

# Local Workforce Development Board Plan Program Years 2021–2024

## *Guidance and Checklist*

### **Appendix: Texas Workforce Investment Council Requirements**

#### **Local Workforce Development Board Strategic Planning**

The Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC) is charged under Texas Government Code §2308.101(5), 2308.302(a), and 2308.304(a)(b)(4), and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) (Public Law 113–128) with recommending the plans of Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) to the governor for consideration for approval. TWIC reviews each Board Plan to ensure that local goals and objectives are consistent with the statewide goals and objectives in the system plan, The Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan FY 2016–FY 2023, which can be found at <https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/organization/twic/System-Strategic-Plan-Update.pdf>.

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

#### **Demonstrating Alignment with Texas’ Strategic Plan for the Workforce System**

The four sections below list and describe the four system goals from The Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan FY 2016–FY 2023 (2020 Update) that identify critical, high-priority system issues for the state. **For each goal, briefly describe one significant Board strategy or initiative that fulfills the intent of the goal. Also, please include the corresponding page number(s) within your plan that further details the identified strategy or initiative.**

#### **System Goal 1 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 time frame and the future. Through greater engagement with employers, education and training providers can better design career and

technical education content and delivery options that are more aligned with industry needs. Providers can make adjustments in program content to benefit employers and students, as well as address both state and regional economic needs.

## **System Goal 1—Local Board Response**

### **Board response and corresponding plan page number(s):**

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board uses data to drive decisions throughout the system. The Board uses employment projection data and performance measures in our strategic plan to guide the development of our region’s pool of human talent to meet the needs of employers.

The Gulf Coast Region boasts an estimated 147,000 total employers representing hundreds of public and private industries. The overwhelming majority of Gulf Coast employers are small businesses employing 100 or fewer workers. However, the largest percentages of private-sector jobs are with those companies that employ more than 100 workers. The ability to fill the workforce needs of local employers in the Gulf Coast Region has always been a high priority, and collaboration with our local workforce partners, including our local education and training providers, is key to producing the amount of skilled workers needed to meet our employers’ needs.

Through its operating affiliate Workforce Solutions, the Board has established a service delivery system to deliver skilled workers for employers and help individual people get a job, keep a job or get a better job. With a region-wide Employer Service; 28 full-time local career offices; 14 adult education providers; and a network of training, support service, and early education providers, Workforce Solutions offers a full range of workforce and career service for its customers. During the most recent year, the Board and Workforce Solutions:

- Helped more than 21,500 employers;
- Helped more than 193,000 people go to work;
- Provided basic education for more than 18,490; and
- Used \$247 million in financial aid to provide training scholarships, work-based learning, work search and work entry support services, and assistance with early education/child care expenses.

Workforce Solutions has an excellent relationship with our local education partners, including our community college partners. The community colleges provide educational programs leading to degrees and technical certificates, adult education and English as second language instruction, and other training. They work with the Board in developing customized training for employers, and consult with us in developing proposals related to workforce training. The colleges in the area are valuable partners in developing industry-based initiatives to address workforce issues in the region.

The region’s 76 public school districts are key partners in addressing many of the long-term shortages of skilled workers in our region. The Board has an existing relationship with many school districts, many career offices work directly with middle and high schools in their communities. The career offices are charged with providing service to young people in their schools. In addition to serving individual youth, many of whom are out of school, the Board

continues to work with schools broadly to provide good labor market information to schools, parents and young people. We continue to expand and improve our labor market information and career planning products which include the High-Skill, High-Growth Guide, Focus on Industry and Occupation profiles, When I Grow Up and Choices Planner. Our goal is to support schools in their efforts to reduce drop-out rates, target resources to prepare youth for the good jobs of the future, and provide both parents and students information they can use in selecting course work and career opportunities. The Board’s Education Committee provides guidance and oversight, and is fully committed to assisting schools in producing more graduates with the skills employers want.

Moving forward, the Board remains committed to working closely with employers, Adult Education providers, and community partners to develop robust, customized training curriculum and courses that are aligned with high-demand industries and occupations, meet the specific needs of employers, and lead to nationally- and/or industry-recognized credentials. The Board considers it a best practice to engage in these types of collaborations, and is currently involved in several projects that reflect our commitment to this strategy.

