GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD
WIOA LOCAL PLAN 2025-2028

Workforce Solutions
G U L F   C O A S T
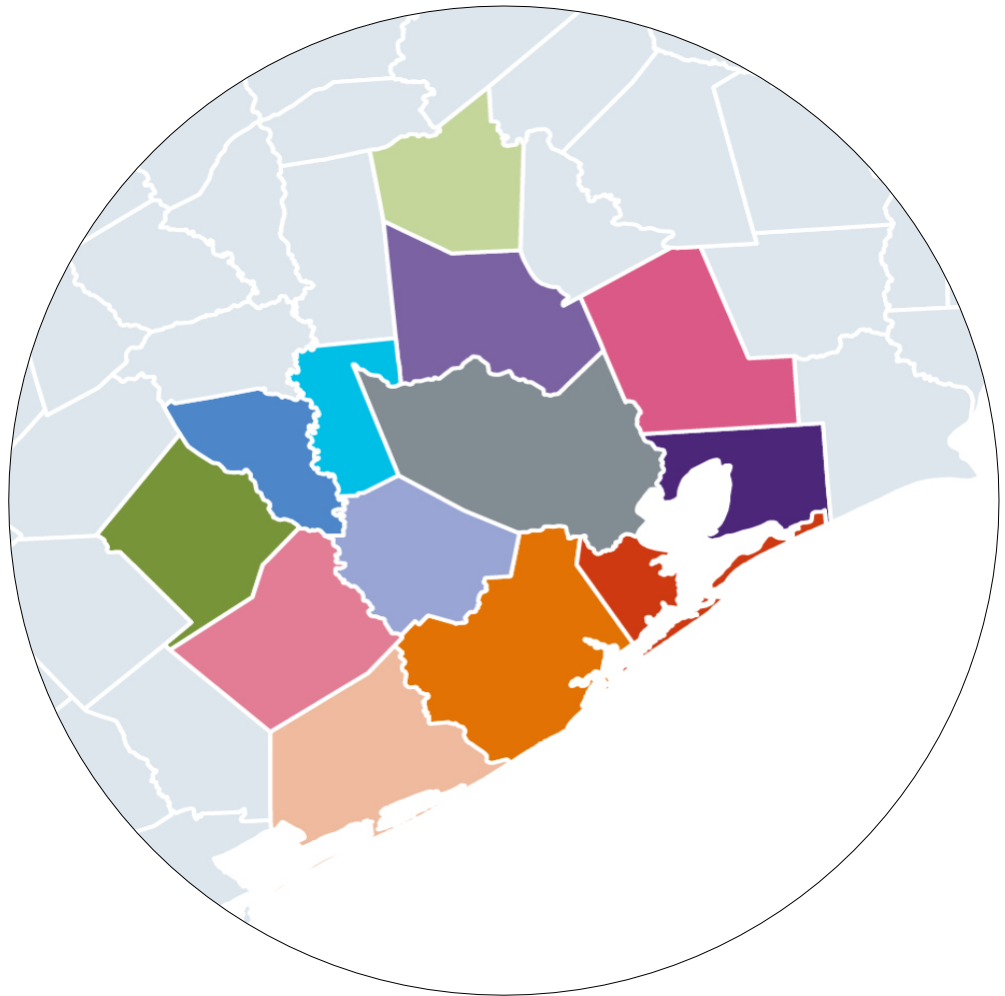
Adopted by The Gulf Coast Workforce Board on March 4, 2025

As revised on May 7, 2025

Local Workforce Development Board Plan
Program Years 2025–2028

Board Plan Development Guidelines

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Board Plan Development Guidelines

The Board Plan development guidelines include the minimum plan requirements; however, Boards are encouraged to provide additional information about the following:

- Board initiatives, which may include local, Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), or federal grants
- Collaborative efforts to achieve the Board vision and mission
- Success stories

Boards must ensure that each element is fully addressed. Boards may not use statements such as "See Section 1.B."

Boards are encouraged to provide specific references to the state plans mentioned in WD Letter 11-24 to demonstrate how their efforts complement the larger context of workforce development in Texas and contribute to the achievement of shared goals.

Each Board must submit its plan as a continuous document without separate document attachments.

Send inquiries regarding these guidelines to Board.Plans@twc.texas.gov.

Part 1: Board Vision and Strategies

A. Vision and Goals

References: WIOA §108(b)(1)(E); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(5)

Each Board must include a description of the Board's strategic vision to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. The description must contain:

- goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including the provision of early education services and services for youth and individuals with barriers to employment as defined by WIOA §3(24); and

- goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on the performance indicators described in WIOA §116(b)(2)(A).

