

Panhandle Workforce Development Board Plan

Program Years 2021–2024

Updated for 2023 Two-Year Board Plan Modification

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Introduction

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) §108 [20 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §679.500–580], each Local Workforce Development Board is required to develop and submit to the state a comprehensive four-year Board plan that identifies and describes policies and procedures as well as local activities which align with the following:

- The Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan FY 2016–FY 2023 2020 Update
<https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/organization/twic/System-Strategic-Plan-Update.pdf>
- Texas Workforce Consolidated 2021–2025 Strategic Plan
<https://www.twc.texas.gov/files/twc/strategic-plan-fiscal-years-2021-to-2025-twc.pdf>
- WIOA Combined State Plan Program Years 2020–2023 Two Year Modifications
https://www.twc.texas.gov/files/twc/commission_meeting_material_02.15.22_item8b_wioa_csp_2020-2023_2yr_mod_I-II_strategic_elements.pdf
- Adult Education and Literacy Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2021 to 2026

<https://www.twc.texas.gov/files/partners/adult-education-and-literacy-strategic-plan-2021-2026-twc.pdf>

- Texas Early Learning Council Early Learning Strategic Plan, 2020-2025
<https://www.twc.texas.gov/files/partners/tx-early-learning-strategic-plan-twc.pdf>
- House Bill (HB) 619 Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan 2023-2025
<https://www.twc.texas.gov/files/twc/commission-meeting-materials-12.20.22-item7b-hb619-strategic-plan-twc.pdf>

Two years after the development of an initial Workforce Development Board Plan, Boards are required to then submit a modification which reflects labor market changes, economic conditions and other factors affecting plan implementation. Texas Government Code requires that the Board Plans are aligned with the Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan, specifically the FY 2016-FY 2023, 2020 Update.

This document begins with the initial Board Plan for the Panhandle Workforce Development Area (PWDA) and builds upon it with the modification information.

The Panhandle Workforce Development Board (PWDB) is a business-led group, the majority of which is comprised of employers from the private sector, as well as representatives from community-based organizations, labor, economic development, secondary and post-secondary education, adult and continuing education, literacy, vocational rehabilitation, public employment services, and the State department of human services. The PWDB is appointed by local elected officials, and oversees workforce program services provided in the 26-county region of the Texas Panhandle. The PWDB and its partners together implement the Board Plan, which directs local entities in their efforts to build a labor force that sustains local communities and supports a positive economic climate.

In 2018, Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) announced its intention to divest itself of ownership of its buildings statewide, which included the Workforce Solutions Panhandle (WSP) facility at 1206 S.W. 7th Avenue, in Amarillo, where the PWDB has been delivering workforce development

services for decades. During the same period, TWC began planning to integrate its Texas Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services staff into the WSP operations in the Panhandle. Over the following years, the PWDB facilitated a relocation of WSP and VR services and staff, opening in a remodeled facility located at 3120 Eddy Street in Amarillo, in March, 2021. The move from a State-owned building, provided to the PWDB at a nominal cost, into a privately-owned facility requiring commercial leasing costs, has added a considerable infrastructure burden to the PWDB's Service Delivery capabilities, with an increase in Operating Costs of nearly 185%, and required a shifting of funding.

Part 1: Board Vision and Strategies

A. Vision and Goals (*WIOA §108(b)(1)(E); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(5)*)

The vision of the PWDB is to establish and enhance a workforce delivery system that serves the needs of area employers, job seekers, and constituents with efficient and effective services by promoting collaboration among stakeholders, creating partnerships with other community organizations, and focusing on workforce issues. The PWDB also supports regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency that will guide the development and provision of services.

- Through engagement with employers, education and training providers, the PWDB collaborates in career and technical education design, content, and delivery options that are aligned with industry needs. In alignment with TWC's System Goal Area 1 – Focus on Employers, the PWDB will continue:
 - ✓ Expanding the number of apprentices in underserved populations;
 - ✓ Developing training opportunities toward industry-based certifications to expand the number of work-ready individuals in high demand occupations;
 - ✓ Increasing the number of employers who participate in work-based learning programs;
 - ✓ Engaging industry representatives to collaborate with community colleges in new program development that incorporates national industry-based certifications into programs of study;
 - ✓ Assisting with aligning the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) to Industry-based certifications, where applicable. (Reference: <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/curriculum-standards/teks/texas-essential-knowledge-and-skills>); and
 - ✓ Assisting with aligning with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) in identifying and implementing relevant industry-based certifications and licenses, and incorporating the occupational information into statewide career and technical education programs.
- Through collaborative and transparent processes, the PWDB and its partners focus on outcomes that improve the employability of program participants, from across a wide spectrum of capabilities and experiences, to meet employer needs. In alignment with TWC's System Goal 2, Engage in Partnerships, the PWDB will continue to expand partnerships with system partners and stakeholders to promote collaboration, joint planning, and enhanced participant outcomes by:
 - ✓ Improving rehabilitation employment outcomes by establishing additional partnerships with secondary and postsecondary entities, and employers;
 - ✓ Increasing access to, referral between, and outcomes of adult education programs and services;
 - ✓ Implementing a coordinated approach, with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), to serving employers, and to identifying opportunities and strategies for improved coordination and enhanced participant outcomes;

- ✓ Participating in regional discussions with the Texas Education Agency about career pathway expansion opportunities for high school students;
 - ✓ Implementing case management that integrates data among multiple programs;
 - ✓ Collaborating with State and community agencies for enhancing services to foster youth;
 - ✓ Connecting more ex-offenders with adult education programs through better developed referral processes and appropriate short-term integrated training options; and
 - ✓ Promoting the importance of community and technical colleges to targeted adult education services that transition adult learners to higher education.
- By improving transitions, aligning programs, and ensuring portability and transferability, the workforce system improves access and the ability of all students to complete programs of study, earn credential(s), transition to further education, and gain critical employability skills. Through the implementation of a common technical core curriculum that is recognized statewide, programs of study can enhance delivery efficiency, dual-credit effectiveness, and improve student outcomes and transitions. Employers are better positioned to find and hire the employees they need through an enhanced education and training pipeline. In alignment with TWC's System Goal 3, Align System Elements, the PWDB will continue to:
 - ✓ Improve and enhance services, programs, and policies to align with programs of study in community and technical colleges with secondary programs;
 - ✓ Enhance transition services for students and youth with disabilities to competitive integrated employment or to postsecondary education and training followed by competitive integrated employment, aligning with the Pathways to Careers Initiative (PCI);
 - ✓ Develop and implement policies and processes for career and technical education opportunities for dual credit; and
 - ✓ Seek input from business and industry to identify the essential knowledge, skills, and abilities, that they require.
 - By addressing high-priority programmatic needs through an integrated strategy, decision-making, at the system, partner, and participant levels, is improved and system service delivery is enhanced. In alignment with TWC's System Goal 4, Improve and Integrate Programs, the PWDB will continue to:
 - ✓ Identify and implement new, relevant technology and service delivery options to expand program and service outcomes;
 - ✓ Increase competitive integrated employment outcomes by increasing awareness of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services and better serving underserved populations;
 - ✓ Enhance quality of increased access to quality child care, to support parents in obtaining and retaining employment;
 - ✓ Support professional development opportunities for child care providers;
 - ✓ Promote increasing the number of child care providers certified as meeting Texas Rising Star (TRS), or other recognized quality rating and improvement system standards, in the child care system;
 - ✓ Provide rural service delivery options through the use of mobile units and affiliate sites;
 - ✓ Direct students to available training and career path options with onsite support at public middle and high schools;
 - ✓ Expand the use of technology for providing online services such as job fairs, eligibility determination, and other interactions; and
 - ✓ Improve service delivery methods to increase effectiveness of service delivery and achievement of employment outcomes for underserved populations.

- PWDB goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including early education services, and services for youth and individuals with barriers to employment include:
 - ✓ Supporting a regional workforce system where individuals are empowered to embark on career pathways leading to increased educational, occupational, and adult literacy skill levels, attainment of recognized credentials, employment with self-sufficiency earnings, and employment security, while meeting the immediate and future skills needs of employers;
 - ✓ Increasing the number of customers engaged in career services and short-term training that leads to employment in high-wage, in-demand occupations;
 - ✓ Meeting local employers' demand for skilled workers with an educated, highly skilled, and well-qualified labor force;
 - ✓ Implementing effective employment placement and retention of veterans, individuals with disabilities, individuals who have exhausted unemployment insurance benefits, dislocated workers, the underemployed, and high-risk population groups such as welfare recipients, disconnected youth and adults who have barriers to employment, including Foster Youth, and for those individuals who are basic skills deficient;
 - ✓ Increasing the number of low-income customers and individuals who have barriers to employment who engage in short-term training leading to employment; and
 - ✓ Creating new employment opportunities by motivating skilled workers to remain in or return to the Panhandle Region.
- PWDB goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators described in WIOA §116(b)(2)(A) include collaboration with workforce system partners to align, leverage, and combine local communities' workforce resources by:
 - ✓ Identifying and effectively serving local employers' skill needs and hiring expectations;
 - ✓ Meeting job seekers' employment needs for placement, retention, and earnings;
 - ✓ Leveraging resources with education partners to address skill gaps including adult literacy skills deficiencies;
 - ✓ Outreaching and re-engaging Out-of-School Youth and Older Youth in work-based training;
 - ✓ Increasing short-term occupational training opportunities leading to attaining recognized credentials; and
 - ✓ Assisting students to successfully complete training which results in measurable skills gains, recognized credentials, entered employment, retention, and earnings gains.

B. Board Strategies (*WIOA §108(b)(1)(F); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(6)*)

The PWDB's strategy to work with entities carrying out the core programs and with required partners to align resources available to the Panhandle Workforce Development Area (PWDA), and to achieve the vision and goals, includes developing and actively supporting dynamic industry partnerships. By aligning and sharing resources through existing collaborations, such as the Board's Business Advisory Committee, comprised of Board and non-Board members, private sector employers, area college representatives, PWDB staff, and WSP staff, the PWDB is assisted in designing and delivering services based on business and industry needs, thus enhancing employer engagement.

- Continued collaboration with required partners in local business and education, and with local community organizations, will enhance the PWDB's workforce system capacity for delivering effective employment and training services, while meeting required performance. Successfully aligning resources and responding to expected shortages of workers in skilled trades and technical occupations due to the skills gap created by employee turnover, combined with the increasing demand for a highly-technically skilled workforce, are essential. WSP Career Services utilize

LinkedIn, the business and employment-focused social media platform that works through websites and mobile apps, to connect with employers and potential job seekers. This platform has proven effective in allowing job seekers to apply directly with companies, such as Cacique Cheese, a leading Hispanic foods company expecting to open their new dairy facility in April 2023, in recruiting engineers and other key positions.

- The PWDB continues to engage a Student HireAbility Navigator to fulfil the stated purpose of this position “To improve access to employment and training services and increase employment opportunities for job seekers with disabilities”. The Panhandle’s Student HireAbility Navigator is fully involved in serving as a resource in the PWDA by “supporting, expanding, and enhancing the provision of pre-employment transition services that are provided by VR”, co-located in the WSP office in Amarillo. Through active participation in numerous relevant local committee meetings, attending local job fairs and transitional fairs, reaching more employers and service providers as well as educators, the Navigator continually identifies and reaches out to crucial partners who have shared goals and objectives to bring to the table. The Navigator is also focusing on building a knowledge base by attending statewide workforce events such as the TWC Annual Workforce Conference, presenting information at the Texas Business Conference about hiring students with disabilities, including discussing the possibility of creating HireAbility Workshops in Amarillo, and participating in the collection and completion of information for a resource guide for employers in hiring individuals with disabilities. The Navigator promotes the Texas HireAbility Campaign at meetings with educators, employers and community partners to increase the awareness of the benefits of hiring people with disabilities as well as increasing access to pre-employment transition services.
- WSP has created a new staff position of Child Care Business Coach under a new Child Care Industry Support Division. This staff will assist Child Care Provider owners and managers, as needed, to increase quality and capacity of existing businesses, in creating new business and in connecting to resources available to help increase the likelihood of success.
- Work continues to encourage and support local partners to pursue skills development grant opportunities to apply for and obtain grants such as TWC’s Jobs and Education for Texas (JET), and the High Demand Job Training (HDJT) grants. HDJT’s \$150,000 annual Grant Application opportunities have provided, to-date, over \$1,040,000 which were matched by the EDCs, for the PWDA. The PWDB plans to continue requesting these WIOA Activities funds which have supplemented Career & Technology Education (CTE) training programs throughout the PWDA.
- Identifying and developing effective career pathways, creating data-driven career choices that align with demand, and delivering appropriate workforce services for Adults, Youth, and Dislocated Workers under WIOA, are critical to achieving the PWDB’s workforce goals and objectives. Utilizing resources such as CareerOneStop.com, a U.S Department of Labor (DOL) tool which pulls datasets from DOL’s Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), and Employment and Training Administration (ETA), which includes its trademark Occupational Information Network (O*NET), the PWDB is building career pathway “roadmaps” for occupations on its Target Occupations List. Where training gaps exist, options such as Local Activity Fund, Wagner-Peyser grants available through the Governor’s office, and TWC Skills Development Fund (SDF) Grant projects, may be pursued to fund curriculum development that initiates instructional availability.
- To promote Apprenticeship programs between regional businesses, Independent School Districts (ISDs) and community colleges, the PWDB maintains Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with the Independent Electrical Contractors (IEC) of the Texas Panhandle, the Plumbers &

Pipefitters Local 404, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters Local 665, the West Texas Electrical Joint Apprenticeship & Training Committee (JATC) and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 602. These MOUs formalize the responsibilities of the parties to:

- ✓ Provide information on apprenticeship and training opportunities to PRPC and WSP;
 - ✓ Make employers and individuals seeking training aware of WSP resources and services and provide appropriate referrals.
 - ✓ Market the apprenticeship programs to businesses in the PWDA as a means to recruit and train qualified workers;
 - ✓ Refer WSP customers to the apprenticeship programs;
 - ✓ Provide workforce center space to the apprenticeship providers for use in interviewing, testing and conducting informational meetings associated with apprenticeship and training opportunities; and
 - ✓ Provide automated links to apprenticeship-related websites through WSP public-use computers.
- Amarillo College (AC) is the PWDA’s Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Service Provider, which helps adult students gain the basic skills needed to succeed in the workforce, earn a high school equivalency, or enter college or career training. AC is developing a new digital customer referral tool, MyOneFlow, to enhance the collaboration with the PWDB and WSP, in performing intake, determining program eligibility, assisting with enrollment in classes, coordinating supportive services as needed, and facilitating the process of connecting customers in order to provide English language, math, reading, and writing instruction to help students acquire the skills needed to succeed in the workforce, earn a high school equivalency, or enter college or career training.
 - In alignment with the Jobs for Veterans Act, the PWDB and WSP provide priority service to veterans and spouses of certain veterans for the receipt of employment, training, and placement services in any job training program directly funded, in whole or in part, by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL).

WSP continues to identify gaps in service to veterans and advance strategies to enhance their education and employment opportunities to ensure seamless transition into the workforce.

WSP continues to host Texas Panhandle Region Employer hiring events at Fort Hood, connecting Military Separation service members with employers from the PWDA, to potentially attract the transitioning soldiers to the Panhandle. Most recently, employers traveled to the Lone Star Convention Center and participated in the Fort Hood Mega Career Fair on January 10, 2023. The employers included Albers Aerospace, Amarillo Economic Development Corporation, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 602, International Aerospace Coatings, Pantex, Talon LPE, and Valero.

The PWDB and WSP also utilize Wagner-Peyser Employment Services (ES) funding to support:

- ✓ TWC’s Panhandle Region Hiring Red, White & You! Annual Job Fairs in partnership with the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC). The most recent event was held on November 11, 2022, hosted at WSP in Amarillo, with TWC’s Executive Director, Mr. Ed Serna, presiding. A total of 35 employers participated in this event. Job seeker registration was at 141 job seekers, with 35 veterans in attendance.
- ✓ TWC’s Texas Veterans Leadership Program (TVLP), which connects returning veterans

with the resources and tools needed to lead productive lives and enjoy the benefits of the society they have served. The Regional manager for the program serves on the PWDB, is provided access to resources in the WSP office in Amarillo, and assists WSP's Business Services team by referring new employers wanting to post job listings on WorkInTexas.com, the comprehensive online job search resource and matching system developed and maintained by TWC.

- Foster youth are a priority population. TWC funds transition centers serving both current and former youth. The centers address critical life barriers facing youth who have or will soon age out of the foster care system. They provide access to education, employment training and services, life skills classes, mentoring opportunities, and appropriate support services. WSP and the PWDB continue to develop and nurture successful partnerships with the Amarillo Foster Youth Transition Center, at Buckner Children and Family Services, to improve and enhance the collaborative process of connecting with foster youth and provide comprehensive workforce services, including career exploration and occupational training or work-based training. Discussions continue with Amarillo Children's Home and the Turn Center, the only private, non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization in the federal Medically Underserved Area (MUA) of the 26-county Texas Panhandle, to create pathways that support Foster Youth who often have developmental delays or undiagnosed disabilities transition from school into employment preparation and training.
- Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) provides training and employment services to low-income job seekers age 55 and older to assist them in securing unsubsidized employment in the public and private sectors. Program participants earn while they learn, gaining competitive job skills and refining existing skills through paid, part-time, on-the-job training assignments at non-profit organizations and government agencies. During training, participants earn minimum wage and provide valuable community services. Utilizing designated office space in WSP in Amarillo, Motivation Education & Training, Inc. (MET), serving as the Sponsor Agency for the Senior Service America (SSAI), and as the Panhandle's SCSEP grantee, provides training, counseling, employment assistance, and paid, part-time community service assignments designed to move older workers into unsubsidized employment, which ensures that job seekers identified by WSP, are likely to benefit from services.
- Motivation, Education and Training, Inc. (MET), referenced above, also serves as the Panhandle region's National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) contractor, which includes mutual referrals for services, coordination of the delivery career and intensive services co-enrollment of individuals eligible for WIOA and NFJP who would benefit from the services of both programs. Partnering activities, with WSP, include joint case management and employment planning, and joint staff training.
- The WSP Director engages in the local No Limits/No Excuses (NL/NE) program initiative, Panhandle Community Partnership, with more than 26 community partners dedicated to "Making pathways to post-secondary credentials and living wage employment accessible for all individuals". Working with business and industry, the chief aims of Panhandle Community Partnership are to connect curriculum and training, create internships, and develop partnerships with education, community, and employers, to provide living wage jobs that will keep talent in the PWDA.
- Through collaboration with the Texas Panhandle Rural Alliance, a group of vital partners from different sectors, who strive to create a common agenda, and to apply the concept of "collective

impact” as an effective approach for solving specific community social problems, effective private and public partnerships are being utilized for many endeavors including increasing and improving workforce development in the PWDA.

- Panhandle Community Services (PCS) continues their partnership with the PWDB and WSP, to enhance employment services to their customers. PCS identifies customers who need assistance with workforce services to obtain full-time employment or complete short-term training leading to self-sufficiency and makes referrals to WSP, to begin the process of determining an individual’s career pathway. PSC’s work-based services include subsidized work experience arrangements and referrals, when appropriate, to WSP, for short-term training. The partners collaborate on the provision of supportive services to referred customers who are eligible to participate in these activities, and job search assistance is provided when customers are job-ready.

C. High-Performing Board (*WIOA §108(b)(18); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(17)*)

The PWDB continues refining ongoing “Best Practices” to remain a high-performing Board, consistent with the factors developed by the Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC). Board staff work closely with the WSP Contractor on a proactive basis to pinpoint performance shortfalls and develop effective strategies to improve performance in targeted measures. These efforts including implementing strategies to increase program spending by appropriate and allowable methods, including:

- Proactive analysis and implementation of state and federal rules and regulations;
- Complete review/update of current Board policies compliant with WIOA requirements;
- Development and implementation of clear, concise, and substantive new local policies;
- Provision of guidance for achieving state mandated program performance standards;
- Development of media directed opportunities for job seekers to access workforce services;
- Enhancement of the WSP website and development of more effective user interfaces;
- Development and implementation of innovative and productive ways to utilize the mobile workforce units and expand workforce services to rural customers;
- Maximization of opportunities through VR Services integration to provide the complete package to job seekers who have disabilities, and eliminate barriers to employment;
- Development and implementation of creative plans to engage disconnected youth, remove barriers to employment, and produce successful career pathways;
- Increase in short term work-based training opportunities leading to employment;
- Continuation of improvement of business services team capabilities to assess employers’ skill needs and match capable workers with job openings;
- Engagement with local business leaders on a personal level to pinpoint employment needs;
- Reinvigoration of alliances with educators, economic developers and community partners to further mutual goals including developing apprenticeship initiatives;
- Further cultivation of partnerships and collaborations with local colleges and universities, and pool resources for occupational skills training opportunities;
- Collaboration with existing programs and funds to provide increased Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) skills;
- Encouragement, creation, and support of labor market driven decisions for developing skills training and addressing labor force challenges;
- Strengthening of PWDB monitoring oversight focus to identify and address high risk areas;
- Sustainment of efforts to effectively place veterans, individuals with disabilities, and high-risk

- population groups in employment and to retain employment;
- Identification of emerging In-Demand Industries and Occupations, and Target Occupations in local job markets;
- Continuation of maintaining and improving two-way open lines of communication with WSP management and staff;
- Provision of active support to WSP management and staff including technical assistance, training, and guidance and clarification for PWDB policies;
- Communication to foster creative approaches to existing challenges and encourage inventive, unique ideas;
- Deliverance of WSP staff training that is timely, current, and relevant; and
- Obtainment of training for PWDB staff to fill in program management and knowledge gaps.

In accordance with 40 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §802.62, monitoring activities should ensure that programs achieve intended results, resources are efficiently and effectively used for authorized purposes, and resources are protected from waste, fraud, and abuse.

The PWDB continues to ensure that the TWC Subrecipient Monitoring Division of Fraud Deterrence and Compliance Monitoring is able to place reliance in the Panhandle’s Fiscal and Program (WIOA, Child Care, and NCP) functions through a subcontracted external Fiscal Monitor and an internal Program Monitor, and has re-certified the monitoring functions for the Board.

A benefit of the internal Program Monitor not being outsourced is that, in addition to overseeing the specified attributes shared by TWC, this PWDB staff is able to extend the oversight to encompass more in-depth review of additional WSP actions, and is able to provide Technical Assistance on a continuous basis, which provides for proactive and not reactive, faster resolution of issues.

