Comprehensive Communications Strategy

Gulf Coast Workforce Board and Workforce Solutions

May 2019

www.wrksolutions.com 1.888.469.JOBS (5627)

Workforce Solutions is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. **Relay Texas:** 1.800.735.2989 (TDD) 1.800.735.2988 (voice) or 711

A proud partner of the americanjobcenter network

Table of Contents

Introduction and background

How did we get here and where are we going?
From its inception, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's marketing communication efforts were largely reactionary and driven by necessity. Both the Gulf Coast Workforce Board and Workforce Solutions have now reached a level of business maturity in which we can be thoughtful, deliberate and proactive in our outreach efforts.

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board and Workforce Solutions are the result of action by the Texas Legislature in 1995 and a gradual development—over the past 20+ years—that has seen the integration of additional federal and state public dollars and resources into a comprehensive, region-wide workforce system. The Board is made up of volunteers appointed by chief elected officials to set the region's workforce agenda, guide the investment of public workforce dollars, and oversee the Workforce Solutions operating system. At the heart of the Board's mission is the creation of a market-driven, business-led service system that meets the needs of people by first understanding and addressing the needs of employers – the creators and keepers of the jobs.

Most importantly, the Workforce Board and Workforce Solutions believe that we are here to keep our region the best place to do business, to work, and to live – we are here to make a difference for the employers, people, and communities we serve.

When it began, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board consolidated a variety of service providers working in local communities under individual agency identities. Both the type and quality of service varied by provider and by location. First as Gulf Coast Careers, then The WorkSource and now Workforce Solutions, the Board established a franchise model designed to ensure consistent and quality service across the entire Houston-Gulf Coast region. The Gulf Coast Workforce Board contracts for the delivery of services under the name of Workforce Solutions.

The goal of this document is to provide a comprehensive marketing communications strategy that creates the structure for us to deliver messages that present a clear and consistent image across multiple communication channels for multiple audiences that support our desired results.

Sharing our story requires an understanding of this complex, unique and underestimated regional public workforce system.

Workforce Solutions

Our operating system reflects our two principal customers: employers and people. Workforce Solutions includes several related, interlocking components that work together to help employers meet their human resource needs and individuals build careers.

For Employers

- Employer Service – Dedicated to getting employers what they need in the way of skilled workers and HR support. Employer Service functions as the sales and marketing arm of Workforce Solutions.

- Early Education Quality – early education and child care providers are employers, and our work to improve the quality of early education directly affects the providers as well as their customers. Additionally, this investment helps working parents remain employed, helps employers reduce turnover by ensuring low-income parents have access to quality child care and supports the development of our future workforce.

For People

- The Career Office network – This network includes our local offices, vocational rehabilitation staff, the support center and payment office, and our youth projects. Daily, it carries out the biggest share of the system's work, helping individuals get a job, keep a job, or get a better job. This network also authorizes, provides and supports our multi-million dollar plus financial aid system.

- Adult Education – Although not formally recognized as Workforce Solutions, the adult education consortium connects to and supports the other parts of the region's workforce system. The providers and staff in the consortium are vitally important in ensuring our region has an educated workforce to meet employers' need for talent.

Size and Scope

Our 13-county Gulf Coast region includes 7.06 million residents and covers 12,000 square miles, which is roughly equivalent to the size of Maryland. The Gulf Coast is home to 3.2 million jobs and 130,000 employers that collectively paid-out $190 billion in wages and generated $490 billion in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2017. The region is poised to continue as one of the nation's job-creation centers as it is projected to add 556,000 jobs between 2016 and 2026 for a growth rate of 17.4 percent.

Our retail footprint includes 26 full-time offices and 11 part-time locations across the region, with the majority in Harris County.

In 2019, we have an operating budget of over $300 million to deliver the following results:

- Serve at least 27,367 employers and 425,000 individuals
- Ensure 14,562 of our employers return for service
- Assist in creating 3,300 new jobs
- Spend $15 million on scholarships for more than 5,000 individuals in high-skill, high-growth occupational training
- Support about 24,000 families and 44,000 children with early education
- Help more than 230,000 individuals go to work
- Raise the incomes of 105,000 by at least 20%
- Help 85% of individuals pursuing a post-secondary education attain a credential (certificate or degree)

Public Workforce Ecosystem

We are the largest of the 28 Workforce Boards in Texas and one of the largest of the 500+ in the nation. We are primarily funded by the federal government, through the Texas Workforce Commission. We support the local efforts of the Commission to achieve statewide goals. Our funding prohibits the purchase of advertising or public relations services for self-promotion. Our outreach efforts are always focused on generating awareness or delivering a service.

