

# **PANHANDLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA (PWDA) PY 2017-2020 INTEGRATED PLAN**

## **TWO-YEAR MODIFICATION**

The Panhandle Workforce Development Board (“Board”) 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 Panhandle Workforce Development Board is appointed by local elected officials, and oversees workforce program services provided in our 26-county region. The Panhandle Board and its partners together implement an Integrated Plan, which directs local entities in their efforts to build a labor force that sustains local communities and supports a positive economic climate. Section I of the plan describes the Panhandle Workforce Development Area’s strategic goals and objectives, and outlines the challenges that the Panhandle Board will address during the period of July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2020. This is a required two-year modification of the original plan submitted in 2017.

### **Board Mission**

The Panhandle Workforce Development Board supports the present and future economic growth and prosperity of the Panhandle Workforce Development Area by actively assisting local employers with finding and developing the talent they need, and by investing in skills development which increases workers’ career opportunities and economic self-sufficiency.

### **Part A: Strategic Elements**

#### **Board’s Vision**

The vision of the Panhandle Workforce Development Board 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 Panhandle Board also supports regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency that will guide the development and provision of services during the four-year period of the Panhandle Workforce Development Area Integrated Plan, as described in the following sections.

**1(a). Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce**, including 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.

**1(b). Goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators described in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (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.

**2. The Panhandle Workforce Development Board develops and actively supports 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, Panhandle Board staff, and Workforce Solutions Panhandle contractor staff, to assist the Board in designing and delivering services based on business and industry needs, thus enhancing employer engagement. Work continues to encourage and support local partners to pursue skills development grant opportunities including Apprenticeship programs and with local ISDs and community colleges to apply for and obtain grants such as the Texas Workforce Commission's JET (Jobs and Education for Texas) grants.

The Workforce Development Director for the Panhandle WDA serves as a vital partner engaged in the local No Limits/No Excuses program initiative with 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 NL/NE group are to connect curriculum and training, create internships, and develop partnerships with education,

community, and employers to provide living wage jobs to keep talent in the WDA.

Through collaboration with the Texas Rural Alliance, a group of vital 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, more effective private and public partnerships are being utilized for many endeavors including increasing and improving workforce development in the Panhandle WDA.

Workforce Solutions Panhandle contractor staff and Panhandle Workforce Development Board staff develop and nurture successful partnerships with the Amarillo Foster Youth Transition Center staff to continually improve and enhance the collaborative process of connecting Foster Youth with Workforce Solutions staff and provide comprehensive workforce services, including career exploration and occupational training or work based training.

The Panhandle Workforce Development Board has engaged 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”. Our Student HireAbility Navigator is fully involved in serving as a resource in the Panhandle WDA by “supporting, expanding, and enhancing the provision of pre-employment transition services that are provided by Vocational Rehabilitation.” 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, our 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 Texas Workforce Commission Annual Workforce Conference, presenting information at the Texas Business Conference about hiring students with disabilities, including discussing the possibility of creating a HireAbility Workshop in Amarillo, and participating in the collection and completion of information for a resource guide for employers in hiring individuals with disabilities.

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 Panhandle WDA workforce goals and objectives, and are further described in this Plan. Where training gaps exist, options such as Local Activity Fund, Wagner-Peyser grants available through the Governor’s office, and Skills Development Grant projects may be pursued to fund curriculum development that initiates instructional availability.

Continued collaboration with required partners in local business and education, and with local community organizations, will enhance the Panhandle WDA workforce system’s 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. In addition to the activities associated with the required partners as outlined in this Plan, other workforce partners and existing activities include:

- 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. Senior Service America, 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 Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff are likely to benefit from services.

- Motivation, Education and Training, Inc. (MET), the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) contractor serving our region, 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 include joint case management and employment planning, joint staff training, and provision of space to MET staff at Workforce Solutions Panhandle offices on an itinerant basis if available.

Note: MET's Regional Specialist Manager serves in the role of SCSEP Grantee through Senior Service America described above.

- Panhandle Community Services (PCS) continues their partnership to assist customers in reducing their dependence on PCS for utility assistance and to enhance employment services to these 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 Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff to begin the process of determining an individual's career pathway. PSC work-based services include subsidized work experience arrangements or when appropriate, customers may be referred to WIOA for short-term training. The partners collaborate on the provision of supportive services to referred customers who are eligible and participate in these activities, and job search assistance is provided when customers are job-ready.

### **Economic and Workforce Analysis**

#### **3(a). Economic Conditions:**

The issue most likely to affect the Panhandle Workforce Development Board'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, seven of the region's eight Workforce Solutions offices were closed, primarily in rural areas, 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 Panhandle Workforce Development

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, as further described elsewhere in this Plan.

According to the Amarillo Economic Development Corporation, 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 the recent Skills Development Grant Partnership with the Texas Workforce Commission 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 ESL, that offer opportunities for increased wage earning potential.

### **3(b). Employment Needs of Employers:**

The Panhandle region is 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 Panhandle Workforce Development Board 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 Texas Workforce Commission 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 aforementioned Skills Development Grant Partnership training opportunities for incumbent workers have increased, and is producing a more highly qualified and well-compensated workforce. The Panhandle WDA 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 Workforce Solutions Panhandle Business Services team utilize monthly surveys and engage 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 them address their labor force needs. Results are coordinated and reviewed, and are incorporated into this Plan for implementation in the coming year. Economic development organizations, school districts, elected officials, and the public are solicited to share their ideas and provide input as well.

Information is also gleaned from labor market assessments conducted by the Amarillo Economic Development Corporation to determine the needs of Amarillo employers, along with information obtained from independent school districts, 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 Texas Workforce Commission Labor Market and Career Information (LMCI) tools, and additional resources from other providers, such as Help Wanted Online.

Assessment of employers' needs is also conducted through the involvement of Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff with businesses, collaborative activities with community colleges and local organizations, and input received from employers and community leaders. Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff shared their front-line experience working with employers, job seekers and students to add practical, current and "real-life" information to be considered during the development of this Plan.

Panhandle Workforce Development Board staff and Workforce Solutions Panhandle Business Services staff gather information on local labor market developments and formulate recommendations on those 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.

Data analysis on all information collected is used to identify high-growth and other high-priority industries. Panhandle Workforce Development Board staff and Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff seek the following information from representatives of those industries about their businesses, and economic development professionals for:

- Industrial and Occupational trends;
- Education and training preferences;
- Employee recruiting methods; and
- Specific gaps in employees' skills.

**4(a). List of Panhandle WDA In-Demand Industries:**

**Target and In-Demand Industries and Occupations**

<b>NAICS Code</b>	<b>NAICS Title</b>	<b>Employment Base Year 2016</b>	<b>Employment Projected Year 2026</b>	<b>Projection Employment Percentage Change</b>
2111	Oil and gas extraction	2,803	3,247	16%
2381	Building foundation and exterior contractors	1,278	1,464	15%
2382	Building equipment contractors	2,861	3,407	19%
3116	Animal slaughtering and processing	11,627	11,874	2%
3327	Machine shops and threaded product mfg.	336	365	9%
3331	Ag., construction, and mining machinery mfg.	615	668	9%
336411	Aircraft Manufacturing	N/A	N/A	N/A
4842	Specialized freight trucking	1,307	1,414	8%
5412	Accounting and bookkeeping services	1,339	1,445	8%
5415	Computer systems design and related services	569	667	17%
5511	Management of companies and enterprises	967	1,101	14%
5611	Office administrative services	625	951	52%
6111	Elementary and secondary schools	14,785	15,342	4%
6211	Offices of physicians	3,045	3,732	23%
6213	Offices of other health practitioners	975	1,226	26%
6214	Outpatient care centers	663	861	30%
6216	Home health care services	2,576	3,422	33%
6221	General medical and surgical hospitals	6,851	7,239	6%
6233	Continuing care, assisted living facilities	579	667	15%
6244	Child day care services	1,320	1,416	7%
8111	Automotive repair and maintenance	1,863	2,034	9%
8113	Commercial machinery repair and maintenance	667	805	21%
9000	Government, Federal, State, and Local	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: Texas Workforce Commission Labor Market Career Information

The “local wisdom” gathered through this process is used to validate and/or update statistical data, and results in a more complete picture of labor market needs considered in the development of this Plan. Labor market information is also gained through data analysis and input is considered in the development of priorities for the identified workforce needs. The Panhandle Workforce Development Board approves recommended In-Demand Industries and Target Occupations, for WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker program training, as well as In-Demand Occupations and related Workforce Development strategies for incorporation into this Plan.

