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**LOCAL BOARD PLAN**  
**PROGRAM YEARS 2021-2024**

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## PART 1: STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

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

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### *BOARDS' VISION*

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

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas (Board) Mission: To be a driving force in the area to provide employers with workforce support for the economic benefit of the communities we serve. The Board has guidance and oversight responsibility for workforce development services in Bowie, Cass, Delta, Franklin, Hopkins, Lamar, Morris, Red River and Titus Counties. The Board is committed to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency within the Northeast Texas region. The Board's strategic plan for workforce development services is fully aligned with the Texas Workforce Commission's Combined State Plan for PY 2021-2024.

The Board applies a "systems approach" to address workforce development challenges. To fully address these issues, the Board developed a structure that cuts across the disciplines of economic development, education, and employment & training programs. The Board understands that coordination of the disciplines is absolutely necessary to create a system to effectively deliver services.

In partnership with the Board of Directors and Chief Elected Officials, Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas will continue to prepare an educated and skilled workforce that responds to employer needs.

As the leader for workforce development for the area, the role of Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas is to bring together the key stakeholders in the region to partner in an efficient and effective manner to produce results aimed at supporting economic growth and self-sufficiency. The Board has partnerships and a memorandum of understanding with both required and optional partners.

The Board has developed a number of guiding principles and goals to accomplish the strategic plan and adhere to the ideals of the strategic vision.

1. Employer Driven – Employers are the Board's primary customer, therefore employer engagement and participation is vital to every aspect of the plan. The Board will

continue to engage regional employers and provide insightful information and resources on the workforce system. The Board will collaborate with education partners to align training programs to meet employer workforce needs.

- Expand outreach within employer community: The Board will work with the Contracted Service Provider and Business Services Unit to expand outreach to the employers in Northeast Texas. The Board will explore additional methods for providing information on workforce development services, highlighting the positive impact they can have on employers. Identify industries and employers that have not utilized workforce services in the past, as potential customers.
  - Employer Seminars: Explore the possibility of holding Employer Seminars to address questions about topics such as Employment Law, Workforce Services, Training Funds, and Training Programs. The Board will partner with Community Colleges, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Corporations, and Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM) groups.
  - Employer Feedback: The Business Services Unit currently uses a combination of surveys and face-to-face meetings to gather employer feedback. The Board will explore methods to enhance this feedback by working with partners such as Economic Development Corporations and Chambers of Commerce. The Board will create a database of employer feedback, which will be used as guidance in workforce development activities.
2. Shared Action and Shared Success through Partnerships - The Board recognizes that no single entity can affect all of the desired change in the region. The Board's role is not to do everything, but to convene the necessary stakeholders and foster partnerships to do the right work – and then share the recognition for success.
- Continue to convene Advisory Groups to discuss regional economic growth: The Board has three Advisory Groups that meet on a regular basis to discuss regional economic growth. The College Presidents' Round Table, Education and Training Advisory Group, and Workforce and Economic Development Advisory Group meet with the purpose of discussing regional challenges and opportunities. The Board will continue to explore ways for these groups to work together to further regional economic success.
  - Communicate success through website, newsletter, and social media: The Board understands the importance of recognizing success as a way to build momentum and strengthen partnerships. The Board will continue to recognize partnerships through its website, social media, annual report, and annual awards banquet. The Board will also explore additional methods for identifying and recognizing workforce success stories. The Board is exploring ways to modernize outreach and customer connection. The Board's new podcast, This Week in Workforce, highlights workforce services, success stories, and partners throughout the region. Additionally, the Board is planning to create a success stories video series to further communicate the success of workforce customers, programs, and partners.
  - Expand partnership network: The Board will expand the current partnership network. The Board will explore potential new members for Advisory Groups and enhance the current communication plan to ensure all partners are aware of

workforce activities within the region. The Board will continue to utilize social media, surveys, and the website to communicate with partners.

3. Preparing an Educated and Skilled Workforce – The Board will take steps to increase the technical skills of the regional workforce. A pipeline of workers with technical skillsets is essential to fill current job openings, replace retiring workers, allow current companies to expand operations, and to attract new industry. These strategies will target adult learners, post-secondary students, PreK/K-12 students, out of school youth, foster youth and individuals with barriers to employment.
  - Increase awareness among In-School (IS) and Out-of-School (OS) Youth about the job market in Northeast Texas and the importance of technical skills: The Board will continue to increase outreach to students, parents, and teachers, making the connection between technical skillsets and job opportunities. Expand career exploration tools, focusing on internet based options, including the Board's website and career video series. The Board will continue to hold the LEAP Career Expo for area 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and Careers in Texas Industries event for high school juniors, and explore ways to add value for the students. Additional planned events include virtual career exploration for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and the Future Forward events for high school seniors. The Workforce Commission Initiatives funding allows the Board to host these events across the region each year.
  - Pathways to College and Careers: The Board's workforce and career education outreach program is designed to connect area students with workforce and training information. Workforce specialist staff members work directly with 12 school districts in the region. Staff provide students with labor market information on local career pathways, occupation wages, and community college programs. Additionally, staff prepare students for the transition from high school by providing workshops on resume writing, interviewing, job search, and workplace expectations. In addition to the partner schools, staff make presentations on career exploration to other schools throughout the region and at the Region 8 Education Service Center.
  - Work with Community College partners to increase number of degree/certificate completers: Although the number of Northeast Texas residents with a certificate or degree has increased over the past several years, there is still room to improve. The Board will work with Community Colleges and other workforce partners to determine reasons for non-completers, and work to move those students towards degree/certificate completion.
  - Emphasize Career Pathways: The Board will continue to develop and improve career pathway information for the region. The Board will work with Community Colleges, K-12 Educators, employers, and other workforce partners to develop a set of relevant career pathways for the region. Information about the Northeast Texas Career Pathway Model will be provided to all school districts in the region.
  - Utilize Technology to Connect with Students: The Board will continue to expand the use of social media and other relevant forms of technology to connect with regional students. The Board will provide students with information about the local labor market, career exploration, local training options, and workforce

services. As part of the Pathways to College and Careers program, the Board has a set of Virtual Reality headsets with corresponding career exploration software. The Career and Education Specialists use these devices to help students explore more than 20 different careers in the virtual world. Students get a virtual hands-on experience through processes like lock-out tag-out, oil changes, and welding. Staff utilizes these VR headsets in the classroom, during presentations, and at Board youth expos.

- Early Education Services: Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas believes preparing an educated and skilled workforce starts in the area's child care centers. The heart of child care quality improvement lies within proper training for directors and teachers. Proper training, even if it is repetitive, encourages child care professionals to implement quality practices in their centers and classrooms. Although training is paramount, child care centers must also have the proper tools to create successful learning environments. The Board provides approximately 5 trainings per month for child care providers and staff, as well as creative and fun curriculum to aid teachers with curriculum implementation. The training provided is for children birth to Kindergarten as well as after school activities for school age students. Pre-K curriculum is a main focus for training to help prepare children to be school ready when they enter the public education system. All training provided ensures child care staff and directors meet the required number of training hours to maintain licensing requirements. The Board also partners with child care providers to offer training for parents.
- Teacher Externships: The Teacher Externship program matches teachers with local employers for a week long job shadowing program. Teachers will be matched with employers related to their area of instruction. Teachers will work alongside several workers and learn various aspects of each operation. Participants will then create a lesson plan for their students, incorporating what they learned during the externship. After the externships, many teachers plan to adjust many of their lesson plans to better match industry needs. This experience will allow the teachers to better prepare their students for the local workforce. The Board has offered the Teacher Externship program for two years. The first year a total of 10 teachers participated, with 15 completing the program in year 2.

4. Service Delivery – The Board will continue to support an integrated and seamless service delivery model for workforce services. The Board will explore methods for expanding and enhancing service delivery.

- Utilize Technology to Enhance Service Delivery: The Board will continue to expand the use of text messages and social media, using both to connect with job seekers and employers. The Board has created a variety of videos as virtual alternatives to in-person workshops. Video workshops on the following topics can be found on the Board's website and YouTube channel:
  - Resume Creation
  - Applications
  - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Employment Planning Sessions (EPS)
  - Texas Unemployment Benefits

- The Ex-Offenders Guide to Finding Employment
- Financial Literacy: Bank On It
- Financial Literacy: Charge it Right
- Rapid Response
- Interview Basics
- Rapid Re-Employment Services

In addition to these videos, Board staff are considering additional topics including Small Business/Entrepreneurship, Business Plans, Child Care, Employer Services, and Youth Services. The Board also offers live workshop options via Zoom. Workshop dates and times are posted on the Board's website and shared through social media. The Board has developed a Mobile App to compliment the Board's website, which provides information about available services.

The Board has upgraded virtual service delivery in a number of ways, including a new chat feature on the website. The ChatBot allows customers to easily get answers to their questions. Staff review all questions and answers to provide adjustments to the feature and improve the answers given. The Board has also added a public WiFi connection at all four workforce centers. This allows customers to access high speed internet from their own device for job search, webinars, training, and interviews. These Wi-Fi networks can be accessed at any time, and even from the parking lot, in the event the customer needs access when the workforce center is closed.

The Board has added Career Connection Kiosks to the five counties in Northeast Texas that do not have a workforce center. The kiosks are located in three county libraries and two county offices. The kiosks include a touch screen computer, keyboard, and printer. Customers can access information on workforce services through the kiosks. The kiosks will serve as a connecting point in these counties and a small part of a bigger plan to expand services throughout the region.

The Board's ability to product virtual content has been significantly expanded and improved. The Board has a new podcast, This Week in Workforce, highlighting the availability of workforce services, events, and partners. Additionally, the Board plans to expand video and virtual services moving forward.

- Career Expos: Continue to hold annual Career Expos and hiring events throughout the region. The Board will explore ways to improve and enhance the career expo for both the employers and job seekers. Additionally, the Board will gather feedback from employers and job seekers on ways to improve expos. The Board has also expanded single employer hiring events. Whether the employer hosts the event at their location or at their local workforce center, the Board promotes the event to area job seekers through direct messaging and social media. Staff also assist the employers during the events.
- Integrate Workforce Partners into Service Delivery at the Local Level: The Board will continue to explore ways to integrate workforce partners into service delivery. The Board will partner with local banks to provide Financial Literacy



classes at each of the workforce centers. The Board partners with a local Adult Education and Literacy contractor to provide high school equivalency instruction in a classroom setting in the Greater Texarkana Workforce Center. Additionally, the Board has fully integrated Vocational Rehabilitation staff into the Northeast Workforce Centers. Workforce staff and Vocational Rehabilitation staff work together on job placement initiatives and customer referrals. The Board has also implemented a rural service delivery model to reach job seekers in the 5 counties of Northeast Texas that do not have a workforce center. As part of this effort, the Board has added Career Connection Kiosks in these counties. The kiosks are located in three county libraries and two county offices. The kiosks include a touch screen computer, keyboard, and printer. Customers can access information on workforce services through the kiosks. The Board will explore ways to increase these types of partnership into service delivery.

- Individuals with Barriers to Employment: The Board and Contracted Service Provider staff will work with individuals whom have barriers to employment, by working to place them in positions to succeed. WIOA identifies 15 types of barriers to employment, including:
  - Displaced homemakers (as defined in WIOA sec. 3(16));
  - Low-income individuals (as defined in WIOA sec. 3(36));
  - Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians (as defined in WIOA sec. 166(b));
  - Individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities (as defined in WIOA sec. 3(25) (includes individuals who are in receipt of Social Security Disability Insurance);
  - Older individuals (age 55 and older) (as defined in WIOA sec. 3(39));
  - Ex-offenders (“offender” as defined in WIOA sec. 3(38));
  - Homeless individuals or homeless children and youths
  - Youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system;
  - Individuals who are:
    - (1) English language learners (WIOA sec. 203(7)),
    - (2) Individuals who have low levels of literacy (an individual is unable to compute or solve programs, or read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, or in the individual’s family, or in society); and
    - Individuals facing substantial cultural barriers;
  - Eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers (as defined in WIOA sec. 167(i)(1-3);
  - Individuals within two years of exhausting lifetime TANF eligibility;
  - Single parents (including single pregnant women);
  - Long-term unemployed individuals (unemployed for 27 or more consecutive weeks);

In addition to the services provided through the Texas Workforce System, these individuals often need services from other organizations to overcome employment barriers. Case management staff conduct assessments and interviews with customers to determine barriers to employment. After determination of barriers, staff will assess the availability of services and make appropriate referrals to community partners. The Board will continue to use the existing network of partners in Northeast Texas for referrals, as well as explore new partnerships that can have a positive influence on customer

outcomes. As appropriate, support services will be provided to customers with barriers to employment, in order to help them become employed. During the past year, the Board has enhanced support services for ex-offenders with a staff member dedicated to working with this population. The ex-offenders program focuses on helping these customers gain employment through services such as training, job search assistance, and on-the-job training contracts.

- Texas Rising Star Providers: The Board and Contracted Service Provider staff work together to improve the availability and quality of child care services throughout Northeast Texas. The Board will work with existing Texas Rising Star (TRS) providers to improve their service quality. New legislation requires all providers participating in the workforce solutions child care program, to be TRS providers. The Contracted Service Provider has three TRS mentors on staff, with plans to add additional mentors. The mentors work with providers to upgrade services, improve quality, create efficiencies, and provide high quality care. The mentors will be assisting all non-TRS providers in becoming TRS certified. A significant increase in funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant will allow the Board to provide quality child care services for about 15% more children in Northeast Texas. The increased funding will also assist to increase the number of quality providers in the region.

5. Performance accountability measures: The Board has three standing committees: Executive, Internal, and External. All three play a role in performance evaluation and guidance. Additionally, the Board and Contracted Service Provider management teams meet regularly as the Joint Management team, to discuss performance measures and status of ongoing initiatives. The Board will continue to ensure performance accountability through a variety of methods.

- Committee oversight: The Board will continue to work with the Contracted Service Provider staff and Board Committees to ensure performance accountability. The Board communicates performance measures, definitions, status and plans to all standing committees. Discussion and open dialogue during committee meetings is important to overall accountability and oversight.
- Monitoring: The Board will continue to utilize the Monitoring Plan to ensure the contracted service provider is meeting or exceeding performance expectations. Written reports providing the result of administrative monitoring reviews for each service area monitored are prepared and provided to the Contracted Service Provider. All findings are documented in the report and a time-phased corrective action plan is required for deficiencies that are determined to be frequent, recurrent, pervasive, fraudulent, or that pose substantial risk to the Board. All completed Contracted Service Provider monitoring is reported bimonthly to the Board Internal Affairs Committee. A status of ongoing monitoring as well as reports of completed monitoring is provided at each meeting of the Committee.
- Educating on Performance Measures: The Board has a dedicated quality assurance staff member responsible for analyzing performance measures. The Manager of Program Integrity and Oversight provides information to both Board and Contract staff members, explaining the components of each performance measure. This staff member also works closely with the Texas Workforce

Commission to ensure the Board is aware of any changes or updates in performance.

*2. Board Strategies: 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 area, to achieve the vision and goals.*

The Board works with the entities carrying out core programs and required partners by fostering an environment of open communication and accountability. The Board and Contracted Service Provider work in partnership to strengthen the workforce development system in Northeast Texas. The Contracted Service Provider for the Northeast Texas area has responsibility for WIOA (adult, dislocated worker, and youth) programs, TANF, SNAP, Child Care and Development, Texas Rising Star, and Wagner-Peyser Employment Services. The Joint Management Team, comprised of the Board and Contracted Service Provider management, meet on a regular basis to discuss core program status and relevant information. These meetings, as well as constant open dialogue, ensure the goals and vision for the local workforce development system are always in the forefront of initiatives and actions taken.

The Board has also taken steps to further the integration of Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) and the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs into the Texas Workforce system at the local level.