Part 2. Economic and Workforce Analysis

A. Regional Economic and Employment Needs Analysis (*WIOA §108(b)(1)(A); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(1)*)

- With regards to the economic conditions of the Panhandle, the issue most likely to affect the PWDB’s ability to accomplish its goals is the availability of public funding. Consistently low unemployment compared to other regions in Texas and declining rural populations have resulted in reduced State allocations. Additional federal budget cuts and reauthorization of legislation that funds workforce programs may generate a lower level of resources for local use, especially if States gain greater flexibility for the distribution of those resources.

Due to past funding limitations, all but two of the region’s rural WSP offices were closed, affecting much of the 26 counties in the Texas Panhandle, and requiring significant changes in business practices to facilitate continued services to these areas. Although a limited rural presence has been reinstated, the Board’s continuing challenge is to ensure that employers, job seekers and students in rural communities continue to access needed workforce services, despite the lack of a constant, or limited physical presence.

According to the Amarillo Economic Development Corporation (AEDC), tremendous opportunities for employment growth exist due to the Centerport Business Park, being developed in downtown Amarillo, designed to be the region’s epicenter for manufacturing and distribution. With eight initial tenants and a combined workforce of over 850 employees providing products for global customers, the venture will support businesses that create and sustain a diversified local economy. Investments in rail and road infrastructure make the park uniquely equipped for

continued development as Amarillo continues to serve as a truck and rail transportation hub.

A multitude of healthcare providers, facilities, and agencies offer broad range of medical services and continue to serve as a major source of employment in the region. Continuing efforts to identify and collaborate with these entities on innovative and successful skills development initiatives, such as a Skills Development Fund Grant Partnership with TWC and two Amarillo hospitals, which increased training for incumbent worker skills, are producing a highly qualified and well-compensated workforce to administer care to patients throughout a multi-state region.

New home building has been steadily high, as business expansion and new business ventures in hotels, retail, and restaurants keep construction activity elevated. Increased food production, processing, and meat packing facilities offer opportunities for jobs involving industrial mechanical repair. A large immigrant population primarily employed in the meat processing sector of this industry presents unique challenges to provide basic literacy services, including English as a Second Language (ESL), that offer opportunities for increased wage-earning potential.

PWDB staff and WSP Business Services staff gather information on local labor market developments and formulate recommendations on industries and occupations on which to focus workforce resources. Small, medium and large employers, economic developers, chamber of commerce representatives, educators, local elected officials, and other interested parties and stakeholders have input.

The WSP Business Services Unit specialized division is tailored to meet employer's workforce needs. The WSP Business Service Representatives (BSRs) work with employers and offer customized business consulting services, such as addressing human resource challenges and identifying the skills sets needed by industry. Workforce and Labor Market Information (LMI) is essential to the Texas Panhandle's economy, providing for the efficient operation of labor markets by supplying quality labor market intelligence. Accurate, objective, relevant, timely, and accessible workforce and LMI is critical for:

- ✓ Building a skilled workforce that spurs business competitiveness and economic growth;
- ✓ Strengthening career pathways and guiding skill attainment for good jobs, economic opportunity, and career growth;
- ✓ Understanding the rapidly changing nature of work and how it impacts the workforce and the area's economy; and
- ✓ Spending workforce training and education funds effectively.

WSP BSRs worked closely with Economic Development Corporations (EDCs), Colleges, Universities, and employers. The largest consumers of WSP's LMI Services were the Amarillo EDC (9 total LMI projects), Amarillo College (LMI presentations at each campus throughout the Texas Panhandle), Frank Phillips College and Clarendon College (both utilized LMI to choose new educational programs at area campuses).

WSP Business Services staff, in cooperation with the Panhandle Community Partnership began work on creating an interactive website to clearly visualize career pathway maps. This tool features Target Occupations from the PWDA, including wage, education requirements, and up-to-date LMI.

Data analysis on all information collected is used to identify high-growth and high-priority industries. PWDB staff and WSP staff seek the information from representatives of those industries about their businesses, and economic development professionals including: industrial

and occupational trends; education and training preferences; employee recruiting methods; and specific gaps in employees' skills.

PWDB In-Demand Industries and Associated Target Occupations		
NAICS Code*	In Demand Industry	Associated Target Occupations**
2111	Oil & Gas Extraction	Chemical Equipment Operators and Tenders Maintenance Workers, Machinery Petroleum Pump System Operators, Refinery Operators, and Gaugers
2381	Foundation, Structure, and Building Exterior Contractors	Carpenters Welders, Cutters, Solderers, & Brazers
2382	Building Equipment Contractors	Electricians Heating, Air Conditioning, & Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters
3116	Animal Slaughtering & Processing	Industrial Machinery Mechanics
3327	Machine Shops, Turned Product, and Screw, Nut, and Bolt Manufacturing	Machinists Production Workers, All Other
3331	Agriculture, Construction, & Mining Machinery Manufacturing	Industrial Machinery Mechanics Machinists Production Workers, All Other Welders, Cutters, Solderers, & Brazers
336411	Aircraft Manufacturing	Aircraft Mechanics & Service Technicians Production Workers, All Other
4842	Specialized Freight Trucking	Bus & Truck Mechanic & Diesel Engine Specialists Heavy and Tractor Trailer Truck Drivers
5412	Accounting, Tax Preparation, Bookkeeping, and Payroll Services	Accountants Auditors Bookkeeping, Accounting, & Auditing Clerks
5415	Computer Systems Design & Related Services	Computer User Support Specialists Information Security Analysts Network & Computer Systems Administrators
5511	Management of Companies & Enterprises	Accountants & Auditors Bookkeeping, Accounting & Auditing Clerks Food Service Managers General & Operations Managers Paralegals and Legal Assistants Project Management Specialists and Business Operations Specialists, All Other
5611	Office Administrative Services	Bookkeeping, Accounting & Auditing Clerks Project Management Specialists and Business Operations Specialists, All Other
6111	Elementary, Middle, and Secondary Schools, Public & Private	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education Food Service Managers Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education
6211	Offices of Physicians	Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses Medical Assistants

PWDB In-Demand Industries and Associated Target Occupations		
NAICS Code*	In Demand Industry	Associated Target Occupations**
		Medical & Clinical Laboratory Technicians Medical Dosimetrists, Medical Records Specialists and Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other Nursing Assistants Radiologic Technologists and Technicians Registered Nurses
6213	Offices of Other Health Practitioners	Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses Medical Assistants Medical & Clinical Laboratory Technicians Medical Dosimetrists, Medical Records Specialists and Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other Nursing Assistants Physical Therapist Assistants Radiologic Technologists and Technicians
6214	Outpatient Care Centers	Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses Medical Assistants Medical Dosimetrists, Medical Records Specialists and Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other Nursing Assistants Physical Therapist Assistants Registered Nurses
6216	Home Health Care Services	Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses Medical Assistants Medical Dosimetrists, Medical Records Specialists and Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other Nursing Assistants Physical Therapist Assistants Registered Nurses
6219	Other Ambulatory Health Care Services	Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics
6221	General Medical & Surgical Hospitals, Public & Private	Food Service Managers Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses Medical & Clinical Laboratory Technicians Medical Dosimetrists, Medical Records Specialists and Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other Pharmacy Technicians Physical Therapist Assistants Radiologic Technologists and Technicians Registered Nurses Respiratory Therapists
6233	Continuing Care Retirement Communities and Assisted Living Facilities for the Elderly	Food Service Managers Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses Medical Assistants Medical Dosimetrists, Medical Records Specialists and Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other Nursing Assistants Physical Therapist Assistants Registered Nurses
6244	Child Day Care Services	Childcare Workers
8111	Automotive Repair & Maintenance	Automotive Body and Related Repairers Automotive Service Technicians & Mechanics

PWDB In-Demand Industries and Associated Target Occupations		
NAICS Code*	In Demand Industry	Associated Target Occupations**
		Bus & Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines
8113	Commercial and Industrial Machinery and Equipment (except Automotive and Electronic) Repair and Maintenance	Control and Valve Installers and Repairers, Except Mechanical Door Industrial Machinery Mechanics Production Workers, All Other
9000	Government: Federal, State, & Local	Correctional Officers and Jailers Firefighters Police & Sheriff's Patrol Officers

* North American Industry Classification System

** While only listed once above, some PWDB Target Occupations are associated with multiple PWDB In-Demand Industries.

In-Demand occupations meet the following criteria: Texas Workforce Commission projects 10 or more annual openings, or 100 or more openings over the next 10 years. The Panhandle WDA includes the following counties: Armstrong, Briscoe, Carson, Castro, Childress, Collingsworth, Dallam, Deaf Smith, Donley, Gray, Hall, Hansford, Hartley, Hemphill, Hutchinson, Lipscomb, Moore, Ochiltree, Oldham, Parmer, Potter, Randall, Roberts, Sherman, Swisher, and Wheeler.

PWDB In-Demand Occupations		
OCCUPATIONAL CODE	OCCUPATIONAL TITLE	TOTAL ANNUAL OPENINGS
45-2093	Farmworkers, Farm, Ranch, and Aquacultural Animals	2,047
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	1,257
41-2011	Cashiers	970
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	944
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	730
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	589
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	588
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	573
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	540
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	521
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	354
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	351
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	299
51-3023	Slaughterers and Meat Packers	285
47-2061	Construction Laborers	270
37-2012	Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	260
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	258
51-3022	Meat, Poultry, and Fish Cutters and Trimmers	258

PWDB In-Demand Occupations		
OCCUPATIONAL CODE	OCCUPATIONAL TITLE	TOTAL ANNUAL OPENINGS
35-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	257
41-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	254
43-6014	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	251
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	245
25-3031	Substitute Teachers, Short-Term	239
53-3033	Light Truck Drivers	217
29-1141	Registered Nurses	196
47-2111	Electricians	178
37-3011	Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	178
53-7051	Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	173
47-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	172
39-9011	Childcare Workers	166
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	166
25-9045	Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	165
43-6013	Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	159
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	157
31-1131	Nursing Assistants	153
51-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	148
35-9021	Dishwashers	143
47-2073	Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	142
43-4171	Receptionists and Information Clerks	142
53-7064	Packers and Packagers, Hand	137
41-4012	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	136
53-7061	Cleaners of Vehicles and Equipment	134
47-5071	Roustabouts, Oil and Gas	133
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	125
35-3011	Bartenders	123
35-2012	Cooks, Institution and Cafeteria	121
45-2091	Agricultural Equipment Operators	120
33-3012	Correctional Officers and Jailers	117
35-2021	Food Preparation Workers	116
31-9092	Medical Assistants	116
41-3091	Sales Representatives of Services, Except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services, and Travel	115
51-9061	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	112

PWDB In-Demand Occupations		
OCCUPATIONAL CODE	OCCUPATIONAL TITLE	TOTAL ANNUAL OPENINGS
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	110
33-9032	Security Guards	110
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	109
43-4081	Hotel, Motel, and Resort Desk Clerks	105
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	104
41-2022	Parts Salespersons	104
49-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers	97
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	96
13-1198	Project Management Specialists and Business Operations Specialists, All Other	94
33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	92
35-9031	Hosts and Hostesses, Restaurant, Lounge, and Coffee Shop	90
25-2022	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	90
39-9032	Recreation Workers	90
53-3058	Passenger Vehicle Drivers, Except Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity	88
11-9021	Construction Managers	87
43-3021	Billing and Posting Clerks	82
47-2031	Carpenters	77
49-3031	Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists	76
43-3071	Tellers	72
49-9051	Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	71
21-1093	Social and Human Service Assistants	71
43-5061	Production, Planning, and Expediting Clerks	66
43-5071	Shipping, Receiving, and Inventory Clerks	64
51-4041	Machinists	59
45-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Workers	57
41-3021	Insurance Sales Agents	57
51-6011	Laundry and Dry-Cleaning Workers	57
51-9111	Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	57
11-3031	Financial Managers	55
39-5012	Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists	55
51-9198	Helpers--Production Workers	55
49-3042	Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines	55
41-2021	Counter and Rental Clerks	54
27-2022	Coaches and Scouts	50
29-2053	Psychiatric Technicians	50
31-9091	Dental Assistants	48

PWDB In-Demand Occupations		
OCCUPATIONAL CODE	OCCUPATIONAL TITLE	TOTAL ANNUAL OPENINGS
13-1071	Human Resources Specialists	47
47-2141	Painters, Construction and Maintenance	47
25-3097	Tutors and Teachers and Instructors, All Other	47
11.9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	45
11-9141	Property, Real Estate, and Community Association Managers	45
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	44
51-9011	Chemical Equipment Operators and Tenders	43
23-2011	Paralegals and Legal Assistants	43
47-5013	Service Unit Operators, Oil and Gas	43
21-1021	Child, Family, and School Social Workers	42
21-1012	Educational, Guidance, and Career Counselors and Advisors	42
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	42
11-9032	Education Administrators, Kindergarten through Secondary	41
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	40
41-9022	Real Estate Sales Agents	40
45-2041	Graders and Sorters, Agricultural Products	39
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	39
13-1151	Training and Development Specialists	39
33-2011	Firefighters	37
11-9051	Food Service Managers	37
51-9124	Coating, Painting, and Spraying Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	35
15-1256	Software Developers and Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers	35
53-4011	Locomotive Engineers	34
13-1161	Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	34
43-5052	Postal Service Mail Carriers	34
41-3031	Securities, Commodities, and Financial Services Sales Agents	34
51-9161	Computer Numerically Controlled Tool Operators	33
29-2034	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	33
53-7081	Refuse and Recyclable Material Collectors	33
47-3013	Helpers--Electricians	32
49-9099	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Workers, All Other	32
53-4031	Railroad Conductors and Yardmasters	32
43-6011	Executive Secretaries and Executive Administrative Assistants	31
13-2072	Loan Officers	31
41-9099	Sales and Related Workers, All Other	31
25-2011	Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	30

PWDB In-Demand Occupations		
OCCUPATIONAL CODE	OCCUPATIONAL TITLE	TOTAL ANNUAL OPENINGS
49-3093	Tire Repairers and Changers	30
45-2011	Agricultural Inspectors	29
43-9041	Insurance Claims and Policy Processing Clerks	29
43-4031	Court, Municipal, and License Clerks	28
37-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Housekeeping and Janitorial Workers	28
33-9092	Lifeguards, Ski Patrol, and Other Recreational Protective Service Workers	28
29-2098	Medical Dosimetrists, Medical Records Specialists, and Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other	28
11-3071	Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	28
53-6031	Automotive and Watercraft Service Attendants	27
43-3011	Bill and Account Collectors	27
47-2051	Cement Masons and Concrete Finishers	27
49-9098	Helpers--Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Workers	27
25-9031	Instructional Coordinators	27
43-5032	Dispatchers, Except Police, Fire, and Ambulance	26
49-3041	Farm Equipment Mechanics and Service Technicians	26
35-3041	Food Servers, Non-restaurant	26
33-9098	School Bus Monitors and Protective Service Workers, All Other	26
35-2015	Cooks, Short Order	25
11-3051	Industrial Production Managers	25
13-1111	Management Analysts	25
29-2012	Medical and Clinical Laboratory Technicians	25
51-9199	Production Workers, All Other	25
51-8031	Water and Wastewater Treatment Plant and System Operators	25
13-2098	Financial and Investment Analysts, Financial Risk Specialists, and Financial Specialists, All Other	24
43-4131	Loan Interviewers and Clerks	24
49-3021	Automotive Body and Related Repairers	23
51-3093	Food Cooking Machine Operators and Tenders	23
13-1041	Compliance Officers	22
29-2041	Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics	22
15-1244	Network and Computer Systems Administrators	22
51-8093	Petroleum Pump System Operators, Refinery Operators, and Gaugers	22
11-2022	Sales Managers	22
43-4199	Information and Record Clerks, All Other	21
25-2012	Kindergarten Teachers, Except Special Education	21
49-9043	Maintenance Workers, Machinery	21

PWDB In-Demand Occupations		
OCCUPATIONAL CODE	OCCUPATIONAL TITLE	TOTAL ANNUAL OPENINGS
49-9012	Control and Valve Installers and Repairers, Except Mechanical Door	20
51-3099	Food Processing Workers, All Other	20
47-4051	Highway Maintenance Workers	20
11-9081	Lodging Managers	20
19-5011	Occupational Health and Safety Specialists	20
31-9096	Veterinary Assistants and Laboratory Animal Caretakers	20
25-2032	Career/Technical Education Teachers, Secondary School	19
17-3023	Electrical and Electronic Engineering Technologists and Technicians	19
51-3092	Food Batchmakers	19
21-1092	Probation Officers and Correctional Treatment Specialists	19
49-2098	Security and Fire Alarm Systems Installers	19
11-9151	Social and Community Service Managers	19
39-3091	Amusement and Recreation Attendants	18
17-2051	Civil Engineers	18
19-2041	Environmental Scientists and Specialists, Including Health	18
37-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Landscaping, Lawn Service, and Groundskeeping Workers	18
41-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Non-Retail Sales Workers	18
31-9099	Healthcare Support Workers, All Other	18
17-2141	Mechanical Engineers	18
43-3051	Payroll and Timekeeping Clerks	18
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	18
51-7011	Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters	17
13-1051	Cost Estimators	17
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	17
25-1072	Nursing Instructors and Teachers, Postsecondary	17
43-5031	Public Safety Telecommunicators	17
41-4011	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products	17
47-2021	Brickmasons and Blockmasons	16
15-1211	Computer Systems Analysts	16
33-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Correctional Officers	16
17-2171	Petroleum Engineers	16
53-3051	Bus Drivers, School	15
51-9192	Cleaning, Washing, and Metal Pickling Equipment Operators and Tenders	15
33-9091	Crossing Guards and Flaggers	15
49-2094	Electrical and Electronics Repairers, Commercial and Industrial Equipment	15

PWDB In-Demand Occupations		
OCCUPATIONAL CODE	OCCUPATIONAL TITLE	TOTAL ANNUAL OPENINGS
17-2071	Electrical Engineers	15
13-1081	Logisticians	15
11-9179	Personal Service Managers, All Other; Entertainment and Recreation Managers, Except Gambling; and Managers, All Other	15
29-1126	Respiratory Therapists	15
25-2052	Special Education Teachers, Kindergarten and Elementary School	15
53-7011	Conveyor Operators and Tenders	14
11-9033	Education Administrators, Postsecondary	14
43-4061	Eligibility Interviewers, Government Programs	14
43-4071	File Clerks	14
21-1022	Healthcare Social Workers	14
29-1051	Pharmacists	14
47-2221	Structural Iron and Steel Workers	14
25-1121	Art, Drama, and Music Teachers, Postsecondary	13
11-1011	Chief Executives	13
13-1031	Claims Adjusters, Examiners, and Investigators	13
47-4011	Construction and Building Inspectors	13
13-2041	Credit Analysts	13
51-9032	Cutting and Slicing Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	13
47-3015	Helpers--Pipelayers, Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	13
25-4022	Librarians and Media Collections Specialists	13

Occupations designated as “Target” must meet specific criteria established by the PWDB including the following:

- 1) Offer training completion within a two- to three-year timeframe,
- 2) Provide an average entry level hourly wage of \$12 or more, and
- 3) Achieve total annual average job openings of 10 or more.

PWDB Target Occupations			
SOC* Code	Target Occupation	SOC* Code	Target Occupation
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	49-9043	Maintenance Workers, Machinery
49-3011	Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians	31-9092	Medical Assistants
49-3021	Automotive Body and Related Repairers	29-2012	Medical and Clinical Laboratory Technicians
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	29-2098	Medical Dosimetrists, Medical Records Specialists, and Health Technologists and

PWDB Target Occupations			
SOC* Code	Target Occupation	SOC* Code	Target Occupation
			Technicians, All Other
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks		
49-3031	Bus and Truck Mechanic and Diesel Engine Specialists	25-2022	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education
47-2031	Carpenters	49-3042	Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics
51-9011	Chemical Equipment Operators and Tenders	15-1244	Network and Computer Systems Administrators
39-9011	Childcare Workers	31-1014	Nursing Assistants
15-1151	Computer User Support Specialists	23-2011	Paralegals and Legal Assistants
49-9012	Control and Valve Installers and Repairers, Except Mechanical Door	51-8093	Petroleum Pump System Operators, Refinery Operators, and Gaugers
		29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians
47-2111	Electricians	31-9097	Phlebotomists
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants
29-2041	Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics	47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters
33-2011	Firefighters	33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers
		51-9199	Production Workers, All Other
11-9051	Food Service Managers	13-1198	Project Management Specialists and Business Operations Specialists, All Other
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	29-2053	Psychiatric Technicians
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics	29-2034	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	29-1141	Registered Nurses
		29-1126	Respiratory Therapists
15-1212	Information Security Analysts	25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education
29-2061	Licensed Vocational Nurses	53-3032	Truck Drivers, Heavy/Tractor-Trailer
51-4041	Machinists	51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers

*Standard Occupational Code

- The employment needs of employers in the Panhandle region are subject to the so-called “brain drain” that many other regions experience, with the added challenge of the varying pay scales customary in other states and other parts of Texas. Regional unemployment levels have consistently remained among the lowest in the State, presenting unique challenges to companies in recruiting and hiring qualified workers. The PWDB is committed to and is actively engaged in creating greater employer engagement first through accurately identifying and pinpointing local employers’ specific workforce needs. By soliciting and compiling results from employer surveys and input from community partners, combined with TWC Labor Market and Career Information (LMCI) data resources, critical elements are brought together to obtain an accurate picture. Secondly, using this information to educate and train a “right-skilled” workforce, including

incumbent workers, includes funding employer-specific training to bring worker skills up to the level needed by area employers.

Through customized training initiatives, such as the Skills Development Grant Partnership, training opportunities for incumbent workers have increased, and are producing a more highly qualified and well-compensated workforce. In February, the PWDB executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Plains Dairy, a leading provider of high-quality milk and dairy products in the region. The company is dedicated to producing milk from local farmers and distributing it to customers in the area. They have a state-of-the-art processing facility that allows them to turn raw milk into a variety of products, including milk, cheese, butter, and ice cream. The PWDB is developing an application for a SDF Project that will invest in measurable skills development to train approximately 100 employees of Plains Dairy, utilizing a customized Safe Quality Food (SQF) food safety and quality management system that provides guidelines for the production, processing, packaging, and distribution of food products.

The PWDB further pursues employer engagement through facilitating completion of Panhandle occupational and industrial-based certification profiles for the identification and validation of industry-based certifications that will allow students to pursue the credentials that will lead to valuable careers.

