appropriate.*

3. *Paid and unpaid work experiences that have academic and occupational education as a component of the work experience*, which may include the following types of work experiences:
   • Summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year;
   • Pre-apprenticeship programs—a program or set of strategies designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a registered apprenticeship program and has a documented partnership with at least one, if not more, registered apprenticeship programs;
   • Internships and job shadowing;
   • OJT opportunities, as defined in WIOA §3(44).

4. *Occupational skills training, which includes priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials that align with in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the workforce area involved, if the Board determines that the programs meet the quality criteria described in WIOA §123.*
   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.

5. *Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation, occupational cluster, or career pathway.*

6. *Leadership development opportunities, including community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors.*
   Leadership development opportunities are opportunities that encourage responsibility, confidence, employability, self-determination, and other positive social behaviors, such as:
   • exposure to postsecondary educational possibilities;
   • community and service learning projects;
   • peer-centered activities, including peer mentoring and tutoring;
   • organizational and teamwork training, including team leadership training;
   • training in decision making, including determining priorities and problem solving;
   • citizenship training, including life skills training such as parenting and work behavior training;
   • civic engagement activities that promote the quality of life in a community; and
   • other leadership activities that place youth in a leadership role such as serving on youth leadership committees, such as a Standing Youth Committee.

7. *Support services, as defined in WIOA §3(59), which enable an individual to participate in WIOA activities.* These services include, but are not limited to, the following:
   • Linkages to community services;
   • Assistance with transportation;

- Assistance with child care and dependent care;
- Assistance with housing;
- Needs-related payments;
- Assistance with educational testing;
- Reasonable accommodations for youth with disabilities;
- Referrals to health care;
- Assistance with uniforms or other appropriate work attire and work-related tools, including such items as eyeglasses and protective eye gear;
- Assistance with books, fees, school supplies, and other necessary items for students enrolled in postsecondary education classes; and
- Payments and fees for employment and training-related applications, tests, and certifications.

8. Adult mentoring for a duration of at least 12 months that may occur both during and after program participation.

Adult mentoring for youth must:
- be a formal relationship between a youth participant and an adult mentor that includes structured activities in which the mentor offers guidance, support, and encouragement to develop the competence and character of the youth;
- include a mentor who is an adult other than the assigned youth case manager; and
- at a minimum, match the youth with an individual mentor with whom the youth interacts on a face-to-face basis.

Group mentoring activities and mentoring through electronic means are allowable as part of mentoring activities. Mentoring may include workplace mentoring in which the local program matches a youth participant with an employer or employee of a company.

9. Follow-up services for not fewer than 12 months after the completion of participation.

Follow-up services are critical services provided after a youth's exit from the program to help ensure the youth is successful in employment and/or postsecondary education and training. Follow-up services for youth may include:
- leadership development opportunities and support services;
- regular contact with a youth participant's employer, including assistance in addressing work-related problems;
- assistance in securing better-paying jobs, career pathway development, and further education or training;
- work-related peer support groups;
- adult mentoring;
- supportive services;
- financial literacy education;
- services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local workforce area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services; and
- services necessary to ensure the success of youth participants in employment and/or postsecondary education.

10. *Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling, as well as referrals to counseling, as appropriate to the needs of the individual youth.*
Comprehensive guidance and counseling is individualized counseling to participants that includes career and academic counseling, drug and alcohol abuse counseling, mental health counseling, and referral to partner programs, as appropriate. When referring participants to necessary counseling that cannot be provided by the Board, the Board must coordinate with the organization it refers to in order to ensure continuity of service.