- Northeast Texas has two contracted AEL providers: Texarkana College Adult Education and Literacy Program and the Red River Valley Adult Education Consortium. Each of these programs operates as both the service provider and fiscal agent for their respective service delivery areas. The Board has maintained a strong relationship with both groups and will continue to be an active participant in adult education activities moving forward. The Board partners with the Texarkana College Adult Education and Literacy Program to provide high school equivalency instruction in a classroom setting in the Greater Texarkana Workforce Center. The Board has Memoranda of Understanding and Infrastructure Funding Agreements in place with both AEL partners.
- The Board also played a role in the integration of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs into the Texas Workforce System. All VR staff and programs in Northeast Texas were relocated into the Workforce Centers by February 2019. The Board and Workforce Centers took proper steps to ensure equipment and facilities meet regulations for VR staff and customers. The Board has Infrastructure Funding Agreements in place with VR to cover the recurring expenses incurred at the Northeast Texas workforce centers. The colocation and service integration has allowed the board to leverage resources to more fully serve customers with disabilities and expand service delivery opportunities through the introduction of new programs such as Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL). Also, the addition of the Student HireAbility Navigator helps further foster the relationship between workforce and VR by making students with disabilities as well as employers and educators aware of the full array of services offered by both organizations.

The Board also has Advisory Groups and partnerships in place to ensure workforce partners are able to align available resources for the local area. The Board maintains partnerships with

Community Colleges, Economic Development Corporations, K-12 Education, Adult Education, and Child Care providers through Advisory Groups. These groups play an active role in working with the Board to develop regional workforce goals. The Advisory Groups also act as an accountability system for the Board, ensuring workforce goals are accomplished and adjusted as necessary. The Board also maintains a relationship with TWC Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) divisions. The Board's Rapid Response Coordinator communicates directly with the region's UI Specialist and the state's TAA staff on local program matters. Board and contractor staff also work with Texas Veterans Commission representatives in order to assist area Veterans find all available resources.

*3. High-Performing Board: A description of the actions the Board will take toward becoming or remaining a high-performing Board.*

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas is committed to remaining a high-performing Board, while striving for continuous improvement of the local workforce development system. The Board will take the following actions to sustain a high level of performance and identify areas for improvement:

Adaptability: The importance of adaptability has become extremely evident during the Covid pandemic. The Board responded to these challenges through expansion of virtual service delivery. Virtual service delivery includes video workshops, zoom rapid response sessions, customer text messaging, and virtual job fairs, among others. The Board plans to continue expanding virtual service delivery as strategy to connect with new customers. In addition to virtual services, the Board will keep adaptability in the forefront of strategic discussions moving forward. Strategic adaptability will focus on the ever-changing needs of workforce customers including employers, job seekers, workers, parents, and local partner organizations. Quality feedback and forecasts from customers will play a critical role in these efforts. Understanding and anticipating the diverse needs of workforce customers will allow the Board to adapt and provide first class service to all customers.

Communication and transparency: The Board will continue to communicate both internally and externally to ensure quality services are delivered through the workforce development system. The Board meets with a number of workforce development partners on a regular basis, including the Chief Elected Officials, Internal Affairs Committee, External Affairs Committee, College Presidents' Roundtable, Education and Training Advisory Group, Child Care Advisory Group, and Workforce and Economic Development Advisory Group. Input, feedback, and direction from each of these groups is vital to the success of the Board and workforce system. Communication with these groups holds the Board accountable for program integrity and successful outcomes. The Board also meets regularly with contracted service provider staff to review current and upcoming projects, performance, and challenges. The Board has plans to update and improve the current communications strategy. Utilizing video, audio, web, and print formats, the Board plans to improve the flow of communications to customers, stakeholders, partners, the media, and the public. These communications will include language and numbers that are easily understandable and relatable. Improved communications and messaging is critical to the Board's goals and strategies for success.

Program Monitoring and Quality Assurance: The Board has developed and utilizes a Monitoring Plan to ensure the Contracted Service Provider is meeting or exceeding expectations in the following areas:

- Compliance with Board policies and contractor procedures
- Adequacy of controls
- Ability to meet contracted performance
- Data integrity
- Effective internal monitoring
- Findings resolution
- Personnel turnover
- Continuous improvement
- Cost effectiveness
- Appropriate utilization of resources
- Effectiveness of service delivery

Written reports providing the result of administrative monitoring reviews for each service area monitored are prepared and provided to the Contracted Service Provider. All findings are documented in the report and a time-phased corrective action plan is required for deficiencies that are determined to be frequent, recurrent, pervasive, fraudulent, or that pose substantial risk to the Board. All completed Contracted Service Provider monitoring is reported bimonthly to the Board Internal Affairs Committee. A status of ongoing monitoring as well as reports of completed monitoring is provided at each meeting of the Committee.

Fiscal Monitoring: The Board contracts with a consulting firm, specializing in various financial and programmatic aspects of workforce development, to perform fiscal monitoring. Fiscal monitoring is done on a quarterly basis. Cash disbursements, payroll, and procurement samples are selected from both Board and Contracted Service Provider expenditures and tested to ensure items are reasonable, allocable, and allowable.

Customer Feedback: The Board is committed to enhancing workforce service delivery for employers, job seekers, child care providers, and partner organizations. Customer surveys are used to gather feedback. After an employer or job seeker utilizes workforce services or meets with a staff member, that employer or job seeker is asked to complete a survey designed to provide feedback regarding the quality of service provided. Customer feedback is gathered after events including job fairs, youth career exploration events, and community outreach events. The Board and Workforce Centers collaborate to review this information and to identify ways to improve the service delivery model. The Board will continue to explore additional methods for gathering and responding to customer feedback.

Staff Development: The Board places priority on staff development, participating in Texas Workforce Commission events such as the Annual Conference, Forum and Quality-Assurance Network (QAN) meetings. The Board has also partnered with the Workforce Center and other Board areas to host WIOA and Business Services training. Additionally, four members of the Board staff have participated in the Texas Workforce Commission Leadership Academy provided by the Governor's Center for Management Development. Board leadership will continue to explore opportunities for staff development.

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## *PART 2. ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS*

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### *4. A regional economic and employment needs analysis:*

- a. The economic conditions, including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations, as well as targeted occupations*
- b. The employment needs of employers in existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations*

The Northeast Texas region, comprised of nine counties, is a largely rural corner of the state but enjoys many substantial economic development advantages. Its proximity to Dallas/Fort Worth, access to Interstate 30, and pro-business climate provide companies with a strong foundation for success. In essence, businesses throughout the region enjoy easy access to the large customer base and sophisticated supplier networks. As a result, the region benefits from the presence of a surprisingly diverse and strong foundation of major industrial employers, ranging from transportation equipment to food processing manufacturers.

**Average Weekly Wages:** Average weekly wages (AWW) are an indicator of wealth accumulation and economic activity. The table below shows the AWW for each of the 9 counties in the Northeast Texas WDA. This is a snapshot of AWW for the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter of 2016 - 2022. The year over year (YOY) change shows the change from the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2021 to the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2022. The change column shows a positive change for all 9 counties. All counties, except one, showed a positive 5 year change in the average weekly wage. Additionally, the Northeast Texas WDA showed an AWW of \$886 2022 Quarter 1, which is the highest quarter 1 wage the region has ever experienced.

	Average Weekly Wages							
County	2016 1Q	2017 1Q	2018 1Q	2019 1Q	2020 1Q	2021 1Q	2022 1Q	YOY Change
Bowie	702	742	745	761	784	800	876	76
Cass	698	729	680	713	742	736	767	31
Delta	387	385	464	498	522	556	658	102
Franklin	669	744	792	858	820	805	818	13
Hopkins	679	728	761	751	791	804	878	74
Lamar	750	798	789	829	839	876	977	101
Morris	777	922	1040	1046	983	906	975	69
Red River	580	616	625	671	746	716	754	38
Titus	684	731	758	742	741	799	886	87
NETX WDA	700	747	759	775	790	810	886	76

**Industry Snapshot:** The largest sector in the Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas Board area is Health Care and Social Assistance, employing 20,405 workers. The next-largest sectors in the

region are Manufacturing (19,399 workers) and Retail Trade (14,457). The Retail Trade industry gained the most jobs from 2020 to 2022, with an additional 1,432 jobs. The Manufacturing Industry gained 752 jobs in that same timeframe. High location quotients (LQs) indicate sectors in which a region has high concentrations of employment compared to the national average. The sectors with the largest LQs in the region are Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (LQ = 2.97), Manufacturing (1.91), and Utilities (1.26).

Sectors in the Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas Board area with the highest average wages per worker are Utilities (\$80,153), Management of Companies (\$78,874), Mining, Quarrying and Oil and Gas Extraction (\$68,004), and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (\$63,575). Regional sectors with the best job growth over the last 5 years are Manufacturing (+2,354), Construction (+955), Wholesale Trade (+560). Over the next 10 years, employment in the Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas Board area is projected to increase by 4,579 jobs. The fastest growing sector in the region is expected to be Health Care and Social Assistance with a +1.3% year-over-year rate of growth. The strongest forecast by number of jobs over this period is expected for Health Care and Social Assistance (+2,723 jobs), Accommodation and Food Services (+2,124), and Other Services (Except Public Administration) (+319).

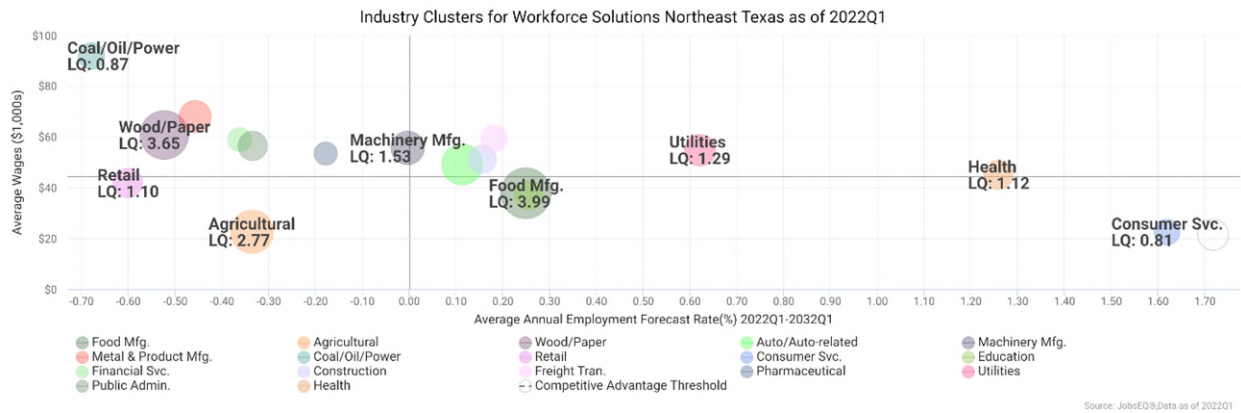
NAICS	Industry	Current			10-Year Forecast				
		Empl	Avg Ann Wages	LQ	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl Growth	Ann % Growth
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	5,037	\$23,740	2.97	5,812	2,389	3,607	-184	-0.4%
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	211	\$68,004	0.49	285	68	168	49	2.1%
22	Utilities	811	\$80,153	1.26	603	227	473	-97	-1.3%
23	Construction	7,429	\$51,443	1.00	7,302	2,276	4,900	125	0.2%
31	Manufacturing	19,399	\$59,085	1.91	19,715	6,816	13,046	-146	-0.1%
42	Wholesale Trade	5,043	\$61,599	1.07	5,265	1,833	3,455	-23	0.0%
44	Retail Trade	14,457	\$35,006	1.11	17,462	7,490	11,088	-1,116	-0.8%
48	Transportation and Warehousing	4,601	\$55,884	0.73	5,381	1,998	3,169	214	0.5%
51	Information	688	\$43,921	0.27	768	228	459	80	1.1%
52	Finance and Insurance	3,264	\$58,371	0.63	2,756	990	1,882	-116	-0.4%
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1,323	\$45,595	0.60	1,303	542	762	0	0.0%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2,852	\$63,575	0.32	2,642	868	1,653	121	0.4%
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	507	\$78,874	0.27	423	151	292	-20	-0.4%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	5,355	\$34,485	0.66	6,634	2,430	3,915	289	0.5%
61	Educational Services	10,820	\$41,391	1.08	10,404	4,571	5,669	164	0.2%
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	20,405	\$45,366	1.12	23,377	9,323	11,331	2,723	1.3%
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	905	\$22,723	0.40	1,711	587	836	288	2.8%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	10,770	\$18,908	1.04	21,867	8,355	11,389	2,124	1.8%
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	5,219	\$26,915	0.96	6,284	2,442	3,523	319	0.6%
92	Public Administration	6,571	\$56,550	1.11	5,831	2,322	3,726	-216	-0.3%
99	Unclassified	50	\$73,425	0.31	61	22	35	3	0.6%
	Total - All Industries	125,715	\$44,515	1.00	143,736	54,715	84,442	4,579	0.4%

Source: JobsEQ

Data as of 2022Q1

**Industry Clusters:** A cluster is a geographic concentration of interrelated industries or occupations. The industry cluster in the Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas Board area with the highest relative concentration is Food Mfg. with a location quotient of 3.99. This cluster employs 5,935 workers in the region with an average wage of \$37,841. Employment in the Food Mfg. cluster is projected to grow in the region about 0.25% per year over the next ten years. Additionally, the Texarkana MSA is a regional hub for Health Care Services. Although the

location quotient does not show a significant concentration, the health care industry in Northeast Texas is the largest single industry sector, employing 20,405 workers. The Health Care sector also projects the largest increase in employment over the next 10 years, at 1.26%.



**Occupation Snapshot:** The largest major occupation group in the Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas Board area is Office and Administrative Support Occupations, employing 13,661 workers. The next-largest occupation groups in the region are Production Occupations (12,435) and Sales and Related Occupations (11,773). High location quotients (LQs) indicate occupation groups in which a region has high concentrations of employment compared to the national average. The major groups with the largest LQs in the region are Production Occupations (LQ = 1.75), Healthcare Support Occupations (1.29), and Management Occupations (1.20)

Occupation groups in the Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas Board area with the highest average wages per worker are Legal Occupations (\$92,700), Management Occupations (\$81,000), and Architecture and Engineering Occupations (\$78,900). The unemployment rate in the region varied among the major groups from 1.7% for Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations to 9.0% for Farming Fishing and Forestry Occupations.

Over the next 10 years, the fastest growing occupation group in the Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas Board area is expected to be Healthcare Support Occupations with a +1.9% year-over-year rate of growth. The strongest forecast by number of jobs over this period is expected for Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations (+1,795), Healthcare Support Occupations (+1,515), and Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations (+573).



Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas, 2022Q1 <sup>1</sup>												
SOC	Occupation	Current					10-Year Forecast					
		Empl	Mean Ann Wages <sup>2</sup>	LQ	Unempl	Unempl Rate	Online Job Ads <sup>3</sup>	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl Growth	Ann % Growth
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	13,661	\$36,900	0.88	623	4.6%	369	13,639	6,268	8,189	-818	-0.6%
51-0000	Production Occupations	12,435	\$39,000	1.75	741	6.0%	177	13,326	4,606	8,995	-275	-0.2%
41-0000	Sales and Related Occupations	11,773	\$36,600	0.99	782	6.5%	957	14,766	6,219	9,221	-675	-0.6%
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	11,617	\$36,000	1.06	841	6.9%	768	15,260	5,382	9,398	479	0.4%
11-0000	Management Occupations	10,265	\$81,000	1.20	225	2.4%	488	9,056	3,667	5,102	287	0.3%
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	10,067	\$23,700	1.03	905	8.9%	747	21,109	8,323	10,991	1,795	1.7%
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	7,572	\$77,900	1.03	111	1.7%	993	4,990	2,020	2,398	573	0.7%
25-0000	Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	7,505	\$45,600	1.12	235	3.4%	96	6,714	2,958	3,442	314	0.4%
31-0000	Healthcare Support Occupations	7,187	\$25,700	1.29	351	5.3%	252	11,507	4,964	5,028	1,515	1.9%
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	5,498	\$47,100	1.13	187	3.3%	274	5,446	1,754	3,500	192	0.3%
47-0000	Construction and Extraction Occupations	5,455	\$42,100	0.96	412	7.2%	86	5,578	1,630	3,787	162	0.3%
13-0000	Business and Financial Operations Occupations	5,236	\$65,500	0.65	144	3.0%	256	4,556	1,382	3,059	115	0.2%
37-0000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	4,114	\$27,700	0.99	269	6.6%	180	5,525	2,333	3,052	139	0.3%
33-0000	Protective Service Occupations	2,571	\$45,000	0.95	82	3.2%	76	2,608	1,090	1,508	9	0.0%
39-0000	Personal Care and Service Occupations	2,263	\$26,500	0.75	210	8.8%	63	3,683	1,495	1,825	363	1.5%
15-0000	Computer and Mathematical Occupations	1,859	\$75,000	0.43	36	2.2%	210	1,452	395	943	114	0.6%
21-0000	Community and Social Service Occupations	1,850	\$49,000	0.83	42	2.6%	75	2,115	674	1,241	200	1.0%
17-0000	Architecture and Engineering Occupations	1,277	\$78,900	0.62	31	2.7%	49	931	303	615	13	0.1%
27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	1,122	\$48,200	0.51	72	6.8%	36	1,219	437	713	69	0.6%
45-0000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	964	\$32,000	1.18	90	9.0%	5	1,444	389	1,073	-17	-0.2%
19-0000	Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	805	\$72,000	0.73	26	3.7%	40	715	180	524	10	0.1%
23-0000	Legal Occupations	620	\$92,700	0.57	12	2.1%	2	424	171	238	14	0.2%
00-0000	Total - All Occupations	125,715	\$45,200	1.00	6,428	5.2%	6,200	146,063	56,641	84,843	4,579	0.4%
Source: JobsEQ®												
Data as of 2022Q1 unless noted otherwise												
Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.												
1. Data based on a four-quarter moving average unless noted otherwise.												
2. Wage data are as of 2021 and represent the average for all Covered Employment												
3. Data represent found online ads active within the last thirty days in the selected region; data represents a sampling rather than the complete universe of postings. Ads lacking zip code information but designating a place (city, town, etc.) may be assigned to the zip code with greatest employment in that place for queries in this analytic. Due to alternative county-assignment algorithms, ad counts in this analytic may not match that shown in RTI (nor in the popup window ad list).												