The WSP Business Services team utilizes monthly surveys and engages local employers to report on technology and employment trends in their industries, skill shortages, and recruiting challenges, and solicits suggestions for services that could help address labor force needs. Economic development organizations, school districts, elected officials, and the public are solicited to share ideas and provide input as well.

Information is also gleaned from labor market assessments conducted by the AEDC to determine the needs of Amarillo employers, along with information obtained from independent school districts (ISDs), postsecondary institutions, adult education providers, and other workforce partner organizations.

To identify demographic, industrial and employment trends and potential skill shortages, data is pulled from multiple sources, including TWC LMCI tools, and additional resources from other providers, such as Help Wanted Online.

Assessment of employers' needs is also conducted through the involvement of WSP staff with businesses, collaborative activities with community colleges and local organizations, and input received from employers and community leaders. WSP staff share their front-line experience working with employers, job seekers and students to add practical, current and "real-life" information.

B. Knowledge and Skills Analysis (*WIOA §108(b)(1)(B); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(2)*)

Employer engagement is the key to meeting the myriad of Panhandle regional workforce needs. Identifying appropriate operational strategies that lead to attainment of the Panhandle's goals involves examining gaps in skills and services in the local labor market. To understand these challenges, PWDB staff conducts analyses of local, state and national data identifying demographic, industrial and employment trends, and potential skill shortages, using a variety of economic tools provided by TWC, other State agencies, and federal and local resources.

The WSP Business Services team continues to develop solutions that successfully address local labor force challenges such as assessment of employers' skill needs, implementation of low-cost, effective

and timely methods that match capable workers with job openings, and collaboration with educators, economic developers and community partners.

Monitoring local and regional job openings in the Panhandle using such tools as WorkInTexas.com, MyTXCareer.com, AmarilloHelpWanted.com, and the Amarillo Globe-News classified listings, confirms that a majority of Panhandle employers continue to seek qualified individuals in the Specialized Freight Trucking and Transportation-related Industries with Commercial Truck Drivers (CDL); and in the Healthcare-related Industries, which remain on the Panhandle's In-Demand Industries and Target Occupations. The region's training providers keep CDL classes full of students, many of whom are hired as soon as they complete the training. Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff develop career pathways in the healthcare field to match customers' skills along the entire spectrum of the regional employers' needs, from the Target Occupations such as Medical Assistants to Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses, and Medical & Clinical Laboratory Technicians. The region's two major hospitals, as well as multiple Outpatient Care Centers and Home Health Care Services providers, also hire these students as soon as they complete their training.

Replacing retiring workers in skilled trades, despite fewer young adults seeking entry into long-term apprenticeship programs in technical occupations remains a challenge. Aligning resources and focusing on "right-skilling" will not only replace workers, but will ensure the replacement workers have the enhanced technical skills to meet the unique requirements created by the increasing demands of an exceptionally complex and specialized business environment.

C. Labor Force Analysis and Trends (*WIOA §108(b)(1)(C); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(3)*)

The size and scale of the Panhandle region, with its 26 counties encompassing 26,000 square miles, present obvious geographic limitations. The rural areas with the most need for workers have the smallest labor force. The regional downturn in oil and gas production have impacted the rural areas the most, with substantial layoffs and few new jobs to replace those lost. Skills in this industry are often not transferrable to other industries, and many former oil field workers are reluctant to take a lower paying job and hold out in hopes that production will ramp up again in more areas.

The population of individuals with barriers to employment in the Panhandle region is sizable. Poverty levels are relatively high, as many families and individuals receive some type of public assistance, and teenage pregnancy rates have also remained high. A growing homeless population, including veterans and individuals with disabilities, adds to the strain on available resources and services, and presents its own unique set of challenges.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the unemployment rate for the Panhandle Workforce Development Area was at 2.9% according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The most current statistics available at the time of the writing of this Plan (December 2022) show that the rate is now at 2.7% which is still well below the rate of 3.6% for the State of Texas. While a low rate is desirable in many ways, it can pose underlying difficulties, such as the ability for employers to match the availability of workers to job openings. With less people available for work, employers have to increase their wages to find, and keep, employees. This can cause some organizations to settle for less-talented workers, which can reduce the productivity of the employer as a whole, and employers may see an increase in employee turnover when workers have ample opportunities from which to choose.

While most Panhandle workers who want to work are able to find jobs, underemployment remains an issue. The lowest paying jobs seem to have the most growth, due in part to the abundance of restaurants, eating establishments, and hotels/motels per capita. This impacts increasing poverty numbers in the region due to the relatively lower wages paid in these occupations.

The need exists, in the Panhandle, for stable jobs which pay a self-sufficient wage. The dual challenge is to find and engage a well-qualified workforce to meet employers' needs for highly skilled, stable workers. With a younger (median age below age 35), more educated (82% with a HS diploma), and growing regional labor force (15%), the pool of available workers in the region offers the potential for realizing economic growth and future stability for employers and workers alike.

In addition to creating new employment opportunities, a key element in the Panhandle is motivating skilled workers to remain in or return to the Panhandle area. This can be achieved by developing and implementing a targeted approach to overcoming challenges inherent in virtual employment. Coordinating with system partners like the Amarillo Chamber of Commerce, AEDC, and local colleges to promote the economically and personally rewarding benefits of staying in or returning to Amarillo, is an effective approach.

Local labor market needs provide the core direction for Panhandle workforce investments. To understand the region's skill needs, PWDB and WSP staff combine a broad analysis of local, state and national data, with local information gained from employers' input and workforce professionals' experience delivering services. Conducting market research and analysis, developing and implementing a regional business engagement plan, and creating and improving opportunities for developing and implementing skills development initiatives, especially among small employers, and employers in demand industry sectors and occupations, are priorities for the PWDB.

The extensive geography of the Texas Panhandle presents a daunting challenge to the delivery of vital workforce services to the populace, compounded by the existence of only one full-service rural WSP office in Borger and one itinerate location, on the campus of Amarillo College in Hereford. Rural communities continue to have the most need for workers, and yet have the smallest labor force. The acquisition and operation of a donated Workforce Mobile Unit several years ago led the PWDB to purchase a second, smaller mobile unit, which is more cost effective to operate.

The Texas Panhandle has a very diverse economy. When analyzing the industries and associated occupations of the PWDA, the list is long with small percentages of job openings in each field. However, two areas stand out when all of the statistics are compiled – Truck Drivers and healthcare-related occupations. At the time of the writing of this Plan, out of a sample of 750 job openings, 36 were specifically for Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (5%). Job Openings for Registered Nurses were 138 (18%) and job openings categorized in other healthcare-related fields, such as Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics; Home Health Aides, Licensed Practical and Vocational Nurses; Nursing Assistants; Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians; Physical and Respiratory Therapists; Radiologic Technicians; Surgical Technologists; and Other Healthcare Practitioners, Technical Workers, and Support Workers, totaled 153 (20%) demonstrating the vast need for employees in these areas and why these occupations make up such a large portion of training programs available, from regional training providers, to customers of WSP and the PWDA.

Several employers in the Panhandle Workforce Development Area (PWDA) that continue their operations and some that have released plans for potential manufacturing industry projects prompted the addition of the occupation of Production Workers, All Others (SOC 51-9199) to the Target Occupations List.

Following the COVID-19 Pandemic, employers in the Healthcare Industry in the PWDA began discovering the increased need for Mental Health services and approached the PWDB with a proposal to develop a credential program with Amarillo College for Psychiatric Technicians. In its February, 2022 Board meeting, the PWDB approved adding this occupation to its High-Demand Occupations and Target Occupations Lists. The Amarillo College program was then added to the Eligible Training Provider System (ETPS) and WSP has enrolled WIOA customers in the program.

D. Workforce Development Analysis (*WIOA §108(b)(1)(D)*; *20 CFR §679.560(a)(4)*)

The strengths of workforce activities in the Panhandle region are the innovative employment and training opportunities developed through the creation of new partnerships with businesses and employers in emerging industries in the Panhandle, such as wind energy, manufacturing, and industrial production, through renewing alliances with existing entities including aviation and child care services, and with other local employers that have maintained a steady presence in the area job market. Additional successes include:

- Industry-Recognized Skills Certification Initiative Grant funds utilized through training workers at local community colleges for employment at a large food processing plant in the region;
- Collaboration between a major local employer with business locations throughout the region to provide management level training to incumbent workers and a local community college, offering opportunities for career growth and increased earning potential; and
- Partnering with employers to fund basic truck driver instruction and licensure, followed by job placement with an experienced driver to complete required over-the-road training.

One of the greatest challenges to improving delivery of workforce services in our region was the mandated relocation of the Amarillo WSP office, the largest office in the area and the primary resource for workforce services for Panhandle area employers and job seekers. Due to the increased costs associated with transitioning from a state-owned building with virtually negligible costs, to leasing suitable office space in an expensive commercial environment, with marginal cost offset, workforce service delivery has been severely impacted. Securing a new facility, however, achieved a long-desired goal of co-housing local VR Services staff with WSP staff to provide enhanced workforce services to individuals with disabilities, such as quality employment services and suitable job referrals, appropriate occupational training opportunities. WSP and local employers have had the opportunity to increase their education and knowledge of VR, and the unique employment issues individuals, who have disabilities, regularly encounter.

Collaboration and joint planning with VR Services and TWC continues providing a seamless approach for access to integrated workforce services, literacy education, vocational rehabilitation, and in-demand workplace skills that lead to self-sufficient employment and advancement for individuals with disabilities. Promoting partnerships with employers and system stakeholders will overcome barriers to meeting workforce needs through creative use of technology and innovation. Following a period of adjustment and settling in to the new paradigm, additional strategies and methods will be developed and implemented based on examination of the successes and lingering challenges observed, and will be designed to increase the quality and effectiveness of workforce services provided to this priority population. Additional strategies include:

- Identifying individual's barriers to employment, including veterans and youth with disabilities, and prioritizing services provided to enhance skill levels, complete credentials, and increase earnings potential;
- Overcoming obstacles encountered in developing short term training opportunities, such as paid or unpaid work experience, internships, apprenticeships, and other work-based training options like On-the-Job-Training (OJT). Individuals may be reluctant to work without pay, despite the inherent opportunities available at the completion, and employers may be reluctant to take a chance on a relatively unskilled, untested worker, whether or not the training is subsidized, both of which must be addressed;
- Outreaching and engaging older, out-of-school youth, and re-connecting them with the local job

market and employers, is an important focus. By fostering quality internships and skills development projects in Target Occupations, and encouraging and assisting area community colleges in the development of, and application for, Skills Development grants, including implementation, students will be connected with employers who offer self-sufficient wages, as well as effective mentoring to encourage continued participation.

- Actively supporting initiatives which integrate language, basic education, and occupational skills training, such as Amarillo College’s existing pilot instructional programs for Limited English speakers in Target and In-Demand Occupations like Certified Nurse Aide, Machinist, and Auto Mechanic, reinforce the PWDB’s goals of creating a qualified, vital workforce.
- WSP staff continue to collaborate with VR staff to provide work-based learning opportunities for students with disabilities through the Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL) program, and are providing participants with foundational employment skills and better preparing them for successful transition to postsecondary education and employment, and work. Developing opportunities for these students to continue gaining valuable work experience and soft skills through other avenues, builds their resumes as well as their employment tool box.
- Efforts continue in earnest to gather consensus among appropriate local stakeholders and partners to build a network that will work towards achieving the goals put forth in the 60x30TX Initiative that are specific to the PWDB, such as strengthening our local economy by better preparing young people for the workforce demands of our diversified, employer-driven local economy, and developing and improving opportunities for individuals to enter into career pathways designed to offer living wages with the potential for increased future earnings. The goal of the 60x30TX Initiative, that 60% of Texans ages 25-34 will have a degree, certificate, or other post-secondary credential of value by 2030, continues with the Governor’s Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative, a collaboration among the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and TWC. The PWDB is coordinating with Region 16 and West Texas A&M University, to respond to a TEA grant opportunity, the 2022-2024 Tri-Agency Grant for Regional Conveners, which provides funding to establish the infrastructure needed to support planning and implementation of high-quality career and education pathways across the workforce development area. Designated regional conveners will join the Texas Regional Pathways Network (TRPN), a growing community of regional partners committed to building regional talent pipelines to targeted industries that will spur economic growth across the state.
- Increasing awareness and educating older youth and parents in realizing that a four-year college degree is not necessarily the only path to success in the job market;
- Increasing collaboration with local AEL partners to consolidate intake, referral, and service strategies that focus on attaining necessary credentials, completing training, and entering employment with the ultimate goal of self-sufficiency; and
- Developing relevant career pathways based on data driven decisions that serve the needs of individuals in removing barriers to employment, attaining credentials, and enhancing skill levels and earning potential.

Part 3: Core Programs

A. Workforce Development System (*WIOA §108(b)(2); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(1)*)

- **Required partner/programs included in the Workforce Development system are:**

- ✓ WIOA adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs;
 - ✓ Wagner-Peyser Employment Service program;
 - ✓ Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) program;
 - ✓ Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program;
 - ✓ Unemployment Insurance (UI) program;
 - ✓ Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program;
 - ✓ Choices, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) employment and training program;
 - ✓ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training programs;
 - ✓ Subsidized Child Care programs;
 - ✓ Apprenticeship programs (Texas Education Code, Chapter 133);
 - ✓ Veterans' employment and training programs;
 - ✓ National and Community Service Act of 2007 program;
 - ✓ Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP); and
 - ✓ Non-Certificate Postsecondary Career and Technology Training programs.
- **Facilitating 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 Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V), was signed into law on July 31, 2018. The act provides an increased focus on the academic achievement of career and technical education students and emphasizes alignment with state-level and local needs. The Panhandle's workforce development system is comprised of the organizations and activities that assist job seekers with finding employment, help workers advance in their careers, provide access to occupational and educational training that leads to self-sufficient employment, improve basic literacy skills among youth and adults, and ensure a skilled workforce exists to support local industry and the local economy over time. This workforce system includes local organizations that serve the adults and youth who may need help preparing for and succeeding in the workforce. The PWDB will support the TWC State Plan strategy through continued and strong collaboration among WSP staff, local employers and industry, training providers and educational institutions, service and advocacy organizations, and other local organizations critical to supporting and delivering effective, integrated workforce services through the core programs.

The PWDB continues to partner with regional Economic Development Corporations (EDCs) to apply for High Demand Job Training grant funding to match the EDCs sales tax investments in a dollar-for-dollar match, for WIOA-allowable, high demand job training activities which may include individual participant recruitment, skills assessment, job search skills improvement, job search, job referral, equipment and minor renovation of facilities used for program-related job training. While the PWDB has utilized its awarded grant funds mostly to purchase equipment for regional community colleges and Independent School Districts (ISDs), future applications are planned to include a combination of all the allowable activities to supplement Career & Technology Education (CTE) training programs throughout the PWDA. This will include Dual-Credit and Career Technical Education Programs as aligning with TWC's Strategic Planning which utilizes funding "to support, create and expand dual-credit and CTE programs that are highly technical in nature, address local demands for high-skill, in-demand and high-wage industries, and allow high school students to complete college credit hours. These programs respond to industry demands for skilled workers in technical fields, while helping high school students prepare for employment or education opportunities."

B. Core Programs—Expand Access, Facilitate Development, and Improve Access (*WIOA §108(b)(3); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(2)*)

- **Expanding access to employment, training, education, and support services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment:** WSP Business Services and PWDB staff will continue to provide assistance to community colleges and businesses to obtain training resources to increase students' and workers' skills, and build educational capacity in the region, including the Skills Development and Self-Sufficiency Fund, and other grant opportunities which expand capacity. Workforce resources pledged to such prospective projects includes labor market information, grant writing assistance, building employer consortia, assistance with eligible students' tuition, fees and materials costs, and job placement. To respond to continued employer input regarding deficiencies in the work-readiness/soft skills of job applicants and employees, additional work-readiness training options will be made available to job seekers and targeted populations through new tools to be provided in the WSP office in Amarillo and online on the updated WSP website. The PWDB and WSP continue to offer training using Online Learning Management Systems (OLMS), such as MATRIX LMS.
- **Facilitating the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs, including specific career pathways:** WSP case management staff are well-trained in assessing customer workforce needs and collaborating with customers to develop employment plans which meet the customers immediate and future needs. Staff work diligently to identify and develop effective career pathways which reflect realistic employment goals that can involve occupational training, as well as work-based training, designed to meet the prescribed objectives of the plan. Staff is made aware of sources for labor market and career information, and to look for every opportunity for co-enrollment and integrated case management to enhance desired outcomes. PWDB policy exists for exploring community partners and agencies which may assist in meeting the needs of customers for training and employment. The PWDB is collaborating with both Amarillo College and the Panhandle Community Partnership in the development of tools, such as a Career Maps website, to be available soon.
- **Improving access to activities leading to postsecondary credential or industry recognized credential:** The availability of short-term training options, that can lead to occupations in demand, is limited in the Panhandle. Working with postsecondary institutions to develop more training opportunities involves identifying training needs of employers, assisting colleges with grant applications to generate funding for curriculum development, and covering tuition expenses for eligible students. Integrated language, basic education and occupational skills training are also limited in the region. Most of the occupations that have been targeted for training require a relatively high level of basic education for successful completion of certificates and degrees. However, Amarillo College has piloted instructional programs for Limited-English speakers in the In-Demand Occupation of Certified Nurse Aide, and the Target Occupations of Machinist and Auto Mechanics. Additional funding will be needed to sustain these programs and expand training for more occupations. WSP staff will assist postsecondary providers in pursuing these opportunities.

The PWDB is actively striving towards the objective of the Texas Industry Cluster Initiative, which is to stimulate long-term sustained growth and focus the allocation of state resources on key industry clusters identified to be engines of job creation and economic development in the 21st century. "Industry cluster" means a concentration of businesses and industries in a

geographic region that are interconnected by the markets they serve, the products they produce, their suppliers, the trade associations to which their employees belong, and the educational institutions from which their employees or prospective employees receive training. The Texas target industry clusters are:

- ✓ Advanced Manufacturing
- ✓ Aerospace, Aviation and Defense
- ✓ Biotechnology and Life Sciences
- ✓ Corporate Services
- ✓ Creative Industry
- ✓ Energy
- ✓ Information Technology
- ✓ Petroleum Refining and Chemical Products

While the PWDB continues to collaborate with regional employers in several of these industry clusters, such as in Aerospace, Aviation and Defense with Bell (Textron), in Energy with the Pantex Plant in Amarillo, and Petroleum Refining and Chemical Products with the Phillips 66/Cenovus Refinery in Borger, a main focus has been placed in the industry cluster of Advanced Manufacturing.

Several employers in the Panhandle Workforce Development Area (PWDA) that continue their operations and some that have released plans for potential manufacturing industry projects prompted the addition of the occupation of Production Workers, All Others (SOC 51-9199) to the Target Occupations List. These projects include:

- ✓ Cacique Foods, a leading Hispanic foods company and the #1 brand of authentic Mexican-style cheeses, cremas and chorizos in the United States, is expecting to open their new 200,000 sq. ft. dairy facility in April, 2023. The company has partnered with AmTech Career Academy and Amarillo College;
- ✓ Ecolomondo Corporation, a cleantech company commercializing its proprietary recycling technology, Thermal Decomposition Process (“TDP”) and specializing in the building and operation of turnkey TDP facilities, announced plans in January, 2022, to build and operate a six-reactor turnkey TDP facility in Shamrock. This will be the Company’s first US-based waste-to-resources TDP plant capable of processing and recycling end-of-life tires (“ELT”) into saleable recycled commercial resources for re-use. At peak production, Ecolomondo expects to create approximately 70 direct and 140 indirect jobs.
- ✓ Chemical Vapor Metal Refining (CVMR) will build a \$1.5 billion, 540-acre rare-earth refinery in Amarillo after the city and Potter County agreed to economic incentives for the project, according to a June 21 press release.
- ✓ Caviness Beef Packers operates two Panhandle facilities:
 - 1) Beef harvest, fabrication, rendering, and hides processing in Hereford. In 2020, Caviness completed approximately 130,000 sq ft of plant additions in Hereford which allowed them to add a second shift to the operations, and expanded upon from coolers, freezers, dry goods, employee welfare, hides, rendering and wastewater complex.
 - 2) Ground beef and patty processing, in Amarillo producing approximately 1,500,000 pounds of ground beef chubs and patties weekly.
- ✓ SSI Foods is a beef patty manufacturing company located in Amarillo, manufacturing hamburger products that meet the core menu needs of quick service and casual dining

restaurants by utilizing four patty processing lines with Tomahawk TM26 patty formers, with expansion capability to six lines.

- ✓ SciCron Technologies' state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Amarillo specializes in applying high-quality, high-performance coatings to plastics, with expertise in coating large, clear sheet products, and coating fabricated, molded, and formed plastic parts, and plastic film products.

Following the COVID-19 Pandemic, employers in the Healthcare Industry in the PWDA began discovering the increased need for Mental Health services and approached the PWDB with a proposal to develop a credential program with Amarillo College for Psychiatric Technicians. In its February, 2022 Board meeting, the PWDB approved adding this occupation to its High-Demand Occupations and Target Occupations Lists. The Amarillo College program was then added to the Eligible Training Provider System (ETPS) and WSP has enrolled WIOA customers in the program.

Multiple projects have been completed utilizing High Demand Job Training (HDJT) grant funding, which matches to local economic development sales tax funding, on a dollar-for-dollar basis. The PWDB has facilitated the purchase of equipment for occupational training of students at the post-secondary level at Clarendon College's Childress, Clarendon, Pampa, and Shamrock Centers; and at Frank Phillips College's Rahll Campus in Dalhart, Allen Campus in Perryton, and its main campus in Borger. The PWDB has also facilitated the purchase of equipment for occupational training of students in Career & Technology Education (CTE) for the local Independent School Districts (ISDs) of Bushland, Canyon, Highland Park, and River Road; and for the Amarillo ISD's AmTech Career Academy.