Minimum Plan Requirements:
☐ A description of the strategic vision to support regional economic growth and self-sufficiency
☐ Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including the provision of:
    ☐ early education services;
    ☐ services for youth; and
    ☐ services for individuals with barriers to employment.
☐ Goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on the performance indicators described in WIOA §116(b)(2)(A)

BOARD RESPONSE

<u>**Strategic Vision for Workforce Development**</u>

Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast (WFS-GC) is the **largest** of the 28 workforce boards in the state of Texas. It serves over **7 million residents** across the region, including the Greater Houston area. It operates a network of **27 career offices** and plays a vital role in aligning regional workforce initiatives with economic growth strategies. WFS-GC is dedicated to fostering a **cohesive vision for workforce development** across the **13-county region** – a vast area characterized by enormous **diversity.**

Recognizing the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's significant role in creating and maintaining a regional network, in 2023 WFS-GC began a year-long process to create a new five-year strategic plan. This new plan **"Innovate, Connect, Thrive: Our Strategic Vision for 2024-2029"** was adopted by the Board in October 2024. It is a framework for us to strengthen communities, support businesses, assist job seekers, and engage partners in a collective vision for regional prosperity, and it introduces **new and refined strategies**, including subregional approaches and expanded use of technology to drive innovation and improve outcomes.

During the planning process, new mission and vision statements were established that more accurately reflect the efforts of WFS-GC to ensure that workforce investments contribute to **regional economic growth** and **help all individuals build careers**, particularly in **high-demand industries**.

Our mission statement represents our commitment to support businesses and job seekers alike: "***We help employers meet their workforce needs and individuals build careers so both can compete in the global economy***"

Our strategic vision is "***to strengthen business and industry, drive the economic growth of our region, and create thriving, inclusive communities where everyone has opportunities to earn, learn, and prosper.***"

This vision aligns with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) §108(b)(1)(E); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(5) by focusing on **business-driven strategies, career pathways, and** business-driven strategies, career pathways, and broader availability of services across the region. Additionally, it aligns with the Texas Workforce Commission's Strategic Plan, "*Accelerating Alignment" (2025-2029)* by emphasizing **workforce system integration, employer partnerships, and regional collaboration** (*Accelerating Alignment*, *p. 8-9*).

Commitment to Innovation and Collaboration WFS-GC is committed to providing high-quality, relevant training and support to serve our regional population. Our strategic plan marks a shift toward more innovative and engaging methods for interacting with customers, employers, and the community. This pivot will significantly strengthen our visibility and impact while better addressing the unique needs of each county. By adopting this methodology, we aim to reimagine our career offices and overall service delivery, focusing on creating more intuitive, responsive, and user-centered interactions.

Supporting Employers and Building a Talent Pool WFS-GC supports employers by developing a strong talent pipeline and clear career pathways. This begins with a focus on education, including early education, and building more robust partnerships with schools, districts, and postsecondary institutions to increase the attainment of degrees, certificates, and other credentials of value. A highly skilled workforce drives regional prosperity, and increasing postsecondary attainment is key to strengthening the economy. To stay competitive and help employers meet their talent needs, we prioritize education and workforce training.

Removing Barriers and Streamlining Processes WFS-GC will continue to **remove barriers** to training and employment by streamlining processes and ensuring **accessibility**. Through partnerships with businesses and community organizations, we will make training programs more relevant and accessible.

Goals for the Workforce System

WFS-GC has established four interconnected goals in its 2024-2029 strategic plan. These goals align with WIOA's emphasis on regional coordination, employer engagement, and service accessibility, as well as priorities outlined in the Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan.

1. Support Business-Forward Strategies to Fuel the Regional Economy

The Gulf Coast region is home to key industries such as energy, manufacturing, and healthcare, as well as high-skill sectors like aerospace, life sciences, biotechnology, and digital technology. Newer industries such as hydrogen, and emerging industries like advanced air mobility are poised for future growth. By supporting business-forward strategies, the Board aims to align workforce development initiatives with the needs of these industries, ensuring a competitive and vibrant business environment.

Through partnerships with chambers of commerce, industry associations, and economic development organizations, WFS-GC can help connect employers to a skilled talent pipeline, building customized training solutions that address critical skill gaps, particularly in middle-skill occupations. Workforce investments focus on job-driven training, apprenticeships, on-the-job training (OJT), and industry-aligned

career pathways to strengthen the region's talent pipeline. This commitment supports local employers by ensuring that training programs remain responsive to industry demands and equip workers with the necessary skills to drive economic growth.