The Board collaborates with a variety of workforce partners to identify employment needs of the region's employer base, and respond proactively to those needs. To ensure training is available, staff continuously works with the Eligible Training Providers (ETP) providers to keep the training list relevant. If training for a particular occupation is not available in the region, the Board works to identify training providers and encourage them to become certified through the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPS). The Board also works closely with the College President's Roundtable, which includes the Executive Director for the Board and the Presidents of Texarkana College, Northeast Texas Community College, Paris Junior College, and Texas A&M University – Texarkana. The Roundtable acts as an Advisory Group to the Board regarding educational and training matters, and in turn the Board communicates business intelligence to the institutions. Each partner has a responsibility to share information regarding matters

pertinent to industry and workforce education, support regional economic development efforts, and leverage available financial and non-financial resources to that end. Board staff also participate in a number of advisory groups throughout the region, including the Sulphur Springs ISD Career and Technology (CTE) group, Texas High's STEM advisory group, Chapel Hill ISD's CTE advisory group, North Lamar ISD's CTE advisory group, and Texas A&M University Texarkana at NTCC's advisory group. These groups meet periodically to discuss the quality of existing programs and the need for additional training programs at both area high schools and community colleges. Staff are also in regular communication with the Region 8 Education Service Center, collaborating on many projects. Region 8 also invites Board staff to participate in meetings with high school counselors. Discussions during these meetings focus on student training needs and workforce readiness topics. The Board has supported the region's community colleges and school districts in Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) grant applications. These grants provide funds to support the growth and expansion of training programs related to high demand occupations. The Board's support for these grants includes input on types of training and written support on each application. Since 2019, the region has received 8 JET grants, with an award total of \$1.7 million.

The Board also meets with the Workforce and Economic Development Advisory Group on a regular basis. This advisory group includes Economic Development directors from the Northeast Texas region. Among other topics, the group discusses employer needs related to existing and potential training programs. Members of this group, along with the Board, have successfully applied for and received 6 High Demand Job Training Grants from the Texas Workforce Commission. These grants included a monetary commitment from EDC partners of \$650,000, matched with grant funds of \$650,000 for a total investment of \$1.3 million. These grants are designed to enhance or create training programs related to high demand jobs within the region. Training programs created or enhanced by these funds included CNC Machinist, Robotics, Welding, Aircraft Mechanics, Computer Networking, Construction, Automotive Technician Services, and Health Sciences. The Board will continue to rely on these resources of local information about employer needs to drive the creation of new training programs in the region.

The two largest industry sectors in Northeast Texas are Manufacturing and Health Care/Social Assistance. Both of these industries need a large number of workers at varying levels of skill.

- Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas is working with several area manufacturers and workforce partners as a stakeholder of the Texarkana Regional Manufacturing Partnership. The partnership is driven by key manufacturing leaders, focusing on the needs of manufacturing employers. The Texarkana Regional Manufacturing Partnership was started by a group of community based partners, interested in learning about industry needs. The partnership is sustainable because the manufacturing leaders are invested in the discussion topics and the outcomes are tied directly to their companies' future. The innovative approach to this partnership calls for the manufacturing leaders to oversee the meetings, topics, and discussion. Workforce, education, and economic development representatives are present at the meetings but sit away from the table and only offer input when called upon. These support partners also react to the manufacturing employer needs brought up during the discussions, through existing programs or the development of a new solution.

- Health Care has a wide variety of employment needs, but the largest need is in the area of nursing. There are a number of different levels of nursing within the health care industry, making it an excellent example of a career pathway. Nursing is one of the fastest growing occupation groups in the country and health care employers need skilled nurses across the entire spectrum, from Nursing Assistants to Registered Nurses. This career pathway allows job seekers to work towards and obtain an entry-level certification that will increase their chances of finding employment. While working, additional certifications can be added, improving their opportunities for advancement and increased wages. Board staff participated in the Texas Workforce Commission Nursing Apprenticeship discussions. The Board was also represented by two members, one from a local community college and one, the CEO of a rural hospital system in Northeast Texas.

Northeast Texas employers have a variety of workforce related needs. The main workforce concern for area employers is the number and availability of employable applicants. The Board and several area partners have introduced programs to address this issue. First, many ISD's have implemented workplace etiquette/behavior training throughout their curriculum. Additionally, community colleges require students to wear work attire and clock in for each class. These types of real world scenarios help change the mindset of the future workforce.

The Board will continue to rely on two primary resources when analyzing workforce training programs in Northeast Texas. These two resources include labor market information and local knowledge. Board staff have multiple credible sources to gather labor market information. This information is regularly analyzed for changes in the local economy. In addition to this data, the Board requests local knowledge from employers, Independent School Districts, Community Colleges, Universities, Economic Development Corporations, Chambers of Commerce, and municipalities. The Board will continue to use labor market data and local knowledge to drive decisions about workforce training initiatives in Northeast Texas.

## *5. A list of the in-demand industry sectors and occupations.*

The Northeast Texas region is home to a number of strong industries that support economic stability and growth in the region. The industries the Board has identified include those that have a substantial current or projected economic impact. Demand industries also include those that provide self-sufficiency opportunities and opportunities for advancement. The Board has identified some of these demand industries as emerging industry sectors that have a strong potential to grow and diversify the regional economy. Emerging industries are those that do not have a large current employment number, but show the potential for growth over the next decade. The Board has identified Computer system design and related services and Support activities for air transportation. These industries are expected to grow by at least 14% over the next 10 years. In discussions with local economic development professionals, these emerging industries also represent targets for growth and expansion in the region. The Board uses labor market information sources to compile data for this list, including TWC LMCI resources, JobsEQ, and Labor Insight. The Board used online surveys to outreach area employers, small businesses, economic development corporations, and chambers of commerce, for feedback on the demand industry list. See separate demand industry file for full data set.

<b>Industry NAICS Code</b>	<b>NAICS Industry Title (Name)</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2020</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2030</b>	<b>Employment Growth 2020-2030</b>	<b>Percent Growth 2020-2030</b>
3331	Agriculture, Construction, and Mining Machinery Manufacturing	581	591	10	1.7%
8111	Automotive Repair and Maintenance	1154	1181	27	2.3%
5415	Computer Systems Design and Related Services	389	462	73	18.8%
3115	Dairy Product Manufacturing	474	503	29	6.1%
3114	Fruit and Vegetable Preserving and Specialty Food Manufacturing	1008	992	-16	-1.6%
4841	General Freight Trucking	1149	1162	13	1.1%
6221	General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	4701	4844	143	3.0%
2373	Highway, Street, and Bridge Construction	1452	1489	37	2.5%
3362	Motor Vehicle Body and Trailer Manufacturing	3410	3414	4	0.1%
3329	Other Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	2013	2018	5	0.2%
3219	Other Wood Product Manufacturing	758	791	33	4.4%
6214	Outpatient Care Centers	699	830	131	18.7%
3221	Pulp, Paper, and Paperboard Mills	895	795	-100	-11.2%
4881	Support Activities for Air Transportation	329	377	48	14.6%
4931	Warehousing and Storage	1164	1276	112	9.6%
1024	Professional and Business Services	6596	7813	1317	20.0%

The Board has identified 23 in-demand occupations, displayed in the table below. Some of the high demand occupations may also be found on the Target Occupation list. WIOA training funds will be expended on Target Occupations only. The In-Demand Occupations list represents occupations in Northeast Texas with significant current or projected demand. These occupations may represent entry level positions with a well-defined career pathway and opportunities for advancement. There is no wage parameters on in-demand occupations. The Board uses labor market information sources to compile data for this list, including TWC LMCI resources, JobsEQ, and Labor Insight. The Board used online surveys to outreach area employers, small businesses, economic development corporations, and chambers of commerce, for feedback on the demand occupation list. See demand occupation file for full data set.

SOC Code	In-Demand Occupation Job Title (Name)	Annual Average Employment 2020	Annual Average Employment 2030	Number Change 2020–2030	Percent Change 2020–2030
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	5207	6460	1253	24%
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	5168	6176	1008	20%
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	3742	4040	298	8%
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	2970	3321	351	12%
29-1141	Registered Nurses	2293	2239	-54	-2%
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1921	2012	91	5%
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	1910	2482	572	30%
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1876	2052	176	9%
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	1712	1880	168	10%
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	1412	1550	138	10%
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	1397	1520	123	9%
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	1341	1374	33	2%
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	1206	1318	112	9%
25-9045	Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	1206	1310	104	9%
47-2061	Construction Laborers	1087	1152	65	6%
53-3031	Driver/Sales Workers	1035	1322	287	28%
53-7051	Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	891	977	86	10%
35-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	829	1021	192	23%
51-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	778	882	104	13%
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	533	813	280	53%
51-9124	Coating, Painting, and Spraying Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	462	603	141	31%
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	324	387	63	19%
11-9051	Food Service Managers	185	218	33	18%

## *6. A list of the target occupations.*

The target occupations are identified as a priority for the Board and the region. The target occupations are training priorities and authorized for WIOA funding expenditures. As funding allows, the Board will partner with Eligible Training Providers and employers to fund training and work experience activities associated with target occupations. The Board will also explore additional grant funding to support training activities associated with target occupations.

The Board has set criteria for the region's target occupations lists. This criterion is identified as an occupation with a mean hourly wage of \$14.10 (self-sufficiency wage level for Northeast Texas) per hour or more, a combined job growth and replacement total of at least 10 per year, and a training period within the Board's goal for education or on-the-job training (OJT). Local wisdom is used to include occupations that do not meet one or more of these requirements. The Board used online surveys to outreach area employers, small businesses, economic development corporations, and chambers of commerce, for feedback on the target occupation list.

Data is gathered by identifying the targeted industries for the region and using both Texas LMI and JobsEQ to identify occupations within those industries. A filter was applied for mean hourly wage, anticipated growth and replacement rates, and training preferences. There were a few exceptions to the filtering criteria, which can be explained by looking at the current job postings for the area using Burning Glass or by applying local wisdom.

The Board gathers local wisdom in a variety of ways. Board staff maintain communications with workforce center management and the Business Service Unit (BSU) team members. The BSU maintains constant contact with employers and gathers information from them during employer visits and job fair events. The Board is a member of multiple chambers of commerce in the region and the Board hosts advisory group meetings of economic developers from across the region. Board staff and BSU staff collaborate when needed to identify training needs for a particular occupation within the region. See separate Target Occupation file for full data set.

<b>Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Code (6-digit)</b>	<b>Target Occupation Job Title (Name)</b>
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor Trailer Truck Drivers
29-1141	Registered Nurses
29-1126	Respiratory Therapists
29-2061	Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, Auditing Clerks
49-3042	Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Exc Engines
47-2111	Electricians
49-3023	Automotive Services Technicians
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters
51-4041	Machinists
31-9091	Dental Assistants
49-3031	Bus/Truck Mechanics & Diesel Eng Specialist
49-9021	Heating, AC, and Refrig Mechanics Installers
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists
49-3021	Automotive Body and Related Repairers
51-9161	Computer Numerically Controlled Tool Operators
29-2034	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians
15-1211	Computer Systems Analysts
29-2055	Surgical Technologists
31-2021	Physical Therapy Assistants
49-3011	Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians
29-2040	Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General
47-2073	Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators

*7. Knowledge and Skills Analysis: An analysis of the knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region, including employment needs in in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations.*

Texas Career Check, an Internet-based analysis tool created by the TWC Labor Market and Career Information (LMCI) staff, tabulates the knowledge, skills, and abilities appearing most often in the profiles of detailed work activities (DWAs) for groups of occupations, weighted by regional employment.

The following table shows the top ten prime knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) most commonly required for the demand industries and target occupations in Northeast Texas. The number in parentheses next to each KSA denotes the number of times it appears in the target occupation list. The KSAs for Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics is not listed within the labor market analytic.

<b>Prime Knowledge</b>	<b>Prime Skills</b>	<b>Prime Abilities</b>
Customer & Personal Service (24)	Critical Thinking (25)	Near Vision (26)
Mathematics (22)	Active Listening (23)	Problem Sensitivity (26)
English Language (20)	Monitoring (20)	Deductive Reasoning (18)
Public Safety and Security (19)	Speaking (20)	Oral Comprehension (16)
Education and Training (19)	Operations Monitoring (17)	Arm-Hand Steadiness (15)
Computers and Electronics (17)	Reading Comprehension (16)	Information Ordering (15)
Administration & Management (15)	Troubleshooting (14)	Finger Dexterity (13)
Mechanical (15)	Complex Problem Solving (14)	Written Comprehension (13)
Engineering and Technology (14)	Judgement & Decision Making (13)	Manual Dexterity (12)
Production and Processing (9)	Quality Control Analysis (12)	Oral Expression (12)

**Prime Knowledge:**

- Customer & Personal Service - Knowledge of principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.
- Mathematics - Knowledge of arithmetic, algebra, geometry, calculus, statistics, and their applications.
- English Language - Knowledge of the structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.



- Public Safety & Security - Knowledge of relevant equipment, policies, procedures, and strategies to promote effective local, state, or national security operations for the protection of people, data, property, and institutions.
- Education & Training - Knowledge of principles and methods for curriculum and training design, teaching and instruction for individuals and groups, and the measurement of training effects.
- Computer & Electronics - Knowledge of circuit boards, processors, chips, electronic equipment, and computer hardware and software, including applications and programming.
- Administration & Management - Knowledge of business and management principles involved in strategic planning, resource allocation, human resources modeling, leadership technique, production methods, and coordination of people and resources.
- Mechanical - Knowledge of machines and tools, including their designs, uses, repair, and maintenance.
- Engineering & Technology - Knowledge of the practical application of engineering science and technology. This includes applying principles, techniques, procedures, and equipment to the design and production of various goods and services.
- Production & Processing - Knowledge of raw materials, production processes, quality control, costs, and other techniques for maximizing the effective manufacture and distribution of goods.

#### Prime Skills:

- Critical Thinking - Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.
- Active Listening - Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
- Monitoring - Monitoring/Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.
- Speaking - Talking to others to convey information effectively.
- Operation Monitoring - Watching gauges, dials, or other indicators to make sure a machine is working properly.
- Reading Comprehension - Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
- Troubleshooting - Determining causes of operating errors and deciding what to do about it.
- Complex Problem Solving - Identifying complex problems and reviewing related information to develop and evaluate options and implement solutions.
- Judgement & Decision Making - Considering the relative costs and benefits of potential actions to choose the most appropriate one.
- Quality Control Analysis - Conducting tests and inspections of products, services, or processes to evaluate quality or performance.