Part 4: One-Stop Service Delivery

A. One-Stop Service Delivery System (*WIOA §108(b)(6); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(5)*)

- **Customer Service and Satisfaction:** The PWDB understands that the workforce system must have the capacity to meet the needs of all current and future customers: employers, system program and service providers, and workers, wherever they are in their careers. Customers must be assured that wherever they enter the workforce system, there is a pathway through the system by instituting a "no-closed door" culture to ensure successful outcomes or referrals for customers of the workforce system programs and services. Any point of entry provides access to the full continuum of programs and services. The ability to accurately assess customer satisfaction with and across workforce system elements and translate this data into useful actions is essential to best meet the needs of workforce system customers. Two innovative products that the PWDB and WSP have recently deployed in the area of customer service:
 - ✓ WSP is incorporating Quick Response (QR) Code technology into its Customer Satisfaction Survey process. This technology allows customers to access the optic label provided on WSP printed and digital media and, in a streamlined, convenient, and confidential method, respond on their customer service experience.
 - ✓ The PWDB has purchased the digital communication management (DCM) software Granicus GovDelivery to enable WSP to build content to be shared with job seekers and connect/distribute through a number of different mediums, including email, Short Message Service (SMS)/text messages, Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds, and social media integration, including, but not limited to, a monthly newsletter.

- **Data-Driven Program Improvement:** The collection of key data, as well as the reporting and analysis of that data, in a consistent and useful manner, are essential in demonstrating outcomes, determining if changes are required or desired, and establishing benchmarks for future performance. The PWDB is committed to working with its partners to promote the building or modification of existing data systems to improve the flow of data, increase the relevance of data, and facilitate analysis that supports effective decision-making across the full spectrum of data users, to achieve effective and efficient programs, services, and outcomes.

The PWDB recognizes the efforts and the recommendations of the Regional Workforce Strategy Working Group representing the Workforce Solutions Alamo, Capital Area and Rural Capital Area. This group was formed to strengthen the alignment of regional workforce planning with economic development to create a data-driven, scalable model to maximize the capacity for Workforce Development Boards to meet the needs of employers in the State and reconnect Texans to the workforce in a way that supports long-term prosperity in urban, suburban, and rural communities. The PWDB is exploring and will support the strategies put forth in the Texas Talent and Economic Growth Pilot Project and Statewide Action Plan to strengthen the alignment between regional workforce planning and economic development.

- **Continuous Improvement and Innovation:** As identified in the Texas Workforce Investment Council’s strategic planning process, the PWDB will continue to identify opportunities and develop solutions for improving performance and outcomes that have cross-partner implications and hold significant strategic value to the overall success of the workforce system’s ability to meet its vision and mission.to

- ✓ Facilitate effective and efficient transitions and enhance transition services;
- ✓ Increase employment outcomes;
- ✓ Expand partnerships with system stakeholders and promote collaboration and joint planning;
- ✓ Incorporate/expand options for dual credit and/or licensure and certification;
- ✓ Increase business and industry involvement;
- ✓ Align programs and services;
- ✓ Share timely data and information;
- ✓ Promulgate promising practices and reduce duplication;
- ✓ Recruit and/or provide professional development;
- ✓ Ensure portable and transferrable options;
- ✓ Address skills shortages; and
- ✓ Institutionalize alternative service delivery methods.

The PWDB continues to endeavor to connect job seekers and other populations with barriers to employment to numerous career and training resources and opportunities to prepare them for entry or reentry into the workforce in high-growth industry sectors, and improve customer opportunities for growth. The PWDB and its partner agencies continue to cultivate emerging industries, support existing businesses and enhance the skills development of the workforce taking advantage of strategic opportunities provided by swift economic change.

In alignment with the TWC Strategic Plan, the PWDB continues to strive for improved access and efficiency, along with value-added services, to benefit customers of the workforce system. The PWDB recognizes that along with system partners, it is responsible for the delivery of twenty workforce education and training programs and related services, as well as education programs that support career preparation and advancement. The PWDB, WSP, and community partners continue to follow the principal of full integration of core programs, with a strategy of

alignment, coordination, and integration of education, employment and training programs. The PWDB continues its objective of structuring collaboration of programs, initiatives and outcomes, to avoid duplication with strategic plans of partner agencies. The PWDB and its partners are committed to customer satisfaction, data-driven program improvement, and continuous improvement and innovation.

The PWDB continues to support TWC's goal, as stated in in 2021-2025 TWC Strategic Plan to prepare individuals for employment by supporting education and training that equips individuals with in-demand skills as identified by employers by:

- ✓ Continuing ongoing support of education programs for students that inform them and prepare them for high-skill, high-demand jobs through identification and allocation of available programs and resources;
 - ✓ Addressing the workforce training needs of employers by leveraging Skills Development Fund (SDF) grants; Texas Industry Partnership (TIP) program grants, which support collaborations between the Board and industry partners through the leveraging of matching contributions of cash or qualifying expenditures for occupation training focusing on the Texas Industry Cluster Initiative; and other available resources to support in-demand job training;
 - ✓ Continuing to support work-based learning opportunities through internships, mentorships, and job shadowing, and
 - ✓ Continue to coordinate and collaborate with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Texas Education Agency to support and develop objectives for increasing the percentage of Texans with post-secondary degrees or certification.
- **Continuous Improvement of Eligible Providers:** The PWDB adopted local performance requirements for the determination of initial eligibility of Eligible Training Provider System (ETPS) program applications per TWC's annual publication of state performance standards that meet the state performance standards. A training provider may apply for certification for any of its programs. However, if the program does not prepare students for employment in an occupation on the Board's Target Occupations list, the school must justify inclusion by demonstrating that the occupation is indeed in demand.

Appropriate documentation demonstrating a projected minimum of ten total openings in the 26 counties of the Panhandle Workforce Development Area (WDA) in each of the next five years must be submitted to the Board. Schools are encouraged to submit validating information for Board review. Such documentation must consist of at least three sources, including, but not limited to: recent economic statistics; information provided by employers, e.g., letters; posted job openings; newspaper articles; information provided by professional organizations related to the occupation or industry; local employer-based, industry-specific advisory groups; and/or other appropriate information verifying demand.

WIOA emphasizes the importance of training services providers to afford the highest quality training services and be responsive to In-Demand and emerging industries. Training provider evaluation criteria must include documentation of partnerships with employers related to the particular training program, WIOA Section 122(b)(4)(D)(ii). To comply with this requirement, documentation must take the following forms, and will be maintained by the PWDB: letter of support from a local employer or employers; evidence of the existence of an employer-based advisory committee; or other means acceptable to the Board as set forth in policy adopted in a public meeting. Providers must also document financial stability through submission of the most recently completed financial statements to the Board. Submissions must include Balance Sheets,

Income Statements (Profit & Loss), and Auditor's Notes.

The PWDB uses several strategies to increase the number of providers and training options for customers, and to assure that local training is available, as follows:

- ✓ The inclusion of public training providers in the membership of the Board's Labor Market Information (LMI) Committee and public notice of those sessions (considered public meetings) assures communication to local providers of training gaps and potential employer collaborations;
 - ✓ Positive relationships are sustained in the region with all local providers that offer training in Target and In-demand occupations. Various standing agreements exist, including the options of provider application to the ETPS (1) for all programs that prepare students for the Target occupations, (2) when a student is interested in a particular program, thereby limiting the demand on the provider's staff time, or (3) not at all, but other resources may be leveraged to allow customers to receive training (e.g., apprenticeship programs);
 - ✓ Maximum flexibility is provided to training providers that wish to certify programs for WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker customer training. At application, training providers certify that their programs lead to specified occupations, including those targeted by the PWDB. Programs that consistently produce student completions that lead to training-related employment are retained on the ETPS;
 - ✓ Those programs with at least five WIOA-enrolled participants per year are evaluated for this outcome. If a substantial percentage of the WIOA participants do not complete the program or cannot obtain training-related employment after graduation, PWDB staff will conduct an evaluation with the provider and the WSP staff to determine what improvements, if any, are necessary to increase the program's WIOA student success rate;
 - ✓ To ensure continuous improvement of ETPS-certified programs, labor market information is provided to training providers, including input from employers and other workforce customers. In addition, periodic meetings are held with training providers and employers to discuss labor market skill and training needs, prior to the submission to the PWDB for updates to the Target Occupations list; and
 - ✓ To ensure that training is available and the need for skills is communicated to the public, skilled trades occupations with workers who are expected to retire faster than they can be replaced are included on the Target Occupations list. These occupations include high-demand opportunities in Construction trades such as Construction Equipment Operators, Carpenters, Electricians and Plumbers; repair workers such as Auto Mechanics, Diesel Mechanics, Heating, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Mechanics, Industrial Machinery Mechanics, and Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics; Industrial Truck & Tractor Operators, and manufacturing technicians such as Machinists and Welders. Registered apprenticeship provides some of the local training for these occupations, including those in Construction. Referrals are made to apprenticeship opportunities by WSP staff.
- **Remote areas and technology:** With 26 counties encompassing 26,000 square miles, the size and scale of the Texas Panhandle presents a daunting challenge to the delivery of vital workforce services to the populace, compounded by the existence of only one full-service rural Workforce Solutions Panhandle office in Borger and one itinerate location in Hereford. An additional component to this challenge is the fact that our rural communities continue to have the most need for workers, and yet have the smallest labor force. The PWDB's newer, smaller mobile

workforce unit is more cost effective to operate and staff. Following the placement of the new mobile unit into service, the older mobile unit is available to be stationed at a specified rural location, with the option of limited transport to other rural communities for employer hiring related functions, such as job fairs, career exploration events, and other opportunities specifically aimed at connecting rural employers with job seekers, and strengthening linkages to workforce services.

Fully utilizing both mobile workforce units, that offer a comprehensive menu of workforce services on a consistent basis to customers in rural areas of the Panhandle who have had limited to no workforce services activity in their area, requires additional approaches. A Rural Business Services Representative is primarily responsible for conducting business services activities with a primary focus on connecting with, and serving, rural employers, by working closely with WSP staff operating the mobile units to conduct activities that promote full utilization of both units in the rural communities. Coordinating planning schedules will ensure employers in rural communities are introduced to, and delivered, essential workforce services. Increased employer awareness of workforce services will increase job placement opportunities, and advance the potential for developing work-based training and internships.

Additionally, access to workforce services for rural communities is increased and enhanced through specific technology improvements, such as continued updates to the WSPanhandle.com website, acquisition and implementation of innovative website elements, improving current online connectivity, and creating access to virtual services. A logical step in achieving these aims is applying a strategy for improvements in rural wireless Internet connectivity, through such methods as creating MiFi hotspots throughout the region, and identifying, and advertising, appropriate rural locations which offer free Wi-Fi, such as libraries and courthouses. Increased and improved access to Internet-based applications for career exploration and job matching and information about occupational and work-based training opportunities can expand and enhance service delivery to rural customers who do not reside within reasonable travel distance to any WSP office. Further strategies include:

- ✓ Outreaching workforce services to the public through multiple electronic sources, primarily web-based media. This will include the continued development of social media utilization, to promote services and provide immediate responses to customer needs, and increase social media presence on the most popular websites and web applications that appeal to, and will reach, the younger population;
- ✓ Maintaining personal contact through the WSP Business Services team with employers in rural communities, assessing needs and developing customized solutions which address recruiting challenges and skills gaps;
- ✓ Regularly updating the WSP website with more interactive and easily accessed resources, such as job search training videos, and maintaining relevant content;
- ✓ Continuing to host successful hiring events at rural locations;
- ✓ Expanding the quality and quantity of focused job fairs and career fairs in the rural communities, including involving specialized education programs as hosts;
- ✓ Continuing utilization of analysis and local wisdom gained through practical experience enhancing the set of operational strategies for serving rural communities to be implemented. Investments will continue to be made to market services to the public through multiple technologies and electronic media. Continued efforts of WSP's social media specialist to

guide the development and utilization of this resource, in collaboration with the WSP Business Services team, in promoting workforce services throughout the region, will be supported. Targeted social media will be further identified and developed to provide an additional venue for customers—both employers and job seekers to communicate needs and generate appropriate staff responses;

- ✓ Including hiring events for job openings, career fairs, and job fairs focusing on rural communities. The WSP website has been redesigned to provide remote users services that are like those offered in the brick-and-mortar offices. New resources available on the website include an improved user interface, more interactive activities such as job search training videos, additional methods for direct, real-time communication to obtain staff assistance, and a fresh new approach to reach and engage disconnected youth using appealing smartphone web applications that offer youth the same multitude of services available on the website, and at WSP offices; and
- ✓ Supporting WSP Business Services members and other key staff continuing to visit employers in our rural communities, assessing needs face-to-face and developing customized solutions which address recruiting and skills gaps. Rural partners will continue to provide itinerant locations for staff to meet with customers throughout the region, including community-based organizations such as Panhandle Community Services, as well as libraries, colleges, independent school districts and public offices. Combined with regularly scheduled staff visits to more rural locations utilizing the second mobile unit, offering computer access with Internet connectivity for accessing WorkInTexas.com and other employment services, will assure rural customers that WSP still has a demonstrated rural presence and can provide services in their communities.
- **WIOA §188 and the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008:** The PWDB has the opportunity to better serve the workforce needs of individuals with disabilities, and ensure compliance with WIOA §188 and the ADA, through the ongoing transition of Texas Workforce Solutions VR Services programs and staff into the WSP office in Amarillo. While the physical and financial issues associated with co-location and integration of VR Services staff and WSP staff is a challenge, the intention is for all of the Panhandle region’s offices to grow in the capacity to serve individuals who have disabilities by common appointment scheduling and regularly scheduled visits to many rural locations by the mobile units. Through continued collaboration and joint planning with VR Services, an effective transition plan reflecting the shared goals of providing a seamless approach for access to integrated workforce services, literacy education, vocational rehabilitation, and in-demand workplace skills that lead to self-sufficient employment and advancement for individuals with disabilities, and promoting partnerships with employers and system stakeholders which overcome barriers to meeting workforce needs through creative use of technology and innovation, can be achieved. Following a period of adjustment and settling in to the new paradigm, additional strategies and methods will be developed and implemented based on examination of the successes and lingering challenges observed, and will be designed to increase the quality and effectiveness of workforce services provided to this priority population.

VR Services include counseling, training, medical treatment, assistive devices, job placement assistance, and other services to assist individuals with disabilities prepare for or maintain their independence. Integration of these services affords the local workforce system with increased opportunities to better serve individuals with disabilities in our region, and improve overall employment outcomes for the employers and the potential for self-sufficiency for the individuals

served.

VR Services staff will provide:

- ✓ Information on program eligibility;
- ✓ Assessment for referrals from WSP staff to determine eligibility for VR Services;
- ✓ Delivery of vocational rehabilitation services, including diagnostics, guidance and counseling, adaptive skills training, vocational training, and pre- and post- employment services;
- ✓ Consultation on rehabilitative technology for workforce customers;
- ✓ Training of WSP staff on disability sensitivity and awareness;
- ✓ Assessment of adaptive technology needs at WSP offices;
- ✓ Information about all programs and services available; and
- ✓ Information and assistance with compliance with all Federal laws and regulations regarding individual with disabilities.

The PWDB and WSP will:

- ✓ Advertise and promote VR Services as part of the entire array of services offered;
- ✓ Integrate VR Services staff into workforce service delivery;
- ✓ Improve and streamline the referral process for individuals with disabilities;
- ✓ Coordinate with VR Services in providing information on the full range of employment services offered including job matching services utilizing WorkInTexas.com;
- ✓ Share timely labor market information and provide a critical link to employers including job leads, job fairs, and hiring events;
- ✓ Coordinate with VR Services staff on co-hosting or supporting VR Services special events;
- ✓ Provide intensive and training services under WIOA as appropriate and applicable, and move towards jointly managing common case files and staffing customers;
- ✓ Actively identify and promote opportunities for co-enrollment to maximize funds and create shorter pathways to achieving training and employment goals;
- ✓ Participate in disability sensibility and awareness training to staff;
- ✓ Request consultation on appropriate rehabilitation technology for workforce customers with disabilities; and
- ✓ Provide additional adaptive equipment, as determined necessary.

- **Workforce partners' roles and resource contributions:** The PWDB coordinates with hundreds of public agencies, nonprofit organizations and private sector businesses in the region to carry out its mission, such as:

- ✓ The region's three community colleges, Amarillo College, Clarendon College and Frank Phillips College, and the public university, West Texas A&M University, are essential, as these institutions provide most postsecondary education supported by the Board and numerous methods of support to help students be successful;
- ✓ The PWDB supports the community colleges' Skills Development Fund, Self Sufficiency Fund, and High Demand Job Training Project applications that support key industries and those associated by cluster relationships, and training for occupations in demand and/or essential to those industries. In addition, staff collaborates with schools and local employers to develop training solutions that meet specific training needs;
- ✓ Amarillo College houses the region's adult basic education program, overseeing Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Educational Development (GED), and ESL instruction

throughout the area, delivered both by onsite teachers and distance learning. ABE services include assessment of workforce customers with limited English skills;

- ✓ Region 16 Education Service Center (ESC):
 - a) Continues to partner with the PWDB and WSP to promote TWC's Externship for Teachers Initiative which unites workforce, industry and education representatives to promote an effective workforce system. During the summer, teachers are assigned to a partner business and shadow workers to the teachers better understand work-based applications of what they teach. This experience is designed to strengthen the connection between business and education, helping teachers learn what skills are critical to small and large businesses and promoting lesson plans that demonstrate how classroom skills are used at work. PWDB Grant funding is utilized for providing stipends to participating teachers.
 - b) Is also responsible for the area's Head Start and Early Head Start program, offering free, high-quality child development services to income eligible families with children ages 0-5 years old. Head Start and Early Head Start is child-focused learning, but also provides comprehensive services to the child's family;
- ✓ The Texas Health and Human Services Commission's (HHSC's) Texas Works Program provides financial support to welfare and SNAP families and supports WSP staff efforts to help these customers locate, enter and retain employment;
- ✓ The area's Independent School Districts collaborate with the PWDB to help at-risk youth complete their high school diplomas, prepare for careers and transition to postsecondary education. Alternative secondary school, tutoring, career exploration and assessment, child care and other services may be provided;
- ✓ Literacy councils play an essential role in workforce development by helping extremely low-skilled readers gain a level of proficiency that will allow them to improve their employment prospects and benefit from further adult education offered by the community colleges;
- ✓ The Panhandle's Economic Development Corporations (EDCs) and related organizations provide financial support for occupational training and related equipment, and business development that leads to increased numbers of jobs. EDC involvement, in the High Demand Job Training Projects, assures workforce system alignment with local economic development resources to the extent possible;
- ✓ WSP coordinates with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to provide information to local Parole Division Officers, regarding Job Seeker services for its Releasees, to enable the Officers to make referrals to WSP to help these individuals locate, enter and retain employment; and
- ✓ Many other local organizations and agencies, such as Panhandle Community Services, Catholic Family Services, Inc., the Salvation Army, Panhandle Independent Living Center, and Amarillo's Downtown Women's Center, provide significant employment and related services. WSP staff coordinate with over 100 faith- and community-based governmental and private organizations in the region to leverage resources on behalf of customers.

B. Cooperative Agreements (*WIOA §108(b)(14); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(13)*)

Cooperative agreements explain how all local service providers, including additional providers, will

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

Cooperative Agreement means a legal instrument of financial assistance between a Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity and a non-Federal entity that, consistent with 31 U.S.C. 6302-6305: (1) Is used to enter into a relationship the principal purpose of which is to transfer anything of value from the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity to the non-Federal entity to carry out a public purpose authorized by a law of the United States (see 31 U.S.C. 6101(3)); and not to acquire property or services for the Federal government or pass-through entity's direct benefit or use; (2) Is distinguished from a grant in that it provides for substantial involvement between the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity and the non-Federal entity in carrying out the activity contemplated by the Federal award.

This is not applicable as no Boards in Texas have these cooperative agreements in place. Given that VR falls under the purview of TWC and as based on TWC guidance, a Letter of Agreement with VR is not required.

C. Employer Engagement, Economic Development, and Unemployment Insurance Program Coordination (*WIOA §108(b)(4); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(3)*)

Employer engagement is the key to meeting our regional workforce needs. The PWDB's Business Advisory Committee assists and informs the PWDB regarding the design and delivery of services based on business and industry needs, as well as enhancing employer engagement, and supporting industry partnerships under WIOA. Comprised of PWDB and non-Board members, private sector, Board staff, and WSP staff, this industry partnership endeavors to:

- Facilitate and increase employer engagement;
- Pursue creative ideas and methods to improve program service delivery design;
- Identify skill needs;
- Develop and validate career pathways;
- Collaborate to create youth initiatives such as apprenticeships to connect youth with careers in demand;
- Align educational curriculum to meet industry needs;
- Identify and develop cost-effective training solutions for companies involving employers and the Business Advisory Committee as incumbent worker intermediaries to leverage Skills Development Grant funds;
- Provide work-based learning opportunities;
- Identify barriers to "entry level employment" and develop strategies to remove those barriers;
- Identify and address organizational and Human Resource challenges;
- Increase productivity;
- Promote communication networks between companies, between managers and workers, and

between companies and their communities and educational institutions;

- Identify and develop business intermediaries to facilitate identifying and meeting employers' immediate hiring and training needs; and
- Expand the utilization of high-quality work-based training by collaborating with PWDB staff in revising policies for customized training and OJT, and providing training to workforce and including business services staff on methods of seeking opportunities for these types of training situations which offer the highest potential for success. This includes developing training contracts which produce highly desirable outcomes in the shortest amount of time and with the least expenditures.

In an effort to develop and strengthen linkages between the workforce system and unemployment insurance programs, the PWDB is working with its Business Advisory Committee to assist the PWDB in designing and delivering services based on business and industry needs, including those of customers recently separated from employment.

D. Coordination of Wagner-Peyser Services (*WIOA §108(b)(12); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(11)*)

Many Texas Panhandle job seekers need job search assistance, career and labor market information, training in skills that make them more employable, support services such as child care, and referral to community resources. Job seekers include the unemployed, underemployed, and recently laid off workers, as well as special populations such as disabled individuals, and individuals with barriers to employment and literacy skills deficiencies, who may need additional, more specialized assistance in securing employment leading to self-sufficiency.