WFS-GC will develop career pathways, implement sector-based strategies, establish industry-specific career centers and job fairs, and advance Work-Based Learning (WBL) initiatives. Cultivating relationships will be a priority in working to achieve this goal. These efforts align with Texas' goal of delivering employer-driven workforce solutions, and the state's emphasis on developing a future workforce through the expansion of WBL, OJT, and apprenticeship programs.

2. Serve as a Convener and Forge Strategic Partnerships

WFS-GC will play a central role in facilitating collaboration among workforce development stakeholders, including local educational institutions, economic development organizations, and community-based organizations (CBOs). Creating a collaborative ecosystem where these stakeholders work together will be crucial in addressing workforce challenges and seizing opportunities.

WFS-GC will facilitate partnerships that leverage resources, share best practices, and align efforts towards common goals. Strategies include creating structured forums that are industry-specific, deepening connections between education and employers, and conducting informational workshops and webinars related to career pathways, skills development, and job search strategies.

In addition, strengthening partnerships with **Vocational Rehabilitation Services** and **Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) providers** ensures that individuals facing workforce entry barriers—such as disabilities, low literacy, and reentry challenges—receive the necessary support to succeed.

These coordinated efforts help streamline workforce services, align the efforts of workforce and education, and ensure that training programs reflect industry needs. This goal is in alignment with the Tri-Agency initiative to strengthen education and workforce partnerships to build clear career pathways, and TWC's goal of strengthening regional coordination.

3. Increase Awareness of Services and Opportunities

Increasing the visibility and accessibility of WFS-GC services is a key priority. Through digital platforms, employer outreach, and targeted public awareness campaigns, WFS-GC will ensure that job seekers and businesses across the region are informed about available workforce programs. Special attention is given to reaching individuals in rural communities and those who may have limited access to employment services or related resources.

Strengthening our successful media partnerships will ensure that more individuals and businesses are aware of available resources and highlight work-based learning (WBL) opportunities, job fairs, and other skills development programs. This goal also includes plans to develop a social media content strategy, create tailored and accessible content for job seekers and employers via a mobile app, and deepen our connection in communities by establishing co-location sites in libraries, community centers, and campuses to increase accessibility to workforce services. Expanding access points for workforce services is in direct alignment with TWC's focus on accessibility and customer-centered design.

Raising awareness helps WFS-GC connect more individuals and businesses to available resources and support. Targeted outreach efforts in communities with limited access to services align with TWC's statewide goals to expand workforce participation.

4. Improve Service Delivery Utilizing Technology and Innovative Solutions

To remain responsive and effective, WFS-GC will leverage advanced technologies and innovative solutions to improve service delivery and better meet the needs of job seekers and employers.

WFS-GC continues to invest in innovative service delivery methods to expand access to workforce programs, such as virtual service platforms and the creation of a mobile app, and we will prioritize innovation through the use of virtual reality training, AI-driven tools, and other technologies to enhance the reach of workforce services.

Other strategies include: 1) realigning staffing structures to enhance service delivery; 2) bolstering infrastructure with updated hardware and software; 3) streamlining administrative processes to ameliorate inefficiencies; and 4) developing an asset mapping tool. This tool will be an interactive digital platform to optimize the use of workforce resources and assist job seekers with locating education, training, and employment opportunities in their communities.

This goal aligns with statewide efforts to modernize workforce systems and invest in virtual career services and digital tools.

Goals for an Educated and Skilled Workforce

Early Education Services

The Board recognizes the critical importance of early education in building a skilled workforce. Partnerships with educational institutions and early childhood education organizations will be strengthened to provide foundational literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills to the youngest learners.

WFS-GC collaborates with childcare providers and early education organizations to expand access to high-quality early learning opportunities, focusing on increasing the number of **Texas Rising Star (TRS)-certified programs**. We integrate childcare services with workforce programs to support working parents and those attending job training or educational programs, ensuring families have the stability needed to pursue economic independence. Initiatives such as early career exploration activities and family literacy programs are designed to reach communities with limited access to early education resources, helping reduce barriers to participation and engagement.

Services for Youth

The Board prioritizes connecting youth to workforce opportunities through career exploration, internships, apprenticeships, and job readiness programs. Partnerships with local school districts and community organizations support these efforts by introducing young people to career pathways and aligning education with high-demand industries.

Programs like **Hire Gulf Coast Youth** and **Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL)** offer paid internships for youth, including those with disabilities, to gain work experience, develop foundational skills, and explore career pathways in high-demand industries. WFS-GC career offices collaborate with schools and community organizations to deliver career exploration workshops, up-to-date labor market information, job readiness training, and mentorship programs tailored for youth.