11. *Financial literacy education.* The financial literacy education program element may include any of the following activities that:
    - support the ability of participants to create budgets, initiate checking and savings accounts, and make informed financial decisions;
    - support participants in learning how to effectively manage spending, credit, and debt, including student loans, consumer credit, and credit cards;
    - teach participants about the significance of credit reports and credit scores, what their rights are regarding their credit and financial information, how to determine the accuracy of a credit report and how to correct inaccuracies, and how to improve or maintain good credit;
    - support a participant's ability to understand, evaluate, and compare financial products, services, and opportunities and to make informed financial decisions;
    - educate participants about identity theft, ways to protect themselves from identify theft, and how to resolve cases of identity theft and in other ways understand their rights and protections related to personal identity and financial data;
    - support activities that address the particular financial literacy needs of non-English speaking participants, including providing support through the development and distribution of multilingual financial literacy and education materials; and
    - support activities that address the particular financial literacy needs of youth with disabilities, including connecting them to benefits planning and work incentives counseling.

12. *Entrepreneurial skills training.* Entrepreneurial skills training provides the basics of starting and operating a small business. Such training must develop the skills associated with entrepreneurship, including, but not limited to, the ability to: take initiative; creatively seek out and identify business opportunities; develop budgets and forecast resource needs; understand various options for acquiring capital and the trade-offs associated with each option; and communicate effectively and market oneself and one's ideas.
Approaches to teaching youth entrepreneurial skills include, but are not limited to, the following:
    - Entrepreneurship education that provides an introduction to the values and basics of starting and running a business.
    - Enterprise development, which provides support and services that incubate and help youth develop their own businesses.
    - Experiential programs that provide youth with experience in the day-to-day operation of a business.

13. *Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the workforce area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services.*

Career awareness activities include providing information on a variety of careers and occupations available, their skill requirements, working conditions and training prerequisites, and job opportunities across a wide range of industry sectors. Career counseling or guidance may include advice and support in making decisions about what career paths to take, providing information about résumé preparation, interview skills, potential opportunities for job shadowing, and the long-term benefits of postsecondary education and training (for example, increased earning power and career mobility).

14. *Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training.*
Postsecondary preparation and transition activities and services prepare ISY and OSY for advancement to postsecondary education after attaining a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent. Postsecondary education includes many kinds of education and training programs, including technical college degree and certification programs, apprenticeships, two- and four-year public and private colleges and universities, trade schools, and more.
Transition planning may include, but is not limited to, programs designed to expand access to college and other postsecondary institutions, particularly for youth facing barriers to enrollment. Activities may focus on improving academic readiness, identifying postsecondary strengths and interests, and helping with applying for college and institutional admission or financial aid.
Common activities include, but are not limited to:
- individualized career planning;
- career shadowing;
- postsecondary education options exploration, including technical schools, community colleges, four-year colleges and universities, and registered apprenticeship programs;
- postsecondary education admissions counseling;
- postsecondary education application assistance;
- postsecondary education financial aid assistance;
- fields of study guidance;
- postsecondary education campus visits;
- postsecondary education entrance exam (SAT/ACT) preparation; and
- study skills workshops and parent support workshops.

The Board allows use of ITAs for youth however, co-enrollment may occur between WIOA Adult and Youth programs to expand access to training and support services.

Assessments
CECT provides an objective assessment of academic levels, skill levels, and service needs of each participant, which includes a review of basic skills, occupational skills, prior work experience, employability, interests, aptitudes, supportive service needs, and developmental needs. Assessments also consider an individual's strengths rather than just focusing on areas that need improvement. The table below provides a list of the assessment tools used to achieve these objectives.

Assessment Tool Name	Assessment Tool Purpose
eSkill	Used to evaluate skill levels of customers who are interested in changing career paths. Provides individuals with insight into different career paths. Also used as a supplemental literacy test, and contains a typing test component.

TABE	Literacy assessment. When the need arises to measure EFL gains after program enrollment under the measurable skill gains indicator, this NRS-approved assessment is used for both the EFL pre- and post-test to determine an individual's educational functioning level.
O*NET My Next Move	Enables users to explore occupations, job outlook information, salaries, and other related education and training programs. Includes an online career assessment called the "Interest Profiler" with 60 questions targeted to help individuals learn what they like to do. Used to help customers explore occupational options and to correlate occupational interest for customers requesting training services.
Gallup StrengthsFinder	Helps individuals identify their strengths and talents, and discover what they naturally do best. Assists in service delivery for the customer by determining the support services and career pathways that are appropriate for the individual.