**4(b). List of Panhandle WDA In-Demand Occupations:**

In-Demand occupations meet the following criteria: Texas Workforce Commission projects 15 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.

<b>Occ Code</b>	<b>Occupational Title</b>	<b>2017 Mean Hourly Wage</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2016</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2026</b>	<b>Annual Transfers from Occupation</b>	<b>Annual Change in Employment (Growth)</b>	<b>Total Annual Openings</b>
35-3021	Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food	\$9.38	5,038	6,583	538	154	1,206
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	\$13.04	6,155	6,534	504	38	944
41-2011	Cashiers	\$9.94	5,175	5,066	469	-11	939
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	\$11.54	2,981	3,695	379	71	697
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	\$15.75	5,853	5,944	337	9	692
45-2093	Farmworkers, Farm, Ranch, and Aquacultural Animals	\$14.85	3,719	4,373	461	65	674
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	\$20.45	4,831	4,960	308	13	529
51-3022	Meat, Poultry, and Fish Cutters and Trimmers	\$13.75	4,044	4,136	312	9	505
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	\$11.62	3,328	3,597	218	27	470
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	\$14.25	2,728	2,935	242	21	403

<b>Occ Code</b>	<b>Occupational Title</b>	<b>2017 Mean Hourly Wage</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2016</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2026</b>	<b>Annual Transfers from Occupation</b>	<b>Annual Change in Employment (Growth)</b>	<b>Total Annual Openings</b>
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	\$14.88	2,688	2,910	210	22	375
39-9021	Personal Care Aides	\$9.29	2,078	2,538	139	46	369
43-5081	Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	\$12.69	2,369	2,573	176	20	331
43-6014	Secretaries & Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, & Executive	\$15.34	3,306	3,101	168	-20	321
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	\$18.13	2,343	2,342	113	0	258
47-2061	Construction Laborers	\$14.94	2,607	2,567	170	-4	256
29-1141	Registered Nurses	\$30.93	3,660	4,226	86	57	256
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	\$11.93	1,314	1,720	121	41	251
37-2012	Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	\$9.24	1,890	1,918	106	3	250
39-9011	Childcare Workers	\$9.35	1,810	1,698	109	-11	241
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	\$57.04	2,436	2,759	155	32	241
31-1014	Nursing Assistants	\$12.56	1,799	1,956	95	16	225
41-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	\$21.52	2,425	2,228	157	-20	223
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	\$16.67	1,970	2,163	115	19	218
43-6013	Medical Secretaries	\$14.09	1,505	1,814	87	31	207
35-2021	Food Preparation Workers	\$10.54	999	1,157	94	16	196

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41-4012	Sales Rep., Wholesale & Manufacturing, Except Tech. & Scientific Products	\$32.89	1,798	1,895	124	10	195
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Ed.	-	2,481	2,616	94	14	192
37-3011	Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	\$13.16	1,571	1,528	111	-4	179
41-3099	Sales Representatives, Services, All Other	\$21.95	1,301	1,437	118	14	175
25-3098	Substitute Teachers	\$10.16	1,564	1,562	73	0	168
33-9032	Security Guards	\$20.78	1,218	1,271	88	5	167
25-9041	Teacher Assistants	-	1,529	1,603	71	7	164
53-3033	Light Truck or Delivery Services Drivers	\$15.27	1,436	1,492	92	6	160
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	-	2,083	2,199	80	12	158
45-2091	Agricultural Equipment Operators	\$13.55	817	1,011	104	19	156
33-3012	Correctional Officers and Jailers	\$19.27	1,845	1,829	83	-2	146
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	\$39.42	1,452	1,579	87	13	145
43-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	\$26.65	1,403	1,465	83	6	145

<b>Occ Code</b>	<b>Occupational Title</b>	<b>2017 Mean Hourly Wage</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2016</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2026</b>	<b>Annual Transfers from Occupation</b>	<b>Annual Change in Employment (Growth)</b>	<b>Total Annual Openings</b>
51-3023	Slaughterers and Meat Packers	\$14.07	1,163	1,188	90	2	145
35-2012	Cooks, Institution and Cafeteria	\$10.99	993	1,014	80	2	141
53-7061	Cleaners of Vehicles and Equipment	\$11.28	937	1,001	84	6	140
53-7064	Packers and Packagers, Hand	\$12.74	933	919	76	-1	138
47-2073	Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	\$19.66	1,011	1,140	75	13	129
51-9061	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers & Weighers	\$30.16	1,015	1,007	77	-1	118
47-1011	Supervisors of Construction and Extraction Workers	\$32.10	1,078	1,162	71	8	115
51-9111	Packaging and Filling Machine Operators & Tenders	\$16.88	905	950	62	4	110
35-2011	Cooks, Fast Food	\$9.33	711	767	59	6	108
31-9092	Medical Assistants	\$13.80	733	928	51	20	107
35-9021	Dishwashers	\$9.46	575	678	50	10	106
47-2111	Electricians	\$24.10	910	939	69	3	104
51-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	\$34.23	1,026	1,063	67	4	104
53-7051	Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	\$16.18	821	905	65	8	103
35-9011	Dining Room and Cafeteria Attendants	\$9.30	491	598	43	11	102

<b>Occ Code</b>	<b>Occupational Title</b>	<b>2017 Mean Hourly Wage</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2016</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2026</b>	<b>Annual Transfers from Occupation</b>	<b>Annual Change in Employment (Growth)</b>	<b>Total Annual Openings</b>
	and Bartender Helpers						
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	\$19.86	872	948	61	8	102
43-3071	Tellers	\$13.33	865	868	56	0	100
43-5061	Production, Planning, and Expediting Clerks	\$23.99	887	945	59	6	97
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	\$21.03	820	888	67	7	97
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	\$24.49	955	1,050	52	10	96
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	\$22.01	1,010	1,017	61	1	94
53-3031	Driver/Sales Workers	\$14.75	882	885	56	0	94
31-1011	Home Health Aides	\$9.29	587	758	34	17	92
43-4081	Hotel, Motel, and Resort Desk Clerks	\$9.14	478	573	52	10	91
35-3011	Bartenders	\$13.66	459	541	57	8	89
25-2022	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	-	1,127	1,189	43	6	87
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	\$21.30	1,146	1,191	41	4	86
41-2021	Counter and Rental Clerks	\$13.12	626	659	47	3	84
49-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics,	\$31.41	826	936	45	11	84

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	Installers, and Repairers						
41-3021	Insurance Sales Agents	\$27.20	793	852	44	6	83
43-4171	Receptionists and Information Clerks	\$11.71	597	633	41	4	83
13-1199	Business Operations Specialists, All Other	\$37.88	775	850	47	8	81
51-2092	Team Assemblers	-	651	677	48	3	79
33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	\$27.45	1,096	1,165	44	7	78
49-3031	Bus & Truck Mechanics & Diesel Engine Specialists	\$20.83	788	815	46	3	74
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	\$23.46	610	688	44	8	70
49-9098	Helpers-- Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Workers	\$13.42	436	514	36	8	67
45-2041	Graders and Sorters, Agricultural Products	\$12.11	470	480	45	1	65
47-2031	Carpenters	\$21.91	869	774	46	-10	64
47-5013	Service Unit Operators, Oil, Gas, and Mining	\$29.64	463	528	46	6	64
43-5071	Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks	\$16.09	598	630	37	3	64
39-5012	Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists	\$11.74	647	562	30	-8	62

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41-2022	Parts Salespersons	\$16.13	430	479	36	5	61
51-3092	Food Batchmakers	\$15.51	371	424	33	5	60
41-3031	Securities, Commodities, and Financial Services Sales Agents	\$41.59	618	641	42	2	60
13-1071	Human Resources Specialists	\$28.14	512	563	35	5	56
49-3093	Tire Repairers and Changers	\$12.89	381	431	35	5	55
49-9051	Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	\$21.94	586	645	32	6	54
43-9041	Insurance Claims and Policy Processing Clerks	\$15.46	402	504	25	10	54
35-2015	Cooks, Short Order	\$10.22	344	372	29	3	53
43-3021	Billing and Posting Clerks	\$15.98	450	510	26	6	52
31-9091	Dental Assistants	\$16.10	385	451	24	7	52
21-1021	Child, Family, and School Social Workers	\$19.56	430	482	29	5	50
39-9032	Recreation Workers	\$13.73	282	296	29	1	49
53-1031	First-Line Supervisors of Trans. & Material-Moving Machine & Vehicle Op.	-	410	452	30	4	48
21-1012	Educational, Guidance, School, and Vocational Counselors	\$26.44	402	428	27	3	45
39-3091	Amusement and Recreation Attendants	\$9.45	177	200	22	2	44