The new strategic plan highlights a focus on Work-Based Learning (WBL) initiatives that will be tailored for young people to provide meaningful experiences and help them transition successfully from education to employment.

Services for Individuals with Barriers to Employment:

WFS-GC offers targeted support for individuals with barriers to employment, including veterans, individuals with disabilities, limited English speakers, and those experiencing economic hardship. Services include wraparound supports such as childcare, transportation assistance, and access to short-term training programs that lead to industry-recognized credentials and sustainable employment opportunities.

A "No Wrong Door" service delivery model ensures that individuals with barriers, including disabilities, low literacy, transportation challenges, or reentry needs, can access the support they require. Workforce Solutions career offices, in collaboration with community-based organizations and Vocational Rehabilitation Services, provide tailored referrals, co-enrollment opportunities, and wraparound services. WFS-GC also has strategies that include developing partnerships with employers open to hiring individuals with non-traditional backgrounds and expanding training programs that address middle-skill job opportunities.

Goals Relating to Performance Accountability Measures

WFS-GC prioritizes meeting the performance accountability measures outlined in **WIOA §116(b)(2)(A)** by leveraging targeted strategies that align with the strategic vision for a skilled and resilient workforce.

Employment Rates WFS-GC actively collaborates with employers and training providers to help participants secure employment in high-demand industries within the region. WFS-GC's focus on industry partnerships and sector-based training initiatives will lead to increased employment opportunities for individuals, particularly those with barriers to employment. Career services, including job matching through **WorkInTexas.com**, are tailored to help participants find sustainable employment during the second and fourth quarters after program exit

Median Earnings The Board's investment in high-growth, high-wage occupations directly contributes to improving median earnings for program participants. By aligning training programs with labor market demands, WFS-GC will ensure that individuals are equipped with skills that translate to higher-paying roles. Partnerships with regional employers will also facilitate access to roles that provide competitive wages and growth potential.

Credential Attainment and Measurable Skill Gains WFS-GC emphasizes short-term training and credentialing opportunities that align with the Gulf Coast's Target Occupations List. WFS-GC partners with community colleges and other training providers to offer stackable, industry-recognized credentials that enhance workforce competitiveness. Regular tracking and evaluation of measurable skill gains ensure that participants make continuous progress toward their career goals.

Effectiveness in Serving Employers WFS-GC's commitment to meeting the needs of employers is demonstrated through initiatives such as customized training programs, hiring events, and sector partnerships. Employer satisfaction is evaluated through regular feedback and surveys, ensuring services remain aligned with industry demands. The Board also provides labor market intelligence to employers, helping them navigate workforce challenges and capitalize on opportunities.

B. Board Strategies

References: WIOA §108(b)(1)(F); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(6));

Boards must provide a description of their strategies to work with the partners that carry out Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) activities to align the resources available to the local workforce development area (workforce area) to achieve the Boards' vision and goals.

> **Minimum Plan Requirements:**
> A description of the Board's strategies to work with the entities carrying out AEL and VR to align:
> ☐ resources available to achieve vision and goals
>
> **Core programs:**
> ☐ Adult Education and Literacy activities
> ☐ Vocational Rehabilitation services

BOARD RESPONSE

Part 1B: Board Strategies

The HGAC Gulf Coast Workforce Board (GCWB) Regional Consortium for Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) is a collaborative effort involving Houston Community College, Lone Star College, San Jacinto College, Region 6 Education Service Center, Adult Education Center, BakerRipley, and the Houston-Galveston Area Council. This consortium delivers performance-driven AEL programs across 13 counties in the Gulf Coast region, supporting the Board's vision of fostering economic growth and empowering residents to achieve self-sufficiency and meaningful employment opportunities.

Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Activities
The consortium leverages the **Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) AEL grant** to provide a comprehensive range of services, including English as a Second Language (ESL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), High School Equivalency (HSE) preparation, Integrated Education and Training (IET), and Digital Literacy. These programs are designed to:

- Prepare participants for employment and career advancement in in-demand industries.
- Facilitate pathways to higher education or workforce training certifications.
- Equip learners with essential skills, including civics education, to enable responsible societal engagement and community participation.