A thorough objective assessment includes a review of:
- Education level and goals
- Work history and job skills
- Employment goals
- WIT registration and job search history
- Transportation and backup
- Childcare needs and backup
- Living situation
- Life circumstances
- Background-criminal history
- Support system
- Health concerns for self and family
- Military background
- Results of tests, skills assessments and interest inventories
- Any other concerns

In addition to formal tools, informal methods are used to gather the data necessary to complete the assessment. Informal assessment data is comprised of information gathered from Intake Common, Assessment Optional Questions, information in WorkInTexas, and interview questions. The list below of interview questions may be asked when conducting the assessment (this list is not all-inclusive).

Assessment Questions

Employment Goals
- What kind of work would you like to do long term?
- What kind of work would you like to do right now?
- How fast do you see yourself going back to work?

Job Search
- How long have you been looking for work?
- Where have you applied?
- Have you had any interviews?

- What challenges have you faced in your current job search?
- About how many hours per day do you spend on job search? How many days per week?
- How do you think can Workforce Solutions help you with your job search?

Employment
- Describe your last three paid jobs.
- What was your job title?
- What was the length of time on the job?
- Was it full time or part time?
- Describe what you did?
- Did you receive any raises or promotions?
- Reasons for leaving?
- What would this employer say about you if I asked for a reference?
- What jobs have you done from time to time to make extra money?
- What work have you done without pay to help in your church, kids' school or community?
- What jobs have you done without pay to help family, friends or others?
- What did you like most about working?
- What did you not like about working?

Education
- What is the highest grade you've completed?
- Do you have a high school diploma?
- Do you have a GED?
- What other schooling or training have you had since high school?
  o Community College
  o Job Corps
  o Four-year college
  o Trade school
  o Military
  o Other
- Are you currently in school or training? If so, where?
- Do you have any certificates of training or occupational license? (For example C.N.A., cosmetologist, contractor) If so, what kind?
- When did you receive the certificate or license?
- What educational goals do you have?

Background
- Do you have any background that impact your ability to find or keep work?
- Do you have court ordered requirements?
  o Restrictions to work schedule?
  o Restrictions to where and when you may work?
  o Community service hours?
  o Limits to how you are able to look for work?

Family Situation
- How many people are living in your household? How many are children?
- Which of the following describes your household?
  o Two Parent   Single Parent   Teen Parent

- Are you responsible for caring for a disabled person on a daily basis?
- Who in your household would encourage your working?
- Who in your household would discourage your working?
- Other than people in your household, what other people would encourage your working?
- What help do you think you could get from family and friends?

Military
- Did you serve in the military?
- Do you have access to your DD214?
- Under what circumstances did you separate?

Transportation
- How do you currently get around?
  o Do you currently have steady, reliable transportation?
  o Do you have a working vehicle?
- Are you familiar with the City Link bus system?
  o Do you live on/ near a bus route?

B. Priority to Recipients of Public Assistance and Low-Income Individuals
(20 CFR §679.560(b)(21))
Boards must include the Board policy to ensure that priority for adult individualized career services and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient, consistent with WIOA §134(c)(3)(E) and §680.600 of the Final Regulations, as well as veterans and foster youth, according to the priority order outlined in the WIOA Guidelines for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth. Boards must also include a list of any Board-established priority groups, if any.

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

In order for customers to receive individualized career services (or training services), they must meet either Dislocated Worker (DW) eligibility, or basic eligibility and criteria for one of the Adult priority groups. DW eligibility requirements are located in the TWC WIOA Guidelines. Adult basic eligibility requirements are:
- Age 18 or older,
- Authorization to work in the U.S. as a citizen or noncitizen, and
- Selective service registration requirements (males only).

The Adult priority groups include:
- The three following federally-defined groups:
  o Public assistance recipients,
  o Other low-income adults,
  o Individuals who are basic skills deficient, and
- The two following Board-defined local groups:
  o Individuals with a disability,

o Individuals whose family income is above the WIOA Income Guidelines but below the Board's Self-Sufficiency Wage.