Setting the Foundation – the Board's Strategic Plan

In February 2019, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board approved an updated strategic plan that articulates our purpose, mission, vision, values and behaviors.

Purpose (why we exist)

To keep our region a great place to do business, work and live.

Mission (what makes us different)

We elevate the economic and human potential of the Gulf Coast region by fulfilling the diverse needs of the businesses and individuals we serve.

Vision (the future to which we aspire)

Our region attracts and retains the best employers, affords everyone the dignity of a job, remains vitally important to the global economy – and all within it are thriving.

Values and behaviors (our strongly held beliefs and the supporting actions)

- We are employer-driven
- We care passionately
    - Advocate for others
    - Inspire hope
    - Fuel progress
- We take responsibilities seriously
    - Be accountable
    - Follow up and follow through
    - Drive results
- We imagine possibilities
    - Seek multiple perspectives
    - Bring fresh thinking
    - Engage one another in making a difference

The strategic plan guides how we act, while our communications plan guides how we speak. Our communications will help our customers and stakeholders see us as we envision ourselves to be.

The strategic plan serves as our brand promise.

Positioning statement and communications goal

We use the positioning statement to provide focus and direction and ensure that our communications demonstrate that we deliver on the brand promise.

Employer-driven and people-focused, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board and Workforce Solutions are the preferred workforce service provider for our employers, local communities and vested stakeholders. We achieve this by delivering:

- Qualified candidates for open positions
- Help and good advice on how to access varied and plentiful job openings,
- Accurate labor market data and reliable career information, and
- A positive impact on the regional economy.

Because of all our communication efforts,

- Our employers trust Workforce Solutions will help them
- Our communities value Workforce Solutions and support us
- Our funders and stakeholders know that investing in and relying on the Board and its system produces a positive return on investment for our region.

Campaign Overview

If we were a private-sector entity, the generalized efforts that we produce would be managed as individual campaigns. In this case, we are using a campaign overview as a structure to present the overall scope of the public outreach requirements of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board and Workforce Solutions. This overview is presented in the context of nine campaigns:

1. Corporate communications and investor relations for the Gulf Coast Workforce Board

2. General brand awareness for Workforce Solutions

3. Business-to-business communications to employers

4. Promoting/Providing job search services (self-serve on web and driving office traffic)

5. Recruiting – seeking qualified candidates for employer customers

6. Career Awareness – driving people to website

7. Career Education – driving educators to use resources

8. Employment/Economic data – generating awareness of our expertise and use of our data

9. Internal Staff – building awareness of our purpose, mission, vision, values/behaviors to produce community ambassadors

Corporate Communications and Investor Relations

Product/Service	Gulf Coast Workforce Board
Communication Goal	We want our funders and stakeholders to know that investing in and relying on the Board and its system produces a positive impact and return on investment for our region.
Communication Objective	Increase awareness of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board as an effective steward of public funds among civic leaders and policy influencers.
Audience(s)	Local elected officials Public workforce leadership Research/advocacy groups Industry peers
Measurement Markers	Outbound reach numbers, engagement counts, value of media hits awareness surveys, participation anecdotes
Current Efforts	Open houses, Workforce Report Card, Hiring Red, White & You Leadership Breakfast, awards and recognitions
Messaging Considerations	Emphasize the Board's impact on the region's businesses and people. Identify the full range of investments from early education to employer efforts. Illustrate with quantified results and success stories.

Scheduling Considerations	We interact with business media monthly with the employment statistics and leverage these relationships to pitch stories quarterly and to proactively offer comment on relevant issues. Events are sporadic but developing an annual pattern.
	We support TWC state-wide initiatives such as Texas Career Signing Day, Texas Internship Challenge, Summer Earn and Learn, Texas HireAbility, Hiring Red, White & You.
	We support national awareness efforts such as Manufacturing Day Registered Apprenticeship Week, and Women in Construction Week.
	We support NAWB and USCM-WDC advocacy efforts as requested.

General Brand Awareness

Product/Service	Workforce Solutions
Communication Goal	We want community stakeholders to know that we exist and that our efforts help keep our region a great place to do business, live and work.
Communication Objective	Increase name recognition of and affinity for Workforce Solutions
Audience(s)	Employers; people looking for jobs; people interested in careers; people who need help to remain employed; other workforce development partners and providers; funders, influencers and public policy leaders; internal and industry peers.
Measurement Markers	Reach numbers, awareness surveys, customer satisfaction surveys
Current Efforts	Service materials, social media, weekly Who's Hiring mention
Messaging Considerations	Service information in context of Board's values and behaviors
Scheduling Considerations	In addition to generating awareness of Workforce Solutions, we also support other workforce-related awareness initiatives as mentioned previously.