### Prime Abilities:

- Near Vision - The ability to see details at close range (within a few feet of the observer).
- Problem Sensitivity - The ability to tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.
- Deductive Reasoning - The ability to apply general rules to specific problems to produce answers that make sense.
- Oral Comprehension - The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
- Arm-Hand Steadiness - The ability to keep your hand and arm steady while moving your arm or while holding your arm and hand in one position.
- Information Ordering - The ability to arrange things or actions in a certain order or pattern according to a specific rule or set of rules (e.g., patterns of numbers, letters, words, pictures, mathematical operations).
- Finger Dexterity - The ability to make precisely coordinated movements of the fingers of one or both hands to grasp, manipulate, or assemble very small objects.
- Written Comprehension - The ability to read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.
- Manual Dexterity - The ability to quickly move your hand, your hand together with your arm, or your two hands to grasp, manipulate, or assemble objects.
- Oral Expression - The ability to communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.

The KSA analysis shows both a number of similarities and differences across the region's demand industries and target occupations. The region's demand industries range from manufacturing, healthcare, construction, warehousing/logistics, and information technology. While the specific training needs of these industries vary, there are a number of KSA's that benefit all employers and workers. The Board coordinates with employers, training providers, and other workforce partners to better understand the employment needs in Northeast Texas. The one recurring theme from all of these discussions is the need for soft skills/employability skills and the seeming decline in these areas over the past 20 years. Employers need workers who show up on time, communicate effectively, make decisions, think critically, and listen, among others. In addition to soft skills, the KSA list also reveals a number of technical skills important to employers and workers in Northeast Texas. These skills are more industry dependent than the soft skills in the lists. Manufacturing is driven by technology and machinery, and therefore understanding how the equipment works and how to repair machinery is paramount. Healthcare employers and workers must have a solid foundation of patient care, but must also stay informed on policy changes on safety and patient information. Information technology companies and employees must be knowledgeable of the seemingly daily changes in the industry, while ensuring cyber security is top of mind. The Board will continue to communicate with employers, training providers, and other community partners to ensure area training is meeting employer, job seeker, and worker needs.

The following table shows the top ten prime knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) most commonly required for the demand occupations in Northeast Texas. The Board has 23 in-demand

occupations. The number in parentheses next to each KSA denotes the number of times it appears in the target occupation list.

<b>Prime Knowledge</b>	<b>Prime Skills</b>	<b>Prime Abilities</b>
English Language (22)	Monitoring (21)	Near Vision (18)
Mathematics (21)	Reading Comprehension (21)	Oral Comprehension (18)
Customer & Personal Service (21)	Speaking (21)	Oral Expression (18)
Education and Training (20)	Active Listening (20)	Problem Sensitivity (18)
Administration & Management (19)	Critical Thinking (19)	Speech Recognition (16)
Public Safety and Security (15)	Social Perceptiveness (18)	Speech Clarity (15)
Computers & Electronics (13)	Coordination (16)	Written Comprehension (12)
Administrative (12)	Time Management (14)	Deductive Reasoning (12)
Production and Processing (11)	Service Orientation (11)	Information Ordering (11)
Sales and Marketing (8)	Judgement & Decision Making (10)	Inductive Reasoning (10)

**8. Labor Force Analysis and Trends: 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.**

Prior to the COVID 19 pandemic of 2020, the employment levels in Northeast Texas were at an all-time high. In February 2020, Northeast Texas had a total employment of 120,268, which is the highest it's been since prior to the 2009 recession. Employment levels had been steadily increasing over the last several years. However, employment levels dropped significantly during COVID, and only recently begin climbing back towards pre-pandemic levels. In February 2021, employment for the region was 117,271, in February 2022 the employment level was 120,121, and most recently in August 2022 employment was 118,868. The Northeast Texas workforce largely concentrated into 5 industries, which account for 60% of total employment: Health Care and Social Assistance, Manufacturing, Retail Trade, Education Services, and Accommodation and Food Services. Average annual wages for the region are \$44,515, with the Manufacturing, Health Care and Social Assistance, Construction, Public Administration, Wholesale Trade, Transportation and Warehousing, Finance and Insurance, Technical Services, Real Estate, Utilities, Management of Companies, and Mining industries paying wages in excess of that average.

The Northeast Texas labor force has remained largely unchanged for the past several years. . Prior to the pandemic of 2020, employment levels were growing annually at a steady rate. As with all other areas across the country, the pandemic decimated employment in Northeast Texas. The greatest loss of jobs occurred in both Manufacturing and Food Services. Labor force levels, which were rising prior to the pandemic, have stalled for the past several years. Employment levels have climbed out of the all-time lows experienced during the pandemic. However, there are still a large number of open jobs available throughout the region.

<b>Labor Force</b>							
	September 17	September 18	September 19	September 20	September 21	September 22	YOY Change
<b>Northeast Texas</b>	122,089	122,718	124,845	124,497	124,904	124,556	-348
<b>Bowie</b>	39,413	39,789	40,095	40,773	38,951	39,148	197
<b>Cass</b>	12,080	12,334	12,435	12,538	12,351	12,187	-164
<b>Delta</b>	2,468	2,445	2,456	2,379	2,449	2,440	-9
<b>Franklin</b>	4,493	4,545	4,657	4,554	5,143	5,175	32
<b>Hopkins</b>	17,121	17,338	17,661	17,180	17,940	17,977	37
<b>Lamar</b>	23,684	23,675	24,371	24,162	24,462	24,163	-299
<b>Morris</b>	4,697	4,704	4,853	5,016	4,613	4,433	-180
<b>Red River</b>	5,173	5,057	5,148	4,976	5,372	5,431	59
<b>Titus</b>	12,960	12,831	13,169	12,919	13,623	13,602	-21

<b>Employment</b>							
	September 17	September 18	September 19	September 20	September 21	September 22	YOY Change
<b>Northeast Texas</b>	116,865	117,215	120,080	115,279	118,868	118,412	-456
<b>Bowie</b>	37,755	37,713	38,384	37,745	37,253	36,910	-343
<b>Cass</b>	11,463	11,737	11,910	11,437	11,574	11,621	47
<b>Delta</b>	2,388	2,357	2,371	2,242	2,339	2,334	-5
<b>Franklin</b>	4,299	4,360	4,496	4,277	5,000	4,933	-67
<b>Hopkins</b>	16,559	16,776	17,153	16,190	17,389	17,228	-161
<b>Lamar</b>	22,755	22,863	23,581	22,502	23,087	23,178	91
<b>Morris</b>	4,376	4,425	4,607	4,315	4,089	4,173	84
<b>Red River</b>	4,923	4,771	4,919	4,622	5,142	5,079	-63
<b>Titus</b>	12,347	12,213	12,659	11,949	12,995	12,956	-39

Unemployment levels peaked in 2020, during the Covic pandemic. Employment has not returned to pre-pandemic levels, but the region has regained a significant number of jobs lost in 2020. Every county in the region saw a decrease in unemployment rate from September 2021 to September 2022. Morris County continues to experience the highest levels of

unemployment. This is largely due to the closure of Lone Star Steel, located in Morris County, in 2020. This employer was the main source of jobs for the county.

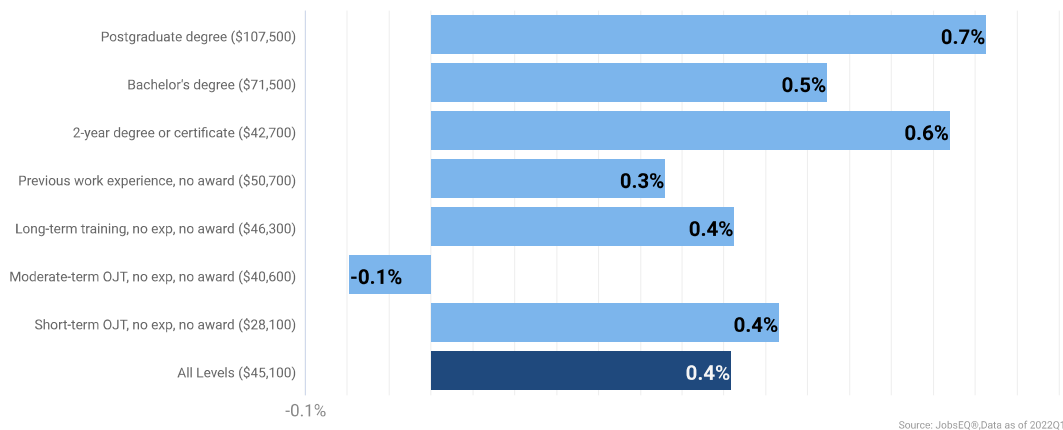
Unemployment Rate							
	September 17	September 18	September 19	September 20	September 21	September 22	YOY Change
<b>Northeast Texas</b>	4.3	4.5	3.8	7.4	5.2	4.6	-0.6
<b>Bowie</b>	4.2	5.2	4.3	7.4	5.2	4.8	-0.4
<b>Cass</b>	5.1	4.8	4.2	8.8	5.9	5.0	-0.9
<b>Delta</b>	3.2	3.6	3.5	5.8	4.7	4.1	-0.6
<b>Franklin</b>	4.3	4.1	3.5	6.1	4.1	3.4	-0.7
<b>Hopkins</b>	3.3	3.2	2.9	5.8	4.0	3.3	-0.7
<b>Lamar</b>	3.9	3.4	3.2	6.9	5.2	4.5	-0.7
<b>Morris</b>	6.8	5.9	5.1	14	9.5	7.8	-1.7
<b>Red River</b>	4.8	5.7	4.4	7.1	5.5	5.3	-0.2
<b>Titus</b>	4.7	4.8	3.9	7.5	4.9	4.5	-0.4

Educational levels in Northeast Texas indicate areas of strengths and weaknesses for a regional workforce. It is essential for Northeast Texas to have an educated workforce. Increasing the number of degree and certificate completers will have a significant impact on the regional economy. The table below represents percentages and numbers of highest achieved level of education. Updates from the education report from 2020, include increases in the percentage and number of people in Northeast Texas who achieved an Associate's degree, Bachelor's degree, and Postgraduate degree. This suggests an increase in the overall education of the region. Degree completion is extremely important to the local workforce, as the area aims to increase the overall level of education. Northeast Texas residents with an Associate's Degree is now 11,645 compared to 9,822 in 2017, an increase of 1,823. Residents with a Bachelor's Degree is now 19,465 compared to 16,044 in 2017, an increase of 3,421. Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas, in partnership with area education institutions fully support the 60x30TX plan from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The 60x30TX plan calls for 60% of Texas residents aged 25-34 to have a degree or credential by the year 2030. The Board and education partners participated in a local outreach campaign to increase awareness about the importance of these goals. The Board will continue to champion area training providers as an affordable opportunity to earn a degree or certificate. The overall increase in both Associate's Degrees and Bachelor's Degrees is an excellent indicator of progress towards the 60X30TX goals for the region and the state. Although these numbers indicate positive results in several areas, there is definitely room for improvement in the pursuit of a more educated workforce in Northeast Texas. Northeast Texas still has a lower percentage of people with a Bachelor's Degree and Postgraduate Degree than Texas. The Board will continue to work with area education partners to support new training programs and methods that increase the odds of degree completion.

Summary						
	Percent			Value		
	Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas	Texas	USA	Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas	Texas	USA
<b>Educational Attainment, Age 25-64</b>						
<b>No High School Diploma</b>	12.1%	14.6%	10.5%	16,807	2,171,844	17,929,220
<b>High School Graduate</b>	35.7%	24.4%	25.4%	49,721	3,627,667	43,289,555
<b>Some College, No Degree</b>	24.3%	21.6%	20.5%	33,790	3,213,443	34,959,338
<b>Associate's Degree</b>	8.4%	7.8%	9.3%	11,645	1,163,242	15,776,790
<b>Bachelor's Degree</b>	14.0%	20.8%	21.6%	19,465	3,089,698	36,888,244
<b>Postgraduate Degree</b>	5.7%	10.7%	12.7%	7,887	1,590,588	21,630,870

Expected growth rates for occupations vary by the education and training required. All levels of employment by education in the Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas Board area are projected to incline slightly over the next ten years, at a rate of 0.4%. The highest growth is expected in 2 year degrees/certificates, bachelor's degrees, and postgraduate degrees. This growth is higher than the projected growth for these occupations from two years ago. This is a good sign for the economic growth of the region. These occupations will typically pay more, creating a more significant impact on the local economy. This chart is a great visualization for the importance of post-secondary training in Northeast Texas and the success of the regional economy.

Annual Average Projected Job Growth by Training Required



The Board uses labor market information to analyze a number of regional socioeconomic factors. Many of these factors are related to individuals with barriers to employment, as defined by WIOA. The Northeast Texas region's percentage of people living below the poverty level is higher than percentages for both Texas and the USA. Additionally, the area's percentage

of households receiving SNAP benefits is also higher. The Board is in a good position to assist people in these categories, as many of them are in contact with workforce center staff on a regular basis. The Northeast Texas region is also home to a higher percentage of people with disabilities, as compared to Texas and the USA. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) staff and services are now fully integrated into the Northeast Texas workforce centers. In addition to referrals between contractor and VR staff, the contract also employs a Student HireAbility Navigator. The Student HireAbility Navigator position is designed to support students with disabilities who are preparing to transition to post-secondary education or employment.

Demographic Summary – Socioeconomic			
	Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas	Texas	USA
Poverty Level (of all people) <sup>5</sup>	17.5%	15.5%	14.1%
Households Receiving Food Stamps/SNAP	14.7%	12.2%	12.2%
Disconnected Youth <sup>3,5</sup>	2.3%	2.9%	2.6%
Children in Single Parent Families (% of all children) <sup>5</sup>	38.6%	34.6%	34.3%
Uninsured	16.1%	17.4%	9.4%
With a Disability, Age 18-64 <sup>5</sup>	13.4%	9.6%	10.3%
Foreign Born	6.1%	17.0%	13.5%
Speak English Less Than Very Well (population 5 yrs and over)	4.4%	14.0%	8.5%

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.

**9. Workforce Development Analysis: 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 are the building blocks of a cohesive and thriving local economy. The role of Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas is to foster the strength and growth of the symbiotic employer and job seeker relationship, by the utilization of programs designed to prepare the current and emerging workforce for the future. These activities include:

**Workshops:** Designed for universal job seekers wishing to enhance self-marketing skills. Topics include WorkInTexas basics, resume writing, interviewing skills, applications 101, guide to employment for ex-offenders, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA), and financial literacy. While the available trainings may not appeal to all job seekers, the topics do address the issues relayed by employers as the most problematic areas often seen in the hiring process. In addition to the in-person workshops offered at the workforce centers, the Board has developed virtual workshop alternatives. Virtual workshops are offered in two formats, including live Zoom workshops with interactive capabilities and video workshops that can be viewed at any time. Workshop topics include Resume Creation, Applications, TANF Employment Planning Sessions, Unemployment Benefits, Ex-Offenders Guide to Unemployment, Financial Literacy, and Rapid Response Services. These workshops will assist those who may have been out of the job market for an extended interval, such as veterans, the homeless, ex-offenders or individuals with disabilities. The Board has also strengthened rural service delivery through workshops hosted at various county libraries in Northeast Texas. Partnering with each of the five county libraries, where there is no workforce center presence, the Board hosts workshops to provide job seekers with information about WIT, job search, resume writing, and interviewing. Program strengths include diversity of format. Virtual workshops allow service delivery in a variety of ways to meet the needs of the individual and overcoming barriers such as transportation. The library workshops takes this resource to our rural counties and reduces travel for customers in those locations. Additionally, these workshops are based on needs identified by local employers and are designed specifically to enhance employability within the region. Conversely, the weakness of these workshops is low attendance, despite marketing efforts and consistency of schedule. With the recent addition of video workshops, which are accessible anytime from anywhere, the board hopes more job seekers will take advantage of this opportunity.

**Work Experience:** for WIOA Adult, WIOA Youth, and Choices customers. It is intended for customers with little or no actual work experience to gain hands-on work related skills while also earning a wage. Additionally, it may be beneficial to individuals who have been out of work for an extended period of time, such as those listed above. Work Experience is a very time limited activity and can therefore only provide basic instruction, however it offers the opportunity for invaluable soft skills training many customers desperately need. Issues revolving around soft skills are some of the most frequently discussed by local employers; therefore, work experience is also quite beneficial to area employers looking for experienced and work ready staff. Alternatively, there are some negative aspects to the program. Employers are under no obligation to hire the individuals at the completion of the assigned hours, so many times the participants must continue to job search upon completion. However, since participants are now armed with soft skills and in most cases some transferable skills, employability of the individual is greatly enhanced. This activity is used heavily in the Choices program and its success is evidenced by Choices participation rates in recent years.