The Board's **No Wrong Door** approach ensures that all individuals—regardless of their entry point—are referred to the appropriate AEL or workforce services. Career Advisors and consortium staff assess participants' needs using tools such as the **Workforce Information System of Texas (WIT)** to identify gaps in education and skills. Customers requiring foundational education are referred to AEL programs for targeted services, ensuring alignment with **WIOA §108(b)(1)(F)** and the Board's strategic goal of improving service delivery through innovative solutions.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Activities
WFS-GC collaborates with **Vocational Rehabilitation Services** to eliminate barriers to education and employment for individuals with disabilities and other challenges. The partnership includes:

- **Specialized Referrals**: Customers requiring services beyond AEL are connected to VR specialists who provide tailored support, such as assistive technology, job readiness training, and workplace accommodations.
- **Integrated Case Management**: VR staff collaborate with Workforce Solutions Career Advisors to create prescriptive, individualized plans that address barriers before they arise.
- **Outreach and Awareness**: VR services are promoted through outreach efforts led by Community Outreach and Awareness Specialists, ensuring individuals are aware of available resources.

To further integrate VR services within the workforce system, **WFS-GC has designated two Vocational Rehabilitation representatives** who work directly with workforce staff to support referrals, case coordination, and participant needs. Additionally, **Vocational Rehabilitation Services are co-located in several Workforce Solutions career offices**, allowing individuals to access support in a familiar, convenient setting while ensuring seamless service delivery.

Aligning Resources with the Board's Vision and Goals
The Board's collaboration with AEL and VR providers is central to achieving its strategic goals:

1. **Supporting Business-Forward Strategies**: By aligning AEL and VR services with industry needs, the Board ensures businesses have access to skilled talent prepared for high-demand occupations.
2. **Increasing Awareness and Accessibility**: The consortium's holistic approach is designed to connect individuals, including those with disabilities, with education and training opportunities by addressing barriers to participation and expanding points of access.
3. **Improving Service Delivery**: The integration of AEL and VR services, supported by data-driven assessments, streamlines referrals and maximizes program efficiency.

Success Story: From ESL Student to Community Advocate: Dr. Maria Franco Cortes' Journey Through Adult Education

*When **Maria Franco Cortes** first arrived in the United States, she faced a challenge shared by many newcomers—learning English. Determined to build a future for herself, she enrolled in **Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) classes at the Adult Education Center in Pearland**. This **Workforce Board-supported program**, funded by the **Gulf Coast Workforce Board** became the foundation of her academic and professional journey, equipping her with the language skills and confidence needed to pursue higher education.*

*Maria's passion for learning and community service led her to earn a **Bachelor of Science** in Business Management and Finance **(Magna Cum Laude),** a Master of Business Administration **(MBA),** and in 2024, a **Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA)**. Her journey from an **ESL student to a professional** dedicated to workforce development, adult education, and nonprofit leadership exemplifies the impact of **AEL programs and Workforce Board investments in education**.*

*In **2024, Maria joined the Gulf Coast Workforce Board as a Senior Planner/Board Affairs**, where she continues her mission of **improving workforce opportunities** and advocating for education. She also serves in leadership roles across multiple organizations, including the **United Nations Association of Houston**,*

ensuring that others have access to the same opportunities that helped her succeed.

C. High-Performing Board

References: WIOA §108(b)(18); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(17)

Boards must include a description of the actions each Board will take toward becoming or remaining a high-performing Board, consistent with the factors developed by the Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC).

Minimum Plan Requirements:

☐ Actions a Board will take to become or remain a high-performing Board

BOARD RESPONSE

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board (WFS-GC) is committed to maintaining its status as a high-performing board by implementing strategic actions that align with the factors established by the **Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC)** and the performance accountability measures outlined in **WIOA §108(b)(18)** and **20 CFR §679.560(b)(17)**. The Board continuously evaluates its policies, service delivery models, and employer engagement strategies to ensure responsiveness to regional workforce needs and alignment with state and federal priorities.

To sustain high performance, WFS-GC prioritizes **data-driven decision-making** and **regional collaboration** to enhance service delivery and workforce outcomes. The Board regularly analyzes labor market data to assess employer demand, inform training investments, and refine workforce strategies. By leveraging real-time workforce intelligence, WFS-GC ensures that workforce programs remain aligned with economic trends and evolving industry needs.

WFS-GC also emphasizes **continuous improvement in service delivery** by integrating innovative technology solutions and expanding access to workforce services. Investments in virtual career services, mobile applications, and digital tools modernize service accessibility, ensuring job seekers and employers can efficiently navigate available workforce programs.

Employer engagement remains a cornerstone of the Board's high-performance strategy. WFS-GC actively collaborates with businesses, industry associations, and economic development organizations to strengthen workforce alignment. Employer-led initiatives, including **sector partnerships and customized training programs**, ensure that businesses have a skilled talent pipeline to support regional economic growth.