Workforce services for job seekers focus on activities that lead to finding and retaining self-sufficient employment. Successful delivery of workforce services and linking job seekers to employers remains the PWDB's most important function, including improving access to services for individuals receiving unemployment benefits, individuals with barriers to employment. Individuals whose skills are not likely to generate employment or self-sufficient wages may be provided training assistance or referrals. Supportive services such as child care and transportation assistance are offered to eligible job seekers and students to facilitate their efforts to enter and retain employment that meets their families' needs. Such services include:

- Information provided to job seekers about available workforce services and programs;
- Training job seekers to effectively build a record in WorkInTexas.com and complete job matches based on their profile;
- Staff-directed matching of applicants to job openings, using WorkinTexas.com;
- Virtual personal assistance for job seekers through phone, email or online access;
- Seminars and workshops to help job seekers find and retain employment, such as general job search, resume writing and interviewing;
- Work readiness preparation;
- Public access computers, software, fax machines, copiers, and phones for job search;
- Assessment resources for self-evaluation of labor market information and options;
- Maintaining current information on availability of services from and referral to local community resources whenever and wherever possible to maximize WIOA funds and prevent duplication of services;
- Individualized placement services for eligible job seekers, including job development, by building on existing employer relationships and using electronic tools such as job aggregators, which collect job openings from multiple sources and makes them available to be searched all

in one location;

- Providing information about Work Opportunity Tax Credits (WOTC) to individuals who are target group members, to promote themselves to prospective employers;
- Employment planning, by mapping successful career pathways which include the steps needed to prepare for and/or enter employment;
- Rapid Response services for workers after a layoff announcement and/or closure, including all the above services and assessment of transferable skills, reemployment planning and referral to training/training assistance as needed;
- Financial assistance needed by eligible job seekers to find and retain employment, including support for transportation, child care and other services; and
- Increased utilization of the City of Amarillo increased public transportation capacity and expansion of bus routes.

Career and labor market information provided to job seekers includes the following:

- Self-assessment tools for determining transferable skills and work preferences;
- Information about occupations in demand;
- Information about local employers and their skills needs;
- Referral to personalized career planning assistance—either internal for eligible job seekers or external;
- Seminars for dislocated workers (Rapid Response); and
- Work-based career exploration for eligible youth and adults.

E. Integrated, Technology-Enabled Intake and Case Management (*WIOA §108(b)(21); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(20)*)

Mastering current technology, and exploring emerging technology, the keys to creating and conducting an effective technology based integrated system for customer intake and case management, will:

- Improve availability of integrated workforce services throughout the region through innovative technology application, coordination with regional and local organizations, and other effective, efficient methods of service delivery;
- Enhance virtual services readily available through upgrading the WSP website, and marketing the availability of all workforce resources through social media; and
- Complete understanding and application of current capabilities enabling full utilization of existing tools, primarily WorkInTexas.com, and TWIST. Adopting and adapting additional, more efficient technologies, such as a real-time customer tracking system, supplies WSP staff with the means to quickly and accurately assess customer needs and provide seamless service delivery, while maintaining service priority requirements.

Critical to this process is engaging the services of individuals with the newest, most relevant computer programming and coding skills to create and implement new systems and applications, conduct staff training and ongoing technical assistance to maintain high levels of staff performance.

Part 5: Workforce Investment Activities

A. Economic Development and Entrepreneurial/Microenterprise Activities (*WIOA §108(b)(5); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(4)*)

In alignment with the State WIOA Plan, PWDB staff actively participate in a Regional Workforce Network (RWN), collaborating with five other Board areas in West Texas for the purpose of sharing information to further build capacity for seamless workforce operations and service delivery to workforce to customers. Topics discussed in face-to-face meetings range from best practices for developing and fostering successful working partnerships with local entities, to cost sharing, procurements, and budgets, as well as special projects to identify opportunities to leverage critical resources designed to promote economic development in the Panhandle region.

This RWN has developed a project focused on identifying best practices for assessing skills training of job seekers and employers to pinpoint relevant credentials necessary for successful job placement and retention, which includes the participation of several employers and multiple local colleges. Three Board areas in this RWN have collaborated to support the workforce needs resulting from the declining oil and gas industry in the Permian Basin/Cline Shale areas. In addition, the RWN is working to develop new partnerships with out-of-state partners in adjacent states such as Oklahoma and New Mexico, to share “labor sheds”, develop a strategic approach to producing regional labor market information, and host combined regional job fairs and other events which support workforce development, respond to economic development challenges, and ultimately better serve the workforce customers in these adjacent areas.

B. Rapid Response Activity Coordination (*WIOA §108(b)(8); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(7)*)

The WSP Business Services team provides Rapid Response services to employers considering, or planning, a layoff or closure. Services are designed to minimize the cost of the layoff to the employer, encourage customized training or other services to limit or prevent job losses, or quickly transition workers into other employment. Services are delivered onsite or in a location convenient for workers, and may include a broad range of services, including but not limited to: unemployment insurance information and referral, assistance with accessing customized training to help workers adjust to technical advances and prevent layoffs, seminars to assist workers to manage their dislocation and find other employment, and worker referral to training resources.

The designated Rapid Response Coordinator for the PWDB is also the lead Business Services staff member, ensuring that any employer that has announced a layoff or closure will receive business-focused support. The Coordinator ensures that the employer receives needed services, and facilitates communication between the employer, TWC, and WSP staff in serving affected workers. Once services are initiated for workers, WIOA program staff are available to assist in providing assessment, reemployment planning, and connection to the local ABE provider if language skills, adult basic education and GED preparation are needed, as well as providing career guidance and occupational skill development, and to access job development and supportive services, as determined appropriate for each worker.

Rapid Response activities in rural areas may require temporary, onsite or local offices where WSP staff can meet the needs of affected workers. Both employers and job seekers will have access to “back office” staff who can respond quickly to telephone and electronic communications, in order to provide services to customers who prefer not to go to a WSP office or who are not based in Amarillo. The PWDB continues to explore paperless recordkeeping options, to effectively utilize staff time while providing customer services outside the WSP offices.

C. Youth Activities and Services (*WIOA §108(b)(9); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(8)*)

The PWDB and WSP have developed a new staff position to enhance youth and young adult activities. This Career Outreach Specialist will focus on innovative technology in Virtual Career Exploration. The PWDB is purchasing Virtual Reality headsets, along with library of occupational videos, which transport the user into an interactive environment to participate in performing tasks in a specific job. The Career Outreach Specialist will host events, both in area schools and in WSP offices, guiding students in exploration of potential occupations and careers in their areas of interest.

The PWDB's Youth program is primarily focused on Out-of-School Youth who need postsecondary education and/or work experience to achieve self-sufficiency. Disconnected youth, parenting youth, first-generation college students, foster youth, and youth who have other barriers to employment, are the priority youth populations determined most likely to benefit from local workforce services.

Increasing the number and quality of work-based training opportunities for at-risk youth such as paid internships for college students and graduating high school seniors that are directly related to students' career interests. Many youth served in workforce programs must be engaged in an occupational component, so paid internships will offer competitive wages to encourage participation. These internships will include mentoring by supervisors trained by workforce staff to provide appropriate encouragement and career exploration.

WSP and PWDB staff fully support the local "No Limits, No Excuses" Panhandle Community Partnership, which assists students in the local school districts with accessing information on colleges and universities, and mapping out a plan for success after high school graduation. This project is building community partnerships that result in an increase in the number of low-income, young adults who complete employer-recognized and valued certificates and degrees, and has led to the implementation of two major youth-serving strategies in which workforce resources have been committed.

The PWDB continues its collaboration with the Texas Panhandle Rural Alliance (TPRA), a group of important partners from different sectors who strive to create a common agenda and apply the concept of "collective impact" as an effective approach for solving specific community social problems, focused on rural communities in the Panhandle. Through research and stakeholder engagement, this collaboration helps to ensure the Panhandle's vitality of a sustainable population of working age people, through five objectives:

- Support the Panhandle's homegrown talent to stay or return to the region;
- Establish workplace conditions for workers of all ages to thrive in jobs and continue to build their skills;
- Create supportive conditions for learners to pursue and complete the post-secondary education or training of their choice;
- Raise learners' aspirations early and strengthen education-career pathways; and
- Close the achievement gap for minorities and English language learners.

Because transitioning low-income students from high school to college has been found to be not as difficult as retaining them in postsecondary training until they successfully complete, WSP Youth Program staff provide case management and mentoring to help current students address barriers that arise during their studies, to facilitate college retention and completion.

WSP staff continue to coordinate and expand efforts between schools and businesses to offer job fairs and career fairs, preferably held in the morning and in the afternoon on the same day in rural locations, maximizing the available audience for youth and the employers, and resulting in highly increased attendance and participation by both parties.

One excellent example of collaboration is the one between WSP staff and the AmTech Career Academy, which has proven to be the kind of targeted, well-prepared approach to conducting meaningful youth job/career fairs, that was the missing link. The nearly unanimous positive comments from employer surveys received demonstrated the event is most valuable for two primary reasons: 1) the Principal of AmTech effectively uses social media to promote the event, and 2) the Principal's exceptional preparation of the students to meet employers, including presenting a highly professional appearance and attitude.

In addition to continuing to serve low-income youth, homeless youth, youth who have disabilities, foster youth, and youth who have barriers to employment, refocusing efforts to outreach and engage out of school youth in successful work-based training opportunities is the primary goal of the PWDB, related to youth services. This cannot be accomplished without employing innovative and imaginative current technologies to reach this population. One immediate example is using existing or creating inventive new smartphone applications to engage disconnected youth with the local job market and promote successful job seeking. Critical to this process is soliciting input and feedback from youth for these projects, as well as ideas for updating the WSP website in a way that appeals to them and creates interest in using the website as a source for job market information. Local Information Technology (IT) staff must have the skills to keep this approach fresh and relevant to youth.

The WIOA youth program, in the Panhandle, includes developing career pathways which lead to self-sufficiency, while meeting required performance measures. The fourteen WIOA youth program elements are key to the overall success of youth program participants. WSP staff determine which elements would be most effective for youth through initial assessment, develop individualized service plans, and identify career pathways. Staff identify and engage local resources which provide access to, or directly offer, services related to the youth elements.

Creating a meaningful attachment to the workforce is a critical factor for success and is accomplished through fostering relationships with community-based organizations which serve local youth, and creating new connections to local employers who have the desire and the labor needs that will afford youth with meaningful work-based training opportunities. Collaboration with the WSP Business Services team to identify these employers helps to facilitate this process.

The overall goal of the Youth programs in the Panhandle is to create the means for Youth program participants to first arrive at data-driven choices, and then develop appropriate and successful career pathways for youth that align with demand. Combining classroom occupational training with short-term work experience opportunities or internships, with an occupational education component, and utilizing all applicable Youth program elements, provides a vital connection to the job market and employers, leading to enhanced performance, successful outcomes, and preparing youth to succeed in the job market and in life. Youth providers in the region are the three community colleges (Amarillo College, Clarendon College, and Frank Phillips College) one university (West Texas A&M University), and local employers that provide work-based training such as career-related internships.

Ensuring the WIOA Youth elements available include linking youth with the appropriate sources, partner agencies, and community providers, by:

- Focusing on outreach and engagement of Out of School Youth and youth disconnected from the workforce, including a streamlined approach to eligibility, identifying appropriate services and career pathways, and developing effective service strategies encompassing educational and employment goals;

- Transitioning low-income youth from high school to college to prepare for many of the jobs being created in Texas and nationally for “middle-skill” occupations, including those that require postsecondary education leading to attainment of certificate and associate degrees;
- Accessing alternative secondary school services or dropout recovery services when determined appropriate and necessary to keep youth engaged and connected;
- Tutoring, remedial skills training, and instruction for dropout prevention and leading to attaining a secondary school diploma or recognized equivalent;
- Retaining low-income youth in postsecondary training until completion, and providing short term work experience and paid internship opportunities that enhance completion and transition;
- Providing paid and unpaid short-term work experience opportunities with an occupational education component resulting in a vital connection to the job market and employers, leading to enhanced performance and successful outcomes;
- Ensuring appropriate supportive services which assist youth in completing program activities, including work based or occupational training, and obtaining and retaining employment are provided under WIOA;
- Providing adult mentoring during and after program participation for a period of at least 12 months to prevent youth from falling through the gaps or becoming disconnected;
- Arranging leadership development opportunities such as community service and other similar activities which encourage youth to give back to their community, and builds confidence, maturity, and self-esteem;
- Affording appropriate guidance and referrals for counseling including drug or alcohol abuse to address and resolve individual needs of youth program participants;
- Providing ready access to current relevant labor market information including PWDB specific demand occupations and industries, and career counseling and exploration;
- Assisting youth with improving and increasing financial literacy by providing relevant and relatable online instruction geared towards youth participants; and
- Exploring and tapping into local entrepreneurship ventures including a university-sponsored small business incubator program.

D. Coordination with Secondary and Postsecondary Education Programs (*WIOA §108(b)(10); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(9)*)

Strategies include the following:

- Making available financial aid information and referrals to training providers;
- Providing career and training plan assistance for eligible individuals, including individuals with barriers to employment, developing successful career pathways and program co-enrollment wherever appropriate and beneficial;
- Coordinating Adult Literacy, ESL, basic education, and GED preparation—either by referral or intensive short-term classes, for eligible individuals;
- Developing a menu of activities leading to achievement of post-secondary, recognized

credentials;

- Supporting local ISDs and community colleges to pursue skills development grant opportunities including Apprenticeship programs and to apply for and obtain grants such as the Texas Workforce Commission's JET (Jobs and Education for Texas) and the High Demand Job Training (HDJT) grants;
- Collaborating on Innovation partnership grants to upgrade skills and earning potential for incumbent workers, and Industry-Recognized Skills Certification Initiative Grants which provide short term courses through local colleges leading to certification completion and enhanced job placement opportunities; and
- Facilitating Postsecondary occupational skills training at community colleges, career colleges or universities.

E. Child Care and Early Learning (*40 TAC §809.12 Board Plan for Child Care Services*)

Many Texas Panhandle job seekers need support services such as child care, offered to eligible job seekers and students to facilitate their efforts to enter and retain employment that meets their families' needs. Child care can be cost-prohibitive for low-income families. Many WSP customers are right on that line of having their entire paycheck only being enough to cover the child care expense. In cases like this, the customer many times will:

- Give up the job to stay home with the child, and become dependent on public assistance;
- Choose to leave the child in an unsafe situation such as in the care of another, only slightly older child or individuals who lack adequate training in early childhood development, and health and safety practices; or
- Leave a child alone.

High-quality child care has many positive impacts on children, such as increased safety and school readiness, as well as impacts on the parents in obtaining and keeping a job, or completing job training. Child care assistance promotes long-term self-sufficiency by enabling parents to work, attend school or attend job skills training, and increase educational levels. To address this issue and implement the following strategies, the PWDB:

- Seeks out additional opportunities to further expand classroom capacity;
- Continues to phase in increases to the maximum reimbursement rates paid with workforce resources to providers caring for eligible children;
- Sustains efforts to support training and professional development for child care administrators and workers;
- Provides follow up training and monitor delivery of recently purchased child care curricula intended to provide an organized and managed approach to promoting critical areas of development;
- Ensures monitors and assessors continue regular observation and review of providers to identify areas which need improvement, and assist providers to initiate or improve TRS (Texas Rising Star) rating levels thus continually improving quality of care and potentially increase reimbursement rates; and
- Looks for and invest in projects which improve child care quality.

The Panhandle's Child Care program gets children school ready. The PWDB utilizes funding it receives from TWC in assisting customers in enrolling children in a quality licensed child care facility

that:

- Ensures children are safe and in a learning environment while parents work or are in training;
- Utilizes early childhood development, which includes high quality curriculum;
- Provides a structured learning environment, with specially trained teachers and safe, healthy food;
- Supports the child's physical, social, emotional and intellectual development, and
- Prepares children for their education/school, work/career and ultimately, self-sufficiency in their adult lives.

WSP's new staff position of Child Care Business Coach under a new Child Care Industry Support Division will assist Child Care Provider owners and managers, as needed, to increase quality and capacity of existing businesses, in creating new business and in connecting to resources available to help increase the likelihood of success. Primary duties will include:

- Connecting child care providers with TWC's child care provider expansion entity/entities;
- Connecting child care providers with TWC's funded business coaching and business training;
- Connecting child care providers with Texas Health and Human Service Commission's Child Care Regulation department to learn about Texas' regulatory requirements for child care operations;
- Connecting child care providers with the Texas Department of Agriculture to learn about the Child and Adult Care Food Program;
- Assisting child care providers with understanding how WSP can help them hire support and other workforce assistance services;
- Assisting child care providers with understanding how to participate in the Child Care Services program and the Texas Rising Star quality rating system; and
- Assisting child care providers with understanding how to use the Texas Child Care Availability Portal and the Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System.

The Texas Early Learning Council acts as the State's advisory council on early childhood education and care for children from birth to school entry as required by the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007. TWC, as part of an Interagency Implementation Support Team, provided recommendations in the development of the Texas Early Learning Strategic Plan 2020-2025. The PWDB and WSP will continue to align with the goals, strategies and action plans discussed in the Early Learning Strategic Plan and in TWC's Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan 2023-2025, as follows:

- Supporting the Texas Early Childhood Professional System (TECPDS); and
- Identifying opportunities to stabilize the child care workforce and promote the hiring and retention of high-quality early educators, such as:
 - ✓ Improving the infant and toddler child care workforce through continued support of the Texas Infant and Toddler Specialist Network (ITSN);
 - ✓ Supporting early childhood education (ECE) workforce initiatives, including those providing wage supports;
 - ✓ Incorporating strategies to support early childhood educators by promoting the expansion of Career Technology Education (CTE) programs of study in the ECE field, including the attainment of Child Development Associate (CDA) certification, and dual credit options; and
 - ✓ Supporting the development of additional early childhood Registered Apprenticeship Programs.

In alignment with the intent of House Bill 619 (HB619) to improve the quality of the infant, toddler,

preschool, and school-age child care workforce in Texas, a portion of TWC’s Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) funding for the PWDB is set aside annually for the purpose of Child Care Quality Improvement (CCQI) activities to be utilized in assisting Child Care providers in becoming Texas Rising Star (TRS)-certified or assisting TRS-certified providers in achieving higher levels of TRS certification. The PWDB and WSP continue to follow a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan by supporting:

- Secondary educational attainment for caregivers and administrators;
- Professional development to assist with teacher/child interactions, curriculum, classroom management and child development;
- Professional development for child care program managers, directors and assistant directors;
- Programs with TRS incentives;
- Classroom content delivery with early learning digital platform;
- Curriculum content delivery with evaluation and assessment tools; and
- Programs with TRS mentor assistance and support.

While TWC annually allocates what is referred to as “Formula” funds to the PWDB for the purpose of subsidizing the cost of child care, there is also an opportunity of leveraging even more funds into the Panhandle area through a process of “matching funds” with Federal dollars. In collaborations with Amarillo College, Texas Tech University and West Texas A&M University, each of which certify allowable child care related expenditures at their institutions, and through an agreement for a donation of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding provided to the PWDB by the City of Amarillo, TWC is able to draw down, for every dollar, an addition two dollars, that is passed directly through to the PWDB for the Subsidized Child Care Program. Each year, these partners give a big boost to the children and parents of the Panhandle.

F. Transportation and Other Support Services (*WIOA §108(b)(11); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(10)*)

Supportive services for eligible job seekers utilizing appropriate program funds for eligible individuals required to obtain or retain employment, or to enter and complete subsidized training, include the following:

- Residential assistance with rent, mortgage, and utilities,
- Transportation assistance in the form of fuel cards, mileage reimbursement, or auto repair, for personal vehicles, and bus tickets for accessing public transportation;
- Assistance with work or training related items or services; and
- Subsidized child care.

G. Coordination of Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) (*WIOA §108(b)(13); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(12)*)

In 2017, the PWDB was enlisted to provide review of the Proposal for the Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Service Provider Grant, submitted to TWC by Amarillo College, as required under TWC’s Workforce Development (WD) Letter 20-17. In its August 2017 Board Meeting, the PWDB authorized creation of an AEL Grant Application Review Committee for the purpose of providing to TWC, recommendations related to the alignment of AEL Local Provider Grant proposals with the PWDA Integrated Plan under WIOA regulation §463.20. Committee members reviewed the Proposal from Amarillo College and provided the Review and Comments to TWC, as required. The comments confirmed that the application was consistent with WIOA and the Board Plan. Amarillo College was

awarded the Contract as the Panhandle's AEL Service Provider in 2018, and has the potential of being awarded renewals of the Contract through 2023.

The PWDB continues to develop, facilitate, and expand innovative partnerships between the Board and employers, community colleges, AEL providers, WSP and other stakeholders, to leverage resources for the provision and integration of an array of workforce and AEL services. The PWDB has fostered an excellent ongoing relationship with Amarillo College in collaborating on skills development initiatives, incumbent worker training, and achievement of industry recognized credentials, as well as traditional classroom based occupational training programs. Building on this relationship, AEL staff from the college regularly meet with PWDB and WSP staff to exchange information, improve processes and methods to assist AEL students with arriving at appropriate and effective career pathways and subsequent enrollment including co-enrollment whenever determined beneficial, or necessary, to completion. One key to the success of this collaboration is the development of a new digital customer referral tool by Amarillo College, to enhance the collaboration with the PWDB and WSP, in performing intake, determining program eligibility, assisting with enrollment in classes, coordinating supportive services as needed, and facilitating the process of connecting customers in order to provide English language, math, reading, and writing instruction to help students acquire the skills needed to succeed in the workforce, earn a high school equivalency, or enter college or career training. This helps to streamline and improve the referral process and track customer participation and success. Other important strategies include:

- Improving data collection methods which streamline customer intake and assessment processes, and which efficiently and accurately pinpoint intrinsic needs of eligible adult customers;
- Identifying and developing career pathways and integrated employment plans that create data driven career choices that are aligned with demand, and deliver appropriate and necessary services under WIOA;
- Enhancing AEL customers' educational and career advancement through the organization of appropriate AEL activities, work readiness and job preparation activities, occupational training, and other services specifically designed to meet the identified needs of adult individuals;
- Strengthening coordination and collaboration on partnerships which increase access to essential services for adults who are basic skills deficient, low income, have other barriers to employment, and are otherwise unprepared and ill equipped to enter employment or successfully retain employment;
- Increasing the number of low-income customers and individuals with barriers to employment who engage in short-term training leading to employment, and increase the number and quality of work-based training opportunities including work experience and customized OJT;
- Closing the information gap and promote where the jobs are by focusing primarily on industries that are net exporters of goods and services, and include occupations that provide a broad range of high-demand career opportunities for eligible adults;
- Increasing potential for customer success by ensuring AEL activities are integrated with and relevant to workforce training, are aligned with common learning objectives and activities identified, and will enhance successful personal outcomes and program completion rates for work based and occupational training;
- Concentrating focus on completion of a recognized postsecondary credential in an In-Demand or Target Occupation, to assist an individual in entering or advancing within a specific In-Demand or Target Occupation, or In-Demand Industry, as determined by the Board, and aligned with local and regional economic and labor market analysis;
- Utilizing co-enrollment and simultaneous participation in basic skills education and occupational

training to accelerate customer progress on a pathway to successfully entering a high demand occupation and ultimately achieving self- sufficiency;

- Developing innovative methods for using current technology to increase customer access to AEL services, including virtual learning and online classes;
- Designing and delivering educational services that meet the particular needs of individual adults, such as accommodating schedules with multiple entry and exit points, flexible non-semester based scheduling, and alternative class times and locations; and
- Continuing to fine-tune strategies for creating employment opportunities for filling skills gaps in emerging industrial and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) occupations by identifying demographic, industrial, and employment trends and potential STEM skill shortages, using TWC Labor Market Career Information and solicited employer input, such as connecting area employers with TWC's Registered Apprenticeship programs to establish industrial machinery manufacturing and repair training opportunities which require STEM skills. Offering grant writing and application assistance to area employers and colleges for the Skills Development and Self- Sufficiency Fund, and other grant opportunities, will expand capacity as well.