Business-to-Business	
Product/Service	Employer Service
Communication Goal	We want employers to know and trust Workforce Solutions as a valued resource for recruiting, staffing and talent development
Communication Objective	Increase awareness of service offering among employers Generate leads for new or enhanced service Generate repeat service
Audience(s)	HR recruiters, HR generalists – Current customers HR recruiters, HR generalists – Prospective customers Industry leaders/associations Chambers/EDCs
Measurement Markers	Engagement stats, referral documentation, increased service delivery units among target segments, awareness surveys
Current Efforts	Collateral, direct mail, events, personal selling
Messaging Considerations	HR information service, standard source/recruit/screen staffing services, customized talent development solutions, financial incentives
Scheduling Considerations	On-going with some seasonal upticks by industry sector

Workforce Solutions

Employment

Product/Service	Comprehensive Job Search Assistance (Matching education and skills with open jobs. Providing professional advice about labor markets and employers; on looking for work and applying for jobs; on education and training needed for good jobs. Finding financial assistance to support work search, work or education.)
Communication Goal	We want to help anyone who wants a job/career to get one
Communication Objective	Increase use of job search advice on wrksolutions.com Increase use of retail service by new customers
Audience(s)	Active job candidates Passive job candidates People who need help to remain employed
Measurement Markers	Website traffic, retail traffic, placements
Current Efforts	Social, collateral, email, weekly Who's Hiring Segment, event participation
Messaging Considerations	The audience is so broad that additional segmentation is needed to ensure relevant and effective messaging.
Scheduling Considerations	Ongoing with some seasonality (e.g. graduations) and market fluctuations (layoffs and upturns)

Recruiting	
Product/Service	Fill open job postings
Communication Goal	Traditionally, job candidates register in Work in Texas as a condition to receive unemployment insurance payments. We need to continually expand our candidate pool beyond required registrants to effectively serve our employer customers.
Communication Objective	Increase the pool of qualified candidates registered in Work-in-Texas for referral to employer listings
Audience(s)	Qualified candidates
Measurement Markers	Work in Texas activity, job posting fills
Current Efforts	One to one recruiting
Messaging Considerations	To make a measurable impact, system-level recruiting would be refined to address areas of greatest challenge. In turn, the audience, communication channels and messages would align to support the need.
Scheduling Considerations	Ongoing with fluctuations to market conditions

Career Awareness

Product/Service	Career Planning Resources
Communication Goal	Help current and future workers make informed career and education decisions
Communication Objective	Increase awareness and use of Workforce Solutions career planning resources Increase awareness of target industries and high skill, high growth occupations
Audience(s)	Students PK-16 Parents Current workers
Measurement Markers	Website traffic, community engagement activities, awareness/interest survey
Current Efforts	Service materials, social media, career office referrals, regional team presentations, career fair participation
Messaging Considerations	Career planning is geared to the middle/high school audience using youthful imagery. We need to expand the availability of Spanish-language materials to reach more parents, current workers and adult ed customers.
Scheduling Considerations	We update materials every two years following the release of projection data from TWC.

Career Education

Product/Service	Career Exploration and Job Readiness Curriculum (When I Grow Up)
Communication Goal	We want to help other service providers deliver good career information based on local labor market data
Communication Objective	Increase awareness and use of Workforce Solutions curriculum materials
Audience(s)	Educators and administrators for preK-12 (we target public education with a residual reach to charter and private schools) Community-based organizations Early education and care providers
Measurement Markers	Web traffic, number of educators trained, awareness surveys
Current Efforts	ESC trainings, regional team trainings for schools and districts
Messaging Considerations	Curriculum features and benefits for educators
Scheduling Considerations	Most teacher training requests are for August and January.

Employment & Economic Data

Product/Service	All LMI products (Monthly jobs report, special reports, county profiles, projection data, historical data)
Communication Goal	Position the Gulf Coast Workforce Board as the local thought leader on jobs and the economy
Communication Objective	Increase media exposure/attributions in business media
Audience(s)	Business and community leaders via local business media
Measurement Markers	Media hits, inquiries, downloads
Current Efforts	Monthly release of jobs report, relationship building with media, regular story pitches
Messaging Considerations	Monthly jobs report, biannual projections, special reports
Scheduling Considerations	For the monthly jobs report, TWC releases data at 9 am. We have a draft report to the Chronicle by 11 am and issue a media release by noon. The one-page summary and web page updates are complete by end of day.