<b>Occ Code</b>	<b>Occupational Title</b>	<b>2017 Mean Hourly Wage</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2016</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2026</b>	<b>Annual Transfers from Occupation</b>	<b>Annual Change in Employment (Growth)</b>	<b>Total Annual Openings</b>
13-2072	Loan Officers	\$37.52	450	500	26	5	43
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	\$15.41	449	505	21	6	43
49-2022	Telecommunication s Equipment Installers & Repairers, Exc. Line Installers	\$23.50	434	422	30	-1	43
51-3011	Bakers	\$10.53	264	292	21	3	42
15-1151	Computer User Support Specialists	\$21.42	487	544	26	6	42
17-3022	Civil Engineering Technicians	\$19.71	433	464	24	3	41
11-9021	Construction Managers	\$48.29	751	678	32	-7	41
51-6011	Laundry and Dry-Cleaning Workers	\$12.33	319	310	21	-1	41
47-2141	Painters, Construction and Maintenance	\$16.40	624	542	29	-8	41
27-3031	Public Relations Specialists	\$24.83	370	412	26	4	41
21-1093	Social and Human Service Assistants	\$14.83	300	344	23	4	41
53-3022	Bus Drivers, School or Special Client	\$13.39	338	338	14	0	40
47-2051	Cement Masons and Concrete Finishers	\$18.67	313	348	22	4	39
13-1151	Training and Development Specialists	\$33.33	322	375	22	5	38
49-3021	Automotive Body and Related Repairers	\$21.53	380	387	23	1	37
51-9011	Chemical Equipment	\$29.82	346	350	27	0	37

<b>Occ Code</b>	<b>Occupational Title</b>	<b>2017 Mean Hourly Wage</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2016</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2026</b>	<b>Annual Transfers from Occupation</b>	<b>Annual Change in Employment (Growth)</b>	<b>Total Annual Openings</b>
	Operators and Tenders						
11-9032	Education Admin., Elementary & Secondary	-	448	471	21	2	36
39-9031	Fitness Trainers and Aerobics Instructors	\$14.97	203	210	21	1	36
53-7072	Pump Operators, Except Wellhead Pumpers	\$23.69	248	282	22	3	35
13-2082	Tax Preparers	\$18.27	362	346	18	-2	35
43-6011	Executive Secretaries and Executive Administrative Assistants	\$23.54	404	339	20	-6	34
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	\$44.60	345	407	18	6	34
27-1026	Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers	\$14.12	401	376	22	-2	34
53-6031	Automotive and Watercraft Service Attendants	\$11.28	180	204	21	2	33
41-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Non-Retail Sales Workers	\$35.16	498	419	26	-8	33
51-9122	Painters, Transportation Equipment	\$17.34	293	308	22	2	33
53-7073	Wellhead Pumpers	\$26.71	229	266	20	4	33
33-2011	Firefighters	\$26.93	454	479	20	2	32
51-4041	Machinists	\$22.45	266	303	18	4	32
49-9012	Control and Valve Installers and	\$21.95	347	376	18	3	30

<b>Occ Code</b>	<b>Occupational Title</b>	<b>2017 Mean Hourly Wage</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2016</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2026</b>	<b>Annual Transfers from Occupation</b>	<b>Annual Change in Employment (Growth)</b>	<b>Total Annual Openings</b>
	Repairers, Except Mechanical Door						
51-8092	Gas Plant Operators	\$32.56	284	290	22	1	30
13-1161	Market Research Analysts & Marketing Specialists	\$31.02	212	279	17	7	30
41-9022	Real Estate Sales Agents	\$46.52	475	383	17	-9	30
47-2131	Insulation Workers, Floor, Ceiling, and Wall	\$16.08	242	265	20	2	29
13-1111	Management Analysts	\$35.15	346	344	18	0	29
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	\$29.26	173	223	15	5	29
43-5052	Postal Service Mail Carriers	\$23.77	379	406	11	3	29
25-3097	Teachers and Instructors, All Other, Except Substitute Teachers	-	259	268	12	1	29
27-2022	Coaches and Scouts	-	219	219	16	0	28
37-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Housekeeping and Janitorial Workers	\$18.12	294	268	17	-3	28
39-3031	Ushers, Lobby Attendants, and Ticket Takers	\$9.52	117	113	13	0	28
51-3021	Butchers and Meat Cutters	\$12.59	177	209	15	3	27
21-2011	Clergy	\$26.22	210	240	14	3	27
17-3029	Engineering Technicians, Except Drafters, AO	\$35.63	294	308	16	1	27

<b>Occ Code</b>	<b>Occupational Title</b>	<b>2017 Mean Hourly Wage</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2016</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2026</b>	<b>Annual Transfers from Occupation</b>	<b>Annual Change in Employment (Growth)</b>	<b>Total Annual Openings</b>
47-3015	Helpers--Pipelayers, Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	\$13.73	157	188	17	3	27
23-1011	Lawyers	\$57.08	701	676	15	-2	27
49-9043	Maintenance Workers, Machinery	\$20.58	239	262	14	2	27
13-1023	Purchasing Agents, exc. Wholesale, Retail & Farm.	-	280	302	16	2	27
17-3031	Surveying and Mapping Technicians	\$22.31	232	256	17	2	27
15-1121	Computer Systems Analysts	\$34.11	320	368	15	5	26
53-7011	Conveyor Operators and Tenders	\$14.41	194	196	16	0	26
47-5021	Earth Drillers, Except Oil and Gas	\$20.33	198	236	17	4	26
53-7032	Excavating and Loading Machine and Dragline Operators	\$17.51	213	238	16	2	26
43-6012	Legal Secretaries	\$17.50	327	272	16	-6	26
43-4151	Order Clerks	\$17.58	226	231	15	0	26
47-2071	Paving, Surfacing, and Tamping Equipment Operators	\$18.38	207	242	15	4	26
25-3021	Self-Enrichment Education Teachers	\$21.90	222	231	11	1	26
43-3011	Bill and Account Collectors	\$15.99	241	242	16	0	25
47-4041	Hazardous Materials Removal Workers	\$30.64	205	215	16	1	25

<b>Occ Code</b>	<b>Occupational Title</b>	<b>2017 Mean Hourly Wage</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2016</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2026</b>	<b>Annual Transfers from Occupation</b>	<b>Annual Change in Employment (Growth)</b>	<b>Total Annual Openings</b>
51-3093	Food Cooking Machine Operators and Tenders	\$13.38	178	181	14	0	24
13-1131	Fundraisers	\$26.89	203	236	14	3	24
13-1041	Compliance Officers	\$27.93	240	266	13	3	23
11-3031	Financial Managers	\$57.04	221	270	12	5	23
53-1021	First-Line Supervisors of Helpers, Laborers, and Material Movers, Hand	-	199	214	14	2	23
11-9051	Food Service Managers	\$28.50	239	227	17	-1	23
17-2141	Mechanical Engineers	\$42.87	275	321	12	5	23
49-3042	Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines	\$23.61	209	233	14	2	23
53-7081	Refuse and Recyclable Material Collectors	\$14.29	168	185	13	2	23
53-3041	Taxi Drivers and Chauffeurs	\$13.19	228	228	9	0	23
11-3011	Administrative Services Managers	\$44.10	230	260	12	3	22
29-2041	Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics	\$19.69	359	367	15	1	22
33-9092	Lifeguards, Ski Patrol, and Other Recreational Protective Service	\$9.75	83	92	9	1	22
33-9099	Protective Service Workers, All Other	\$13.61	82	90	9	1	22

<b>Occ Code</b>	<b>Occupational Title</b>	<b>2017 Mean Hourly Wage</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2016</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2026</b>	<b>Annual Transfers from Occupation</b>	<b>Annual Change in Employment (Growth)</b>	<b>Total Annual Openings</b>
43-5032	Dispatchers, Except Police, Fire, and Ambulance	\$22.65	214	221	12	1	21
49-2098	Security and Fire Alarm Systems Installers	\$18.84	164	185	13	2	21
25-2054	Special Education Teachers, Secondary School	-	278	292	10	1	21
51-8031	Water and Wastewater Treatment Plant and System Operators	\$20.36	267	256	14	-1	21
17-2071	Electrical Engineers	\$49.15	252	282	11	3	20
27-1024	Graphic Designers	\$18.13	214	211	12	0	20
47-5081	Helpers--Extraction Workers	\$14.54	130	161	13	3	20
11-2022	Sales Managers	\$54.05	209	231	13	2	20
47-2211	Sheet Metal Workers	\$28.55	168	183	12	2	20
45-2011	Agricultural Inspectors	-	132	144	12	1	19
13-1031	Claims Adjusters, Examiners, and Investigators	\$27.82	180	209	11	3	19
43-4199	Information and Record Clerks, All Other	\$18.16	151	162	10	1	19
43-4131	Loan Interviewers and Clerks	\$20.29	168	195	10	3	19
29-2071	Medical Records and Health Information Technicians	\$18.43	269	301	8	3	19