The TWC AEL Strategic Plan Fiscal 2021 to 2026 calls for, as one of its goals, to enhance customer experience with increased coordination. In alignment, the PWDB and WSP will continue to support the objectives and action items set forth in the AEL Plan as follows:

- Align TWC AEL workforce development service policies to enhance the workforce customer experience to promote co-enrollment and referral efforts with the PWDB;
- Support development of career pathway ladders, and distribution of career pathway resources, with AEL, VR and the PWDB; and
- Support 60x30TX goals and share information with the Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative.

As well, the PWDB and WSP will continue to support the TWC Goals as outlined in the Texas Workforce Consolidated Strategic Plan, that align with the AEL Strategic Plan, by:

- Supporting a workforce system that allows employers and workers to achieve and sustain economic prosperity;
- Preparing individuals for employment by supporting education and training that equip them with in-demand skills as identified by employers; and
- Fostering systems that enhance early education, support strong families, advance the growth of the at-risk workforce to accelerate their employment opportunities, and help support personal and family stability.

The PWDB and WSP will also continue to support the Texas Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative strategies outlined in the AEL Strategic Plan by:

- Identifying students' most efficient paths to attaining high-value credentials;
- Strengthening and streamlining collaboration among key education and workforce system stakeholders who are developing pathways at the regional level;
- Expanding opportunities for work-based learning experiences;
- Ensuring students and families have the support, tools, and resources needed to achieve education and career success;
- Expanding access to effective college and career advising;
- Reducing financial barriers in education; and
- Aligning statewide education and workforce systems with statewide priorities and goals.

Part 6: Adult, Dislocated Workers, and Youth Services

A. Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training (*WIOA §108(b)(7); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(6)*)

Per WIOA, individualized training, career, and education services will be given on a priority basis, regardless of funding levels, to public assistance recipients, other low-income adults, and individuals who are basic skills deficient. Veterans and eligible spouses will continue to receive first priority of service for all Department of Labor (DOL) funded job training programs, which include WIOA programs. To ensure priority service is given, WSP staff will be thoroughly trained and will maintain proficiency in the following areas:

- Initial identification of customer status and information gathering;
- Assessment of customer information including employment and training needs;
- Determination of appropriate workforce services, including co-enrollment;
- Suitable referral and timely follow up; and
- Documentation of entire process in the Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST), and WorkInTexas.com, as appropriate.

The PWDB continues to focus on training as a successful method to help individuals become self-sufficient and ensure that employers have the qualified pool of skilled local workers needed to succeed in a highly competitive business climate. To sustain and improve training and education services, the PWDB:

- Strives to increase the number and quality of work-based training opportunities for job seekers and students, including youth internships, work experience, and customized OJT training;
- Provides increased work-readiness training options to job seekers;
- Continues to develop and facilitate innovative partnerships with community colleges, businesses, and other stakeholders, assisting them with planning and preparation for training grants that will increase workers' skills and build educational capacity in the region, including utilization of the Skills Development Fund to develop customized job training, and other such opportunities;
- Maintains collaborations with regional employers and colleges to increase training and education opportunities and utilize innovative partnership grants to upgrade skills and earning potential for incumbent workers, and to meet the changing needs of local business and industry (such as an Incumbent Worker Training Project, in the Fall of 2022 with the City of Canyon to train Solid Waste Truck Operators); and
- Works to close the information gap and promote where the jobs are by focusing primarily on industries that are net exporters of goods and services, and include occupations that provide a broad range of high-demand career opportunities for eligible adults and dislocated workers.

B. Priority to Recipients of Public Assistance and Low-Income Individuals (*20 CFR §679.560(b)(21)*)

Local workforce development area policies and procedures ensure that priority in coordinating programs and delivering services for targeted populations, including veterans, individuals with disabilities, at-risk youth, Foster Youth, individuals with barriers to employment, and workers at all skill and occupational levels is paramount, so that these groups receive the resources to be successfully employed, become self-sufficient, and prepared for long-term career growth, and comprise a qualified labor pool available for local employers. Information and training received

from Vocational Rehabilitation Services staff will enhance and improve the strategies developed and applied for individuals with disabilities.

PANHANDLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD POLICY

Chapter 2-WIOA

Section 2.1 All WIOA Program Participants

Subsection 2.1.2

WIOA Priority of Service-Update

Effective 12-09-2020

PURPOSE:

To update policy regarding the federal requirement that WIOA programs are administered in a manner that is not discriminatory based on a disability. Updated information in this policy revision is highlighted in bold typeface.

BACKGROUND:

While WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) adult eligibility requirements remain mostly consistent with WIA (Workforce Investment Act), there are some significant changes to the service priority provisions. Consistent with WIA, priority for adult services must be given to recipients of public assistance and other low-income individuals, with added priority for individuals who are basic skills deficient. Under WIA, this priority applies only when adult funds are restricted. Under WIOA, however, priority access to services by members of this group applies automatically. Boards are no longer allowed to make a declaration of restricted or unrestricted funds.

29 CFR 38.12(h) requires that licensing and certification programs are administered in a manner that is not discriminatory based on a disability.

29CFR 38.12(i) states recipients must not impose or apply eligibility criteria that screen out or tend to screen out individuals with disabilities or any class of individuals with disabilities from fully and equally enjoying any aid, benefit, service, training, program, or activity, unless such criteria can be shown to be necessary for the provision of any aid, benefit, service, training, program, or activity being offered.

29 CFR 38.12(k) prohibits recipients from placing a surcharge on a particular individual with a disability, or any group of individuals with disabilities, to cover the costs of measures, such as the provision of auxiliary aids or program accessibility, that are required to provide that individual or group with the nondiscriminatory treatment required by WIOA Title I or this part.

29 CFR 38.12(o)(1) states that nothing in this part requires an individual with a disability to accept any accommodation, aid, benefit, service, training, or opportunity provided under WIOA Title I or this part that such individual chooses not to accept.

29 CRF 38.14(a): With regard to any aid, benefit, service, training, and employment, recipients must provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities who are applicants, registrants, eligible applicants/registrants, participants, employees, or applicants for employment, unless providing the accommodation would cause undue hardship.

PANHANDLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD POLICY:

Consistent with WIOA, individualized career services and training services will be given on a priority basis, regardless of funding levels. In addition, WSP will administer programs and services in a manner that is not discriminatory based on a disability, per the cited references in 29 CFR 38.12. Veterans and eligible spouses will continue to receive priority of service for all federal and state funded job training programs, which include WIOA programs. The existing guidance on priority of service for

veterans remains in effect. (See WD Letter 25-15, issued on October 26, 2015, Applying Priority of Service and Identifying and Documenting Eligible Veterans and Transitioning Service Members.) Under state law, foster youth and former foster youth, as defined below, will also be given priority in the receipt of federal and State funded services. (See WD Letter 43-11 as amended, Priority of Service for Eligible Foster Youth, for additional details.)

In addition to the eligibility criteria that all participants are required to meet, some programs also have priorities that establish a rank order to be observed in enrolling or serving participants. These priorities can be of two types: a) statutory; or, b) discretionary. The following provides guidance on how priority of service interacts with these two types of priorities.

Programs with Statutory Priorities

Some programs are required by law to provide a priority or preference for a particular group of individuals or require the program to spend a certain portion of program funds on a particular group of persons. An example of this type of priority is the priority for low-income individuals and for recipients of public assistance for the WIOA adult formula programs. For programs with this type of mandatory priority, program operators must determine the status of each individual person in a priority group and apply priority of service. Priority for WIOA individualized career services and training services must be provided 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. Foster youth and former foster youth, as defined in WD Letter 43-11, issued on November 3, 2011, and entitled, "Priority of Service for Eligible Foster Youth", who are also recipients of public assistance, low income, or basic skills deficient.
3. All other individuals who are recipients of public assistance, low-income, or basic skills deficient.
4. All other eligible veterans and eligible spouses.
5. All other foster youth and former foster youth.
6. All other individuals, including any local priority groups established by the Panhandle Workforce Development Area (WDA) Board.

The local priority group established by the Panhandle Workforce Development Area (WDA) Board is all adults who at the time of WIOA enrollment have not completed a high school diploma, GED, or other high school equivalency, and have not completed a GED, nor are currently attending GED or equivalency classes.

Priority of service means that a person is given priority in order of the priority groups over non-covered persons for the receipt of employment, training, and placement services provided under a qualified WIOA program. Priority means that a person in a priority group is entitled to precedence over non-covered persons for services. This means that a person in a priority group either receives access to a service earlier in time than a non-covered person or, if the resource is limited, the person in a priority group receives access to the service instead of or before the non-covered person.

For services such as classroom training, priority of service applies to the selection procedure, as follows:

- First, if there is a waiting list for the formation of a training class, priority of service is intended to require a person in a priority group to go to the top of that list.
- Second, priority of service applies up to the point at which an individual is both approved for funding and accepted or enrolled in a training class.

Therefore, once a non-covered person has been both approved for funding and accepted/enrolled in a training class, priority of service is not intended to allow a person in a priority group who is identified subsequently to "bump" the non-covered person from that training class.

The application of priority of service varies by program depending on the eligibility requirements of the particular program. Qualified job training programs fall into two basic categories: universal access programs and programs that require prospective participants to meet specified eligibility criteria.

Universal Access Programs

For workforce programs that operate or deliver services to the public as a whole without targeting specific groups, a person in a priority group must receive priority of service over all other program participants. For example, the primary universal access services are the "core" services delivered through the One-Stop system under the Wagner-Peyser and WIOA programs. A person in a priority group will receive the first level of priority in universal access programs. For example, an eligible priority person requests universal services, however, all seats in the resource area are being used by non-eligible persons and there are several non-eligible persons in line. In this case, the eligible priority person would receive priority by being moved to the front of the line, but would not displace one of the non-eligible persons already using a computer.

Programs with Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility criteria identify basic conditions that each and every participant in a specific program is required to meet. A person in a priority group must first meet any and all of the statutory eligibility criteria in order to be considered eligible for enrollment in the program, receipt of priority for enrollment in the program, and priority for receipt of services. For example, for services such as classroom training, priority of service applies to the selection procedure as follows: First, if there is a waiting list for the formation of a training class, the eligible veteran will receive priority by being moved to the top of that list. Second, priority of service applies when an individual is both approved for funding and accepted or enrolled in a training class. Therefore, once a non-eligible person has been both approved for funding and accepted or enrolled in a training class, an eligible veteran who is identified subsequently will not take the place of the non-eligible person from that training class.

Part 7: Fiscal Agent, Grants, and Contracts

A. Fiscal Agent (*WIOA §108(b)(15); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(14)*)

The Panhandle Regional Planning Commission (PRPC) is the grant recipient and administrative entity for the PWDB and its partner group of chief elected officials, the Panhandle Workforce Development Consortium's Governing Body. These entities are responsible for the disbursement of grant funds described in WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III), as determined by the CEOs or the governor under WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i).

B. Sub-Grants and Contracts (*WIOA §108(b)(16); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(15)*)

PRPC's Procurement Manual is aligned with TWC's Financial Manual for Grants & Contracts (FMGC), to ensure that competitive processes are used to award grants and contracts. The Contractor that staffs the WSP offices and delivers associated workforce and child care services is procured through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process. RFPs are also utilized to solicit consulting and professional services. Vendors which offer other services and items determine to be required to

complete training or obtain/retain employment are procured through competitive methods that are tailored to the service(s) or item(s) to be purchased. PRPC makes payments directly to training providers and other vendors for goods and services authorized by the WSP Contractor on behalf of workforce customers. These payments include training costs, supportive services, and child care fees.

Part 8: Performance

A. Board Performance Targets (*WIOA §108(b)(17); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(16)*)

The PWDB's methods for evaluating program performance involve review of local, state and federal expectations on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis. While TWC continues to define and determine the applicable state performance measures under WIOA, the following methods for measuring and tracking Panhandle performance are ongoing. Monthly performance reviews include the evaluation of information shown below, which is provided to the Board after staff analysis of successes and shortcomings:

- Number of employers, job seekers, and program customers served;
- Number of workforce program customers served by activity;
- State-reported actual performance compared to expectations;
- Funds expended compared to budgeted resources;
- Locally established measures' actual performance compared to expectations;
- Performance goals with which private sector contractor profit is associated; and
- Board staff monitoring results.

The following performance measures were set in accordance with WIOA § 116(c):

- Adult Employed Quarter 2 Post Exit
- Adult Median Earnings Quarter 2 Post Exit
- Adult Employed Quarter 4 Post Exit
- Adult Credential Rate
- Adult Measurable Skills Gains
- Dislocated Worker Employed Quarter 2 Post Exit
- Dislocated Worker Median Earnings Quarter 2 Post Exit
- Dislocated Worker Employed Quarter 4 Post Exit
- Dislocated Worker Credential Rate
- Dislocated Worker Measurable Skills Gains
- Youth Employed/Enrolled Quarter 2 Post Exit
- Youth Employed/Enrolled Quarter 4 Post Exit
- Youth Median Earning Quarter 2 Post Exit
- Youth Credential Rate
- Youth Measurable Skills Gains
- All Career & Training (C&T) Participants Employed/Enrolled Quarter 2 Post Exit
- All Career & Training (C&T) Participants Employed/Enrolled Quarter 4 Post Exit
- All Career & Training (C&T) Participants Credential Rate

Quarterly evaluations of trends in the areas listed above, as well as special grants and strategic objectives, receive additional analysis by staff. Results of these reviews are reported to the PWDB upon completion or incorporated into future plan or policy changes submitted to the group for approval. Annual evaluation of contract results and progress toward achieving strategic objectives are

also reported to the Board upon completion or incorporated into policies submitted to the group for approval.

Part 9: Training and Services

A. Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) (*WIOA §108(b)(19); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(18)*)

Adults, dislocated workers, and Out of School youth ages 18-24 who have been determined eligible for WIOA and need occupational training may access training with an ITA, which enables them to choose among available training providers. Training and ITAs are handled in a tiered approach following specific steps. Generally, individuals are expected to contribute toward their own support and/or educational costs, as much as possible. Job seekers that have tested the labor market for employment without success are identified by employment services staff in the WSP office, and may be referred to program case management staff.

Initial assessment and objective assessment are conducted, and the information documented and entered into the TWIST system. WSP staff and customers collaborate on development of an individualized service plan. Customers deemed in need of basic skills are referred to literacy programs, adult basic education, GED, and adult educational cooperatives. Referrals for occupational skill classroom training may be made directly to the community colleges and university.

Customers eligible for workforce services that cover all or part of training costs are referred only after comprehensive assessment and individual service plans document the need for training/employment. WSP staff maintains a cooperative relationship with the Panhandle community colleges' business and industry programs to ensure that training provided meets local employers' needs.

An ITA can only be used for training that leads to employment and is limited to training in a Target Occupation as defined by the PWDB. Board staff compiles a list of training providers certified by TWC through the ETPS. The ETPS website provides information about these providers and is made available to each customer in WSP offices to provide maximum opportunity for customer choice. An ITA covers tuition, fees, books and supplies. An ITA does not include the cost of supportive services (based on assessment). WSP Program Case Managers decide the appropriate total value of each ITA, based on the customer's assessment and employment plan, and the certified training provider's published costs. The key issues with an ITA are:

- Customer choice, including increased information about eligible training programs made available through the ETPS;
- Eligibility and suitability for an ITA determined accurately and effectively;
- Training in occupations, targeted by the PWDB, and most likely to offer local employment, career growth, and self-sufficiency;
- Consistently high performance and completion rate for eligible training providers;
- Cancellation/forfeiture of an ITA and recovery of unused funds; and
- Exceptions that allow non-ITA training.

B. ITA Limitations (*20 CFR §663.420*)

Limits on Duration and Amounts of ITA's and coordination with other resources to maximize customer choice include:

- Established monetary limits for the total WIOA funded cost per participant for training and support services combined;

- No limit on the amount for an ITA based on individual training provider cost;
- Duration limited to the shortest length of time necessary to complete the level of occupational education and training required to begin entry level employment in the chosen field; and
- Exceptions regarding how ITA's are handled on an individual basis, per local policy.

Part 10: Apprenticeship

A. Registered Apprenticeship Programs

The PWDB is committed to reenergizing and refocusing efforts to create and utilize Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs to train individuals, for skilled trades in high demand and high wage occupations, while they earn wages. RA combines on-the-job- training under the supervision of experienced journey workers with related classroom instruction. The best opportunities for apprenticeship training in the Panhandle are in the fields of wind energy, industrial manufacturing, and industrial machinery repair.

WSP staff and the Business Services team collaborate to develop and implement a detailed plan of action which includes determining and applying effective methods to identify potential apprenticeship candidates, especially veterans, actively seek out potential employers who would benefit from this partnership, and create successful matches.

Staff strongly encourages and assists employers with new or existing local apprenticeship training programs to register in the ETPS so that WIOA funds may be leveraged to assist with training costs.

B. Apprenticeship Texas

The PWDBs' strategy and commitment to Apprenticeship Texas is based on detailed information and guidance personally provided by TWC Apprenticeship staff. WSP staff and the Business Services team collaborate to develop a strategic approach which involves:

- Working to identify and actively outreach potential employers in both traditional and non-traditional industries to participate in the Apprenticeship Texas initiative;
- Connecting employers with TWC Apprenticeship staff when appropriate and beneficial;
- Providing complete Apprenticeship Program information including tapping into available funds; and
- Remaining in communication with and guiding employers through the entire apprenticeship process through successful completion.

Part 11: Public Comment

On Wednesday, November 8, 2022, public meeting notices regarding requests for input and comments on the two-year review and modification of the Panhandle Workforce Development Board Plan for Program Years 2021-2024, were published in the Texas Register, and on the <https://wspanhandle.com/> and <https://theprpc.org> websites. Partners from regional training providers, businesses and individuals were also invited by direct email to discuss topics, including the PWDB's Target Occupations, In-Demand Occupations, and In-Demand Industries lists. Public comments received in the meeting were incorporated into the updates to the lists, which were approved by the PWDB and Consortium's Governing Body (CEOs) in the December 2022 meetings, and to the proposed draft Plan Modification being presented to the bodies in the February 2023 meetings.



NOTICE OF MEETING

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) §108 (20 Code of Federal Regulations §679.500–580), each Local Workforce Development Board is required to develop and submit to the State a comprehensive four-year Board plan that identifies and describes policies and procedures as well as local activities, and then, after two years, to review the local Board Plan and develop and submit modifications to reflect labor market changes, economic conditions, and other factors affecting plan implementation. One of the areas to be reviewed includes the Board’s Target Occupations, In-Demand Occupations, and In-Demand Industries lists.

A public meeting will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, November 8, 2022, for comments on the two-year review and modification of the Panhandle Workforce Development Board Plan for Program Years 2021-2024. This meeting will be held in virtual format with videoconference available pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.127.

Members of the public interested in attending this meeting may do so by logging onto:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84152487455?pwd=Y2tRQlQyYWRUL256bGRlZFBtaG15Zz09>

(Meeting ID: 841 5248 7455 - Password: 984317) or may participate by phone (346) 248-7799 (Meeting ID: 841 5248 7455 - Password: 984317)

A copy of the Panhandle Workforce Development Board Plan for Program Years 2021-2024 can be found on the PRPC’s website at: <https://www.theprpc.org/Programs/WorkforceDevelopment/default.html>

AGENDA

1. **CALL TO ORDER**
2. **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**
3. **ADJOURN**

PUBLIC NOTICE

This notice complies with Texas Government Code Chapter 551, Open Meetings Act, Section 551.041 (Notice of Meeting Requirements); Section 551.043 (Time and Accessibility of Notice Requirements); and Section 551.053 (Notice Requirements of a Political Subdivision Extending into Four or More Counties). The notice has been filed at least 72 hours before the scheduled time of the meeting with the Secretary of State's Office, the Potter County Clerk's Office and has been posted in the Administrative Office of the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission.

Posted this 2nd day of November, 2022, at 415 Southwest Eighth Avenue, Amarillo, Texas, at 9:00 a.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Leslie Hardin'.

Leslie Hardin

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER / PROGRAM
Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities
Relay Texas: 711

Public meeting and legal notices regarding the proposed draft of the PWDB Plan 2023 Modification were also published in the Texas Register, Amarillo Globe-News, on the wspanhandle.com website and on the PRPC website, beginning on January 30, 2023 requesting public comment(s). No public comments have been received to date.

LEGAL NOTICE

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) §108 (20 Code of Federal Regulations §679.500–580), two years after its initial submission, each Local Workforce Development Board is required to modify its comprehensive four-year Board plan that identifies and describes policies and procedures as well as local activities, and submit it to the State. The Panhandle Regional Planning Commission (PRPC), and the Panhandle Workforce Development Board (PWDB) will submit, to the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), the two-year modification of the Panhandle Workforce Development Board Plan for Program Years 2021-2024, on March 1, 2023.

Interested parties may examine the proposed modification of the Board Plan on the PRPC website at: <http://theprpc.org/programs/workforcedevelopment/default.html>. Copies may also be requested by email using the contact information listed below.

PRPC will accept written public comments on the Board Plan submitted by February 28, 2023. Written comments may be sent to Leslie Hardin, Workforce Development Program Manager, by email: lhardin@theprpc.org, or by mail: Panhandle Regional Planning Commission, PO Box 9257, Amarillo, TX 79105-9257.