**On-the-Job Training (OJT):** for WIOA Adult, WIOA Youth, WIOA Dislocated Workers, and Choices customers. Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas has a robust OJT program that assists both employers and job seekers simultaneously. It allows job seekers to gain employment in a field with little or no experience, while allowing employers to offset the extraordinary cost of training new employees. OJT is a viable and essential program for individuals who may not be inclined to function well in traditional classroom instruction or for those who need to return to work quickly and are unable to devote the time to a lengthy training program. While OJT does offer valuable experience and transferable skills, the narrow focus of the training may be more limited in scope than and not as marketable as a traditional occupational or vocational training



program. However, the program is a perfect fit for those customers who need to earn money right away while acquiring new skills. The program is successful with more than 80% of participants completing the training period and maintaining employment with the company.

Job Shadowing: For WIOA Youth. Job shadowing allows a youth customer to explore future career options before pursuing employment in a particular occupation or industry. The idea of a specific job can differ greatly from its reality; therefore, job shadowing is designed to bring the reality to the forefront so the youth can make an informed decision about the future. Since much of the service area is rural, virtual job shadowing will also be utilized to offer the widest range of options available. It may also be beneficial to youth who have particular barriers to employment such as offenders, and those who are basic skills deficient to help them establish and reach realistic goals. Job shadowing is very limited in duration, and is not designed to be a full view of all available career paths, but rather should be used as a tool for in-depth career exploration, stacked with other activities to provide a well-rounded career planning experience.

Vocational and Occupational Skills Training: For WIOA Adults, WIOA Youth, WIOA Dislocated Workers, SNAP E&T, and TANF/Choices customers. These services are provided through a partnering institution such as a local community college or trade school and are designed to assist customers with the attainment of skills and credentials in demand occupations. These training programs are the best pipeline of qualified labor for positions requiring specialized skills or credentialing. The Board works with training partners to identify and provide new courses and curriculum as the local market dictates. These training programs offer the best labor pipeline for many of the industries in demand in Northeast Texas. The Board also utilizes the Metrix Learning online training platform as a method for WIOA customers to learn new skills. Metrix Learning offers more than 5000 courses, available at no cost to workforce customers in Texas. Staff work with WIOA customers to identify career and training interests, and then assist customers in signing up for related courses. Metrix also offers certification exams for certain course tracts. The exams have a cost but scholarship funds are available for eligible WIOA customers. Metrix Learning offers an online training option that customers can complete on their own timeline and pace. The success of these training programs can be measured by the Board's consistent achievement of statewide performance measures such as credential attainment, measurable skills gain, enrolled/employed q2/q4 post exit, as well as median earnings of exiters. Occupational and vocational skills training is the most utilized service offered to eligible customers, and the one with the most impact on the individual. Conversely, it can be difficult, especially for dislocated workers to enter into a long term training program that might eliminate their ability to work full time and maintain adequate participation in the chosen course of study. However, these programs are life-changing and can exponentially increase the earning potential of an individual, especially in a rural area with limited employment options.

Early Childhood Education: Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas believes preparing an educated and skilled workforce starts in the area's child care centers. The heart of child care quality improvement lies within proper training for directors and teachers. Proper training, even if it is repetitive, encourages child care professionals to implement quality practices in their centers and classrooms. Although training is paramount, child care centers must also have the proper tools to create successful learning environments. The Board provides approximately 5 trainings per month for child care providers and staff, as well as creative and fun activities to aid teachers with curriculum implementation. The training provided is for children birth to Kindergarten as well as after school activities for school age students. Pre-K curriculum is a main focus for training to help prepare children to be school ready when they enter the public

education system. All training provided ensures child care staff and directors meet the required number of training hours to maintain licensing requirements. It can be difficult to find available dates and times for the trainings that accommodate the busy schedules of the owners, directors, and teachers. Typically, these trainings must be conducted after business hours and on weekends, requiring multiple sessions so everyone can attend. However, the board recently transitioned to conducting most trainings via Zoom which has eliminated some of the barriers to attendance. The success of these programs is evident as the participating providers in the region are rarely sanctioned for lack of training or insufficient curriculum.

K-12 Students: The Board has several programs and initiatives related to K-12 students. For several years, the Board has hosted LEAP (Learning Endorsements and Professions) Youth Career Expos for area 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Eighth grade students must select an endorsement prior to entering high school, which determines some of their elective coursework. The LEAP Expo allows students the opportunity to speak with local employers and post-secondary training providers to learn more about career pathways. The LEAP Expo helps students make a connection between careers and their endorsement decision. Each year, the Board hosts LEAP Expos at four locations, with annual attendance from 25 schools and approximately 2500 students. The Board's Future Forward events are for high school seniors. This event is specifically for seniors planning to enter the workforce or community college, and those that aren't sure what they will do after high school. The events includes a keynote speaker, breakout sessions, and an employer panel. In addition to these events there are several resources for students on the Board's website including career exploration videos, local career wage information, and information about local post-secondary training providers. The events are very successful and informative for students, based on feedback provided by school administration and the Region 8 Educational Services Center.

Pathways to College and Careers: The Board's Pathways to College and Careers program places workforce staff in several school districts across the region. The Board has identified a number of partner schools, who have signed agreements for participation in the program. Career and Education Specialists spend at least one day each week at their schools. Services include one-on-one sessions with students to discuss career interests and local employment opportunities. Also, these staff make group presentations to classes about labor market information, career resources, post-secondary training programs, financial aid, and workforce services, among others. These staff members have also developed video workshops for students on FASFA, Resume Creation, and Interviewing. This is an effort to expand virtual service delivery and offer these resources to all school districts in the region. The program has been very successful and well received based on feedback provided by administrative staff. The Board received funding from the Texas Workforce Commission to purchase Virtual Reality (VR) headsets and career exploration software. The Career and Education Specialists use these VR headsets with students in their partner schools. They also make special presentations with the VR headsets to non-partner schools and at Board events such as LEAP and Future Forward. Through three years of this program the Career and Education Specialists have participated in group presentations or events with more than 16,000 students. Staff have also made presentations or participated in events with more than 3,000 teachers, faculty, and parents. These staff have also met one-on-one with 2,500 students. This program has and will continue to make a significant impact on these students and the region's future workforce.

Employers: The Board and Contracted Service Provider staff work together to gather feedback on the training and employment needs of employers in Northeast Texas. Feedback is gathered through face-to-face meetings, advisory group meetings, customer surveys, and job fair events.

Specific employer needs vary, however a universal need is a workforce that is equally competent in both soft skills and technical skills. In many cases, employers need workers with a solid foundation in technical skills, willing to learn business-specific processes. These needs are confirmed by the projected growth of occupations in the region and the corresponding education requirements. The majority of job growth in the area will require, at a minimum, a technical certificate. Employers also need a way to upgrade worker skills to match technological and process changes. The Board has access to the Metrix Learning online learning platform. Staff have outreached employers with information on Metrix Learning and the options to upgrade incumbent worker skills. The Board also helps provide information on the state's Skills Development Fund and Skills for Small Business to the employer community, as a way to upgrade new and incumbent worker skills. The success of the employer programs is evidenced through the continued involvement and support of local employers by participation in events such as job fairs and youth expos, as well as acting as training sites for work experience and on-the-job training. Additionally, the Board consistently meets or exceeds state performance measures such as Employer Workforce Assistance. The Board has been and will continue to be a successful focal point for bringing community stakeholders together to expand and advance the economic development of the region.

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## PART 3: CORE PROGRAMS

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*10. Workforce Development System: A description of the workforce development system in the local area that identifies:*

- a. the programs that are included in the system; and*
- b. how the Board will work with the entities carrying out 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 strives to provide superior service to all customers. WIOA offers a comprehensive list of core programs for job seekers in the Northeast Texas region. Programs are provided at one of four Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas workforce center offices and include:

- WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth
- Wagner-Peyser Employment Service
- TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) /Choices
- SNAP E&T – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training and
- TAA - Trade Adjustment Assistance
- Child Care Services

- Student Hireability Navigator

Additionally, services for job seekers at the workforce centers include:

- Information relating to support services for employment, including child care and transportation
- Career, employment and labor market information
- Resume writing templates and support materials
- Job readiness training and workshops including interview skills, proper work attire, interacting with customers and co-workers, attendance expectations, and resume writing
- Soft skills
- Basic computer skills
- Internet job search
- Career and skill assessment tools and services
- Information on financial aid for occupational and vocational training
- An expanded scope of services and training available to eligible jobseekers and workers through partner programs.
- Financial literacy training

Trained staff members are available to answer questions and assist any customers that require assistance.

Northeast Texas customers also include local employers. Services that are provided to all employers at their request include:

- Assistance in finding employees, including instructions on how to provide quality job postings resulting in matches with the most qualified workers.
- Interview facilities at local workforce center offices.
- Labor market information.
- Rapid response to mass layoffs and business closings.
- Onsite and customized hiring events
- Information about training and hiring incentives such as on-the-job training programs, Work Opportunity Tax Credits (WOTC), and Fidelity Bonding

The Board partners with a number of organizations throughout the region. These include economic development entities, chambers of commerce, community colleges, universities and school districts, all of which strengthen the region's workforce. These partnerships assist the Board in serving job seekers by providing enhanced access to employment, education, training and support services.

In addition, partnerships aid in supporting career and technical education. The Board will work to fulfill the following goals:

- Collaborate with local employers to determine current and future needs while identifying training opportunities in the region.
- Maintain a strong partnership with the Region 8 Education Service Center to determine strategies to best acquaint local school districts with the labor market and career information. In addition, the Board's Pathways to College and Careers (PC<sup>2</sup>) program will continue to connect middle and high school students as well as parents with

information on career opportunities and educational requirements for high growth, high demand occupations.

- Continue to provide industry tours for Career and Technology teachers.
- Work with the Business Services unit to explore industries to highlight for local students.
- Explore opportunities for providing industry tours for high school seniors.
- Increase internship opportunities.
- Ensure school guidance counselors and teachers have current labor market information about high growth and in-demand career options.
- Continue to have Virtual Job Shadow's career videos available for all school districts on the Board's website and mobile App.
- Identify and promote youth college and career fairs throughout the region.
- Continue to expand the LEAP (Learning Endorsements and Professions) Expo for 8th grade students.
- Enhance and grow career and college exploration events for high school seniors.
- Continue to improve the Board's Pathways to College and Careers (PC<sup>2</sup>) program, designed to connect high school students directly with career and/or training information in the Northeast Texas area.
- Use the Board's website and social media presence to promote information on career pathways.

The Board will continue to support the Texas Workforce Commission's strategy to work with entities whose goals align with workforce development programs. Through co-location efforts and the franchise service delivery model, customers receive service efficiency, uniformity, and equity at any of the four workforce centers in Northeast Texas. In addition, the Board has facilitated the integration of formal training programs by developing partnerships with local community colleges.

*11. Expand Access, Facilitate Development, and Improve Access: A description of how the Board will work with entities carrying out core programs to:*

- a. expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment;*
- b. 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 Lists, and career pathways occupations that the Board is planning to develop; and*
- c. improve access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable).*

The Board works closely with entities carrying out core programs to improve the workforce development system in Northeast Texas. Entities carrying out core programs include the Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas Contracted Service Provider, Texarkana College Adult Education and Literacy, Red River Valley Adult Education Consortium, and the Texas Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation. Working in partnership, these entities are focused on enhancing service delivery.

The Board and workforce partners will continue to explore methods for expanding access to workforce services. Methods for expanding access include:

- Continue to expand and update technology at the Workforce Centers to enhance accessibility of services, resource rooms and self-service options for job seekers.
- Continue to work with current partners and expand outreach, exploring new potential partnerships. Partnerships are vital in workforce development, and expanding those partnerships will allow the Board to reach a wider group of customers.
- Continue to strengthen the rural service delivery model in Northeast Texas. The Board has five new Career Connection kiosks in each of the five counties that do not have a workforce center. These kiosks, located at county libraries and county offices, offer customers a local connection to workforce services. Kiosks provide access to the Board's website, WorkInTexas, events calendar, chat option, and more. Additionally, all of the Board's workshops are now virtual. Information about virtual workshops is provided through social media, the Board's website, WorkInTexas, and direct messaging. These workshops provide customers in rural Northeast Texas the opportunity to participate without traveling to a workforce center.
- Expand access to programs through continued improvement of virtual services utilizing video conferencing, e-signature and digital transaction management platforms, and video workshops
- Strengthen partnerships with local Independent School Districts. The Board currently contracts with several local districts to provide on campus student support designed to provide guidance to both students and administrators regarding career pathways, in demand occupations, work readiness, and real-time relevant labor market information. The board plans to expand these partnerships in the future and offer aspects of the program to the additional ISD's in the area. This effort raises awareness of key programs such as WIOA and encourages youth, especially those with disabilities to avail themselves of available workforce center services. The Workforce Career and Education specialist staff, working within the schools, are now providing workshops across the region, including schools that are not program partners. These staff provide workshops on social media use, resume writing, interviewing, resumes, workplace behavior, and Virtual Reality career explorations. These staff have made presentations at several school districts and the Region 8 Education Service Center.
- The Board's SkillUp Northeast Texas initiative includes more than 5000 free online courses from Metrix Learning. These courses can be accessed anywhere, anytime, through an online learning portal. Staff continue to outreach individuals, groups, employers, partners and others about this resource. Eligible customers can also receive scholarships for industry certification exams, which do have a cost.

The Board will work with the Contracted Service Provider, Community Colleges, and Adult Education providers to strengthen the Career Pathways Model for Northeast Texas, focusing on outreach and co-enrollment.

- Provide more structure and detail to the current career pathways model.
- Work with community colleges to develop contacts for implementing cross referrals.
- Continue to work with the College President's Roundtable to provide labor market information for new program development.
- Continue to provide industry tours for Career and Technical Education teachers. Industry tours provide an inside look at employers' operations. Teachers get a better

understanding of job opportunities and the skillsets needed for those jobs. The Board will incorporate career pathways into these discussions.

- Provide Teacher Externships to area Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers. Teacher externships will match teachers with a local employer for a week long job shadowing program. Teachers will be matched with employers related to their area of instruction. Teachers will work alongside several workers and learn various aspects of each operation. Participants will then create a lesson plan for their students, incorporating what they learned during the externship. The Board has offered the Teacher Externship program for two years. The first year a total of 10 teachers participated, with 15 completing the program in year 2. The Board has provided information on this program to support groups throughout the region, and there is a request to continue expanding this program to include more teachers.

The Board will continue to offer several initiatives supporting postsecondary credentials and information about local training programs. Staff will also work with Board Advisory Groups to expand these initiatives and explore additional options.

- Continue to partner with Region 8 Education Service Center to promote Career and Technical Education throughout the region.
- The Board provides career information videos from Virtual Job Shadow. The Board will highlight those careers that require a postsecondary credential and those that can be found in the Career Pathways model.
- Continue to work with middle schools in the region to promote careers through the LEAP Expos. The Youth Career Expos offer students a glimpse at area employers and training providers. The Board will explore ways to incorporate information about postsecondary credentials into this event.
- The Board will work with Advisory Groups and the employer community to develop a list of postsecondary credentials and industry recognized certifications, relevant to Northeast Texas.
- The Board is hosting the Future Forward event series for area senior students. This three-day, three-location event will focus on students that plan to enter the workforce or a local training program. Information about local career pathways will be provided, including information on industry-recognized credentials and local employer information.
- The Board will continue to promote the SkillUp Northeast Texas initiative, and the Metrix Learning catalog to students throughout the region. This program can supplement traditional training programs at the local community college, with free online training with a short time commitment. This program also offers a number of assessments for students.

The Board is a member of the Texarkana Regional Manufacturing Partnership, focusing on the Governor's Advanced Technologies and Manufacturing cluster. The partnership includes representatives from area manufacturing employers, workforce, secondary education, post-secondary education, economic development, chambers of commerce, and municipalities. The group is focused on three topic areas, including vocational training, high school outreach, and soft skills. A number of initiatives designed to meet partnership goals are underway. The local community college, Texarkana College, has translated feedback from this group into a short term manufacturing certificate. The 16-week manufacturing certificate is designed to give

students the skills foundation needed to succeed at any of the area's manufacturing employers. The Board will continue to work with the group and expand outreach to area students about career opportunities available in local manufacturing.