<b>Occ Code</b>	<b>Occupational Title</b>	<b>2017 Mean Hourly Wage</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2016</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2026</b>	<b>Annual Transfers from Occupation</b>	<b>Annual Change in Employment (Growth)</b>	<b>Total Annual Openings</b>
25-2011	Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	\$15.58	185	192	10	1	19
51-7011	Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters	\$13.75	170	175	10	0	18
43-4031	Court, Municipal, and License Clerks	\$14.63	197	207	8	1	18
25-4021	Librarians	\$25.87	170	182	7	1	18
51-9023	Mixing and Blending Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	\$17.12	163	166	12	0	18
43-3051	Payroll and Timekeeping Clerks	\$18.04	180	182	10	0	18
29-1051	Pharmacists	\$57.02	328	354	7	3	18
51-9199	Production Workers, All Other	\$19.41	161	159	12	0	18
15-1152	Computer Network Support Specialists	\$26.66	171	201	10	3	17
21-1019	Counselors, All Other	\$29.79	166	171	11	0	17
43-9021	Data Entry Keyers	\$16.09	209	163	12	-5	17
49-3041	Farm Equipment Mechanics and Service Technicians	\$22.98	142	161	10	2	17
25-9031	Instructional Coordinators	\$27.91	184	189	8	0	17
29-2057	Ophthalmic Medical Technicians	\$19.95	175	207	8	3	17
11-9141	Property, Real Estate & Community Assoc. Mgr.	\$24.37	303	259	9	-4	17
29-1126	Respiratory Therapists	\$24.90	229	281	6	5	17

<b>Occ Code</b>	<b>Occupational Title</b>	<b>2017 Mean Hourly Wage</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2016</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2026</b>	<b>Annual Transfers from Occupation</b>	<b>Annual Change in Employment (Growth)</b>	<b>Total Annual Openings</b>
47-2181	Roofers	\$16.34	172	168	12	0	17
41-4011	Sales Rep., Wholesale & Manufacturing, Technical & Scientific Products	\$63.96	139	155	10	2	17
53-3021	Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity	\$15.71	125	136	5	1	16
25-2032	Career/Technical Education Teachers, Secondary School	-	211	220	8	1	16
17-2051	Civil Engineers	\$46.27	170	201	9	3	16
13-1051	Cost Estimators	\$35.50	138	153	9	2	16
11-9033	Education Administrators, Postsecondary	\$46.17	215	220	10	0	16
21-1022	Healthcare Social Workers	\$23.48	132	151	9	2	16
43-4111	Interviewers, Except Eligibility and Loan	\$15.47	123	134	8	1	16
25-4031	Library Technicians	\$11.40	108	114	6	1	16
25-1072	Nursing Instructors and Teachers, Postsecondary	-	157	187	7	3	16
29-1123	Physical Therapists	\$40.76	246	295	6	5	16
43-5031	Police, Fire, and Ambulance Dispatchers	\$17.81	169	180	9	1	16
15-1132	Software Developers, Applications	\$37.74	163	210	9	5	16
47-2221	Structural Iron and Steel Workers	\$21.19	122	145	10	2	16
29-2055	Surgical Technologists	\$19.42	158	180	8	2	16

<b>Occ Code</b>	<b>Occupational Title</b>	<b>2017 Mean Hourly Wage</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2016</b>	<b>Annual Average Employment 2026</b>	<b>Annual Transfers from Occupation</b>	<b>Annual Change in Employment (Growth)</b>	<b>Total Annual Openings</b>
25-1121	Art, Drama, and Music Teachers, Postsecondary	-	177	190	7	1	15
49-2094	Electrical and Electronics Repairers, Commercial and Industrial Equipment	\$23.25	139	155	9	2	15
25-2012	Kindergarten Teachers, Except Special Education	-	140	147	8	1	15
43-4121	Library Assistants, Clerical	\$11.63	96	103	6	1	15
21-1014	Mental Health Counselors	-	129	138	9	1	15
15-1142	Network and Computer Systems Administrators	\$33.77	236	247	11	1	15
17-2171	Petroleum Engineers	\$82.93	189	213	9	2	15
29-2034	Radiologic Technologists	\$24.77	223	255	6	3	15
41-9099	Sales and Related Workers, All Other	\$13.25	118	120	9	0	15
37-1012	Supervisors of Landscaping, Lawn Service & Groundskeeping Workers	\$24.25	212	185	12	-3	15

Source: Texas Workforce Commission Labor Market and Career Information (LMCI)

**4(c). List of Panhandle WDA In-Demand Industries and Associated Target Occupations:**

New In-Demand Industries and New Associated Target Occupations are **Bolded**.

NAICS Code*	In-Demand Industry	Associated Target Occupations**
2111	Oil & Gas Extraction	<b>Chemical Equipment Operators and Tenders Maintenance Workers, Machinery</b>
<b>2381</b>	<b>Foundation, Structure, and Building Exterior Contractors</b>	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 Truck & Tractor Operators Industrial Machinery Mechanics
<b>3327</b>	<b>Machine Shops; Turned Product; and Screw, Nut, and Bolt Manufacturing</b>	Machinists
3331	Agriculture, Construction, & Mining Machinery Manufacturing	Industrial Machinery Mechanics Machinists Welders, Cutters, Solderers, & Brazers
<b>336411</b>	<b>Aircraft Manufacturing</b>	Aircraft Mechanics & Service Technicians
<b>4842</b>	<b>Specialized Freight Trucking</b>	Bus & Truck Mechanic & Diesel Engine Specialists Industrial Truck & Tractor Operators Heavy and Tractor Trailer Truck Drivers
<b>5412</b>	<b>Accounting, Tax Preparation, Bookkeeping, and Payroll Services</b>	Accountants Auditors Bookkeeping, Accounting, & Auditing Clerks
5415	Computer Systems Design & Related Services	Computer User Support Specialists Network & Computer Systems Administrators
5511	Management of Companies & Enterprises	Accountants & Auditors Bookkeeping, Accounting & Auditing Clerks <b>First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers</b> Food Service Managers General & Operations Managers
5611	Office Administrative Services	Bookkeeping, Accounting & Auditing Clerks <b>First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers</b>
6111	Elementary, <b>Middle</b> , and Secondary Schools, Public & Private	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education Food Service Managers <b>Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education</b> Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education
6211	Offices of Physicians	Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses Medical Assistants Medical & Clinical Laboratory Technicians Medical Records & Health Information Technicians Nursing Assistants Radiologic Technologists and Technicians Registered Nurses

NAICS Code*	In-Demand Industry	Associated Target Occupations**
6213	Offices of Other Health Practitioners	Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses Medical Assistants Medical & Clinical Laboratory Technicians Medical Records & Health Information Technicians Nursing Assistants Physical Therapist Assistants Radiologic Technologists and Technicians
6214	Outpatient Care Centers	Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses Medical Assistants Medical Records & Health Information Technicians Nursing Assistants Physical Therapist Assistants Registered Nurses
6216	Home Health Care Services	Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses Medical Assistants Medical Records & Health Information Technicians Nursing Assistants Physical Therapist Assistants Registered Nurses
6221	General Medical & Surgical Hospitals, Public & Private	Food Service Managers Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses Medical & Clinical Laboratory Technicians Medical Records & Health Information Technicians 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 Records & Health Information Technicians Nursing Assistants Physical Therapist Assistants Registered Nurses
6244	Child Day Care Services	<b>Childcare Workers</b>
8111	Automotive Repair & Maintenance	Automotive Service Technicians & Mechanics 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	Industrial Machinery Mechanics
9000	Government: Federal, State, & Local	Correctional Officers and Jailers Firefighters Police & Sheriff's Patrol Officers

Source: Texas Workforce Commission Labor Market and Career Information (LMCI)

\* North American Industry Classification System

\*\* While only listed once, several Panhandle WDA Target Occupations are associated with multiple Panhandle WDA In-Demand Industries. The associated list above is abbreviated to show examples for reference.

## 5. List of Panhandle WDA Target Occupations:

New Target Occupations are **Bolded**.