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program

Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities

Relay Texas: 711

WIOA Board Two-Year Plan Modification Form

Workforce Development (WD) Letter 18-22, Attachment 1

Overview

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Final Rule at 20 CFR §679.580 requires that at the end of the first two years of the four-year local plan, Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) and their appropriate chief elected officials (CEOs) review their local plans and prepare and submit modifications to reflect labor market changes, economic conditions, and other factors affecting plan implementation. These factors may include, but are not limited to, changes to the financing available to support WIOA Title I services and partner-provided WIOA services or a need to revise strategies in order to meet local performance goals.

Instructions

Boards must respond to each of the following prompts and make corresponding changes to their plans. When modifying their plans, Boards must use Track Changes for easy identification by the Texas Workforce Commission during review. If no modifications are required, Boards must provide a brief yet detailed explanation as to how the Board and its CEO(s) made that determination. For each response, include **all** corresponding page numbers from the plan.

1a. Describe any changes in labor market and economic conditions in the Board's local workforce development area, including changes to the employment needs of employers and changes to existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

1) Several employers in the Panhandle Workforce Development Area (PWDA) that continue their operations and some that have released plans for potential manufacturing industry projects prompted the addition of the occupation of Production Workers, All Others (SOC 51-9199) to the Target Occupations List. These projects include:

*Cacique Foods, a leading Hispanic foods company and the #1 brand of authentic Mexican-style cheeses, cremas and chorizos in the United States, is expecting to open their new 200,000 sq. ft. dairy facility in April, 2023. The new processing facility is being developed on 55 acres of land in the Amarillo Economic Development Corporation's (EDC) South Georgia Business Park. The company has partnered with AmTech Career Academy and Amarillo College.

*Ecolomondo Corporation, a cleantech company commercializing its proprietary recycling technology, Thermal Decomposition Process ("TDP") and specializing in the building and operation of turnkey TDP facilities, announced plans in January, 2022, to build and operate a six-reactor turnkey TDP facility in Shamrock. This will be the Company's first US-based waste-to-resources TDP plant capable of processing and recycling end-of-life tires ("ELT") into saleable recycled commercial resources for re-use. At peak production, Ecolomondo expects to create approximately 70 direct and 140 indirect jobs.

*Chemical Vapor Metal Refining (CVMR) will build a \$1.5 billion, 540-acre rare-earth refinery in Amarillo after the city and Potter County agreed to economic incentives for the project, according to a June 21 press release.

*Caviness Beef Packers operates two Panhandle facilities:

a) Beef harvest, fabrication, rendering, and hides processing in Hereford. In 2020, Caviness completed approximately 130,000 sq ft of plant additions in Hereford which allowed them to add a second shift to the operations, and expanded upon from coolers, freezers, dry goods, employee welfare, hides, rendering and wastewater complex.

b) Ground beef and patty processing, in Amarillo producing approximately 1,500,000 pounds of ground beef chubs and patties weekly.

*SSI Foods is a beef patty manufacturing company located in Amarillo, manufacturing hamburger products that meet the core menu needs of quick service and casual dining restaurants by utilizing four patty processing lines with Tomahawk TM26 patty formers, with expansion capability to six lines.

*SciCron Technologies' state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Amarillo specializes in applying high-quality, high-performance coatings to plastics, with expertise in coating large, clear sheet products, and coating fabricated, molded, and formed plastic parts, and plastic film products.

2) Following the COVID-19 Pandemic, employers in the Healthcare Industry in the PWDA began discovering the increased need for Mental Health services and approached the PWDB with a proposal to develop a credential program with Amarillo College for Psychiatric Technicians. In its February, 2022 Board meeting, the PWDB approved adding this occupation to its High-Demand Occupations and Target Occupations Lists. The Amarillo College program was then added to the Eligible Training Provider System (ETPS) and WSP has enrolled WIOA customers in the program.

See pages 13-28, 30-31

1b. Describe any changes made to the Board's Target Occupations, In-Demand Occupations, and In-Demand Industries lists since the four-year local plan was approved in July 2021 and include the updated template (WD Letter 18-22, Attachment 3, WIOA Target Occupations, In-Demand Occupations, and In-Demand Industries Template). If no changes were made to a list, submit the current list with the current date. Describe the review process that the Board used to determine whether the Target Occupations, In-Demand Occupations, and In-Demand Industries lists required modification. Cite all sources used.

On November 8, 2022, staff hosted a Public Meeting on behalf of the Panhandle Workforce Development Board, to give its communities and partners an opportunity to provide input into the development of modifications to the Board Plan pertaining to labor market changes, economic conditions, and other factors affecting Plan implementation. Areas reviewed included the Board's Target Occupations, In-Demand Occupations, and In-Demand Industries lists. Attendees representing the Healthcare, Manufacturing and Education Industries robustly discussed current needs and future trends for the Panhandle. The recommendations were taken to the Panhandle Workforce Development Board, and the Panhandle Workforce Development Consortium's Governing Body (Chief Elected Officials – CEOs) quarterly meetings on December 7th and 8th, respectively.

1) Both bodies approved adding several **Target Occupations**, most notably, those aligning with the Governor's Texas Target Industry Cluster Initiative as follows:

* Advanced Manufacturing – Project Management Specialists and Business Operations Specialists (13-1198); and Production Workers (51-9199)

* Biotechnology and Life Sciences – Medical Dosimetrists, Medical Records Specialists and Health Technologists and Technicians (29-2098)

* Energy/Petroleum Refining and Chemical Products – Petroleum Pump System Operators, Refinery Operators and Gaugers (51-8093)

* Information Technology – Information Security Analysts (15-1212)

2) To determine the occupations to be included on the Panhandle's **In-Demand Occupations** List, staff evaluated the Texas Labor Market Information (LMI) 2020-2030 Occupational Employment data and, based upon the statistic of the number of Annual Job Openings equaling ten (10) openings or more, compiled the proposed List which was presented in the Public Meeting described above. The number of occupations recommended to be included on the List, presented to the public, and approved by both of the Panhandle's governing bodies, for this Plan Modification, nearly doubled from the previous List in the 2021-2024 Board Plan, reflecting the major disruption in the labor force caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

3) Industries operating in the Panhandle Workforce Development Area have always represented the very diverse environment of the Texas Panhandle ranging from Agricultural, Construction, Healthcare, Manufacturing, Service(s) and Transportation, to the U.S. Department of Energy's mission at the Pantex Plant, the Phillips 66/Cenovus Energy Refinery in Borger, and Amarillo's Bell (Textron) aerospace commercial/military Rotocraft production facility.

Prompted by TWC discussions of a Statewide shortage of Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics, in May 2022, the In-Demand Industry of Other Ambulatory Health Care Services was approved and added to the Panhandle's **In-Demand Industries** List, and Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics (29-2041) was added to the Target Occupations List. This Industry has been added to the 2021 List for this Plan Modification. No other changes to the In-Demand Industries have been made.

See pages 13-28, 31-36

2. Describe any changes in the financing available to support WIOA Title I services and partner-provided WIOA services that have affected the implementation of the Board's plan. For partner-provided services, Boards should consider the roles and resource contributions of the Workforce Solutions Offices, changes in partner infrastructure contributions, and whether any financial changes have required the Board to revise a strategy that was described in the original plan. For example, if reductions in federal funding or changes in the Board's funding strategies have required the Board to consider closing one or more Workforce Solutions Offices or if a shift in how services are delivered

has changed the amount available for operating costs, Boards must include this information as part of the two-year modification.

* In 2018, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) announced its intention to divest itself of ownership of its buildings statewide, which included the Workforce Solutions Panhandle (WSP) facility at 1206 S.W. 7th Avenue, in Amarillo, where the Panhandle Workforce Development Board (PWDB) has been delivering workforce development services for decades. During the same period, TWC began planning to integrate its Texas Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services staff into the WSP operations in the Panhandle. Over the following years, the PWDB facilitated a relocation of WSP and VR services and staff, opening in a remodeled facility located at 3120 Eddy Street in Amarillo, in March, 2021. The move from a State-owned building, provided to the PWDB at a nominal cost, into a privately-owned facility requiring commercial leasing costs, has added a considerable infrastructure burden to the PWDB's Service Delivery capabilities, with an increase in Operating Costs of nearly 185%, and required a shifting of funding.

See pages 3-4, 26

* The PWDB continues to partner with regional Economic Development Corporations (EDCs) to apply for High Demand Job Training grant funding to match the EDCs sales tax investments in a dollar-for dollar match, to purchase equipment for regional community colleges and Independent School Districts (ISDs). These \$150,000 annual Grant Application opportunities have provided, to-date, over \$1,040,000 which were matched by the EDCs, for the PWDA. The PWDB plans to continue requesting these WIOA Activities funds which have supplemented Career & Technology Education (CTE) training programs throughout the PWDA.

See pages 7, 28, 31

3. Describe any changes made to the strategies used to meet local performance goals.

In alignment with the **TWC Mission Strategic Plan Goals for 2023-2027**, the PWDB continues to strive for excellence in service delivery for the residents of the PWDA and has updated strategies in several areas including, but not limited to:

Goal 1 – Ensuring the Texas workforce system supports employers and allows business and industry to thrive, by (1.1.2) expanding recruiting and hiring services to help employers build and maintain a robust workforce.

*The WSP Amarillo office relocated from a State-owned facility into a remodeled building in March of 2021. The new facility doubled in size and offers, among its amenities, multiple public meeting spaces of various capacities, which are available to employers for hiring events, interviews and planning meetings. These opportunities for inviting the public into WSP have greatly enhanced business connections and exposure of workforce and child care services that were limited in the previous location. Several local and regional employers, including Pantex (Interviews & Testing), Cacique (Additional Office Space, Onboarding, & Training), Texas Department of Criminal Justice

(Additional Office Space), West Texas Healthcare Association (Monthly Seminar), Panhandle Human Resources Association (Board Meetings), Quick Quack Car Wash (Management Meetings), Panhandle Community Partnership (Committee Meetings), and Express Personnel Employer Seminars, schedule and utilize meeting rooms on a regular basis.

See pages 3-4, 28

Goal 2 – Ensuring a skilled workforce is prepared and equipped to fill critical in-demand jobs, both now and in the future, by (2.2.1) expanding the development of high-quality work-based learning opportunities that provide workers with the skills and experience needed to fill in-demand jobs and ensure qualified workers are matched with hiring employers.

*The PWDB has partnered with several regional employers and training providers in taking advantage of TWC’s Skills Development Fund (SDF) grants. In February, the PWDB executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Plains Dairy, a leading provider of high-quality milk and dairy products in the region. The company is dedicated to producing milk from local farmers and distributing it to customers in the area. They have a state-of-the-art processing facility that allows them to turn raw milk into a variety of products, including milk, cheese, butter, and ice cream. The PWDB is developing an application for a SDF Project that will invest in measurable skills development to train approximately 100 employees of Plains Dairy, utilizing a customized Safe Quality Food (SQF) food safety and quality management system that provides guidelines for the production, processing, packaging, and distribution of food products.

See page 23

Goal 3 – Providing exceptional customer service and support to all workforce system stakeholders, by (3.1.2) enhancing the overall customer experience within the workforce system, providing multiple integrated pathways for customers to choose how they interact with the system.

The PWDB understands that the workforce system must have the capacity to meet the needs of all current and future customers: employers, system program and service providers, and workers, wherever they are in their careers. Customers must be assured that wherever they enter the workforce system, there is a pathway through the system by instituting a “no-closed door” culture to ensure successful outcomes or referrals for customers of the workforce system programs and services. Any point of entry provides access to the full continuum of programs and services. The ability to accurately assess customer satisfaction with and across workforce system elements and translate this data into useful actions is essential to best meet the needs of workforce system customers.

*WSP is incorporating Quick Response (QR) Code technology into its Customer Satisfaction Survey process. This technology allows customers to access the optic label provided on WSP printed and digital media and, in a streamlined, convenient, and confidential method, respond on their customer service experience.

See pages 31-33

*The PWDB has purchased the digital communication management (DCM) software Granicus GovDelivery to enable WSP to build content to be shared with job seekers and connect/distribute through a number of different mediums, including email, Short Message Service (SMS)/text messages, Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds, and social media integration, including, but not limited to, a monthly newsletter.

See page 31

4. Describe any other factors affecting plan implementation.

The PWDB acknowledges the changes in the workforce environment from the COVID-19 pandemic. Factors contributing to the Panhandle's extremely tight labor market, which presented challenges even before the economic shutdown, have continued, while a new set of circumstances has emerged. Many workers have not returned to the labor market for several reasons that are not unique to the Panhandle but are trending nationwide. Some workers moved in the direction of retirement, possibly earlier than they might have planned; some, after receiving income support, made calculations to adapt to an income level perhaps less than what pre-pandemic employment afforded, but considered adequate; and some are considering career changes and weighing options. PWDA employers struggle to fill positions, and with retention of a sufficient level of workers to maintain and grow businesses. WSP drives outreach efforts, innovating methods and content, to entice individuals to connect with staff who are eager to assist with re-introducing those who have been out of the workforce, to the wide range of opportunities, and counseling those who have an interest in improving their skills and earning potential.

See pages 24-25

Texas Workforce Investment Council Requirements

The Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC) is charged under Texas Government Code §2308.101(5), 2308.302(a), and 2308.304(a)(b)(4), and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) (Public Law 113–128) with recommending the plans of Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) to the governor for consideration for approval. TWIC reviews each Board Plan to ensure that local goals and objectives are consistent with the statewide goals and objectives in the system plan, [The Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan FY 2016–FY 2023](#),

Additionally, state law charges TWIC with reporting annually to the governor and to the Texas legislature on the implementation of the system’s strategic plan and monitoring the operation of the state’s workforce system to assess the degree to which the system is effective in achieving state and local goals and objectives. Therefore, TWIC also reviews Board Plans and plan modifications to determine each Board’s progress in implementing strategies that align with the strategic plan for the Texas workforce system. Following consideration for approval at a regularly scheduled quarterly meeting, TWIC recommends the Board Plans to the governor for consideration for approval. Boards’ responses to the following planning elements are reviewed by TWIC for alignment and are the basis for recommending approval.

The Texas Workforce Environment: Key Issues

During the development of the TWIC strategic plan, several key issues surfaced that factor into the analysis on an ongoing basis. There are two distinct areas where issues arose: those occurring in the workforce environment and those that are taking place within the integrated workforce system framework. This plan considered both dimensions. These issues are taking place in the environment within which the Texas workforce system resides and hold cross-partner implications. These issues have been considered in the formation of system goals, objectives, and outcomes.

Educational Programs of Study

In Texas, career and technical education and programs of study are guided by federal and state law and require consistent and ongoing collaboration by the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Administered through these two partner agencies, these efforts are designed to ensure that the critical linkages between secondary and postsecondary career pathways and dual credit are providing seamless transitions and transfer options. The goal of these efforts is a higher completion and graduation rate, thereby increasing the number of individuals with a diploma or degree, as well as nontraditional credentials that are in high demand in both today’s job market and the future.

Programs of study are tied to coherent sequences of academic, career, and technical courses and training. This sequencing is improving transfer options and will ultimately result in higher graduation or completion rates in areas where workers are needed in the current job market. The national trend is to implement a program of study as an effective method of career and technical education delivery that provides students with practical experience to assist them to translate their academic experiences into real-world applications.

While programs of study have not been fully implemented at the postsecondary level, a number of elements are operational that are making progress in achieving an integrated pathway from secondary to postsecondary, and between community and technical colleges. Texas must continue to develop

and integrate career and technical education programs of study within and across educational levels. As the education landscape continues to evolve, opportunities exist to improve student education and employment outcomes.

Adult Education

Adult education programs and services are important components of the Texas workforce system. These programs are funded through a variety of federal, state, and local sources to improve literacy and educational outcomes for adults who have not earned a high school diploma or who perform below the high school level, thereby making postsecondary education, training, or employment difficult. Through the provision of these programs and services, adult education improves employability outcomes by ensuring a growing number of Texans who are prepared to attain some form of postsecondary credential. Adult education programs and services are designed to coordinate, deliver, and align postsecondary and workforce readiness training to ensure that all programs lead to high school equivalency, further training, college or university, or employment.

In September 2013, mandated by Senate Bill 307 (83rd Texas Legislature), adult education programs and services transitioned from the Texas Education Agency to the Texas Workforce Commission. Through its contracts, the Texas Workforce Commission requires enhancements to service delivery models supporting innovation and increased outcomes, including incentives for enrollment, integration with workforce programs, and models focused on transitions to work or postsecondary education. This approach allows continuity of services as programs build capacity and enhance service delivery and curricula, while steadily supporting an upward trajectory in the program's overall direction toward increased employment and training outcomes consistent with the requirements in Senate Bill 307.¹

A key capacity to achieving the above stated goals is the referral capabilities and infrastructure necessary to serve individuals seeking adult education programs and services to locate the most appropriate program, regardless of where it resides within 1 Adult Education and Literacy Outcome Report to the Texas Legislature for SFY14. Texas Workforce Commission (2014). 15 the adult education domain. Improving this capacity and improving coordination among service providers are essential components to serving these learners.

Changing Demand for Middle-Skill Workers

While concentrations of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) jobs vary region to region, overall middle-skill STEM occupations generally pay high wages, tend to be prevalent in all regions, and are growing in Texas. STEM workers at all levels of educational attainment experience stronger employment outcomes and higher lifetime earnings. While workers tend to command higher pay if they have knowledge in more than one STEM field, education and training programs tend to focus on one specific domain of knowledge. Middle-skill STEM workers are projected to find broad employment options. In fact, it is estimated that over the next decade over 60 percent of jobs in Texas will be middle-skill and will require some form of postsecondary education.

A key aspect to understanding STEM-related employment is the growth of middle-skill STEM employment. These middle-skill STEM jobs tend to require a high level of STEM technical knowledge but often less than would be required for a four-year degree. As a result, middle-skill STEM jobs tend to be more geographically dispersed across the state, whereas those requiring a four-year degree tend to be concentrated in certain geographic regions.

Texas has developed an infrastructure from which to engage public and private sector stakeholders to enhance, reinforce, and build a strong supply of STEM-capable workers across the state. The state has also honed its ability to source, compete, and grow targeted industry clusters. Strategies

addressing middle-skill workers in the STEM area are an essential focus of this strategic plan.

Increasing Demand for Industry-based Certifications for Texas Workers

Over recent years, the role, purpose, and value of industry certifications has changed dramatically. While licenses, certificates, and certifications all fall under the larger umbrella of workforce credentials, the current workforce landscape in Texas points to the growing role that industry certifications can play in improving workforce outcomes.

The distinction between licenses, certificates, and certifications is important because each play a vital role in workforce development. As defined by the National Organization for Competency Assurance standard 100, licenses and certificates are generally awarded by academic institutions or similar groups and are generally based on education and/or training, whereas the primary focus of certifications is on assessment by a third-party provider, based on industry-recognized standards. Further, certification processes are independent from any one training or education provider. Certifications are created, developed, sponsored, or operated through the private sector with little or no participation by public institutions. Certification allows for greater portability of validation, uniformity of standards, and applicability in high-demand and high-skill occupations that experience rapidly changing industry standards.

Although all workforce credentials are important to successful outcomes for the Texas workforce system, the role and impact of industry-based, third-party certifications is growing. The ability to identify and track workers who have certifications, analyze demand trends, and provide feedback and information to enhance workforce system decisions is an important capacity for the Texas workforce system to build. As such, it is essential that the Texas workforce system place special emphasis on industry-based certifications during the timeframe encompassed by this strategic plan.

Demand-Driven Programs and Services

The state continues to grow jobs in both middle- and high-skilled occupations across a number of different employer sizes and industry sectors. The ability to fill these positions with properly skilled workers by creating and implementing responsive programs and services is essential to successfully meet employer needs. The Texas economy has been one of the strongest in the United States over the past 15 years and national assessment measures from the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas and the Texas Leading Index point to continued economic health for the state. To sustain and increase economic growth, a well-trained labor supply must be available for employers seeking to establish, conduct, or expand business operations in Texas. The Texas workforce system partners must develop and implement new and enhanced data systems and tools to better understand and respond to the state's dynamic workforce environment. Further, this information must be effectively translated into effective and efficient delivery of services that meet the needs of Texas employers.

While the traditional baccalaureate degree is still viewed as the primary pathway to postsecondary success, interest in middle-skill jobs has increased the desire and need for other avenues of education. Middle-skill jobs are primarily occupations that require education or training beyond high school, but not necessarily a bachelor's degree.

Despite the increased interest in these jobs, it appears that there is a growing divide between the number of qualified, technically skilled, and available job applicants and the 2 Tracking Industry-Based Certifications: Promising Practices in Capturing Data on the Workforce Supply of Industry Certified Workers. Texas Workforce Investment Council (2015). 17 number needed by Texas employers. During the listening sessions conducted in advance of developing this plan, the Council heard from both the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and a panel of Texas employers that it is difficult to recruit and hire appropriately skilled employees. The central message was that

employers are having a difficult time finding certain types of employees—particularly in middle-skill occupations—and that, as a result, sometimes job listings can go unfilled for long periods of time, resulting in a direct cost to employers.

Education System Coordination and Alignment

As the Texas workforce system evolves, it must have the capacity to design, implement, and assess aligned and integrated programs and services in a collaborative manner. This is particularly relevant at transition points across system partners and programs. There are a vast array of needs and expectations of customers in the Texas workforce system, ranging from adult education, career and technical education, and college and work readiness. Educational and career transitions need to be seamless and accessible from any point in the workforce system to ensure that customers are able to navigate these wide-ranging options and opportunities efficiently and effectively, without unnecessary duplication or experiencing gaps in services that hinder progress in achieving the desired workforce education and training goal.

Demonstrating Alignment with Texas’ Strategic Plan for the Workforce System WD Letter 18-22, Attachment 2

The four sections below list and describe the four system goals from The Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan FY 2016–FY 2023 (2020 Update) that identify critical, high-priority system issues for the state. Boards inform the development of strategic goals and objectives and are essential to the implementation of the workforce system plan. Board plan responses apprise TWIC of innovative practices and how key strategies in the system plan translate into local action to move the system forward. Examples of select Board responses will be presented to TWIC under each goal. All 28 Boards will be represented in the briefing for the approval of the plans.

For each goal:

- briefly describe how the Board is working to fulfill the intent of the goal as specified in the description; and
- include the corresponding page number(s) within your plan that further details the identified strategy or initiative.