## **PART 4: ONE-STOP SERVICE DELIVERY**

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*12. One-Stop Service Delivery System: A description of the one-stop delivery system in the workforce area, including explanations of the following:*

- a. 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;*
- b. 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;*
- c. How entities within the one-stop delivery system, including the one-stop operators and the one-stop partners, will comply with WIOA §188, 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; and*
- d. The roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners.*

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas is an employer driven system focused on meeting the needs of business and industry. Principle Concepts, LLC manages the single contract as the Workforce Services and Child Care Provider. The contractor ensures total integration of service delivery and facilitates the efficacy and economy of service across multiple funding sources. Additionally, the Board in conjunction with Principle Concepts utilize a franchise model for all workforce centers and services, ensuring efficiency, equality, uniformity, and exceptional customer service.

During 2022, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services did not renew their lease of space in the Texarkana Workforce Center. This vacancy includes a loss of \$101,281 in infrastructure costs. The loss of this sub-lessee will limit the funds in the Board's operating grants available to provide services to workforce customers.

The Board's Contracted Service Provider has developed and published the document, *Minimum Standards for Operation of the Workforce Centers*. This living document created the foundation for the provision of services and is the basis for measurement of customer driven service delivery. As part of the workforce services provider contract, it is a requirement to follow the Minimum Standards for Operation and to update the document as necessary to ensure compliance with any and all policy and procedural changes issued by TWC or the board.

The contract also includes local performance measures that are negotiated each year. The performance measures and goals are aligned with and designed to ensure the needs of local



employers and customers are met and a systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of achieving those goals is accomplished on a continuous basis.

One-stop services should be readily available and easily conveyed to all interested job seekers. The services provided to the public, such as workshops, are delivered in simple to comprehend language, with assistive technology available if needed. One-on-One workshops can also be provided if necessary. The Board remains committed to using available and emerging technology to assist customers, particularly those who may be located a distance from a center and with limited transportation. Priority is placed on maintaining up-to-date computer hardware and software available to the public. For example, those wishing to apply for child care services can do so from any computer through the Board's website. All public events are marketed through the board's website, Facebook page, and Twitter. To further expand the virtual presence of Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas, the Board has developed a mobile app for Apple and Android devices outlining the services available to both job seekers and employers. In addition, staff have recorded all workshops so they are now accessible by the public at any time through the Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas website. Virtual workshops are also offered regularly using the Zoom platform. The schedule for these live virtual workshops is available on the Board's website. These virtual services are designed to connect with customers across the nine-county service region including remote areas. The Board has also added a Chatbot feature to the website to answer common questions from customers. Additionally, the Board has placed Career Connection Kiosks in each of the five counties that do not have a workforce center. These kiosks provide a physical connection to workforce service for people in the most rural areas of Northeast Texas. Customers can use the kiosks to connect to the Board's website, find contact information, view upcoming events, and search for jobs.

The Board strives to achieve seamless delivery of services and universal access to individuals with disabilities and/or language barriers. Workforce Solutions centers have expanded existing technology to enhance accessibility of services, resource rooms, and self-service options for job seekers with a wide range of visual, hearing, physical, cognitive, and other disabilities. Resource rooms are equipped with access stations that include: adjustable tables, large screen monitors on moveable mounting arms, alternative input devices such as track ball and hands free mice, as well as oversized keyboards and touch screen technology. In addition, text magnification and screen reading software is available on workstations designed for customers with visual impairment, as well as a video magnifier for printed materials. Portable assistive living devices are available to individuals with hearing impairment as are text based Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDD) and UbiDuo face-to-face communication solutions. Furthermore, the Board is committed to working with the Texas Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation (TWS VR) services division to ensure the needs of individuals with disabilities are met. Co-location of VR services at the Workforce Centers provides a one-stop delivery system for individuals with disabilities. The Board plans to work closely with VR staff to ensure regional employers understand employment law regarding individuals with disabilities. The employment of a Student HireAbility Navigator enhances these efforts to build bridges between the local ISDs, employers and VR staff.

Partnerships are essential to a successful and growing local workforce system. The Board partners with many employer organizations, economic development groups, educational institutions, municipal entities, and faith-based and community-based organizations. In addition, the Board works closely with the Texas Veterans Commission representatives housed in the centers to ensure Veterans receive priority of service for training and other workforce

activities. Adult Education is another essential partner working to cross refer those in need of services. The Texarkana College Adult Education and Literacy program has a classroom at the Greater Texarkana Workforce Center to serve center customers quickly and easily. The Board will continue to work with TWS VR Services Division to help individuals with disabilities gain skills, complete training programs, and find employment by expanding programs such as the Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL) program as well as the year round work experience program offered by TWS VR.

### *13. Cooperative Agreements*

- a. 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 WD Letter 18-20, Attachment 2 11 sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts.*

See Appendix D for cooperative agreements.

### *14. Employer Engagement, Economic Development, and Unemployment Insurance Program Coordination: A description of the strategies and services that will be used in the workforce area to do the following:*

- a. 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*
- b. Support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the workforce area*
- c. Better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development*
- d. Strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs*

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

The goal of the Board is to be the primary provider of human capital to employers in the area. The Workforce Centers serve as a central point of contact for employers and promote knowledge and continuing use of Workforce services. The Board has established an employer-driven system dedicated to sustaining and promoting business development in the region. Providing quality, value-added services to local employers allows Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas to propagate the relationship between employers and job seekers.

The service delivery model for employer engagement is focused around a dedicated Business Services unit. Business and Employment Consultants (BEC) work with area employers by posting openings in the WorkinTexas system, screening and referring qualified applicants and providing local intelligence such as labor market information. In addition, the BEC assists employers with business expansion opportunities by providing information regarding Work Opportunity Tax Credits, On-the-Job Training, and Skills Development Grants, thus allowing employers to save time and money.

Employer outreach and engagement are crucial, and as such, two BEC positions covering the nine-county region are devoted entirely to this objective. These staff members work closely with area businesses to identify needs such as current labor pool skills gaps and supply linkages to local training providers to ensure a skilled and ready workforce exists to meet employer needs. These services increase employer capacity and allow employers to be more competitive in the current local economy.

Integrated services are provided to all employers at their request through a single point of contact to support local and regional economic and workforce development efforts. These services, at a minimum, include:

- Assistance in finding employees including instructions on how to provide quality job postings resulting in matches with the most qualified workers;
- Labor exchange;
- Rooms for employers' usage and interview facilities (available on a first-come, first-served basis)
- Job fairs, both large regional events and small single-employer events;
- Support employer hiring events with social media outreach and direct messaging to job seekers;
- State and/or federally generated Labor Market Information (LMI);
- State and/or federally generated information on Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA);
- Information regarding consultations on workplace accommodations for persons with disabilities;
- Information on and referral to business start-up, retention, and expansion services;
- Information on and referral to sources for developing customized training programs;
- Information on and referral to career preparation activities;
- Rapid response to mass layoffs and business closings;
- Information about training incentives such as on-the-job training programs (based on worker eligibility); and,
- State and/or federally generated information on tax credits for new hires.

The Board makes rapid response services available to all employers and eligible job seekers in the region. Rapid response services are designed to respond to layoffs and plant closings by quickly coordinating services and providing immediate resources to companies and their affected workers. The Board relies on the Business Services Unit for local information about

layoffs and closings that do not require a formal Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) letter. The Board provides employers and workers with options for either in-person sessions and/or virtual sessions. These information sessions include information about workforce services, local resources, job search assistance, and training opportunities. The Board works closely with the TWC Unemployment Insurance regional representative. The UI specialist is invited to participate in all rapid response sessions, in order to provide affected workers with information about the Texas Unemployment Insurance Process. The Board and UI specialist also offer the employer information about the shared-work program and filing mass claims. As an alternative to in-person rapid response sessions, the Board offers virtual sessions for all employers and eligible workers.

The Board has several Advisory Groups focused on regional collaboration and responding to the needs of local employers. The College Presidents' Roundtable is comprised of the College Presidents of the three Community Colleges and universities in Northeast Texas. The Education and Training Advisory Group is a combination of both K-12 representatives and Higher Education representatives. The Workforce and Economic Development Advisory Group is represented by Economic Development Corporations, Chambers of Commerce, and others working in the economic development profession. The Child Care Advisory Group is comprised of local child care professionals. These groups meet on a regular basis to discuss regional challenges and opportunities. One of the primary objectives of all four groups is providing a skilled workforce for the success of existing industry and the attraction of new industry. These groups have successfully responded to industry needs on many occasions, including the award of six High Demand Job Training Grants. These four grants included \$650,000 in matching funds from Economic Development Partners combined with \$650,000 in grant funding from the Texas Workforce Commission. High Demand Job Training grants created or enhanced several local training programs, which include Computer Numerical Control (CNC), welding, robotics, air craft maintenance, computer networking, and health sciences. All of these programs were created in response to employer needs. The College Presidents' Roundtable has also been able to develop shared programs. While the need for some training programs exists, there is not enough demand to justify the cost of separate programs at each Community College. The College Presidents work together to rotate the programs each year, reducing costs, while continuing to meet the workforce needs of local employers.

The Board works with the Business Services Unit, Community Colleges, and Economic Development Corporations to outreach employers concerning the benefits of the Skills Development Fund (SDF) program. The Board works with these partners to actively develop SDF projects in Northeast Texas. Employers are provided information about SDF grants, including benefits for the employers, employees, and community college. Several employers in Northeast Texas have taken advantage of SDF grants in the past few years, but there remain a large number of potential employer partners that have never participated in a SDF project. The Board also actively promotes the Skills for Small Business program, which provides training to area businesses with fewer than 100 employees at no cost. The Board will explore expanding outreach and target those employers that have not participated in a previous skills training grant.

The Board will continue to meet the needs of dislocated workers throughout the Northeast Texas region. Quality and relevant services are critical in assisting these workers with reemployment opportunities. Dislocated Workers (DLW) are priority customers for placement in On-the-Job Training (OJT) training activities, shortening the time they are out of work. Business Services team members evaluate DLW customer profiles to assess relative skills and

abilities in order to make quality job matches, while identifying high quality employment opportunities. Northeast has executed in excess of thirty one on-the-job training agreements during the past twenty four months and is skilled in utilizing this method of obtaining reemployment for DLW. Business Services staff also work closely with area employers to make connections between DLW and employers looking to hire strong candidates. The Board works to identify additional funding opportunities to assist in the reemployment process. The Board has applied for and received multiple Dislocated Worker Grants, designed to provide vocational and occupational training for DLW in Northeast Texas. These training programs are identified as those with a high probability of employment after completion, again shortening the amount of time a DLW is unemployed.

*15. Coordination of Wagner-Peyser Services: 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.*

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas utilizes the Texas Model for workforce system service delivery. The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) implemented the Texas Model for the delivery of Employment Services (ES) (Wagner-Peyser Act services). The Board contracts with a service provider to operate the area's workforce centers. The service provider has full responsibility for day-to-day supervision of TWC (state) ES staff. While TWC retains administrative oversight regarding human resource issues, local managers employed by the service provider directs daily assignment and work activities, in addition to setting and monitoring performance goals, interviewing and selecting potential employees, and initiating disciplinary action, if needed. As the Board has fully implemented and works under the Texas model, coordination within the system is ensured and any duplication of services are kept at a minimum.

Also, as the Board only contracts with one service provider, all four workforce centers and all programs are operated using one all-encompassing service model. The service provider utilizes a franchise model, meaning that all services and activities are carried out identically, regardless of the office location. Programs and staff are supervised not by center but rather by department and program, ensuring coordination, consistency, and accuracy.

*16. Integrated, Technology-Enabled Intake and Case Management: 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.*

Technology plays an integral part in many aspects of the daily operation of Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas. Staff utilizes WorkInTexas to foster the symbiotic relationship between employers and job seekers by providing a centralized location for job postings, resumes, and matching services. Program staff uses the TWIST system to track case management and child care activities. In addition, management uses web reports and custom built Infomaker reports to track real time performance issues. The Board's paperless document management system, is utilized for all workforce center case management and child care files. In addition, all fiscal

activities are conducted using the workflow functions in the Cabinet system. Virtual services have been expanded to ensure that customers receive assistance in all circumstances. Through the utilization of video, virtual conferencing, and digital signature and transaction management technologies, the Board has provided a secure environment for customers who may not be able to access services in person. All case management activities, such as eligibility determination, counseling visits, referrals, assessments, and document management can be accomplished either virtually or in-person. The Board utilizes an electronic signature platform to send and receive customer documents securely. Additionally, the Board maintains a mobile lab consisting of specially equipped laptops that can be deployed to assist with a variety of situations such as on site hiring events for employers and offsite computer labs and classes for rural areas. The Board also takes significant measures to ensure the protection of customer information.

## **PART 5: WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES**

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### ***17. Economic Development and Entrepreneurial/Microenterprise Activities: 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.***

The Board will continue to strengthen partnerships with Economic Development organizations in Northeast Texas. The Board convenes the Workforce and Economic Development Advisory Group to discuss regional economic development challenges and opportunities. This group is comprised of economic development professionals from across the region. Acting as an advisory group to the Board's External Affairs Committee, the Workforce and Economic Development group provides insight and expertise on the economic development climate in Northeast Texas. An ongoing conversation amongst this group focuses on ways the Board can better support economic development efforts in Northeast Texas. The group is in various stages of development on several ideas from this group. These ideas include a regional analysis, target occupation media campaign, and expansion of internships/apprenticeships.

The Workforce and Economic Development Advisory Group has provided input to help establish the Board's Target Occupation List. Acting as a source of local wisdom, the group has insight about employer training needs that is not always apparent in the labor market data.

The Board brought the High Demand Job Training Grant (HDJT) opportunity to the Workforce and Economic Advisory Group members. Several of the members were interested in this opportunity and pledged the matching fund requirements. The Board was recently awarded a sixth High Demand Job Training Grant from the Texas Workforce Commission. Each of the six Northeast Texas HDJT grants has been a collaboration involving multiple Economic Development Organizations. Combined, the six HDJT grants have secured \$650,000 from the Texas Workforce Commission and \$650,000 matching funds from Economic Development partners, resulting in \$1.3 million to create and enhance high demand community college and high school training programs in Northeast Texas.

The Board also actively supports economic development efforts with labor market information reports. Economic Development organizations often reach out to board staff for assistance in

supplying potential employer prospects with labor market information on the region. Board staff routinely provide information on labor availability, occupations wages, and industry reports. Additionally, board staff participate in employer and site selector visits, in order to provide information about the local workforce, employer resources, training resources, and workforce services.

The Board realizes the importance of Economic Development partnerships, and will continue to align workforce program activities with economic development activities in Northeast Texas. In order to maintain and strengthen these Economic Development partnerships, the Board will:

- Continue to meet with the Workforce and Economic Development Advisory Group on a regular basis, both as a means to provide and receive information on regional activities and opportunities.
- Explore additional Workforce/Economic Development grant opportunities to leverage local funds.
- Participate in economic development business retention, expansion, and recruitment efforts. Provide labor market information and potential training funds as requested.
- Convene economic development and education partners as appropriate to provide guidance on workforce development initiatives.

The Board will promote entrepreneurial-skills training and microenterprise services in partnership with the local Small Business Development Center (SBDC). The Board will take the following steps to expand outreach of entrepreneurial-skills training and microenterprise services:

- Include the two regional SBDC directors in Workforce and Economic Development Advisory Group meetings as appropriate.
- Provide SBDC directors with information on workforce services and resources for small businesses.
- The Board has a series of instructional videos covering a variety of small business topics, including start-up and operations. However, these videos are now several years old and some of the information is outdated. The Board is expanding a number of video workshops and plans to update the video series for entrepreneurs and small business owners.
- Provide small businesses resource information on the Board's website and social media channels. These resources include the Skills for Small Business program from TWC and programs from the Small Business Administration.
- The Board is planning to host a regional Business Plan contest for high school and community college students. The Board will convene a panel of local small business owners, finance professionals, economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, and educators to review business plan submissions. Finalists will pitch their business plan live to the panel and winners will be provided with startup funding provided by local sponsors. Winners will also be connected with a local mentor to assist in their small business ideas.