<b>SOC* Code</b>	<b>Target Occupation</b>	<b>SOC* Code</b>	<b>Target Occupation</b>
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	29-2061	Licensed Vocational Nurses
49-3011	Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians	51-4041	Machinists
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	<b>49-9043</b>	<b>Maintenance Workers, Machinery</b>
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting and Auditing Clerks	31-9092	Medical Assistants
49-3031	Bus and Truck Mechanic & Diesel Engine Specialists	29-2012	Medical & Clinical Laboratory Technicians
47-2031	Carpenters	29-2071	Medical Records and Health Information Technicians
<b>51-9011</b>	<b>Chemical Equipment Operators and Tenders</b>	<b>25-2022</b>	<b>Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education</b>
<b>39-9011</b>	<b>Childcare Workers</b>	49-3042	Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics
15-1151	Computer User Support Specialists	15-1142	Network and Computer Systems Administrators
33-3012	Correctional Officers & Jailers	31-1014	Nursing Assistants
<b>31-9091</b>	<b>Dental Assistants</b>	29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians
47-2111	Electricians	31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters
33-2011	Fire Fighters	33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers
<b>43-1011</b>	<b>First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers</b>	29-2034	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians
11-9051	Food Service Managers	29-1141	Registered Nurses
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	29-1126	Respiratory Therapists
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics	25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	53-3032	Truck Drivers, Heavy/Tractor-Trailer
53-7051	Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers

Source: Texas Workforce Commission Labor and Market Career Information (LMCI)

\*Standard Occupational Code

## **6. Analysis of Knowledge and Skills Needed to Meet Employment Needs of Employers:**

Employer engagement is the key to meeting the myriad of Panhandle regional workforce needs. Identifying appropriate operational strategies that lead to attainment of the goals of this Plan involves examining gaps in skills and services in the local labor market.

To understand those challenges, Panhandle Workforce Development Board 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 Texas Workforce Commission, other State agencies, and federal and local resources.

The Workforce Solutions Panhandle 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.

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.

## **7. Analysis of Regional Workforce:**

The size and scale of the Panhandle region, with its 26 counties encompassing 26,000 square miles, presents obvious geographic limitations. The rural areas with the most need for workers yet have the smallest labor force. Although pockets of rebound activity have been recently observed, the prior regional downturn in oil and gas production have impacted the rural areas the most, with substantial layoffs and few new jobs to replace those that were 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 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.

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, which impacts increasing poverty numbers in our region due the relatively lower wages paid in these areas.

The need exists in the Panhandle WDA 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 our 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 Panhandle WDA workforce development 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, i.e. the Amarillo MSA had the lowest unemployment rate every month for last 18 months. 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 economically and personally rewarding benefits of staying in or returning to Amarillo is another effective approach.

Local labor market needs provide the core direction for Panhandle workforce investments. To understand the region's skill needs, Panhandle Workforce Development Board and Workforce Solutions Panhandle 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 in the Panhandle WDA.

As previously noted, the enormity 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 and one itinerate location. Our 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 over the last two years have led the Panhandle Workforce Development Board to purchase a second, smaller mobile unit, which will be more cost effective to operate and staff, as described in the Strategic section of this Plan.

#### **8. Analysis of Workforce Development Activities Including Education and Training:**

The strengths of workforce activities in our 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 is the mandated relocation of the Amarillo Workforce Solutions Panhandle 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 going from a state-owned building with virtually zero costs, to leasing suitable office space in an expensive commercial environment, with marginal cost offset, workforce service delivery will be severely impacted. Securing a new facility will, however, offer the potential to achieve a long desired goal of co-housing local Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services staff with Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff to provide enhanced workforce services to individuals with disabilities, such as quality employment services and suitable job referrals, appropriate occupational training opportunities. The potential exists for Workforce Solutions staff and local employers to increase their education and knowledge of VR, and the unique employment issues individuals who have disabilities regularly encounter.

Collaboration and joint planning with Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Texas Workforce Commission continues on an effective transition plan 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. 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

Mechanics reinforce the Panhandle Workforce Development Board's goals of creating a qualified, vital workforce.

- Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff continue to collaborate with Vocational Rehabilitation 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 to develop opportunities for these students to continue gaining valuable work experience and soft skills through other avenues, building 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 Panhandle WDA, 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.
- 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;
- 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;
- The Panhandle region's rural workforce service delivery system will grow in the capacity to serve individuals by common appointment scheduling and regularly scheduled visits to more rural locations for the mobile workforce units, as previously described.

The capacity of the Panhandle WDA to provide workforce development activities to address weaknesses are described in the Operational Section of this Plan.

## **Part B: Operational Elements**

This section of the Panhandle Workforce Development Area Integrated Plan outlines operational strategies designed to lead to attainment of the Plan's strategic goals and objectives. It describes the local workforce development system, the programs and services to be provided to specific populations, and workforce staff support and promotion of state-operated programs and technology to be applied to service delivery.

### **Description of the Workforce Development System**

#### **1(a). Required partner/programs included in the system:**

- 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.

**1(b). 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 Panhandle Workforce Development Board will support the Texas Workforce Commission State Plan strategy through continued and strong collaboration among Workforce Solutions Panhandle 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, as further described in this section of the Plan.

**2(a). Expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services:**

Workforce Solutions Panhandle Business Services and Panhandle Workforce Development Board 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 Workforce Solutions Panhandle office in Amarillo and online on the updated Workforce Solutions Panhandle website.

**2(b). Career pathways and co-enrollment in core programs:**

Workforce Solutions Panhandle case management staff are well trained in assessing customer workforce needs and collaborating with customers to arrive at employment plans which meet the customers immediate and future needs. Staff works 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. Panhandle Workforce Development Board policy exists for exploring community partners and agencies which may assist in meeting the needs of customers for training and employment.

**2(c). Improve 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 WDA. Working with postsecondary institutions to develop more training opportunities will involve 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. Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff will assist postsecondary providers in pursuing these opportunities.

**3. 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.**

**Strategies and Services Used in the Local Area**

**4(a). Engagement of employers:**

Employment Services staff and the Business Service team at Workforce Solutions Panhandle focus on activities that help small, medium and large employers find qualified workers. Employer-serving staff members meet monthly to share information about employers, marketing activities and upcoming events. Information from these meetings is shared among Workforce Solutions Panhandle program managers, provided to Panhandle Workforce Development Board staff for planning and policy development, and incorporated into training for other staff members.

A large part of employer services involves recruitment of qualified workers, and includes the following key components:

- Training employers to effectively use WorkInTexas.com and fully utilize all services available in the workforce system;
- Assisting employers with the development of job descriptions and posting openings in WorkInTexas.com;
- Promptly generating automated and staff-referred matching of applicants to openings;
- Ensuring virtual availability of staff to provide personal assistance to employers by phone or email;
- Advertising job openings through social media;
- Conducting job fairs, both general and targeted to one or more employers;
- Screening applicants, including collection and review of paper or online applications, and administer employer-specified assessments (in compliance with Texas Workforce Commission policy);
- Providing interviewing and testing space at no cost to employers;

- Educating employers about and promote the use of Work Opportunity Tax Credits, and assist employers with documentation when appropriate;
- Providing businesses with short-term, “tryout” placements of potentially qualified workers eligible for such placements, to reduce the risk to employers of hiring entry-level workers;
- Increasing training and education opportunities and utilize innovation partnership grants to upgrade skills and earning potential for incumbent workers, and meet the changing needs of local business and industry;
- Funding employer-specific training to bring a candidate’s skills up to the level needed by the employer, including subsidized OJT, customized training, or off-the-shelf college coursework;
- Placing priority on marketing and providing services to small- and medium-size businesses without dedicated human resources professionals; and
- Collaborating with employers on layoff aversion strategies to reduce potential loss of jobs and reduce unemployment.

Labor market information and assistance with economic development activities, and identifying and meeting business and employer hiring needs is a priority, and a critical part of enhancing economic development, in the Panhandle region. The Panhandle Workforce Development Board has engaged a labor market information specialist to coordinate information gathering and efforts on the delivery of workforce services to business, public, and educational partners, in conjunction with Workforce Development Program service delivery staff, and Business Services staff. This individual actively supports and advances collaboration between these entities, conducts market research and analysis, and implements a regional business engagement plan designed to create and improve opportunities for developing and implementing skills development initiatives, especially among small employers, and employers in demand industries and occupations.