Furthermore, the Board cultivates **strategic partnerships** with educational institutions, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) providers to create seamless career pathways and bridge skills gaps. By aligning training programs with in-demand occupations, WFS-GC maximizes employment opportunities for job seekers while addressing critical workforce shortages.

To maintain high standards of performance, WFS-GC implements a **rigorous accountability framework** that monitors program effectiveness and compliance with state and federal performance indicators. Key performance metrics, including **employment rates, credential attainment, and employer satisfaction**, are regularly evaluated to drive program enhancements and policy adjustments.

WFS-GC remains committed to excellence in workforce development by continuously refining its programs and services to support economic growth. A rigorous accountability framework tracks key performance indicators, including employment rates, credential attainment, and employer satisfaction, to assess impact and guide improvements. The Board's strategies align with industry needs, leverage data-driven insights, and strengthen our role as a leader in regional workforce development.

Part 2. Economic and Workforce Analysis

A. Regional Economic and Employment Needs Analysis

References: WIOA §108(b)(1)(A); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(1); WIOA §108(b)(1)(B); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(2); WD Letter 24-20, Change 1

Boards must include a regional analysis of the following:

- Economic conditions, including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations

- Employment needs of employers, including the knowledge and skills needed to meet such employment needs, within in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations

Minimum Plan Requirements:

An analysis of the economic conditions that includes the following:
☐ Existing in-demand industry sectors
☐ Emerging in-demand industry sectors
☐ Existing in-demand occupations
☐ Emerging in-demand occupations
☐ Target occupations

A description of employer employment needs, including the knowledge and skills needed to meet such employer's needs, within the following:
☐ Existing in-demand industry sectors
☐ Emerging in-demand industry sectors
☐ Existing in-demand occupations
☐ Emerging in-demand occupations
☐ Target occupations

The Board must include its In-Demand Industries List, In-Demand Occupations List, and Target Occupations List

Note: As appropriate, a workforce area may use an existing analysis, if it provides a current and accurate description of the regional economy.

BOARD RESPONSE

A widely accepted measure of economic activity, nominal **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** across the Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land MSA reached **$697 billion** in 2023 marking three consecutive years of increases since the 2020 global pandemic.[1] Based on 2022 GDP figures, if the Houston region were a country, it would be larger than Argentina, Sweden, or Belgium. While **Houston's employment base continues to diversify over time**, oil and gas exploration and production, petrochemical manufacturing, and healthcare remain **key drivers** of Houston's economy generating tens of thousands of jobs directly and indirectly.

The **region saw strong job growth after the pandemic,** adding over 100,000 jobs annually from 2021 to 2023. In 2024, pre-revision data shows a decline to 58,000 jobs, similar to 2019 levels.

This level was also in line with Houston's long-term average annual employment gains of approximately 60,000 to 65,000 jobs.

Despite slower job growth, steady unemployment rates and insurance claims indicate **economic stability** compared to pandemic fluctuations.

Additional examples of the aforementioned moderation in job growth were observed in the most recent **Long-term Employment Projections** provided by the Texas Workforce Commission Projections covering the 13-county Gulf Coast Region, which includes greater Houston, indicated a **growth rate of 14.9 percent**, or 517,000 additional jobs, over the period spanning 2022 to 2032. This compares to 17.6 percent and an **increase of 560,000 jobs** between 2020 and 2030. Among the roughly 250 detailed industries for which regional projection data are available, Scientific Research and Development is an **emerging industry** with strong growth (31.4%), high wages ($2,656/week based on a 2022 four quarter average), and a workforce of 10,668 jobs as of 2022— **well above regional averages**.

WFS-GC **discontinued use of growth as a criterion** for selecting targeted industries in 2023, Scientific Research and Development met the necessary size and wage requirements for inclusion on the recently approved 2025 Targeted Industries List, bringing the **total number of industries targeted** by the Gulf Coast Workforce Board to 52. The 51 industries remaining industries were all present on the 2023 list and as such constitute existing in-demand industry sectors. In terms of target occupations, dubbed **High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations** by WFS-GC, the mix found on the recently approved 2025 list reflects both the size and economic diversity of a region with roughly 150,000 employers, 3.4 million jobs, and a population approaching 7.8 million residents.

The **2025 list contains 121 occupations,** down from 147 on the previous list approved in 2023. The list now emphasizes two-year degree occupations, removing jobs requiring advanced degrees beyond a bachelor's degree. As a result, the current list no longer includes occupations that require advanced degrees; however, all remaining occupations are eligible for tuition assistance. Previously, more than two-thirds of the occupations on the 2023 **High-Skill, High-Growth**

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[1] Total Gross Domestic Product for Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX (MSA) (NGMP26420) | FRED | St. Louis Fed

Occupation List required a bachelor's degree or higher. The 2025 iteration lowers that share to nearly 40 percent.