*18. Rapid Response Activity Coordination: A description of how the Board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response activities described in WIOA §134(a)(2)(A).*

The Board is responsible for coordinating the delivery of Rapid Response services with the State Rapid Response Unit at the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to employers and workers in the event of a layoff or closure. The primary purpose of these services for businesses is to assist in the management of human resource needs, control unemployment insurance costs, and Workers' Compensation costs during a transition and to assist the employer to maintain good standing in the community.

The Board will provide Rapid Response services when one or more of the following circumstances occur:

- a) Announcement or notification of a permanent closure of a facility, store, enterprise, or plant, regardless of the number of workers affected;
- b) Announcement or notification of a mass layoff;
- c) A mass job dislocation resulting from a disaster as defined by state or local emergency management policies. The Department encourages States to consider appropriate roles and responsibilities for Rapid Response activities following a natural or other disaster event and establish these roles and responsibilities as part of any emergency management plans that are developed; or
- d) The filing of a TAA petition, in accordance with sec. 221(a)(2)(A) of the Trade Act, which requires that the Governor ensure that Rapid Response services are delivered to all workers who are covered by the petition for TAA.

Although the above occurrences require delivery of Rapid Response services, the Board does not limit service delivery to just these instances. The Board makes Rapid Response services available to all employers and eligible workers in the region. Information about Rapid Response services is provided to employers through the Business Service Unit employer outreach efforts.

The governor has delegated (through the Texas Workforce Commission) the responsibility and funding to the 28 local Workforce Solutions Boards. A portion of the state's WIOA Rapid Response funds are allocated to each of the Boards under a formula that provides an equal base amount and then an additional allocation based on factors such as number of long term UI Claimants and Unemployment Rate. The Board has a Rapid Response Team (Team) including the Board's authorized Rapid Response Coordinator and a member from the Contracted Service Provider staff. The Board's designated Rapid Response Coordinator works closely with the state's Dislocated Worker/Rapid Response unit to ensure any information regarding layoffs, closures and/or natural disasters is quickly shared. The contracted service provider's staff ensures the Rapid Response Coordinator is notified of any pending layoffs in our area.

In the event of a layoff or closure, attempts will be made to contact the employer within 48 hours of receipt of notice and shall establish a date and time for an on-site meeting to occur. At a minimum the initial on-site meeting shall include the Rapid Response Coordinator and management representatives from the business affected. The Rapid Response Coordinator will provide information on shared work programs and layoff aversion strategies. For affected



workers the primary purpose of services is to assist in finding new employment prior to their layoff date or to link them to continuing services until employment can be secured.

If a layoff cannot be averted, the Team offers affected workers an on-site or virtual orientation to include access to and information regarding comprehensive workforce services, IRS Tax responsibilities, Unemployment Insurance, and employment and training activities. The Board's Rapid Response Coordinator will communicate with the TWC UI specialist to ensure someone is available to provide information on the Texas unemployment benefits process. Most Rapid Response services shall be provided in a group setting, however, vendors shall be maintained to expedite the provision of individualized crisis counseling and financial counseling in cases where such services are critical to the well-being of the individual in question.

*19. Youth Activities and Services: A description and assessment of the type and availability of workforce investment activities for youth in the local area, including activities for youth who have disabilities. This description must include an identification of successful models of such activities.*

The Board understands that youth are the future of the workforce and a key element of a thriving local economy. Youth are able to take advantage of an array of different activities designed to prepare them for the world of work. Youth can take advantage of many of the same offerings available to other populations such as staff assisted job search, workshops, assessment, short-term educational training, work readiness skills training, on-the-job training, occupational and vocational education, and secondary education equivalency services. One of the main components of the youth program is work experience, which allows youth, many of whom have never been exposed to employment, the opportunity to get practical hands on work experience while gaining valuable skills.

Job Shadowing is another component of the youth program that allows for career exploration in both a virtual and real world option. The Board, through a program designed by Strivven Media, will continue utilizing a virtual job shadowing component that encourages youth to explore a variety of potential career choices.

For youth who are basic skills deficient, staff members will work with the youth to improve literacy and numeracy skills through a variety of computer based remediation exercises designed to refresh and improve reading comprehension and mathematical computation.

The Workforce Centers will host specialized workshops, specifically for youth to address issues unique to the population, such as financial preparedness and planning for the future based on desired outcomes and realistic expectations. The Board's Pathways to College and Careers program will connect middle and high school students and parents with information on career opportunities and education requirements for high growth, high demand occupations. Additionally, the Student Hireability Navigator staff person, will work with area schools to connect students with disabilities with information on career opportunities and training programs.

The Board is a proponent of inclusion; youth with disabilities can participate in all of the activities available to all youth. If necessary, TWC VR Services Division may be consulted to

offer assistance if accommodations are needed, but it is of tantamount importance that all youth are included, regardless of their disability status.

Occupational and Vocational training services are also available to youth. Youth may choose the same trainings available to Adults and Dislocated Workers.

A successful model of VR and workforce integration is evident in the youth program. In addition to the SEAL program which the board has successfully operated for several years, annually meeting or exceeding participant goals, WIOA and VR staff have worked together to leverage resources and improve outcomes for youth with disabilities. VR services offers funding for post-secondary educational activities for many of the students they serve. Often times these youths complete their coursework but are unable to find job placement after graduation because they lack work experience. When appropriate, these youths can be co-enrolled into the WIOA program where experienced Business Services staff can find work experience or on-the-job placement directly related to the student's credential. These opportunities provide both the much needed hands-on experience in the workplace as well as an opportunity to showcase their talents with an actual employer, which could lead to full time employment.

The Board model relies heavily on work experience, on-the-job as well as occupational and vocational training for youth focusing on established career pathways. These services are proven methods for helping youth obtain sustainable employment at self-sufficient wages. This success is evidenced by the Board's consistent attainment of contracted youth measures such as employment post-exit and starting wages.

*20. Coordination with Secondary and Postsecondary Education Programs: 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.*

With the focus for WIOA youth primarily directed to Out of School Youth, the Board maintains and strengthens relationships with school districts in the region to provide services where needed. The Board's Pathway to College and Careers program includes workforce career and education specialist staff dedicated to working directly with students. This program provides career information to middle schools and high schools grades 6-12. Working directly with partner school districts gives the Board the opportunity to have a presence in the schools and connect students with vital material to prepare for their future. The career and education specialists assist students with career exploration, college admissions, resume writing, job search, social media use, labor market information, and more. Additionally, the career and education specialists have Virtual Reality headsets with career exploration software. The VR headsets have 23 careers for students to explore in the virtual world.

Board staff also work closely with the Region 8 Education Service Center and area school districts. Staff provide labor market information to a number of school districts to help administrators make decisions about course offerings. Schools can align programs of study with high demand occupations and industries. Additionally, staff participate in several area school advisory groups, including Sulphur Springs, Chapel Hill, North Lamar, Texarkana, and Cumby. Staff also work with school districts on grant applications such as the Jobs and

Education for Texans (JET) grant. The Board has also offered a Teacher Externship program for the previous two summers. The Teacher Externship program matches high school career and technology teachers with an employer related to the courses they teach. The program is designed to provide each teacher with the workforce and training needs of each employers, so the teacher can take that information back to their students. Teachers spend a week during the summer job shadowing at a local employer. At the end of the week, the teachers spend time with Board staff and Region 8 staff, discussing the externship experience. Each teacher is also required to create a lesson plan using the information they learned during the externship. The lesson plan allows the teachers to take the externship experience back to their students.

The Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas region is served by three community colleges; Texarkana College, Northeast Texas Community College, Paris Junior College along with one university, Texas A&M University-Texarkana. The partnerships with the institutions are vital in providing opportunities for customers. The Board coordinates meetings of the College Presidents Roundtable to discuss education and workforce activities in the region. Working closely with these colleges will ensure enhancement of services and that any duplication of services is kept to a minimum.

The community colleges offer workforce education certificate programs designed to provide specific skills for students so they may seek immediate employment. Students who complete certificate programs may also have the option to continue their career pathway by working towards an associate degree and receiving credit for studies they have completed. The university offers career pathway programs through articulation agreements with the regions community colleges.

*21. Child Care and Early Learning: 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.*

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas has a strong child care program that works to ensure quality child care is provided to the maximum number of eligible children. Board and contractor staff meet monthly to discuss forecasting, as well as quality improvement goals for child care. Collaborative efforts are made with three Texas Rising Star mentors and one Texas Rising Star assessor to develop a detailed plan for the future of child care quality in our child care centers. The TRS mentors and assessor are trained experts in child care quality and they have a plethora of knowledge relating to school readiness, early learning and area child care needs. They have developed strong relationships with Northeast Texas' child care professionals and they consistently look for new, innovative training opportunities to improve quality, as well as assisting providers with their center and classroom needs. As a result of new legislation, every child care provider participating in the TWC child care program must meet Texas Rising Star standards by 2024. The Board is taking steps to ensure all interested providers are given the support needed to meet these standards. The Board is planning to hire additional TRS mentors to support this initiative. Additionally, the Board is hiring a new position within the child care program to pursue business development activities. This new positions will support the expansion of available child care providers in Northeast Texas. This position will work with existing providers on potential expansions. This staff person will also work with employers,

college, and other workforce partner to discuss the possibility of starting new child care programs at their facilities.

The Board works continuously to balance the number of children in care with available funds. Outreach about the child care program is ongoing, including social media, news outlets, presentations, and as part of the Board's new podcast. A significant increase in funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant will allow the Board to provide quality child care services for about 15% more children in Northeast Texas. The increased funding will also assist to increase the number of quality providers in the region.

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas is continuously engaged with area employers by being involved at area job fairs to distribute information and answer questions regarding the program. The child care program is also promoted through presentations to civic organizations and Chambers of Commerce meetings. Several times a year, child care staff visit area employers to educate them on the benefits of the program to their employees. Staff also make information guides available to employers, which can be shared with employees.

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas is always looking for new ways to improve the quality of child care with our providers in Northeast Texas. Staff provide quality training and materials to TRS providers and also support non-TRS providers in improving the quality of their facilities to assist them with the new Pre-TRS status.

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas believes the heart of quality improvement lies within proper training for child care directors and teachers. Proper training, even if it is repetitive, encourages child care professionals to implement quality practices in their centers and classrooms. Although training is paramount, child care centers must also have the proper tools to create successful learning environments. The Board provides approximately 5 trainings per month for child care providers and staff, as well as creative and fun activities to aid teachers with curriculum implementation. The training provided is for children birth to Kindergarten as well as after school activities for school age students. Pre-K curriculum is a main focus for training to help prepare children to be school ready when they enter the public education system. All training provided ensures child care staff and directors meet the required number of training hours to maintain licensing requirements.

The Board is also a proponent of classroom management. The Brightwheel classroom management system is provided to all TRS providers, which includes tablets and software packages. This application is interactive between the provider and parent. The program assists in parent involvement by allowing access to children's learning activities and daily interactions with the teacher. Classroom management software also aids providers with business management, attendance tracking, individual classroom lesson plans, and activities. The Board also assists area providers with non-TRS status. A new classroom management system will be purchased for all 71 child care providers who have subsidized children in the Northeast Texas WDA. This will reach at least 100 classrooms and even more children, and focus on toddlers and pre-school ages. It will expand quality learning environments and prepare children to attend school as well. All providers will be well trained to apply the management system and fully engage children in successful quality learning environments.

Child care classroom teachers should also be rewarded for their hard work, tenure, and furthering their education. To that end, the Board provides incentives to approximately 90 TRS

teachers and directors based on several factors, including the Center's star status, higher education, Child Development Associates (CDA's) and length of employment. The Board continually offers provider staff opportunities to fund their higher education through CDA classes and credentials.

Finally, Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas continues to purchase quality educational items to assist providers in their goals of reaching TRS status, or increasing star levels for current TRS facilities. The funding per facility is based on the size of the facility and the percentage of CCS subsidized children. The Board and contractor work diligently to recruit more providers, and encouraging those providers to take the necessary steps to become quality TRS facilities. The child care mentors continually research training and available resources to assist all providers, creating and enhancing quality learning environments for area children.

*22. Transportation and Other Support Services: 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.*

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas is fortunate in that three of the four largest cities in the area have some form of public transportation. For those in rural communities, a low-cost transportation service is available through the ArkTex Council of Governments. Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas assists customers with the utilization of these services by purchasing transportation passes when appropriate. In addition, Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas provides transportation assistance through the use of fuel cards as a support service if necessary to allow customers to participate in and complete assigned educational or work based activities. Other support services that are directly related to training and/or employment activities may be provided on a case-by-case basis as needed to enter into or maintain classroom participation or employment.

*23. Coordination of Adult Education and Literacy (AEL): A description of how the Board will coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with adult education and literacy 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 maintains a strong partnership with both Northeast Texas Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) providers: the Red River Valley Adult Education Consortium and Texarkana College Adult Education and Literacy. All partners work closely to ensure activities are carried out in accordance with local, state, and federal guidance. Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas operates under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with both service providers to make AEL services available to customers in the region.

In order to integrate and improve service delivery, the Board and AEL service providers agree to:

- Coordinate referrals of potential customers in an efficient and effective manner

- Provide ongoing communication pertaining to mutual customers within the limitations of statutes, rules or policies.
- Provide qualified personnel to educate each entity's staff on programmatic and eligibility information as needed, including, a liaison to serve as a resource and to address questions from customers.
- Ensure quality customer service and customer-centered focus and collaborate links to education, employment and training services for eligible customers.
- Keep each entity apprised of any services that will benefit eligible customers.

The Board will work with Adult Education providers to:

Collaborate with local businesses for career pathways: The Board will work with Adult Education providers and continue to identify career pathways in targeted occupations where training is needed. A reverse referral process can be used to identify potential customers for Workforce Solutions and Adult Education. Information regarding local business needs can be provided by the Business Services Unit and will be incorporated as part of the pathway process. Introduction of business partners to the Adult Education providers will also assist in learning of local business needs and identifying potential customers.

Provide information regarding local occupations in demand for the Board area: The Board will provide a list of occupations in demand by county for each of the Adult Education service providers on a quarterly basis. This information is helpful in identifying areas of study for students.

Establish a portal on the Boards website for Adult Education information: Place resource material and general information regarding the Adult Education program that will include points of contact, career opportunities and support services available for the student on the Board's website. This information will also be available to potential customers via the Board's social media application.

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas will ensure access and priority of services for all individuals with barriers to employment, including accessibility as it pertains to buildings and technology. Translation services are provided for limited English proficient customers. Public access rooms provide a variety of accessibility accommodations.

The Board will review all proposals received under Title II, except those that present a potential conflict of interest. The local application review process will ensure alignment with WIOA requirements and board plan activities, consistent with WIOA §§107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA §232. The Board will identify a review committee of at least three members to review all AEL applications submitted for the Northeast Texas WDA. After reviewing proposals, the Board will provide TWC with recommendations to promote alignment with the local board plan and WIOA requirements.

## PART 6: ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKERS, AND YOUTH SERVICES

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*24. Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training: A description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the workforce area. Also, a list of the assessment instruments (tools) used for adult, dislocated worker, and youth.*

The Board provides a full array of work readiness and training opportunities for the Adult and Dislocated Worker populations in the area. Activities such as staff assisted job search, workshops, assessments, short-term educational training, work readiness skills training, adult education, and subsidized employment are all available and are provided on an as needed basis as directed by the customer's individual employment plan. These activities are designed to promote active engagement in the work search which will ultimately culminate in employment. As these activities have proven successful for many program participants, they will continue to be an integral part of the service delivery plan. During 2022, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services did not renew their lease of space in the Texarkana Workforce Center. This vacancy includes a loss of \$101,281 in infrastructure costs. The loss of this sub-lessee will limit the funds in the Board's operating grants available to provide services to workforce customers.

In regards to training activities, Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas offers on-the-job training opportunities for eligible customers who are in need of skills training or upgrading. Through this long standing program, eligible customers are placed with an employer for a period of time not to exceed six months, during which time the employer trains the participant for a position. The participant is a full-time employee of the company and subject to the same benefits as other employees. To help offset the tremendous cost of training a new and relatively unskilled employee, the employer is reimbursed fifty percent of the training wage for the contract period. Customers participating in this program have a greater than eighty percent contract completion rate. It also allows participants to start earning money from the onset of training. This is particularly important for the dislocated worker population which is often interested in getting back into employment with a steady income as quickly as possible.