System Goal 1 and Rationale

Focus on Employers

Effective engagement with employers informs many system strategies and functions that address the changing needs of industry as well as state and regional economies. Education and training are a primary system function that may require multiple state and local entities to work with similar employers to design instruction or adjust career and technical education program and delivery options. Coordination and partnerships with employers are essential to gain insight and implement initiatives while ensuring that industrial productivity continues.

System Goal 1—Local Board Response

Please describe how your local Board has improved employer engagement and efforts to collaborate with any other entities that require input, participation, and/or partnership with employers. Specifically, describe how you coordinate efforts to gain more comprehensive insight on employer needs while reducing the demand on the employers who would otherwise be responding to multiple requests. Identify the primary outcomes and, where relevant, list key entities involved and type of information requests for each entity.

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s): 4, 6, 12, 29-30

Identifying appropriate operational strategies involves examining local labor market skills and service gaps by analyzing local, state and national data that identify demographic, industrial and employment trends and potential skill shortages, using a variety of economic tools provided by TWC, other state agencies, and federal, local, and private resources. The PWDB is committed to and is actively engaged in creating greater employer engagement.

In alignment with TWC’s System Goal 1, the PWDB will continue:

- Expanding the number of apprentices in underserved populations;
- Developing training opportunities toward industry-based certifications to expand the number of work-ready individuals in high demand occupations;
- Increasing the number of employers who participate in work-based learning programs;
- Engaging industry representatives to collaborate with community colleges in new program

- development that incorporates national industry-based certifications into programs of study;
- Assisting with aligning the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) to Industry-based certifications, where applicable. (Reference: <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/curriculum-standards/teks/texas-essential-knowledge-and-skills>); and
- Assisting with aligning the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) with identifying and implementing relevant industry-based certifications and licenses and incorporating the occupational information into statewide career and technical education programs.

The WSP Business Services Unit specialized division is tailored to meet employer's workforce needs. The WSP Business Service Representatives (BSRs) work with employers and offer customized business consulting services, such as addressing human resource challenges and identifying the skills sets needed by industry. Workforce and Labor Market Information (LMI) is essential to the Texas Panhandle's economy, providing for the efficient operation of labor markets by supplying quality labor market intelligence. Accurate, objective, relevant, timely, and accessible workforce and LMI is critical for:

- Building a skilled workforce that spurs business competitiveness and economic growth;
- Strengthening career pathways and guiding skill attainment for good jobs, economic opportunity, and career growth;
- Understanding the rapidly changing nature of work and how it impacts the workforce and the area's economy; and
- Spending workforce training and education funds effectively.

WSP BSRs worked closely with Economic Development Corporations (EDCs), Colleges, Universities, and employers. The largest consumers of WSP's LMI Services were the Amarillo EDC (9 total LMI projects), Amarillo College (LMI presentations at each campus throughout the Texas Panhandle), Frank Phillips College and Clarendon College (both utilized LMI to choose new educational programs at area campuses).

WSP Business Services staff, in cooperation with the Panhandle Community Partnership began work on creating an interactive website to clearly visualize career pathway maps. This tool features Target Occupations from the PWDA, including wage, education requirements, and up-to-date LMI.

System Goal 2 and Rationale

Engage in Partnerships

Workforce system partners leverage local and regional partnerships to enhance system alignment and improve outcomes and reporting. Partnerships rely on a culture of collaboration and trust, deep working relationships, and communication to provide a solid foundation on which to coordinate planning, integrate processes, and develop the collective technical capacity to share needs, data, and information.

System Goal 2—Local Board Response

Please describe your primary (top) partnerships, how you use them to address key strategies in your plan, and the significant outcomes and progress related to the partnerships. In addition, specifically describe partnerships that foster innovation and improved participant engagement and outcomes in workforce development.

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s): 4-10, 34-37, 52, 55-57

In alignment with TWC's System Goal 2, the PWDB will continue to expand partnerships with system partners and stakeholders to promote collaboration, joint planning, and enhanced participant outcomes by:

- Improving rehabilitation employment outcomes by establishing additional partnerships with secondary and postsecondary entities, and employers;
- Increasing access to, referral between, and outcomes of adult education programs and services;
- Implementing a coordinated approach, with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), to serving employers, and to identifying opportunities and strategies for improved coordination and enhanced participant outcomes;
- Participating in regional discussions with the Texas Education Agency about career pathway expansion opportunities for high school students;
- Implementing case management that integrates data among multiple programs;
- Collaborating with State and community agencies for enhancing services to foster youth;
- Connecting more ex-offenders with adult education programs through better developed referral processes and appropriate short-term integrated training options; and
- Promoting the importance of community and technical colleges to targeted adult education services that transition adult learners to higher education.

The PWDB's strategy to work with entities carrying out the core programs and with required partners to align resources available to the Panhandle Workforce Development Area (PWDA), and to achieve the vision and goals, includes developing and actively supporting dynamic industry partnerships. By aligning and sharing resources through existing collaborations, the PWDB is assisted in designing and delivering services based on business and industry needs, thus enhancing employer engagement.

***Businesses/Employers** – The PWDB develops and actively supports dynamic partnerships by aligning and sharing resources through existing collaborations, such as the Panhandle Board's Business Advisory Committee, comprised of Board and non-Board members, private sector employers, area college representatives, Board staff, and contractor staff, to assist the Board in designing and delivering services based on business and industry needs. The strengths of workforce activities in the Panhandle region are the innovative employment and training opportunities developed through the creation of new partnerships with businesses, employers, and training providers in the Panhandle.

***Economic Development** – Work continues to encourage and support local partners to pursue skills development grant opportunities to apply for and obtain grants such as TWC's Jobs and Education for Texas (JET), and the High Demand Job Training (HDJT) grants. HDJT's \$150,000 annual Grant Application opportunities have provided, to-date, over \$1,040,000 which were matched by the EDCs, for the PWDA. The PWDB plans to continue requesting these WIOA Activities funds which have supplemented Career & Technology Education (CTE) training programs throughout the PWDA.

***Community Colleges** – Continued collaboration with required partners in local business and education, and with local community organizations, will enhance the PWDB's workforce system capacity for delivering effective employment and training services, while meeting required performance. Successfully aligning resources and responding to expected shortages of workers in skilled trades and technical occupations due to the skills gap created by employee turnover, combined with the increasing demand for a highly-technically skilled workforce, are essential.

Amarillo College, the PWDA's Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Service Provider, is developing a new digital customer referral tool, MyOneFlow, to enhance the collaboration with the PWDB and

WSP, in performing intake, determining program eligibility, assisting with enrollment in classes, coordinating supportive services as needed, and facilitating the process of connecting customers in order to provide English language, math, reading, and writing instruction to help students acquire the skills needed to succeed in the workforce, earn a high school equivalency, or enter college or career training.

***Independent School Districts (ISDs)** – One of the goals of the PWDB is to expand collaboration, joint planning, and enhanced participant outcomes with regional ISDs. The PWDB and WSP will strive to gain more access to benefit students through developing additional career pathways and dual-credit training opportunities.

***Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)** – Collaboration and joint planning with VR Services and TWC continues for providing a seamless approach for access to integrated workforce services, literacy education, vocational rehabilitation, and in-demand workplace skills that lead to self-sufficient employment and advancement for individuals with disabilities. Promoting partnerships with employers and system stakeholders will overcome barriers to meeting workforce needs through creative use of technology and innovation.

***Chambers of Commerce** – In addition to creating new employment opportunities, a key element in the Panhandle is motivating skilled workers to remain in or return to the Panhandle area. This can be achieved by developing and implementing a targeted approach to overcoming challenges inherent in virtual employment. Coordinating with system partners like the Amarillo Chamber of Commerce, AEDC, and local colleges to promote the economically and personally rewarding benefits of staying in or returning to Amarillo, is an effective approach. ***Ex-offenders** – WSP coordinates with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to provide information to local Parole Division Officers, regarding Job Seeker services for its Releasees, to enable the Officers to make referrals to WSP to help these individuals locate, enter and retain employment.

System Goal 3 and Rationale

Align System Elements

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

System Goal 3—Local Board Response

Please describe alignment efforts and the status, outcomes, and plan for continuous improvement of system alignment in your region. In the description, include barriers, considerations, and proposed actions to overcome the barriers.

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s): 5-8, 13-22, 38-39, 55-57

Through the implementation of a common technical core curriculum that is recognized statewide, programs of study can enhance delivery efficiency, dual-credit effectiveness, and improve student outcomes and transitions. In alignment with TWC’s System Goal 3, the PWDB will continue to:

- Improve and enhance services, programs, and policies to align with programs of study in community and technical colleges with secondary programs;
- Enhance transition services for students and youth with disabilities to competitive integrated

employment or to postsecondary education and training followed by competitive integrated employment, aligning with the Pathways to Careers Initiative (PCI);

- Develop and implement policies and processes to career and technical education opportunities for dual credit; and
- Seek input from business and industry to identify essential knowledge, skills, and abilities they require.

The PWDB continues to endeavor to connect job seekers and other populations with barriers to employment to numerous career and training resources and opportunities to prepare them for entry or reentry into the workforce in high-growth industry sectors, and improve customer opportunities for growth. The PWDB and its partner agencies continue to cultivate emerging industries, support existing businesses and enhance the skills development of the workforce taking advantage of strategic opportunities provided by swift economic change.

In alignment with the TWC Strategic Plan, the PWDB continues to strive for improved access and efficiency, along with value-added services, to benefit customers of the workforce system. The PWDB recognizes that along with system partners, it is responsible for the delivery of twenty workforce education and training programs and related services, as well as education programs that support career preparation and advancement. The PWDB, WSP, and community partners continue to follow the principal of full integration of core programs, with a strategy of alignment, coordination, and integration of education, employment and training programs. The PWDB continues its objective of structuring collaboration of programs, initiatives and outcomes, to avoid duplication with strategic plans of partner agencies. The PWDB and its partners are committed to customer satisfaction, data-driven program improvement, and continuous improvement and innovation.

Positive relationships are sustained by the PWDB with all local training providers that offer training in target and in-demand occupations. PWDB staff continue to facilitate provider applications to the ETPS for programs that will prepare students for the Target Occupations.

WSP staff provide connections to other resources that may be leveraged to allow customers to receive training other than in a traditional classroom setting (e.g., apprenticeship programs). Well-trained and committed case management staff deliver front line services including individual assessment and collaborate with customers on the development of quality service plans that create career pathways that lead to success.

The PWDB strives to connect workforce development staff with local ISDs in an active meaningful way by establishing and maintaining a consistent workforce staff presence in middle schools and high schools by assigning Outreach Specialists dedicated to connecting school counselors and students to resources to access local labor market tools and career exploration information.

Strategies relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators described in WIOA §116(b)(2)(A) include collaboration with workforce system partners to align, leverage, and combine local communities' workforce resources. The PWDB continues to develop, facilitate, and expand innovative partnerships between the Board and employers, community colleges, AEL providers, WSP and other stakeholders, to leverage resources for the provision and integration of an array of workforce services.

System Goal 4 and Rationale

Improve and Integrate Programs

Accelerate employment and improve efficiencies through shared resources that can be leveraged to

create new, relevant, and innovative opportunities that serve the needs of all stakeholders. By addressing high-priority programmatic needs through an integrated strategy, decision-making at the system, partner, and participant levels is improved and system service delivery is enhanced. The changing economic and educational landscapes provide opportunities to share relevant data through appropriate “push” mechanisms in an organized manner to key stakeholders who rely on information generated by system partners.

System Goal 4—Local Board Response

Please describe local efforts to integrate processes and share resources across programs in your region. Identify efficiencies realized and improved participant outcomes as a result. Describe how this work can be leveraged to create new, relevant opportunities that serve the needs of all stakeholders.

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s): 5-10, 41-42, 52-54

In alignment with TWC’s System Goal 4, the PWDB will continue to:

- Identify and implement new, relevant technology and service delivery options to expand program and service outcomes;
- Increase competitive integrated employment outcomes by increasing awareness of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services and better serving underserved populations;
- Enhance quality of increase access to quality child care to support parents in obtaining and retaining employment;
- Support professional development opportunities for child care providers;
- Promote increasing the number of child care providers certified as meeting Texas Rising Star (TRS), or other recognized quality rating and improvement system standards, in the child care system;
- Provide rural service delivery options through the use of mobile units and affiliate sites;
- Direct students to available training and career path options with onsite support at public middle and high schools;
- Expand the use of technology for providing online services such as job fairs, eligibility determination, and other interactions; and
- Improve service delivery methods to increase effectiveness of service delivery and achievement of employment outcomes for underserved populations.

The PWDB continues to support TWC’s goal, as stated in in 2021-2025 TWC Strategic Plan to prepare individuals for employment by supporting education and training that equips individuals with in-demand skills as identified by employers by:

- Continuing ongoing support of education programs for students that inform them and prepare them for high-skill, high-demand jobs through identification and allocation of available programs and resources;
- Addressing the workforce training needs of employers by leveraging Skills Development Fund (SDF) grants; Texas Industry Partnership (TIP) program grants, which support collaborations between the Board and industry partners through the leveraging of matching contributions of cash or qualifying expenditures for occupation training focusing on the Texas Industry Cluster Initiative; and other available resources to support in-demand job training;
- Continuing to support work-based learning opportunities through internships, mentorships, and job shadowing, and
- Continuing to coordinate and collaborate with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

and the Texas Education Agency to support and develop objectives for increasing the percentage of Texans with post-secondary degrees or certification.

Mastering current and emerging technology are the keys to creating and conducting an effective technology based integrated system for customer intake and case management. Complete understanding and application of current capabilities enables full utilization of existing tools, primarily WorkInTexas.com. Adopting and adapting additional, more efficient technologies, such as a real-time customer tracking system, provides WSP staff with the means to quickly and accurately assess customer needs and provide seamless service delivery, while maintaining service priority requirements.

The PWDB has purchased the digital communication management (DCM) software Granicus GovDelivery to enable WSP to build content to be shared with job seekers and connect/distribute through a number of different mediums, including email, Short Message Service (SMS)/text messages, Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds, and social media integration, including, but not limited to, a monthly newsletter.

In addition to creating new employment opportunities, a key element in the PWDB is motivating skilled workers to remain in or return to the Panhandle area. This can be achieved by developing and implementing a targeted approach to overcoming challenges inherent in virtual employment. Since college graduates drive economic development, redoubling efforts to coordinate with system partners like the Amarillo Chamber of Commerce, Amarillo Economic Development Corporation, and local colleges to promote the fact that staying in or returning to Amarillo, can be economically and personally rewarding.

Strategic Opportunities to Drive Local Implementation

Before TWIC began the process to develop the new system strategic plan, Board directors were invited to provide input on issues and opportunities for consideration in system planning. Please consider the responses you provided (above) to local board area implementation of the four primary goals in the current system plan and identify how the new system strategic plan can help future implementation of your regional goals and strategies related to the following:

Increase engagement of target populations, including Opportunity Youth, Texans with disabilities, foster youth, and sex-trafficking victims.

Describe Board strategies that support engagement of sometimes underserved populations.

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s): 5-9, 39, 49-52, 58-60

***Opportunity Youth** are defined as youth between the ages of 16-24 who are disconnected from education and the workforce. Prior to 2020, the national average of Opportunity Youth was 11%, in Texas it was 13%, and in rural Texas, it was 27%. Although the broad impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on this population are not yet fully understood, it is safe to assume that those percentages went up rather than down. While there is no system currently in place for tracking these individuals in the Texas Panhandle, we do know that after high school graduation we lose track of about half of our students, meaning they do not go on to enroll in a postsecondary institution and they are not trackable in the workforce.

The PWDB and WSP have developed a new staff position to enhance youth and young adult activities. This Career Outreach Specialist will focus on innovative technology in Virtual Career

Exploration. The PWDB is purchasing Virtual Reality headsets, along with library of occupational videos, which transport the user into an interactive environment to participate in performing tasks in a specific job. The Career Outreach Specialist will host events, both in area schools and in WSP offices, guiding students in exploration of potential occupations and careers in their areas of interest.

The PWDB's Youth program is primarily focused on Out-of-School Youth who need postsecondary education and/or work experience to achieve self-sufficiency. Disconnected youth, parenting youth, first-generation college students, foster youth, and youth who have other barriers to employment, are the priority youth populations determined most likely to benefit from local workforce services.

Increasing the number and quality of work-based training opportunities for at-risk youth such as paid internships for college students and graduating high school seniors that are directly related to students' career interests. Many youth served in workforce programs must be engaged in an occupational component, so paid internships will offer competitive wages to encourage participation. These internships will include mentoring by supervisors trained by workforce staff to provide appropriate encouragement and career exploration.

***Texans with Disabilities** - The PWDB continues, through the Texas HireAbility campaign, to engage a Student HireAbility Navigator to fulfil the stated purpose of this position "To improve access to employment and training services and increase employment opportunities for job seekers with disabilities". The Panhandle's Student HireAbility Navigator is fully involved in serving as a resource in the PWDA by "supporting, expanding, and enhancing the provision of pre-employment transition services that are provided by VR", co-located in the WSP office in Amarillo. Through active participation in numerous relevant local committee meetings, attending local job fairs and transitional fairs, reaching more employers and service providers as well as educators, the Navigator continually identifies and reaches out to crucial partners who have shared goals and objectives to bring to the table. The Navigator is also focusing on building a knowledge base by attending statewide workforce events such as the TWC Annual Workforce Conference, presenting information at the Texas Business Conference about hiring students with disabilities, including discussing the possibility of creating HireAbility Workshops in Amarillo, and participating in the collection and completion of information for a resource guide for employers in hiring individuals with disabilities. The Navigator promotes the Texas HireAbility Campaign at meetings with educators, employers and community partners to increase the awareness of the benefits of hiring people with disabilities as well as increasing access to pre-employment transition services.

United We Work, a half day of job shadowing for students with disabilities, was most recently held on October 27, 2022 to help promote and raise awareness of National Disability Employment Awareness Month. 28 students participated with hands-on work experience at eight different employer sites including a veterinary clinic, restaurant, hair salon, automotive detailing center, and an elementary school. Students also received training on how to prepare for a job interview, followed by mock interviews from community business leaders.

EPIC Success College and Career Conference targets rural school districts with 19 schools and more than 600 students participating. VR participates and shares resources with teachers, staff, students and employers regarding the services available for students with disabilities.

***Foster Youth** – Foster youth are a priority population. TWC funds transition centers serving both current and former youth. The centers address critical life barriers facing youth who have or will soon age out of the foster care system. They provide access to education, employment training and services, life skills classes, mentoring opportunities, and appropriate support services.

WSP and the PWDB continue to develop and nurture successful partnerships with the Amarillo Foster

Youth Transition Center, at Buckner Children and Family Services, to improve and enhance the collaborative process of connecting with foster youth and provide comprehensive workforce services, including career exploration and occupational training or work-based training. Discussions continue with Amarillo Children's Home and the Turn Center, the only private, non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization in the federal Medically Underserved Area (MUA) of the 26-county Texas Panhandle, to create pathways that support Foster Youth who often have developmental delays or undiagnosed disabilities transition from school into employment preparation and training.

***Sex-Trafficking Victims** – Human trafficking affects both adults and children, men and women, and people from all parts of Texas, the United States, and around the world. The Attorney General's Human Trafficking and Transnational/Organized Crime division assists law enforcement and prosecutors on human trafficking cases, pursues civil litigation against traffickers and businesses, assists victims with resources, engages the public through training, develops initiatives to enhance the state's support and coordination of human trafficking efforts, and facilitates collaboration between federal, state, and local law enforcement and prosecutors. The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) also presides over the Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force and Coordinating Council. Established to increase collaborative efforts across the state, the Task Force and Coordinating Council bring together local, state, and federal agencies and nongovernmental partners to bring an end to human trafficking in Texas and address its impact. The OAG's Human Trafficking and Transnational Organized Crime Section (HTTOC) is fighting to end human trafficking in the State of Texas through aggressive criminal prosecution and civil actions to hold offenders accountable, and aims to raise public awareness about the threat Human Trafficking presents to Texas by providing training, educating lawmakers and partnering with community stakeholders.

Adult Sex Trafficking is trafficking of adults for sex by force, fraud, or coercion in strip clubs, brothels, massage parlors, street prostitution, or internet prostitution. Child Sex Trafficking is trafficking children, under the age of 18, by any means into the commercial sex industry.

All PWDB and WSP complete the mandatory training produced by the TWC Training and Development Department in collaboration with the Office of the Attorney General, "Be the One (BCS Version) in the Fight Against Human Trafficking", which focuses on preventing, recognizing, and reporting "Red Flag" behaviors for Human and Sex Trafficking.

Improve efficiency and outcomes through data-driven decision-making and investments.

Describe Board strategies that support data-driven decision-making and investments.

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s): 32

The collection of key data, as well as the reporting and analysis of that data, in a consistent and useful manner, are essential in demonstrating outcomes, determining if changes are required or desired, and establishing benchmarks for future performance. The PWDB is committed to working with its partners to promote the building or modification of existing data systems to improve the flow of data, increase the relevance of data, and facilitate analysis that supports effective decision-making across the full spectrum of data users, to achieve effective and efficient programs, services, and outcomes.

The PWDB recognizes the efforts and the recommendations of the Regional Workforce Strategy Working Group representing the Workforce Solutions Alamo, Capital Area and Rural Capital Area. This group was formed to strengthen the alignment of regional workforce planning with economic development to create a data-driven, scalable model to maximize the capacity for Workforce Development Boards to meet the needs of employers in the State and reconnect Texans to the workforce in a way that supports long-term prosperity in urban, suburban, and rural communities.

The PWDB is exploring and will support the strategies put forth in the Texas Talent and Economic Growth Pilot Project and Statewide Action Plan to strengthen the alignment between regional workforce planning and economic development.

As identified in the Texas Workforce Investment Council's strategic planning process, the PWDB will continue to identify opportunities and develop solutions for improving performance and outcomes that have cross-partner implications and hold significant strategic value to the overall success of the workforce system's ability to meet its vision and mission.to:

- Facilitate effective and efficient transitions and enhance transition services;
- Increase employment outcomes;
- Expand partnerships with system stakeholders and promote collaboration and joint planning;
- Incorporate/expand options for dual credit and/or licensure and certification;
- Increase business and industry involvement;
- Align programs and services;
- Share timely data and information;
- Promulgate promising practices and reduce duplication;
- Recruit and/or provide professional development;
- Ensure portable and transferrable options;
- Address skills shortages; and
- Institutionalize alternative service delivery methods.