For individualized career or training services, staff will first determine if the customer is in one of the federal WIOA priority groups. Customers will initially be prioritized according to whether they meet criteria for one of the 3 WIOA Adult priority groups—low income, public assistance, or basic skills deficient. Since the Board's two additional priority groups, individuals with a disability, and individual with non-self-sufficient income are not WIOA-mandated priorities, those individuals would be subsequent to anyone in the first 3 priority groups. Following this determination, staff will make services available in this order:

1. Eligible veterans (first) and eligible foster youth (second) who are also in the low income, public assistance, or basic skills deficient priority groups;
2. Other individuals who are low income, receiving public assistance, or basic skills deficient;
3. Eligible veterans (first) and eligible foster youth (second) who have a disability;
4. Other individuals who have a disability,
5. Eligible veterans (first) and eligible foster youth (second) whose household income is above the WIOA Income Limit but below the Board's Self-Sufficiency Wage, and
6. Other individuals whose household income is above the WIOA Income Limit but below the Board's Self-Sufficiency Wage.

Part 7: Fiscal Agent, Grants, and Contracts
A. Fiscal Agent
(WIOA §108(b)(15); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(14))
Boards must include identification of the entity responsible for the disbursal of grant funds described in WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III), as determined by the CEOs or the governor under WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i).

The Board contracts with Region XIV Education Service Center, located at 1850 Hwy 351, in Abilene to provide fiscal agent services, which includes disbursal of grant funds and payroll and benefit administration for Board staff. Region XIV provides fiscal management services for the workforce subrecipient as well.

B. Sub-Grants and Contracts
(WIOA §108(b)(16); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(15))
Boards must include a description of the competitive process that will be used to award the sub-grants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities.

The Board contracts with procured service providers for the provision of workforce and child care services using the following procurement process.

- Develop an RFP based on the requirements of the FMGC, request notice of intent letters, offer the opportunity to ask questions and provide answers to potential bidders.
- The RFP is posted on the Board's website and notices are automatically sent to all interested vendors through the website. Typical timeline allows 8 to 10 weeks for response.
- Responses are reviewed by external evaluators.
- Recommendations are developed and presented to the Executive Committee; a final decision is made by Board vote.

RFP documents are designed to ensure fair competition for a variety of management models, including managing director, private consultants and corporations and allow for contracting with an entity for up to

four years, based on the Board's discretion of whether to renew the contract. Typically, the Board reconsiders the contract after the first year with a new provider, and then extends the contract for an additional one to two years based on performance for up to two additional terms, not to exceed a total of four years. The Board's subrecipients may directly hire staff or may subcontract with a professional employment entity to hire staff to provide services. The Board's competitive process complies with the procurement requirements in the TWC FMGC and in the Agency-Board Agreement.

Part 8: Performance
A. Board Performance Targets
(WIOA §108(b)(17); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(16))
Boards must include a description of the local levels of performance negotiated with TWC and the CEOs consistent with WIOA §116(c), to be used to measure the performance of the area and to be used by the Board for measuring the performance of the local fiscal agent (where appropriate), eligible providers under WIOA Title I subtitle B, and the one-stop delivery system in the area.

The following WIOA performance targets have been contracted to the Board for BCY21. These are subsequently contracted to the workforce subrecipient.

Measure	Target
Employed Q2 Post Exit - Adult	76.5%
Employed Q4 Post Exit – Adult	68.3%
Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit – Adult	$5000
Credential Rate – Adult	65.4%
Measurable Skills Gains – Adult	45.8%
Employed Q2 Post Exit – DW	85.8%
Employed Q4 Post Exit – DW	82.1%
Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit – DW	$6600
Credential Rate – DW	87.5%
Measurable Skills Gains – DW	61.3%
Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit - Youth	69.9%
Employed/Enrolled Q4 Post Exit - Youth	71.1%
Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit – Youth	$3300
Credential Rate – Youth	28.5%
Measurable Skills Gains – Youth	20%

Per WD Letter 05-19, "On November 26, 2018, the Commission approved removing the minimum performance standards from the criteria for determining the initial and continued eligibility of training programs." Additionally, "Once sufficient baseline data are gathered, the data will be analyzed and evaluated for purposes of proposing new state performance standards for Commission approval. TWC recommends that Boards not establish performance standards until that time." Based on this recommendation, the Board has suspended its training provider performance requirements until TWC establishes new standards.