In November 2019, Workforce Solutions was awarded a grant that runs through December 2022, provided by the Wal-Mart Foundation, to initiate and expand retail up-skilling opportunities for businesses and their current workforce, and develop career pathways to unemployed individuals seeking to transition into or out of the retail industry.

## **System Goal 2 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.

## **System Goal 2—Local Board Response**

### **Board response and corresponding plan page number(s):**

The Gulf Coast region has a prolific number of workforce development partners. We have ten community college systems, more than a dozen university campuses, numerous economic development and business organizations, a host of state and local agencies, and a wide variety of

community and faith-based organizations. Together, these institutions represent a rich infrastructure for the Gulf Coast workforce system.

With our partners, we provide a wide range of service to employer and individual customers. On the resident side, community and faith-based organizations provide mentoring, life skills training, adult basic education, English as a second language, childcare, transportation, and other work support service. Some of these organizations are paid vendors for our system while many others work informally with Workforce Solutions jointly assisting customers.

Our system-wide Navigators work to ensure that customers with disabilities are able to navigate the realm of finding employment on a level playing field by coordinating with Texas Workforce Solutions – Vocational Rehabilitation Services and other community organizations to promote awareness of disability related topics and much more.

In addition to working with our core partners, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board outreaches to local community partners to seek their input and collaboration on special projects in order to enhance our administration of the core programs. Over the past year the GCWB has seen success across a broad range of community-based projects. One example is our collaboration with the City of Houston’s Re-entry program. The mission of the Community Re-Entry Network is to work in partnership with the community to assess, plan, and implement effective strategies to reduce recidivism, increase public safety, and successfully assist and support re-entry individuals in their transition in becoming productive, contributing members of the Houston community.

We work by securing work experience sites for up to ten weeks, wages up to \$12.00 hourly immediately upon return to the community. We also make sure the individuals are aware of available training to support their efforts in finding employment. We offer financial aid and work-related support service to assist the individuals with needed clothing, transportation, training and certification/licenses to prepare for employment.

The Board has engaged in multiple partnerships – with industry associations, economic development organizations such as the Greater Houston Partnership, the United Way and its member agencies, the Homeless Coalition for Houston/Harris County, the Houston Food Bank, the Houston Housing Authority, and local governments – to leverage the resources available through Workforce Solutions for as many employers and individuals as possible.

## **System Goal 3 and Rationale**

### **Align System Elements**

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

## System Goal 3—Local Board Response

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

The Board is dedicated to aligning core programs in education and workforce to benefit employers and workforce development generally in the region. The Board has no difficulty identifying organizations interested in providing education and training service to meet employer needs. The region's ten community colleges, universities, and numerous private career schools are valuable partners.

The Board uses the Workforce Commission's online application and review process to maintain its list of approved vendors and educational programs. We provide information to organizations interested in becoming vendors at <https://www.wrksolutions.com/about-us/business-opportunities/become-a-vendor>. Workforce Solutions financial aid payment office assists organizations who want to become part of our network of providers. Staff answer provider questions and assist them in completing the process.

One example of the Board's practice of aligning system elements is of our management of the Adult Education and Literacy program in the region. Serving as the grant recipient allows the Board to have stronger alignment of the education services to the needs of employers. Moving forward, the Board remains committed to working closely with employers, Adult Education providers, and community partners to develop robust, customized training curriculum and courses that are aligned with high-demand industries and occupations, meet the specific needs of employers, and lead to nationally- and/or industry-recognized credentials. To assist, the Board created the Education Opportunity Connector, an initiative intended to strengthen relationships and promote integration within our one-stop system. The Connector brings our career offices and adult education providers together through shared Workforce Solutions services.

The Gulf Coast Education Consortium served over 50,000 customers in ESL, Adult Basic and Secondary Education, Career Pathways and Transitions courses. Career Pathways course are uniquely designed to meet the workforce needs of employers and to enable customers to secure industry relevant certification and obtain or retain employment in in-demand occupations. These courses may involve integrated education and training (IET), which is concurrent enrollment of customers in Adult Education and workforce training, workplace literacy, or work-based training in collaboration with employers.

The Board is also committed to connecting customers to wrap-around support services and resources, provided either directly through the workforce system or through strategic partnerships with community-based organizations, to eliminate as many barriers as possible that may keep customers from successfully completing their course and transitioning into employment and/or postsecondary education. For example, the Board has two Student HireAbility Navigators who serve as resources in the region to support, expand, and enhance the provision of pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities who are in the early phases of preparing for transition to postsecondary education and employment.