The list now prioritizes occupations where tuition assistance supports shorter training programs (four years or less) over those requiring advanced degrees. Ultimately, the occupations on the 2025 **High-Skill, High-Growth Occupation List** demonstrate some combination of above-average size, growth, wages, education requirements, and importance to the 52 targeted industries previously noted. As a result, they align with current and anticipated employer needs across the region over the next several years.

Lastly, in-demand occupations identified on WFS-GC's **Where-the-Jobs-Are List** include those **expected to generate at least 568 annual openings**, regardless of earnings potential or skill level. These occupations reflect the **scale of the regional economy.** The **ten largest** occupations on the list—ranging from General Operations Managers to Waiters and Waitresses—account for nearly one in five of the 3.49 million jobs across the Gulf Coast.

A **skills-based analysis** of employer demand (low-, middle-, and high-skill jobs) offers insights into regional workforce needs. **Low-skill occupations**—those requiring a high school diploma and short-term on-the-job training or less—are expected to make up the **largest share of jobs in the region** through 2032 (36.7 percent). However, they **are projected to have the slowest growth rate** among the three skill categories at 12.8 percent. Middle-skill occupations—requiring at least a high school diploma and moderate on-the-job training—are expected to remain the second-largest category (33.4 percent) and grow at the second-fastest rate (13.6 percent) over the decade. (Source: 2022-2032 Long-term Employment Projections TWC LMCI / BLS)

These occupations are particularly significant as they meet the minimum education requirements for WFS-GC's **High-Skill, High-Growth** designation, with minor exceptions for certain oil field jobs that lack formal credential requirements.

High-skill occupations—those requiring a bachelor's degree or higher—will remain the smallest category by employment but are projected to grow the fastest at nearly 20 percent. This trend highlights the increasing demand for highly skilled workers in specialized roles.