Internal Communications

Product/Service	I Am Workforce Solutions
Communication Goal	We want our staff to feel empowered by the Board's strategic plan to deliver exceptional customer service as Workforce Solutions ambassadors in both daily work and the local community
Communication Objective	Increase understanding of the Board's new strategic plan Increase application of the Board's values and behaviors
Audience(s)	Board, contractor, TWC/TVC/VR staff in workforce and adult ed H-GAC leadership and staff
Measurement Markers	Improved employee engagement survey results, improved customer service, fewer complaints, improved staff retention, improved performance
Current Efforts	Pending
Messaging Considerations	Internal focus groups revealed opportunities for improvement around internal customer service, staff support, training, transparency, trust, leadership and technology
Scheduling Considerations	Creating a workplace culture driven by purpose is a long-term commitment. Communications support change efforts but cannot deliver results in isolation.

Audience Segments

The following demonstrates our various audiences. Each audience wants, needs or expects something different from us. By segmenting audiences, we can create messages that resonate according to the wants, needs and expectations of each.

- Employers
    - HR recruiters, HR generalists – Current customers
    - HR recruiters, HR generalists – Prospective customers
    - Industry leaders/associations
    - Chambers/Economic Development Commissions

- People looking for jobs
    - Unemployed ages 16+
    - Underemployed ages 16+
    - Current workers ages 16+
    - Students ages 15+ preparing to enter the workforce

- People interested in careers
    - Students PK-16
    - Parents
    - Educators/administrators
    - Current workers

- People who need help to remain employed
    - Low-wage and employed
    - Low-wage and employed/in school with one or more child

- Other Workforce Development Service Providers/Partners
    - PK-12
    - Colleges, Universities and Trade Schools
    - Community-based and faith-based organizations
    - Vendors (training, early education, other)

- Funders/Influencers/Public policy leaders
    - Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Commissioners/leadership/staff
    - Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC)
    - United States Department of Labor

- o Local Elected officials: State legislators (local reps), Federal legislators (local reps), County judges/mayor of Houston, H-GAC board members, City mayors, County commissioners, city council members, School board members, Community college trustees
- o Research/advocacy groups: United Way Houston, Federal Reserve Bank – Dallas, Center for Public Policy Priorities, Kinder Institute at Rice, Barbara Jordan – Mickey Leland School at TSU, Hobby School at UH, Center for Houston's Future, Good Reason Houston, etc.

- Internal
  - o Board, contractor, TWC/TVC/VR state, workforce, adult ed staff
  - o H-GAC leadership and staff
  - o Workforce Board

- Industry Peers
  - o Texas Association of Workforce Boards (TAWB), National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB), United States Conference of Mayors – Workforce Development Committee (USCM-WDC), International Association of Workforce Professionals (IAWP)
  - o TWC professional networks

A Note on Target Populations

While understanding that we serve anyone who wants and needs our help, we should note that at times we make an extra effort to connect with specific target populations. Examples of target populations include:

- justice-involved individuals
- older workers
- opportunity (disconnected) youth
- people experiencing homelessness
- people with disabilities
- public assistance recipients
- refugees
- self-employed
- veterans and spouses
- young people currently or formerly in foster care.

Media Landscape

Everyday experience tells us that media consumption is moving to *on-demand* digital content. To keep pace with our customers, we must increase efforts in social media. At the same time, traditional media is evolving to serve younger audience and remains well-suited to deliver mass reach and mature audiences.

Social Media

According to the Pew Research Center, roughly 70% of all Americans use some type of social media. While social media grew sharply from 2005 to 2015, use has held at 70% since 2016. The table below shows the percentage of adults who use each platform.

	Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn	Twitter	Pinterest	Snapchat	YouTube	WhatsApp
Total	68%	35%	25%	24%	29%	27%	73%	22%
Men	62%	30%	25%	23%	16%	23%	75%	20%
Women	74%	39%	25%	24%	41%	31%	72%	24%
Ages 18-29	81%	64%	29%	40%	34%	68%	91%	27%
30-49	78%	40%	33%	27%	34%	26%	85%	32%
50-64	65%	21%	24%	19%	26%	10%	68%	17%
65+	41%	10%	9%	8%	16%	3%	40%	6%
White	67%	32%	26%	24%	32%	24%	71%	14%
Black	70%	43%	28%	26%	23%	36%	76%	21%
Hispanic	73%	38%	13%	20%	23%	31%	78%	49%
High school or less	60%	29%	9%	18%	18%	24%	65%	20%
Some college	71%	36%	22%	25%	32%	31%	74%	18%
College graduate	77%	42%	50%	32%	40%	26%	85%	29%
Urban	75%	42%	30%	29%	29%	32%	80%	28%
Suburban	67%	34%	27%	23%	31%	26%	74%	19%
Rural	58%	25%	13%	17%	28%	18%	59%	9%

Platform Descriptions

Facebook

Currently, the largest platform with well over one billion active users.