## System Goal 4 and Rationale

### Improve and Integrate Programs

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

## System Goal 4—Local Board Response

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

Through the integrated workforce system in Texas, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board manages the WIOA core programs along with several additional programs administered by TWC. The Board will work with our partners carrying out core programs and other workforce development programs in the region to continue to support the strategy identified in the State Plan. In developing the local plan, the Board accounted for the regional economy, employers’ current and projected human resource needs, and the current and future workforce. All of this information plays a part in shaping how we target investments to meet the needs of the labor market and its industries, employers and individuals.

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board recognizes the importance of using data to drive decision-making and has made availability and evaluation of data a key part of its strategic development and oversight processes and consumer education efforts.

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board has access to a number of state provided Labor Market Information and Career Exploration Services such as:

- Reality Check – TexasRealityCheck.com (<http://www.texasrealitycheck.com>)
- Texas Career Check (<https://texascareercheck.com/>)
- Jobs Ya’ll (<https://jobsyall.com/>)
- Texas Consumer Resource on Education and Workforce Statistics (Texas CREWS) – TexasCREWS at <http://www.txcrews.org>
- Texas Labor Analysis – Regional occupational Analysis Tool (<https://texaslaboranalysis.com/>)
- Emerging and Evolving Occupations (<https://lmci.state.tx.us/researchers/emerging.asp>)

The Board has worked to identify the workforce needs of businesses, job candidates, and workers in the workforce region using a combination of labor market intelligence (using the services listed above) and active participation of various partners and stakeholders. These needs are identified in three lists: 1) Targeted Industries, 2) Where the Jobs Are, and 3) High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations. The three lists are used to guide not only the Board's strategic investments, but also to help our residents build careers in industries and occupations with good prospects and higher wages. We use the High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations list to decide which occupations we will support with our education scholarship dollars.

Using these tools, we set the below goals for Workforce Solutions:

By 2021,

- 3,400 new jobs will be created as a direct result of Workforce Solutions partnering with other business organizations
- 67 percent of the new jobs created with employers in industries targeted by the Gulf Workforce Board as a direct result of Workforce Solutions' partnership efforts
- 45 percent of new jobs created with employers in high-skill, high-growth occupations targeted by the Gulf Coast Workforce Board as a result of Workforce Solutions' partnership efforts

As our system becomes more complex and fully integrated, we have become creative with how we share our data to our stakeholders, system partners, and customers. Some examples:

- Our employer and resident service staff have ongoing relationships with both our partners and customers. On the employer service side, business consultants, industry liaisons, and administrative staff maintain relationships with employers, economic development organizations staff, and schools. On the resident side, career office staff, particularly our greeters, resource room specialists, personal service representatives, financial aid specialist and employment counselors, work with residents to ensure they have access to all the services they want and need.
- The Gulf Coast Workforce Board has a Regional Team made up of Navigators and Facilitators that go out in to the community to reach populations that might not be served in a local career office. The Regional Team works with our partners to conduct community-based job search seminars and workshops. These presentations are conducted outside the career office in schools, libraries, and a wide range of community-based organizations.
- Staff work with our vendor network to provide information about our service and system. Grants management staff work with many of our partners to ensure the system is working to maximize resources in the region and provide coordinated service to employers and individuals. Board staff provide support to partners in developing new projects and grant proposals. Staff work with partners to develop meaningful memoranda of understanding (MOU) by providing high quality labor market and information and guiding partners in the development of programs that are the best fit for the Region.

- Marketing – The Board’s marketing plan is designed to share information about workforce service throughout the region. Our marketing plan includes the use of our website, [www.wrksolutions.com](http://www.wrksolutions.com), email blasts, targeted mailings, and special events.
  - The Board has invested funds to update our virtual technologies to help continue and improve communication and access to assist customers
  - Workforce Solutions offers free online learning tools to provide individuals looking for work and employers in need of staff with creative solutions for navigating the job market: [www.wrksolutions.com/onlinelearning](http://www.wrksolutions.com/onlinelearning)
  - Workforce Solutions partners with ABC 13 for a weekly Facebook Live hiring/job search event that has reached 500,000 viewers in 21 sessions