Continuing to develop business intermediaries, such as non-profit organizations, industry alliances, and labor unions, will enhance business services and activities to employers and job seekers. Working with these partners to develop training initiatives in response to current demand and growing trends will better meet employers’ needs. Priorities for achieving these aims include the following:

- Providing information about economic conditions and labor market data to assist employers and economic developers with workforce planning, recruitment and competition;
- Developing customized labor market reports to meet specific needs of employers and economic developers;
- Teaching employers and economic developers how to utilize labor market information tools available through Texas Workforce Commission and other sources;
- Supporting business expansion and location in the region in coordination with economic developers, including assistance in packaging labor market information and workforce services to be offered to business prospects;

- Reviewing human resource needs with small and medium-size employers without human resource professionals and provide needed services;
- Informing educational institutions of the skill needs of employers that are gained through labor market analysis and direct employer input;
- Participating in the activities of chambers of commerce throughout the region;
- Visiting business sites throughout the region to market employer services, assess needs, and provide customized solutions; and
- Providing or refer employers to information about employment law.

Training assistance provided to employers includes the following:

- Funding employer-specific training through the employer or a postsecondary provider, where the employer agrees to hire that eligible worker upon successful completion (OJT or customized training);
- Funding employer-specified training for groups of adults and dislocated workers, where the employer agrees to interview every individual who completes training for potential hire;
- Informing educational institutions of the skill needs of employers to encourage the development of applicable training programs;
- Promoting state-operated programs that support training, including Skills Development and Self-Sufficiency Funds, and Skills for Small Business; and
- Supporting community colleges in the development, application for and implementation of Skills Development, Self-Sufficiency and federal training grants, including assistance in building employer consortia.

#### **4(b). Needs of Businesses:**

Employer engagement is the key to meeting our regional workforce needs. Our Business Advisory Committee assists and informs the Panhandle Workforce Development Board 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 Panhandle Board and non-Board members, private sector, Board staff, and Workforce Solutions Panhandle 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 Panhandle Workforce Development Board 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.

**4(c). Coordination with workforce development programs and economic development:**

In alignment with the State WIOA Plan, Panhandle Workforce Development Board 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 our region.

This RWN 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 included 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.

**4(d). The workforce system and unemployment insurance programs:**

Efforts to develop and strengthen linkages between the workforce system and unemployment insurance programs include establishing the Business Advisory Committee to assist the Panhandle Workforce Development Board in designing and delivering services based on business and industry needs, including those of customers recently separated from employment.

**5. Services for employer customers:**

Services for the Panhandle Workforce Development Board’s employer customers include recruitment assistance, labor market and economic information, support for economic development activities, and analysis and training to address skills gaps in the labor force.

Alternative paths to economic self-sufficiency will include leveraging federal assistance programs and identifying local resources which foster and support microbusiness development and creates new jobs, and encouraging entrepreneurship to reach financial security, such as tapping into an existing business incubator program at a local university for technical support and creating joint ventures.

### **Description of the Workforce Delivery System**

#### **6(a). Continuous Improvement of Eligible Providers:**

The Panhandle Workforce Development Board adopted local performance requirements for the determination of initial eligibility of Eligible Training Provider System (ETPS) program applications per Texas Workforce Commission'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 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 Panhandle Workforce Development Board:

- A 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 Panhandle WDA Board uses several strategies to increase the number of providers and training options for customers, and to assure that local training is available, as follows:

- Training providers are solicited annually through publication of a legal notice;

- 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 Panhandle WDA 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 Eligible Training Provider System (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); and
- 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 Board. Programs that consistently produce student completions that lead to training-related employment are retained on Texas Workforce Commission's Eligible Training Provider System list.

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, Panhandle Workforce Development Board staff will conduct an evaluation with the provider and the Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff to determine what improvements, if any, are necessary to increase the program's WIOA student success rate.

To ensure continuous improvement of Eligible Training Provider System 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 Board for updates to the Target Occupations list.

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 Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff.

**6(b). 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 and one itinerate location. 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 aforementioned second, new, smaller mobile workforce unit will be more cost effective to operate and staff. Following the placement of the new mobile unit into service, the older mobile unit will 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 new Rural Business Services Representative now in place is primarily responsible for conducting business services activities with a primary focus on connecting with and serving rural employers by working closely with Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff operating the Mobile Units to conduct activities that promote full utilization of both units in the rural communities, including 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 will be increased and enhanced through specific technology improvements, such as planned 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 advertising appropriate rural locations which offer free WiFi, 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 will expand and enhance service delivery to rural customers who do not reside within reasonable travel distance to any Workforce Solutions Panhandle office. Further strategies include:

- Market 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 as well;
- Maintain personal contact through the Workforce Solutions Panhandle Business Services team with employers in rural communities, assessing needs and developing customized solutions which address recruiting challenges and skill gaps;
- Regularly update the Workforce Solutions Panhandle website with more

interactive and easily accessed resources, such as job search training videos, and maintaining relevant content;

- Continue to host successful hiring events at rural locations; and
- Expand the quality and quantity of focused job fairs and career fairs in the rural communities, including involving specialized education programs as hosts.
- Continued analysis and local wisdom gained through practical experience enhances the set of operational strategies for serving rural communities to be implemented during this planning cycle. Investments will be made to market services to the public through multiple technologies and electronic media. Procurement of a social media specialist to guide the development and utilization of this resource, in collaboration with the Workforce Solutions Panhandle Business Services team, and promote workforce services throughout the region will be conducted. 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.

Hiring events for job openings, career fairs, and job fairs will focus on rural communities, although Amarillo will also be included in those communications. The Workforce Solutions Panhandle website will be redesigned to provide remote users services that are like those offered in the brick and mortar offices. New resources available on the website will include an improved user interface, more interactive activities such as job search training videos, and 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 Workforce Solutions Panhandle offices.

Workforce Solutions Panhandle Business Services members and other key staff continue to visit employers in our rural communities, assessing needs face-to-face and develop customized solutions which address recruiting and skill 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 new second mobile unit, offering computer access with Internet connectivity for accessing WorkInTexas.com and other employment services, will assure rural customers that Workforce Solutions Panhandle still has a demonstrated rural presence and can provide services in their communities.

**6(c). WIOA §188 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):**

The Panhandle WDA has been given a unique 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 Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services programs and staff to Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and the Workforce Solutions Panhandle offices. While the physical and financial issues associated with co-location and integration of VR Services staff and Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff is a daunting challenge to overcome, as mentioned prior, the intention is for the Panhandle region's rural office and itinerant site to grow in the capacity to serve individuals who have disabilities by common

appointment scheduling and regularly scheduled visits to many rural locations for the mobile workforce units, as previously described.

Through continued collaboration and joint planning with VR Services and TWC on 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. 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.

Vocational Rehabilitation 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 will 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 Workforce Solutions Panhandle 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 Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff on disability sensitivity and awareness;
- Assessment of adaptive technology needs at Workforce Solutions Panhandle 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 Panhandle Workforce Development Board and Workforce Solutions Panhandle will:

- Advertise and promote Vocational Rehabilitation (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;
- Provide disability sensibility and awareness training to Board and Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff;
- Request consultation on appropriate rehabilitation technology for workforce customers with disabilities;
- Provide additional adaptive equipment as determined necessary;
- Inform VR Services staff of scheduled Board meetings; and
- Implement the VR/Workforce Solutions Panhandle service strategies mentioned elsewhere in this Plan Modification.

**6(d). Workforce partners’ roles and resource contributions:**

The Panhandle Workforce Development Board coordinates with hundreds of public agencies, nonprofit organizations and private sector businesses in the region to carry out its mission. Following is a brief description of those which contribute the most financial support:

- The region’s three community colleges and the public 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 Board supports the community colleges’ Skills Development Fund and Self Sufficiency Fund 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), 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) is responsible for the area’s Head Start program;
- The Texas Health and Human Services Commission’s (HHSC’s) Texas Works Program provides financial support to welfare and SNAP families and supports Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff efforts to help these customers locate, enter and retain employment;
- The area’s Independent School Districts collaborate with the Board 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 may provide financial support for occupational training and related equipment, and business development that leads to increased numbers of jobs. EDC involvement in the development of this Plan assures workforce system alignment with local economic development goals to the extent possible; 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. Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff coordinate with over 100 faith and community based governmental and private organizations in the region to leverage resources on behalf of customers.

### **7. Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities:**

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, Workforce Solutions Panhandle 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 Panhandle WDA will continue 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 they need to succeed in a highly competitive business climate. To sustain and improve training and education services, the following strategies will be implemented or expanded in the next two years:

- Increase the number and quality of work-based training opportunities for job seekers and students, including youth internships, work experience, and customized OJT training;
- Provide increased work-readiness training options to job seekers;
- Continue 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;
- Maintain 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; and

- 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.

### **8. Rapid Response Activities:**

The Workforce Solutions Panhandle 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 Panhandle WDA 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, Texas Workforce Commission, and Workforce Solutions Panhandle 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 Adult Basic Education 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 Workforce Solutions Panhandle 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 Workforce Solutions Panhandle office or who are not based in Amarillo. We continue to explore paperless recordkeeping options, to effectively utilize staff time while providing customer services outside the Workforce Solutions Panhandle offices.