Part 9: Training and Services
A. Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)
(WIOA §108(b)(19); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(18))
Boards must include a description of how training services outlined in WIOA §134 will be provided through the use of ITAs, including, if contracts for training services will be used, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of ITAs under that chapter, and how the Board will ensure

informed customer choice in the selection of training programs, regardless of how the training services are to be provided.

Training services are provided through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for individuals who, after interview, evaluation or assessment, and case management are determined to be unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment that leads to self-sufficiency or higher wages from previous employment through career services alone. At this time the Board is opting to not use contracts for training services. The customer must be determined to be in need of training services and to possess the skills and qualifications to successfully participate in the selected program. Requirements for receiving training services include:

- Determination of eligibility for DW or Adult priority-funded groups,
- A complete assessment of skills, abilities, aptitudes, and barriers;
- Development of a Career Development Plan; and
- Documentation in case notes regarding the need and justification for providing training services and that the customer meets the following requirements:
  - ➢ the training institution's enrollment stipulations (such as an acceptance letter),
  - ➢ pre-requisites for the training program,
  - ➢ support systems needed for successful completion,
  - ➢ an inability to obtain sufficient grant assistance from other sources to pay the full costs of training, and
  - ➢ additional funding needed, if the ITA will not finance all training costs.

As part of the assessment discussion staff review local labor market information and training options to enable the customer to make the most informed choice possible.

Staff assist customers in navigating the Eligible Training Provider List as part of the process for researching and choosing the training program that best addresses their needs. Staff must also provide performance and cost information relating to Eligible Training Providers. Staff may conduct a search for all providers in this workforce area and/or narrow the search to indicate a specific training program, training provider, or occupation. All WIOA customers desiring financial training assistance through an ITA must select a training program from the ETPL. WIOA funds may not be expended for training programs until the program is certified by TWC for inclusion on the Statewide List. The customer is free to choose the training program/entity, provided that it:

- Offers the course they have been approved to attend,
- Is geographically appropriate in terms of their needs,
- Accepts them for study, and
- Offers the most overall cost-effective training for that individual.

Case notes must document staff efforts for helping the customer to make an informed choice and include the rationale for selecting the training program.

B. ITA Limitations
(20 CFR §663.420)
Boards may impose limits on the duration and amount of ITAs. If the state or Board chooses to do so, the limitations must be described in the Board Plan, but must not be implemented in a manner that undermines WIOA's requirement that training services are to be provided in a manner that maximizes

customer choice in the selection of an Eligible Training Provider. Exceptions to ITA limitations may be provided for individual cases and must be described in Board policies.

The following information is the Board's policy for limiting the duration and amount of ITAs.

Customers may not be sponsored for training or education programs beyond the associate degree level, and the ITA may not exceed $12,000. Exceptions to this limit may be made on a case-by-case basis, with the approval of the Project Director. Customers must also maintain a full course schedule of at least 12 hours. Under special circumstances, the individual may obtain permission from staff to take less than 12 hours. This is given if, for example, the school offers insufficient courses or if the student is working full-time.

Update
On April 20, 2022, the Board voted to remove cost limits for ITAs, and to allow the workforce contractor to manage ITA costs through budgeting and service delivery planning.

In addition, it is the Board's policy to allow ITA sponsorship of any program on the Statewide List for any occupation that trains for an occupation listed on the West Central Targeted Occupations List, or listed on the Targeted Occupations List of another board area to which the customer is willing (and will attest in writing) to commute or relocate.

Part 10: Apprenticeship
A. Registered Apprenticeship Programs
Boards must include a description of how the Board will encourage Registered Apprenticeship programs in its workforce area to register with the Eligible Training Provider System in order to receive WIOA funding.