Instagram – Visual platform, largely photos but growing video content. Good for general awareness, but not conducive to web links. Sample uses #WelcomeAboard with pictures of new hires on first day of work from both people and employers.

LinkedIn – Professional networking site. Used to interact with individuals and interest groups. Frequently used as part of professional job search by both recruiters and candidates.

Pinterest – Visual bulletin boards where users can share visuals on one or multiple topics. Leans heavily to adult females. Career education curriculum materials intended for teachers would work well on this platform.

Reddit – Reddit is a bulletin-board system that provides a way to view news and web content and comment. People use Reddit to follow what they like, be it media, news, history, the opportunity to learn, or anything else. Most popular with males 18-29. Reddit's audience is well-educated, typically either having or working toward a college degree.

Snapchat – Imaging messaging application. Allows users to create and view Snaps, Stories and Chats from their friend network. Users add filters and emojis to photos then share to a friend's network or public. More recently, publishers like the NYTimes and WSJ are providing content via Snap Chat. The value of disappearing content remains difficult to track and quantify. Nonetheless, the platform remains popular with young people and could be used to build brand awareness in conjunction with youth-focused events.

Tumblr – Tumblr is a blogging platform that makes it easy for users to post images, GIFs, videos, music, text, links, and more. The dashboard shows all posts of the blogs a user follows. A post can be commented on, liked, or reposted. Content is unmonitored.

Twitter – Newsfeed of short posts from individuals, organizations and news outlets. Followers can react and comment to posts. Effective for sharing links to website content.

WhatsApp – Messaging service owned by Facebook that uses internet connectivity (Wi-Fi/data) instead of cellular.

YouTube – Video content. Heavy usage among teens and adults, 85% and 73% respectively. Provides both entertainment and educational "how to" content. The Workforce Solutions channel includes mostly occupation videos. We would like to evolve this to include more original how-to content.

What is a #Hashtag?

A word or phrase preceded by a hash sign (#) used on social media posts to identify messages on a specific topic. It is a type of metadata that allows individuals to apply dynamic user-generated tagging so that other users can easily find messages with a specific theme or content. The hashtag first gained prominence on Twitter and is now commonly used on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn as well.

The hashtag may contain letters, digits, and underscores. A hashtag search yields messages with that tag. A hashtag archive is collected into a single stream under the same hashtag. For example, on the photo-sharing service Instagram, the hashtag #bluesky allows users to find all the posts that have been tagged using that hashtag.

Teen Use of Social Media

As we look to the future, younger consumers are surrounded by technology. Teens are early adopters of social media and both carry their consumption patterns and expand to new platforms as they move into adulthood. The table below shows Pew Research Center reports of online platform use among teens.

	YouTube	Instragram	Snapchat	Facebook	Twitter	Tumblr	Reddit
U.S. teens	85	72	69	51	32	9	7
Boys	89	69	67	49	33	9	11
Girls	81	75	72	53	32	9	4
White	86	73	72	48	33	10	8
Black	79	72	77	57	29	11	5
Hispanic	85	72	64	58	36	7	7
13-14	84	63	63	47	24	7	4
15-17	86	78	74	54	38	11	9
Less than $30K	86	74	77	70	40	10	10
$30K to $74,999	84	72	71	56	30	8	4
$75K and up	85	71	64	36	30	11	8
Parent's educational level							
High school or less	85	73	73	65	35	12	6
Some college	87	73	74	61	37	9	7
College graduate	84	71	63	33	27	8	8

Current Social Media Footprint

Workforce Solutions has five main social media accounts that are managed by Board staff.

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- YouTube

The content posted on these channels focuses on career planning, labor market information, hiring events, and special initiatives.

Facebook is our most popular platform with the largest following, so we focus most of our efforts on developing content for it and then repurposing that content for the other accounts. Content posted varies from live videos, photos, flyers, infographics or just plain text notifications.   The main Facebook page also serves as a customer service tool. Many customers contact Workforce Solutions through the Facebook page for help with an issue, to provide feedback or to ask a question.