### **9. Youth Activities:**

The Panhandle WDA’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.

As previously described, Workforce Solutions Panhandle and Panhandle Workforce Development Board staff fully support “No Limits, No Excuses” 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.

Through our collaboration with the Texas Rural Alliance, 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, in the Panhandle, as described in the Plan

Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff based on the Amarillo College campus at a Career Center offer career counseling, financial aid, and tuition assistance for eligible youth and adults. 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, 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.

Workforce Solutions Panhandle 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 Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff and the Amarillo Area Center for Advanced Learning (AACAL) program on an event hosted by AACAL, which proved 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 was most valuable for two primary reasons: 1) the AACAL program director effectively used social media to promote the event prior to the date, and live streamed the event on the Periscope live video app to livestream the event while it was going on, and 2) the director’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 Panhandle Workforce Development Board 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 Workforce Solutions Panhandle website in a way that appeals to them and creates interest in using the website as a source for job market information. Local IT staff must have the skills to keep this approach fresh and relevant to youth.

WIOA youth program redesign in the Panhandle WDA 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. Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff will determine which elements would be most effective for youth through initial assessment, developing individualized service plans, and identifying career pathways. Staff will 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 will be 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 Workforce Solutions Panhandle Business Services team to identify these employers will help facilitate this process.

**10. Training assistance for job seekers includes the following:**

- Financial aid information and referral to training providers, including registered apprenticeship programs;
- 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;
- Adult literacy, ESL, basic education, and GED preparation—either by referral or intensive short-term classes for eligible individuals;
- Adult literacy, integrated ESL, and occupational skills instruction through community college programs;
- Activities leading to achievement of post-secondary, recognized credentials;
- Work-based training—either OJT or customized to fit specific employers’ needs;
- Innovation partnership grants to upgrade skills and earning potential for incumbent workers;
- Industry-Recognized Skills Certification Initiative Grants which provide short term courses through local colleges leading to certification completion and enhanced job placement opportunities; and
- Postsecondary occupational skills training at community colleges, career colleges or universities.

**11. Transportation and Other Supportive Services:**

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.

## **12. Customer Services for Job Seekers under Wagner Peyser:**

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 Panhandle WDA'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;
- Train 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;
- Provide 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 skill need;
- 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.

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. To address this issue, the following strategies will be implemented or expanded in the next three years:

- Seek out additional opportunities to further expand classroom capacity;
- Continue to phase in increases to the maximum reimbursement rates paid with workforce resources to providers caring for eligible children;
- Sustain efforts to support training and professional development for child care administrators and workers;
- Provide 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;
- Ensure 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
- Look for and invest in projects which improve child care quality.

### **13. Adult Education and Literacy (AEL):**

The Panhandle Workforce Development Board continues to develop, facilitate, and expand innovative partnerships between the Board and employers, community colleges, AEL providers, Workforce Solutions Panhandle and other stakeholders, to leverage resources for the provision and integration of an array of workforce and AEL services.

The Board 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 meets with Board and Workforce Solutions Panhandle 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 designated Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff co-located at Amarillo College and the Workforce Solutions Panhandle office to streamline and improve the referral process and track customer participation and success.

The Panhandle Workforce Development Board will identify a review team and implement the review of proposals for the local adult education competition based on Agency guidance.

Other important strategies include:

- Improve data collection methods which streamline customer intake and assessment processes, and which efficiently and accurately pinpoint intrinsic needs of eligible adult customers;
- Identify and develop 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;
- Enhance 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;
- Strengthen 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;
- Increase 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;
- 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;
- Increase 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;
- Concentrate 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;
- Utilize 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;
- Develop innovative methods for using current technology to increase customer

access to AEL services, including virtual learning and online classes; and

- Design and deliver 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
- Continue 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 Texas Workforce Commission (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.

#### **14. Executed Cooperative Agreements:**

This is not applicable (N/A) per Texas Workforce Commission as no Boards in Texas have these cooperative agreements in place, therefore, an answer to this planning element is not required.

#### **15. Disbursal of Grant Funds:**

Panhandle Regional Planning Commission (PRPC) is the grant recipient and administrative entity for the Panhandle Workforce Development Board and its partner group of chief elected officials, the Panhandle Workforce Development Consortium's Governing Body.

#### **16. Competitive Process for Awarding Contracts:**

PRPC's Procurement Manual is aligned with Texas Workforce Commission's Financial Manual for Grants & Contracts, to ensure that competitive processes are used to award grants and contracts. The contractor that staffs the Workforce Solutions Panhandle 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. Training procured outside the Eligible Training Provider System is solicited through a RFP process. Respondents are selected to match the needs of individual customers, with price comparisons when more than one provider offers the same training. 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 Workforce Solutions Panhandle contractor on behalf of workforce customers. These payments include training costs, supportive services, and child care fees.

#### **17. Performance:**

The Panhandle Workforce Development Board's methods for evaluating program performance involve review of local, state and federal expectations on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis. While Texas Workforce Commission continues to define and determine the applicable state performance measures under WIOA, the following methods for measuring and tracking

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 employer, job seeker, 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 Q2 Post Exit
- Adult Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit
- Adult Employed Q4 Post Exit
- Adult Credential Rate
- Dislocated Worker Employed Q2 Post Exit
- Dislocated Worker Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit
- Dislocated Worker Employed Q4 Post Exit
- Dislocated Worker Credential Rate
- Youth Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit
- Youth Employed/Enrolled Q4 Post Exit
- Youth 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 Panhandle Workforce Development Board 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 the Plan or policies submitted to the group for approval.

**18. Panhandle Workforce Development Board staff continues refining ongoing best practices** to remain a high-performing workforce development board area. Board staff work closely with the Workforce Solutions 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 Workforce Solutions Panhandle 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 Vocational Rehabilitation 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 AEL skills;
- Encouragement, creation, and support of labor market driven decisions for developing skills training and addressing labor force challenges;
- Strengthening of Board 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 Workforce Solutions Panhandle management and staff;
- Provision of active support to Workforce Solutions Panhandle management and staff including technical assistance, training, and guidance and clarification for Board policies;
- Communication to foster creative approaches to existing challenges and encourage inventive, unique ideas;
- Deliverance of Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff training that is timely, current, and relevant; and
- Obtain training for Board staff to fill in program management and knowledge gaps.

### **19. Individual Training Account (ITA):**

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

Workforce Solutions Panhandle office, and may be referred to program case management staff.

Initial assessment and objective assessment is conducted, and the information documented and entered into the TWIST system. Workforce Solutions Panhandle 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. Workforce Solutions Panhandle 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 Panhandle Workforce Development Board. Board staff compiles a list of training providers certified by Texas Workforce Commission through the Eligible Training Provider System (ETPS). The ETPS website provides information about these providers and is made available to each customer in Workforce Solutions Panhandle 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). Workforce 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:

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

## **20. Integrated Technology-Enabled Intake and Case Management System:**

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 enable the following:

1. Greatly 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;
2. Virtual services readily available through upgrading the Workforce Solutions Panhandle website, and marketing the availability of all workforce resources

through social media; and

3. Complete understanding and application of current capabilities enables 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 Workforce Solutions Panhandle 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.

**21. Ensuring that priority for adult individualized career services and training** services is given to recipients of public assistance and other low income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient is outlined under Panhandle Workforce Development Board policy consistent with WIOA §§134(c)(3)(E) and §680.600 of the Final Regulations, and Texas Workforce Commission Workforce Development (WD) letter 12-15 regarding WIOA Guidelines for Adults, Dislocated Worker, and Youth. Panhandle Workforce Development Board staff monitors and verify that Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff training has been provided in the subject area.

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

1. Established monetary limits for the total WIOA funded cost per participant for training and support services combined;
2. No limit on the amount for an ITA based on individual training provider cost;
3. 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
4. Exceptions regarding how ITA's are handled on an individual basis, per local policy.

**23. The overall goal of the Youth programs in the Panhandle WDA** 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:

1. 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;
2. 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;
3. Accessing alternative secondary school services or dropout recovery services where determined appropriate and necessary to keep youth engaged and connected;
4. Tutoring, remedial skills training, and instruction for dropout prevention and leading to attaining a secondary school diploma or recognized equivalent;
5. Retaining low-income youth in postsecondary training until completion, and providing short term work experience and paid internship opportunities that enhance completion and transition;
6. 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;
7. 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;
8. 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;
9. 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;
10. Affording appropriate guidance and referrals for counseling including drug or alcohol abuse to address and resolve individual needs of youth program participants;
11. Providing ready access to current relevant labor market information including Panhandle WDA specific demand occupations and industries, and career

counseling and exploration;

12. Assisting youth with improving and increasing financial literacy by providing relevant and relatable online instruction geared towards youth participants; and
13. Exploring and tapping into local entrepreneurship ventures including a university sponsored small business incubator program.