The Board is not aware of any such programs at this time. However, the Board has formed a partnership with WE CAN TX, a statewide network of regional education-workforce partnerships collaborating to develop innovative, modern apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities for underrepresented students while meeting the needs of employers. The Board is looking to develop its capacity as a backbone organization to support work-based learning within an industry-sector context. Educate Texas will launch WE CAN TX in 2021 with a cohort of approximately 10 regional partnerships – comprised of K-12, community college, employers, and workforce organizations – that will receive technical assistance and engage in peer learning. Innovations that will be deployed include: expanding dual credit and CTE course sequences, introducing innovative work-based course structures that use jobs as a learning lab, and leveraging virtual learning tools to expand access to apprenticeships. The work-based courses are based on similar programs launched in Kentucky by Jobs for the Future.

In addition, Board staff is currently researching ways to develop youth apprenticeships in this area and participate in the Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship (PAYA) learning network. PAYA convenes collective networks of national, state, and regional partners to:
- Improve public understanding of the benefits of high-quality American youth apprenticeship;
- Disseminate better information about the conditions and strategies necessary for success and sustainability of youth apprenticeship partnerships; and
- Support high-quality, youth apprenticeship partnerships in more places.

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

The Board has participated in several conferences and webinars related to ApprenticeshipTexas, but is not aware of any activities in the region at this time. However, the Board has formed a partnership with WE CAN TX, a statewide network of regional education-workforce partnerships collaborating to develop innovative, modern apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities for underrepresented students while meeting the needs of employers. The Board is looking to develop its capacity as a backbone organization to support work-based learning within an industry-sector context. Educate Texas will launch WE CAN TX in 2021 with a cohort of approximately 10 regional partnerships – comprised of K-12, community college, employers, and workforce organizations – that will receive technical assistance and engage in peer learning. Innovations that will be deployed include: expanding dual credit and CTE course sequences, introducing innovative work-based course structures that use jobs as a learning lab, and leveraging virtual learning tools to expand access to apprenticeships. The work-based courses are based on similar programs launched in Kentucky by Jobs for the Future.

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- Improve public understanding of the benefits of high-quality American youth apprenticeship;
- Disseminate better information about the conditions and strategies necessary for success and sustainability of youth apprenticeship partnerships; and
- Support high-quality, youth apprenticeship partnerships in more places.

Part 11: Public Comment
Boards must include a description of the process used by the Board, consistent with WIOA §108(d), 20 CFR §679.550(b) and §679.560(b) and (e), to:
- **make copies of the proposed local plan available to the public through electronic and other means, such as public hearings and local news media;**
- **include an opportunity for comment by members of the public, including representatives of business, labor organizations, and education;**
- **provide at least a 15-day, but no more than a 30-day period for comment on the plan before its submission to TWC, beginning on the date that the proposed plan is made available, before its submission to TWC; and**
- **submit any comments that express disagreement with the plan to TWC along with the plan.**

A notice of the availability of the plan was published in the Abilene Reporter News, the regional newspaper, and on the Board's website on Wednesday, February 10, 2021 (the notice on the website remained there for the duration of the comment period). The notice indicated that the draft plan would be discussed at the Board meeting on Wednesday, February 17, 2021. (Note: Due to the unprecedented winter storm that impacted the entire state of Texas during the week of the regularly scheduled Board meeting, the meeting was rescheduled for the following week. The notice on the Board's website was updated to reflect the change in the meeting date.)
  i.   Date of publication – February 10, 2021
  ii. Final date of 15-day comment period – February 24, 2021
  iii. Name and address of publication: Abilene Reporter News, 101 Cypress, Abilene, Texas   79601

   iv.   Date of public hearing – February 24, 2021
    v.   Interested parties could obtain a copy of the plan by calling or sending an e-mail to the Board's designated contact person. A copy of the plan was also made available on the Board's website, on the following page: www.wfswct.org/publicinfo
   vi.   Written comments could be submitted electronically, via fax or delivered via mail or in person to the Board offices at 500 Chestnut, Ste. 1200 in Abilene.