The following topics are most popular:
- Low cost/free education and training opportunities
- Career planning resources for youth
- Industry statistics
- Collaborations with news media
- Financial assistance (UI, DUA etc.)
- Hiring events

There are also 18 career office Facebook pages run by contractor staff (Astrodome, Bay City, Baytown, Conroe, East End, Huntsville, Lake Jackson, Liberty, Northeast, Northline, Northshore, Pearland, Rosenberg, Southeast, Southwest, Texas City, Westheimer, Willowbrook), two Twitter accounts (Baytown and Northeast), and three Instagram accounts (Astrodome, Northeast and Willowbrook) that are dedicated to specific office locations.

Employer Service manages the following Facebook groups and pages as well.
- https://www.facebook.com/JobsInGulfCoastTexas/
- https://www.facebook.com/GulfCoastOGI/
- https://www.facebook.com/groups/HireTrainRetain/
- https://www.facebook.com/groups/GetSkilledGetHired/

All office social media pages and groups are used as a local recruiting tool. Content should consist of job postings, job fairs and community events specific to that service area. Each page is managed by staff that are responsible for all postings and interactions with customers.
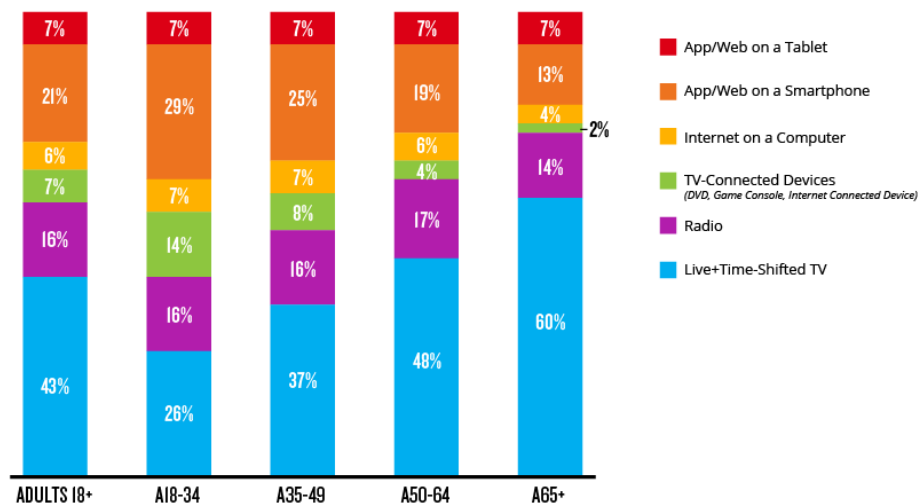
Traditional Media

Smart phones have made social media ubiquitous. But traditional media remain viable and useful communication channels. People still watch TV, read newspapers and magazines, and listen to music. They simple consume the media in a more fragmented manner.

According to a Nielson report in June 2018, the amount of people using traditional platforms held relatively steady when looking deeper into the data. Live + time-shifted TV viewing and radio have remained consistent. Radio alone reaches 92% of adults on a weekly basis; live and time-shifted TV has a weekly reach of 88%.

Q1 2018 SHARE OF DAILY TIME SPENT BY PLATFORM
Based on Total U.S. Population

Source: Q1 2018 Nielsen Total Audience Report

Traditional news media holds value for two of our audiences. Senior-level decision makers tend to be older and consumers of traditional media. Additionally, residents of lower-income areas are more reliant on TV news and less so on digital pathways. In terms of content, as high as 25% of African

Americans and Hispanics consider daily information on jobs and employment is important to their daily lives.

Other Communication Channels
Media isn't our only avenue for reaching our audiences. Point-of-service materials, grassroots community engagement activities, public meetings and non-metro media are some of the other ways that we communicate with our stakeholder audiences.

We use point-of-service branding to establish a standard of service that sets Workforce Solutions apart for the "old unemployment office." Additionally, point-of-service materials:
- Reinforce and remind customers and staff of key messages
- Leverage real estate to deliver useful information
- Our services and customers are diverse. Point-of-service materials allow each customer to gravitate to the relevant messages.
- Ensure consistency across the region
- Support customer decision-making
- It allows our brand and our messages to leave the office and continue repetition and sometimes pass-along.
- The office is more than a container for service delivery.