Occupational and vocational training is also available to qualifying Adults and Dislocated Workers based on priority of service requirements through the utilization of individual training accounts. All local community colleges and local career and technical schools have trainings available through the Eligible Training Provider List. Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas training participants typically achieve and surpass state established goals for training completion and entered employment.

The Board utilizes a variety of assessment tools designed to meet the needs of the individual customer and ensure training programs are appropriate. TABE or CASAS tests are used for WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth customers to establish educational functioning levels and to determine if customers are basic skills deficient. Alternatively, the Accuplacer assessment utilized by the community college is an acceptable substitute if the customer has already been assessed by an educational institution. The Board also uses the CareerScope assessment to determine interest and aptitude for specific careers as part of the process to determine suitability for areas of interest.



The Board's SkillUp Northeast Texas initiative is a new resource for all workforce customers. The initiative allows free access to the Metrix Learning catalog of more than 5000 online courses. The online course format is flexible, allowing customers to complete the courses on their schedule at any time. Customers can take single courses or skill tracks. Additionally, some skill tracks can lead to industry certifications. Certification exams do have a cost, but eligible WIOA customers may qualify for scholarships to cover those exam costs. Metrix Learning also offers a number of assessment tools staff use with adult, dislocated worker, youth, and other customers.

*25. Priority to Recipients of Public Assistance and Low-income Individuals: 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.*

#### POLICY STATEMENT:

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) individualized career services and training services must be delivered to eligible adults in adult and dislocated worker programs on a priority basis as required by WIOA regulations.

#### POLICY REQUIREMENTS:

Priority of service will be determined in the following order:

- 1) Eligible veterans and eligible spouses (as defined in WD Letter 25-15) who are also recipients of public assistance, low-income, or basic skills deficient.
- 2) Non-covered persons (individuals who are not veterans or eligible spouses) who are recipients of public assistance, low income, or basic skills deficient in the following order:
  - a) Foster youth and former foster youth (as defined in WD Letter 43-11, Change 2) as required by Texas Family Code §264.121
  - b) Non-foster youth
- 3) All other eligible veterans and eligible spouses.
- 4) Priority populations established by the governor and/or Board in the following order:
  - a) All other foster youth and former foster youth, as required by Texas Labor Code §264.121
  - b) No Local Board designated priority groups
- 5) Non-covered individuals outside of the groups given priority under WIOA.



## REASONS FOR POLICY:

To ensure WIOA individualized career services and training services are provided according to the WIOA mandated priority of service regulations.

## **PART 7: FISCAL AGENT, GRANTS, AND CONTRACTS**

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*26. Fiscal Agent: An identification of the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds described in WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III), as determined by the chief elected officials (CEOs) or the governor under WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i).*

The North East Texas Workforce Development Board, DBA Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas, is responsible for the disbursement of grant funds described in WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III), as determined by the chief elected officials or the governor under WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i).

*27. Sub-Grants and Contracts: A description of the competitive process that will be used to award the sub-grants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities.*

The Board has established procurement policies and procedures intended to comply with the general requirements of Title 48 Federal Acquisition Regulations System, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR, Part 200), Texas Uniform Grant Management Standards, and the TWC Financial Manual for Grants and Contracts. More specifically, the underlying purposes and policies of the Procurement Policy are:

- a) To simplify and clarify the laws and regulations governing procurement by the Board;
- b) To permit the continued development of acceptable procurement policies and practices;
- c) To provide consistency in the procurement practices of the Board in compliance with pertinent procurement laws;
- d) To increase public confidence in Board procurements;
- e) To ensure the fair and equitable treatment of all persons/entities who participate in the procurement process;
- f) To provide increased economy and efficiency in procurement activities by avoiding unnecessary, unwarranted and duplicative procurements;
- g) To foster free and open competition;
- h) To provide safeguards for the maintenance of a procurement system of quality and integrity;
- i) To ensure that full accounting is available and given for all procurements;

The first step in any procurement will begin with the determination and justification of need for a good or service and a pre-procurement cost analysis. A staff member from any Board department initiates this process by completing the Procurement Initiation Request. The Executive Director and Finance Director shall review and approve requests to solicit and procure goods and services.

Upon approval of the procurement, a list of prospective providers is compiled, using the official Bidders List, telephone directory, HUB directory, and other known resources as deemed appropriate. The opportunity is publicly advertised, at a minimum, in accordance with the Board's approved policies regarding procurement. Published notices will include the following:

- A brief description of the issuing agency and services to be provided
- A description of the geographic area to be served
- How to obtain a RFP package
- A deadline for obtaining a RFP package and deadline for submitting an offer
- A date of bidders conference, if applicable
- A name and phone number of the contact person

When goods and/or services are to be procured using a Request for Proposals (RFP), the solicitation must provide sufficient information so that bidders clearly understand what is being sought. The performance expectations must be fully and clearly communicated in the RFP. The Board RFP's shall include, at a minimum, the following:

- Time/date: This element includes statements regarding the periods of time during which services are to be performed and due dates established for responses to be considered
- Protest procedures
- Purpose
- Overview of the complexity/scope of work being procured
- The evaluation process/procedures to be used
- The period of contract performance
- Approvals required by local procedures
- Proposal submission instructions
- Requirements for budget submission;
- Administrative/Governance Provisions

All contract awards will be made consistent in dollar value and category with the intentions stated in the procurement document.

Selection Consideration: Consideration in selecting agencies or contractors to deliver services shall include:

- Their effectiveness in delivering comparable or related services based on demonstrated performance, the likelihood of meeting performance goals, cost

reasonableness, quality of training, contractor integrity, compliance with public policy and financial and technical resources.

- Board staff and/or evaluator recommendations for proposals to enter into contract negotiations shall be made to the Executive Director. Documentation of the evaluation process and ranking shall be provided to and discussed with the Executive Director.

**Selection Approval:** The Executive Director will review and approve the process and recommendations and make the final decision on selection of proposals for negotiation.

**Contract Negotiation:** The negotiation process may take multiple meetings with each selected awardee to complete development of the following contract documents:

- Statement of Work
- Budget
- Performance Data and Standards or
- Participant Planning Summary (Where applicable)

Negotiation will ensure compliance with the program design criteria established by the solicitation specifications, adequacy of staffing, administrative and financial systems capabilities, cost reasonableness, allowable cost and allocation of proposed budget items, total available funding, population numbers and characteristics to be served for the workforce development area, and the program mix of services to be provided based on the Board's plan and needs assessment.

**Contract Award:** Upon completion of successful negotiation, Board staff will prepare the final results to be presented to the Executive Director and as appropriate to the Board for their review and approval for contract. Unsuccessful negotiations may be brought to the Executive Director and/or Board for further discussion and guidance with a staff recommendation for action.

## PART 8: PERFORMANCE

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*28. Board Performance Targets: A description of the local levels of performance negotiated with TWC and the chief elected officials consistent with WIOA §116(c), to be used to measure the performance of the local 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 local area.*

The Board utilizes the twenty-two (22) performance measures contracted with the Texas Workforce Commission to measure performance. Those measures are as shown below. These measures encompass the 18 required WIOA Adult/DW/Youth outcome measures, 2 reemployment and employer engagement measures, and 2 program participation measures.

The Texas Workforce Commission provides all Boards with information about the development of performance measures, including methods and formulas used to reach performance goals. The Board provides information to the Texas Workforce Commission on performance targets, including relevant local events and wisdom that might result in a deviation from historic performance numbers.

- Claimant Reemployment w/in 10 Weeks
- Number of Employers receiving WF Assistance
- Choices Full Engagement Rate – All Family
- Avg # of Children Served Per Day – Combined
- Employed Q2 Post Exit – Adult
- Employed Q4 Post Exit – Adult
- Credential Rate – Adult
- Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit – Adult
- Measureable Skills Gain - Adult
- Employed Q2 Post Exit – DW
- Employed Q4 Post Exit – DW
- Credential Rate – DW
- Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit – DW
- Measureable Skills Gain - DW
- Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit – Youth
- Employed/Enrolled Q4 Post Exit – Youth
- Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit - Youth
- Credential Rate – Youth
- Measurable Skills Gain - Youth

- Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit – C&T Participants
- Employed/Enrolled Q2-Q4 Post Exit – C&T Participants
- Credential Rate – C&T Participants

In addition to the state contracted measures, the Board utilizes nineteen (19) local performance measures in the contract with the Contracted Services Provider to measure Integrated Outcomes, Employer Engagement, Average Wage at Placement, Child Care, Youth, and SNAP E&T.

## PART 9: TRAINING AND SERVICES

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*29. Individual Training Accounts (ITAs): A description of how training services outlined in WIOA §134 will be provided through the use of Individual Training Accounts (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.*

Based on eligibility and available funding, The Board will provide eligible WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker customers with funding for a full range of training services by establishing an Individual Training Account (ITA). In order to benefit the majority of customers, the accumulative spending cap on any one individual served by the Board may not exceed overall guidelines (\$10,000) or specific program limitations. A budget worksheet that includes the customer's financial situation will include an assessment of all resources available to the individual including: Pell grants, student loans, scholarships, household income, Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Child Support, and all other sources of assistance.

The Individual Training Account document itself is a cost disclosure and agreement between the program and the customer. It sets up an account for the customer and indicates the amount of funds budgeted for the training program and all supportive cost for the duration of the training program. This is reflected on The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST) ITA financial tracking tab as well as in the customers file in the Cabinet NG system.

- The budgeted amount of the training will cover only in-state resident cost of training, less any financial aid applied to the cost prior to WIOA payment. Financial aid such as Pell Grants, GI Bill, scholarships, Veteran's Administration assistance, and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) assistance are applied first to the cost to pay for tuition/fees prior to approval of the training funds and total support amount. Additional grants or financial aid shall be evaluated every 6 months to prevent duplication in the payment of tuition. If duplication is found, tuition shall be reimbursed by the training provider.
- The total allowed for training is computed based on each training program's reported cost.
- The amount spent on training with a state-approved training provider will not exceed the amount of the reported cost of the approved training program per the ETP. Costs exceeding the reported cost of the training program will be the responsibility of the customer.

- The Contracted Service Provider shall inform customers that the overall general spending maximum may not be encumbered based on the possibility of future unknown need.
- Individual training expenses are based on the Individual Employment Plan (IEP) and may encumber the actual funds needed over more than one fiscal year. The Training Payment Approval Form submitted is valid only for the expense for which it is issued.
- ITAs will be issued only for Board approved training programs of two years or less published duration. This includes paying for the last 30 hours of a four-year degree as long as it meets the Board's criteria and is a training provider on the Statewide List of Eligible Training Providers.
- Training services funded through ITAs must be directly linked to:
  - occupations on the Board's targeted occupations list, or on the targeted occupations list for another local workforce development area to which an adult or dislocated worker is willing to commute or relocate; or
  - occupation's that have been determined on a case-by-case basis to have a high potential for sustained demand and growth in the workforce area, based on sufficient and verifiable documentation, in accordance with the Board's procedures and TWC rule 841.34(b).
- Customers who are unemployed must attend training full time as determined by the training provider's definition of a full-time student.
- The Contracted Service Provider may add an additional twelve months to the ITA time availability authorized for a customer who is enrolled in training and is employed on a full or part-time basis if this will allow the customer to complete the training.
- The ITA document must indicate training costs are subject to the availability of WIOA program funds.
- WIOA funds must not be used to pay training costs:
  - for any portion or term of training for which the customer has signed a loan as part of financial aid; or
  - were paid by the customer (or other source) prior to WIOA program registration.

The Board provides each ITA customer an assessment (CareerScope) which assesses their interest as well as aptitude for a profession. Additionally, if the program does not require Educational Functional Level (EFL) testing for admittance, the CASAS or TABE is given to ensure the customer is able to successfully complete the coursework and is not in need of remediation. If the customer is indecisive on their training program, the Case Manager will use the CareerScope results to assist the customer in the decision making process. Information about the ETP, including programs the board can assist with as well as the cost of the program and which schools offer it is shared with the customer. Case managers explain about the various programs using LMI to discuss the likelihood of employment as well as starting and prevailing wage in addition to historical data related to each of the programs. Once all pertinent information is relayed, case managers always inform the customer it is ultimately customer choice that drives the final decision.

*30. ITA Limitations: 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 Local 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.*

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas has developed an ITA policy, approved by the Board of Directors, which limits the amount of an ITA to \$10,000 and the duration of an ITA to 2 years. Proposed exceptions to the ITA limitations are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Exceptions may be approved by the Executive Director.

## **PART 10: APPRENTICESHIP**

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### *31. Registered Apprenticeship Program: A description of how the Board will encourage Registered Apprenticeship programs in its area to register with the eligible training provider system in order to receive WIOA funding.*

The Board is committed to fully integrate and align WIOA apprenticeship strategies with the local workforce system. In order to encourage Registered Apprenticeship programs to enroll in the eligible training provider list, the Board will take the following actions:

- Host apprenticeship Q/A webinar for area employers: The Board will partner with the Texas Workforce Commission Department of Apprenticeship to offer a Q/A webinar to Northeast Texas employers. The Board believes employers are reluctant to embrace apprenticeships due to misconceptions about the details of the program. The Board believes these webinars will provide clarification on the benefits of the apprenticeship program. A survey will be used to gauge interest of employer participants. Staff will follow up with interested employers and begin the process of creating the registered apprenticeship program.
- Apprenticeship video: The Board has recently expanded virtual service delivery through videos and webinars. In addition to the live webinar session on apprenticeships, the Board will create an apprenticeship information video. The video will be available on the Board's website and social media channels. The Board will use information gathered from the live webinar to create a video aimed at answering the most common apprenticeship questions from employers.
- Partner with area community colleges to expand apprenticeship programs: The Board has been able to foster strong relationships with area community college partners. Board management meets each year with the College Presidents' Roundtable to discuss workforce programs and challenges. The Board will challenge the community college Presidents to explore opportunities to incorporate apprenticeship programs into their existing workforce training.

- Educate potential employer partners and apprenticeship programs: All Registered Apprenticeship programs, by virtue of their registration, can be on a state's Eligible Training Provider List and are thereby eligible to receive federal workforce funding as pre-approved training providers. The Business Services unit will educate employers about these changes under WIOA and the opportunity to receive workforce funding for Registered Apprenticeship programs.
- Identify existing apprenticeship programs: The Board will identify a list of existing registered apprenticeship programs in Northeast Texas. These programs may be used as "Success Stories" in outreach efforts. The Board will also work to identify programs similar to apprenticeships, but have not yet been registered.
- Educate workforce partners through Advisory Groups: The Board will inform workforce partners about Registered Apprenticeship programs. Registered Apprenticeship programs will be included on the agenda at upcoming meetings of the College President's Roundtable, Workforce and Education Advisory Group, and Workforce and Economic Development Advisory Group.
- Develop New Apprenticeship Programs: The Board will continue to explore ways to expand apprenticeship opportunities in Northeast Texas. The Board partnered with Adaptive Construction Solutions and McCarthy Building Companies to offer solar apprenticeships to workforce customers in Northeast Texas. Additionally, the target customers for this initiative are homeless Veterans. The Board will look to expand this new program, as the area is home to several new solar sites.

*32. Apprenticeship Texas: A description of the Board's strategy and commitment to support Apprenticeship Texas efforts across the state, as applicable.*

The Board is committed to fully integrate and align WIOA apprenticeship strategies with the local workforce system. The Texas Workforce Commission has increased the targeted number of individuals to be trained through registered apprenticeship programs. The Board will take appropriate steps to support statewide apprenticeship efforts.

- Communicate Apprenticeship information through Board's website, social media, and newsletter: The Board uses a variety of methods to communicate information about workforce development activities, including through its website and social media.
- Success Stories: The Board will identify successful apprenticeships in Northeast Texas and highlight those success stories in social media and direct email outreach to employers. The Board will also explore success stories from across the state, stressing the positive impact apprenticeships can have on employers and employees.
- Educate the Employer community: Host live webinars and provide recorded videos designed to educate Northeast Texas employers on the apprenticeship program. Provide real examples from employers and apprentices in Texas, speaking to the positive impact of the program.