A notice of the availability of the plan was also posted to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn, and was also sent to the Board's newsletter list.

Comments received about the Board's plan: There were no comments received.

The plan update was approved by a vote of the full Board on February 24, 2021. It was also approved by the Board's Chief Elected Officials Workforce Committee via email notification to the Board's Executive Director.

Update
A notice of the availability of the plan was published on the Board's website on Tuesday, January 17, 2023 (the notice remained there for the duration of the comment period). The notice indicated that the draft plan would be discussed at the Board meeting on Wednesday, February 15, 2023. A notice of the availability of the plan was also posted to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn, and was also sent to the Board's newsletter list.
    i.   **Date of publication – January 17, 2023**
   ii.   **Final date of 30-day comment period – February 15, 2023**
  iii.   **Date of public hearing – February 15, 2023**
  iv.   **Interested parties could obtain a copy of the plan by calling or sending an e-mail to the Board's designated contact person. A copy of the plan was also made available on the Board's website, on the following page: www.wfswct.org/publicinfo**
    v.   **Written comments could be submitted electronically, via fax or delivered via mail or in person to the Board offices at 500 Chestnut, Ste. 1200 in Abilene.**

Comments received about the Board's plan: There were no comments received.

Plan approval: The plan update was approved by a vote of the full Board on February 15, 2023.

Appendix: Texas Workforce Investment Council Requirements
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: Focus on Employers
By accessing critical education and labor data sets, employers can better find and plan for skilled workers to meet their needs in both the immediate time frame and the future. Through greater engagement with employers, education and training providers can better design career and technical education content and delivery options that are more aligned with industry needs. Providers can make

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

The Board has played an integral role in developing the manufacturing industry cluster through its collaboration with the Big Country Manufacturing Alliance (BCMA). BCMA was formed in early 2017 through the efforts of the Board and area manufacturers. The structure of BCMA focuses on employers as central drivers with support provided by partners from economic development, higher education, secondary education and workforce. The goal is to provide an opportunity to hear from employers regarding their specific needs and then work toward training alignment to meet those needs. As the first recognized NextGen Manufacturing Partnership in Texas, BCMA provides a single voice to support partners, identify education and training needs, build relationships between manufacturers, and highlight manufacturing capabilities in this workforce area.

Additional details regarding this partnership, its accomplishments, current initiatives, and future goals are found in Section 4.C on pages 54-55.

System Goal 2: 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.

Alignment of core programs and activities with the overall West Central Texas community is achieved through engaging in collaboratives that bring together partners who share common customers with the workforce system. The Board partners with many entities for the purpose of leveraging resources, exchanging information, and aligning services to reduce duplication and expand pathways to workforce programs and services. More detail about these partnerships, including the Student HireAbility Navigator, is found in Section 1.B, on page 9.

System Goal 3: 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.

The Board supports alignment of services through its work with partner entities to expand access to employment and activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential. These partnerships promote a pipeline for skilled and credentialed workers to fill employer gaps. Though alignment of services through partnerships is discussed throughout the plan, the best examples of this activity are found in Section 3.B, on page 45.

System Goal 4: 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.

WSWCTB applied for the Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialist Pilot Project in 2019 and received a grant to hire and strategically locate a team of five Career and Education Outreach Specialists ("CEO Team" or "Specialists") throughout the region. The Specialists have a presence in middle and high school classrooms in 25 partner school districts across the 19-county region. The Specialists expose, educate, and engage students in career exploration and career decision making through classroom presentations, workshops, individual meetings, guest speakers from business, education and community partners, and visits to local businesses and college campuses. A new sibling program, "rootEd", has recently been added to this initiative. In 2020, the Board applied for and received a $1.5M grant from rootEd Alliance, Inc. a collaborative philanthropic effort that seeks to clear the path to a stronger future for students in rural America. Through a network of partners, rootEd provides advice, exposure and access to college and career opportunities to students in high school and college. More detail about these programs is located in Section 5.D., on pages 66-68.