Grassroots community engagement – Educated and skilled candidates often don't want to make a physical trip to a career office. The private sector already uses algorithms to screen applicants, conduct video analysis of job interviews, asses financial stability and risk.   In the future, the public workforce system will undoubtedly adopt more technology to automate work currently done by our front-line staff. As the retail services of our brick and mortar locations become more automated, we can focus on the uniquely human ability to engage in relationships. This means leaving the office and imbedding our staff members into the schools, churches, community centers and homes of those not fully engaged in the workforce. To varying degrees the Workforce Solutions offices and regional teams already engage with customers and prospects in community settings. Moving forward, we would develop a system of tracking activities and measuring impact.

In recent years, the Workforce Report Card and Local Plan have provided Board members an opportunity to interact with business and civic leaders through public meetings. While very labor-intensive for a relatively small number of attendees, this exposure provides good qualitative impact.

While population is centered in and adjacent to Houston, the Gulf Coast region includes many suburban, smaller city and rural communities. Local radio, newspapers and magazines still exist to provide residents with close-to-home coverage. In the last two years, we have found success in connecting local

staff to the media, particularly around hiring events. The Katy News, for example runs our press release on the monthly jobs report almost verbatim. With adequate resources, this avenue has potential.

Content Strategy

In the digital age, we characterize media as paid, earned and owned. **Paid** media is advertising, which our funding largely prohibits. Over the last three years, we increased our **earned** media to a value of over $700,000 in 2018 by generating news coverage. Moving forward, **owned** media provides the greatest opportunity to increase our communications impact.

> - We will attract and retain stakeholders by creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content.
> - By repurposing our content across various platforms, we expand the reach and frequency of our messages while maximizing investments. It will also position us to serve current and future customers who expect on-demand digital content in an individually-selected format.
> - Media consumption will continue to shift to social channels, video, web-based and user-generated content.

The descriptions below demonstrate how each communication channel contributes to our portfolio of owned media content.

Web
- Our website can become our central connection point to all stakeholders.
- The entry point for each stakeholder may be an individual page or section on our website that contains information and links to related content. This is the longest presentation form of the content. It is where we provide our customer/stakeholder with the professional advice or information s/he seeks.
- The webpage should have text, images, links to additional relevant information and a mechanism to connect with us in person.
- Chat functionality and other interactive tools may be possible
- When possible, we use original imagery for authenticity and credibility.
- Imagery can include photos, charts/graphs, or video.
- The imagery can be professional or user-generated; our original or partner content
- Measures – page visits, time spent on page, reduced bounce rate, lead generation

Social media
- Use social media to build general awareness and draw viewers into the website.
- We take a snippet from the webpage and use it as a social media post. Usually the first line of the article and the image or video with some minor edits will become the text for the social media post. The actual post will vary according to the channel – Facebook is most liberal, Instagram is best with photos and few words.

- For newsworthy content such as new data, we tag journalists and local experts for likes and shares
- Soon, we will want to look at how we can use social media platforms for individual customer communications.
- Measures – views, comments, likes, shares

Audio

- We can use podcasts to deliver information in an audio format.
- Podcasts are much like drive-time radio of decades past. It was the time of day when radio programs had teams of personalities who shared news and topical information often through their dialogue with one another and guests. And, the Tweet is the modern equivalent of the listener phone call.
- Podcasts are generally part of a reoccurring series.
- Podcasts can be of any length. An episode that is delivering subject matter should be short and focus on a single topic. Job search advice is best suited to short episodes with a single speaker. A more complex topic such as registered apprenticeships can be a longer episode with one or multiple guests.
- Measures – downloads

Video

- Video allows us to deliver both a visual and audio message
- Younger consumers increasingly prefer video content
- Social media with video generates higher engagement
- Video sharing helps expand reach beyond our geographic area
- Measures – views

Email/Text

- Email is used for awareness, education and calls-to-action
- Email is most effective when a customer or prospect has already engaged and expressed interest in learning more.
- Text has a higher open/response rate than email.
- We invite stakeholders to opt-in or -out.
- The email/text message can focus on a single message or serve as an e-newsletter
- Here again, the same or similar image from the web landing page and a few sentences will be adjusted to draw the recipient into the web or other call to action.
- Measures – reach, opens, click-throughs, unsubscribe, forwards, shares to social

Direct Mail
- In a digital world, traditional printed mail can stand out
- Thanks to rich data collection, contemporary direct mail can be highly targeted
- Serves as an effective awareness tool for business prospect development
- Can also be used to reach audiences where technology is limited
- Effective in low-income households
- Measures – reach, responses, pass-along