**24. The Panhandle Workforce Development Board is committed to reenergizing and refocusing efforts to create and utilize Registered Apprenticeship programs** to train individuals for skilled trades in high demand and high wage occupations, while they earn wages. The best opportunities for apprenticeship training in the Panhandle are in the fields of wind energy, industrial manufacturing, and industrial machinery repair.

Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff and the Business Services team collaborates 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 will strongly encourage and assist 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.

**25. The Panhandle Workforce Development Boards' strategy and commitment to Apprenticeship Texas** is based on detailed information and guidance personally provided by Texas Workforce Commission Apprenticeship staff. Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff and the Business Services team are collaborating to develop a strategic approach which involves:

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

### **Part C: Public Comment**

On February 8 and February 11, 2019, public notices of the Panhandle Workforce Development Area (PWDA) 2019 Two-Year Plan Modification availability were published in the Amarillo Globe-News and the Texas Register stating that the Plan Modification would be published on the PRPC website, beginning on February 11, 2019. On February 6, 2019, email notifications were sent to media contacts for Amarillo radio outlets and rural newspapers and publications.

Beginning on February 6, 2019, public comment was sought for the development of the PWDA 2019 Two-Year Plan Modification through public notices, open meetings, and discussions with workforce partners. No public comments have been received to date.

# Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC) Requirements Local Workforce Development Board Strategic Planning

## Part 1- Demonstrating Alignment with Texas' Strategic Plan for the Workforce System

### System Goal and Rationale:

#### Focus on Employers:

By accessing critical education and labor data sets, employers can better find and plan for skilled workers to meet their needs in both the immediate timeframe and the future. Through greater engagement with employers, education and training providers can better design career and technical education content and delivery options that are more aligned with industry needs. Providers can make adjustments in program content to benefit employers and students, as well as address both state and regional economic needs.

### Board Strategies / Actions / Anticipated Outcomes / Targets:

Employer engagement is the key to meeting our regional workforce needs. Identifying appropriate operational strategies that lead to attainment of the goals of this Integrated Plan 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 Texas Workforce Commission, other state agencies, and federal, local, and private resources, as described in this Modified Plan on pages 6, 28, and 41-42.

### System Goal and Rationale:

#### Engage in Partnerships:

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

### Board Strategies / Actions / Anticipated Outcomes / Targets:

The Panhandle Workforce Development Board develops and actively supports dynamic industry 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, thus enhancing employer engagement, as well as through the other methods described in this Modified Plan.

**System Goal 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.

**Board Strategies / Actions / Anticipated Outcomes / Targets:**

Positive relationships are sustained in the Panhandle WDA with all local training providers that offer training in target and in-demand occupations. Panhandle Workforce Development Board staff facilitates provider application to the Eligible Training Provider System for programs that will prepare students for the Target Occupations. Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff provides 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 delivers 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 Panhandle Board 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 applying for a Texas Workforce Commission grant for the purpose of assigning Outreach Specialists dedicated to connecting school counselors and students to resources to access local labor market tools and career exploration information. Further efforts in this area are outlined in this Modified Plan.

**System Goal 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.

**Board Strategies / Actions / Anticipated Outcomes / Targets:**

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 Workforce Solutions Panhandle staff with the means to quickly and accurately assess customer needs and provide seamless service delivery, while maintaining service priority requirements. An addition to creating new

elements in Panhandle WDA workforce development 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. Participation in the Regional Workforce Network as previously described in this Plan will promote and develop critical partnerships necessary for the successful application of other strategies for workforce development, as will other valuable approaches described further in this Plan Modification.

**Part 2 – Identifying Industries of Significance to the Regional Economy**  
**Descriptions of the top three industry clusters/sectors and occupations.**

1. The three key industry clusters or sectors within our workforce area are identified, including an explanation as to why those clusters or sectors are the key to our region, and the regional economy, are:
  - A. Production Support and Industrial Machinery Sector- Nearly every manufacturing industry in the region has machinery for a multitude of diversified products that requires skilled technicians to maintain, repair, and replace.
  - B. Distribution, Transportation and Logistics Sector- Investments in road infrastructure and distribution capabilities make the region uniquely equipped for continued economic development in this area. The region remains a vital transportation hub, and an epicenter for manufacturing and distribution to foreign and domestic markets.
  - C. Emerging Biotechnology, Life Sciences, and Medical Sector- the Panhandle is the central location for medical services in tristate area. This sector has sustained growth over time, in part due to retiring worker replacement, and to expansion of technically advanced services offered.
2. For each cluster/sector identified in Question 1, the top five occupations where employer demand exceeds the pool of available workforce or education program graduates or skilled applicants are identified, and labor market information data including job numbers, wages, and education required, and projected growth is provided:
  - A. Production Support and Industrial Machinery Sector:
    - Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers- Avg. Employment: 688; Hourly Wage: \$23.46; Postsecondary nondegree award; Projected Growth: 13%;
    - Industrial Machinery Mechanics- Avg. Employment: 1050; Hourly Wage: \$24.49; HS Diploma or equivalent required; Projected Growth: 10%;

- Machinists- Avg. Employment: 303; Hourly Wage: \$22.45; HS Diploma or equivalent required; Projected Growth: 14%;
- Maintenance Workers, Machinery-Avg. Employment: 262; Hourly Wage: \$20.58; HS Diploma or equivalent required; Projected Growth: 10%;
- Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics- Avg. Employment: 233; Hourly Wage: \$23.61; HS Diploma or equivalent required; Projected Growth: 12%;

B. Distribution, Transportation and Logistics Sector:

- Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics- Avg. Employment: 1017; Hourly Wage: \$22.01; Post-secondary non-degree award required; Projected Growth: 11%
- Bus & Truck Mechanics & Diesel Engine Specialists- Avg. Employment: 815; Hourly Wage: \$20.83; Associate's Degree; Projected Growth: 13%
- General and Operations Managers-Avg. Avg. Employment: 2759; Hourly Wage: \$57.04; HS Diploma or equivalent required; Projected Growth: 13%
- Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators- Avg. Employment: 905; Hourly Wage: \$16.18; HS Diploma or equivalent required; Projected Growth: 10%
- Heavy & Tractor Trailer Truck Drivers- Avg. Employment: 4960; Hourly Wage: \$20.45; Post-secondary non-degree award required; Projected Growth: 13%

C. Emerging Biotechnology, Life Sciences, and Medical Sector:

- Dental Assistants- Avg. Employment: 451; Hourly Wage: \$16.10; Post-secondary non-degree award required; Projected Growth: 17%
- Medical Assistants- Avg. Employment: 928; Hourly Wage: \$13.80; Post-secondary non-degree award required; Projected Growth: 27%
- Physical Therapist Assistants- Avg. Employment: 223; Hourly Wage: \$29.26; Associate's Degree; Projected Growth: 29%
- Radiologic Technologists- Avg. Employment: 255; Hourly Wage: \$24.77; Associate's Degree; Projected Growth: 14%
- Registered Nurses-Avg. Employment: 4226; Hourly Wage: \$30.93; Associate's degree required; Projected Growth: 16%

3. Strategies planned to address those occupations identified in Question 2 to reduce any worker shortages must include a successful approach to reducing a shortage of workers in any of the

identified sectors, which necessitates utilizing a labor market program specialist at the Board level who will conduct market research and analysis, and develop and implement a regional business engagement plan that creates and improve opportunities for developing and implementing skills development initiatives among employers in demand industries and occupations. Additional key strategies for these projected growth areas include:

- A. Production Support and Industrial Machinery Sector Strategy: Create alliances with new and existing industrial manufacturing employers to provide work-based or occupational training opportunities for industrial machinery mechanics utilizing WIOA funding as appropriate.
- B. Distribution, Transportation and Logistics Sector Strategy: Foster collaboration between employers and local colleges to provide required training through Industry- Recognized Skills Certification Initiative Grants, and occupational training utilizing WIOA funding as appropriate.
- C. Emerging Biotechnology, Life Sciences, and Medical Sector Strategy: Continue to engage medical industry employers to facilitate development of partnerships utilizing skills development grant funding to improve incumbent workers' skills to increase earning potential and enhance worker retainment, and tap into WIOA funding to train new workers to enter the field.