Collateral and Point-of-Service
- Workforce Solutions produces commercial-grade quality products for our customers
- The same content goes on our website as customer self-service
- We can be more deliberate in reformatting the content and presenting it for digital consumption
- Our in-office signage, posters, video monitors reinforce content and compliment the human interaction
- We will use promotional items as memorability devices to reinforce messages and incite positive behaviors
- Measures – views, responses

Media Relations
- We leverage contacts with traditional media to pitch television news, public affairs programming, op-eds/letters to the editor, business news, community news
- For each media hit we maximize exposure with a tease on social media, the actual hit, share on social media, post to website, send to peer network for sharing, share internally.
- We repackage media content on social media and the web. We capture snapshots of the reporter conducting interviews and post to social media to tease the story. We share the story when it runs. We post links to the stories from the "in the news" page on our website.
- Measures – reach, views, paid value

Owned Assets Inventory
- To generate use and impact of digital content, we will need to increase the acquisition and use of video and photography assets
- We can create a protocol to acquire, store, track and share owned assets across all contractors throughout the region.
- We can build on our Public Outreach Standards and Guidelines and its associated Brand Manual to provide guidance and maintain quality as our assets expand
- We can continue to evolve our point-of-service materials according to customer needs.

Events Strategy

Events create an opportunity for different audiences to interact with the Workforce Board and Workforce Solutions in person.   Events include our own productions as well as partner activities in which we participate. For example, larger events like Hiring Red, White & You! reach across the entire region, while others are community-specific like Council Member Jerry Davis's B-Better youth conference or the annual apprenticeship awareness seminar.

Events provide us the opportunity to achieve our communications goals. The colorful backdrops are conducive to photos, allowing us to connect to more employers and job candidates via social media. As part of event registrations, we request consent for the use of imagery for media and ask for social media profile handles. This allows us to use images in photo/video images and tag stakeholders. This expands the reach of our posts to their followers.

Large or small, well-orchestrated events require detailed planning and coordination. The better the planning, the less obvious the resource demands. Consequently, it is important to consider the required effort relative to the resulting impact before committing to events.

The following are some examples of other events, which Workforce Solutions supports:

Apprenticeship week	Industry workgroup meetings
CTE signing days	Labor Day
Careers in Texas Week – Jobs Y 'all	Manufacturing day
Committee meetings	New Year/New You
Disability awareness month – Texas HireAbility	Open houses
Grassroots community fairs/festivals	Public meetings/listening sessions

Messaging Strategy

As we develop messages for each audience, we remain committed to our purpose and articulate it in everything we do. As we mentioned before, we have varied audiences with varied needs, wants and expectations. The messages will be different, but all rooted in our strategic plan.

Measurement

As we move from strategy to tactics, the measures we use will allow us to gauge our progress over time. For reference, we can assess the practices and results from other Workforce Boards. As we begin searching for a baseline measure, we can gauge ourselves against our competition. While we are the one and only public workforce system for the Houston-Gulf Coast region, we can compare ourselves to organizations across different industries. For example:

Industry	Organization
Business-to-business services	Insperity, Robert Half, ADP
Advocacy	Texas Association of Business, United Way, Children at Risk
Economic Development	Greater Houston Partnership, Federal Reserve
Community Service	Colleges/Universities, BakerRipley, City of Houston

We identified the following as the desired results of our communication efforts:
- Our employers trust Workforce Solutions will help them
- Our communities value Workforce Solutions and support us
- Our funders and stakeholders know that investing in and relying on the Board and its system produces a positive return on investment for our region

As we set priorities and allocate resources to achieve our communication goals, we will establish measures, baselines and targets that:
- Represent achievement on each of the above statements
- Account for the short-, mid- and long-term achievements
- Gauge impact of short-, mid- and long-term achievements

We should also consider using marketing automation tools with dashboards that allow us to monitor communication activities and gauge impact. Examples of automation tools include:
- ActiveCampaign
- Hubspot
- Ontraport
- Marketing Cloud
- SendinBlue

Next Steps

1. Complete tactical plans for our campaigns that lay out what we are currently doing and want to maintain:
    a. Corporate communications and investor relations
    b. General brand awareness
    c. Business to business/Recruiting
    d. Data on the economy and employment
    e. Employment/Career awareness/Career education
    f. Internal Communications

2. Augment tactical plans to include any changes to what we currently do, plans for added or new efforts (for example, social media, owned assets, web presence). Rank added or new efforts in terms of importance.

3. Estimate resources needed to carry out tactical plans, set measurements and timelines, set time for review and adjustments.

4. Implement tactical plans.