Workforce Solutions GULF COAST

2025 High-Skill High-Growth Scholarship Eligible Occupations[1,2,5]

SOC	Occupation Title	Employment Growth Annual Averages 2022	2032	Net Change	Percent Change	Total Annual Openings	Typical Education Needed for Entry into Occupation	Work Experience in a Related Occupation	Typical On-the-job Training	Median Hourly Wage 2023
13-0000	**Business & Financial Operations**									
13-1041	Compliance Officers	7,000	8,167	1,167	16.7	692	Bachelor's	None	Moderate OJT	$36.05
13-1051	Cost Estimators	5,359	5,757	398	7.4	495	Bachelor's	None	Moderate OJT	$36.48
13-1071	Human Resources Specialists	16,822	20,334	3,512	20.9	1,870	Bachelor's	None	None	$30.39
13-1081	Logisticians	4,405	5,896	1,491	33.8	556	Bachelor's	None	None	$34.69
13-1082	Project Management Specialists	26,663	30,929	4,266	16.0	2,412	Bachelor's	None	None	$46.71
13-1111	Management Analysts	7,039	8,485	1,446	20.5	769	Bachelor's	< 5 years	None	$42.18
13-1141	Compensation, Benefits, & Job Analysis Specialists	2,006	2,392	386	19.2	191	Bachelor's	< 5 years	None	$39.82
13-1151	Training & Development Specialists	7,798	9,395	1,597	20.5	872	Bachelor's	< 5 years	None	$30.40
13-1161	Market Research Analysts & Marketing Specialists	10,791	13,579	2,788	25.8	1,370	Bachelor's	None	None	$30.12
13-2011	Accountants & Auditors	30,428	36,022	5,594	18.4	3,089	Bachelor's	None	None	$39.29
13-2051	Financial & Investment Analysts	6,912	8,323	1,411	20.4	617	Bachelor's	None	None	$44.79
15-0000	**Computer and Mathematical Occupations**									
15-1211	Computer Systems Analysts	11,846	15,417	3,571	30.1	1,151	Bachelor's	None	None	$54.10
15-1212	Information Security Analysts	2,448	3,587	1,139	46.5	291	Bachelor's	< 5 years	None	$54.46
15-1231	Computer Network Support Specialists	2,273	2,721	448	19.7	208	Associate's	None	Moderate OJT	$27.21
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	13,377	16,212	2,835	21.2	1,254	Some college	None	Moderate OJT	$26.45
15-1241	Computer Network Architects	2,040	2,369	329	16.1	148	Bachelor's	≥ 5 years	None	$62.44
15-1242	Database Administrators	1,304	1,579	275	21.1	110	Bachelor's	None	None	$48.91
15-1243	Database Architects	811	995	184	22.7	70	Bachelor's	< 5 years	None	$63.95
15-1244	Network & Computer Systems Admins.	5,780	6,727	947	16.4	441	Bachelor's	None	None	$46.47
15-1252	Software Developers	19,802	28,367	8,565	43.3	2,131	Bachelor's	None	None	$60.44
15-1253	Software Quality Assurance Analysts & Testers	3,222	4,394	1,172	36.4	349	Bachelor's	None	None	$48.53
15-1254	Web Developers	1,277	1,711	434	34.0	134	Bachelor's	None	None	$44.80
15-1255	Web & Digital Interface Designers	2,509	3,085	576	23.0	255	Bachelor's	None	None	$38.88
15-2031	Operations Research Analysts	2,264	3,200	936	41.3	257	Bachelor's	None	None	$40.81
15-2051	Data Scientists	3,618	5,217	1,599	44.2	421	Bachelor's	None	None	$46.87
17-0000	**Architecture and Engineering Occupations**									
17-1011	Architects, Ex. Landscape & Naval	1,857	2,035	178	9.6	135	Bachelor's	None	Internship/residency	$37.88
17-1022	Surveyors	1,847	2,026	179	9.7	139	Bachelor's	None	Internship/residency	$29.67
17-2011	Aerospace Engineers	1,668	2,097	429	25.7	140	Bachelor's	None	None	$67.41
17-2041	Chemical Engineers	2,166	2,577	411	19.0	165	Bachelor's	None	None	$80.03
17-2051	Civil Engineers	9,415	10,376	961	10.2	675	Bachelor's	None	None	$41.99
17-2071	Electrical Engineers	3,921	4,399	478	12.2	268	Bachelor's	None	None	$51.55
17-2081	Environmental Engineers	967	1,150	183	18.9	85	Bachelor's	None	None	$60.12
17-2112	Industrial Engineers	7,206	8,725	1,519	21.1	588	Bachelor's	None	None	$52.19
17-2141	Mechanical Engineers	6,975	8,255	1,280	18.4	541	Bachelor's	None	None	$57.10
17-2151	Mining & Geological Engineers, Incl. Mining Safety	192	226	34	17.7	15	Bachelor's	None	None	$48.73
17-2171	Petroleum Engineers	5,833	7,102	1,269	21.8	484	Bachelor's	None	None	$75.76
17-3011	Architectural & Civil Drafters	4,499	4,775	276	6.1	455	Associate's	None	None	$28.15
17-3012	Electrical & Electronics Drafters	962	1,052	90	9.4	90	Associate's	None	None	$30.92
17-3022	Civil Engineering Technologists & Technicians	2,462	2,675	213	8.7	252	Associate's	None	None	$30.33
17-3023	Electrical & Electronic Engineering Techs.	1,622	1,758	136	8.4	176	Associate's	None	None	$32.44
17-3026	Industrial Engineering Technologists & Technicians	1,288	1,418	130	10.1	135	Associate's	None	None	$36.22
17-3027	Mechanical Engineering Technologists & Technicians	1,312	1,355	43	3.3	124	Associate's	None	None	$31.49
17-3028	Calibration Technologists & Technicians	839	940	101	12.0	90	Associate's	None	None	$36.96
17-3031	Surveying & Mapping Technicians	2,889	3,202	313	10.8	384	High school	None	Moderate OJT	$23.26
19-0000	**Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations**									
19-2042	Geoscientists, Ex. Hydrologists & Geographers	2,582	3,200	618	23.9	284	Bachelor's	None	None	$67.76
19-4021	Biological Technicians	1,867	2,138	271	14.5	272	Bachelor's	None	None	$24.05
19-4031	Chemical Technicians	2,612	2,815	203	7.8	331	Associate's	None	Moderate OJT	$43.26
19-4042	Environmental Science & Protection Techs., Incl. Health	816	1,019	203	24.9	112	Associate's	None	None	$22.90
19-4043	Geological Techs., Ex. Hydrologic Techs.	1,032	1,130	98	9.5	119	Associate's	None	Moderate OJT	$27.31
19-4044	Hydrologic Technicians	215	220	5	2.3	22	Associate's	None	Moderate OJT	$24.53
19-5011	Occupational Health & Safety Specialists	5,589	7,224	1,635	29.3	835	Bachelor's	None	None	$38.46
21-0000	**Community and Social Service Occupations**									
21-1018	Substance Abuse, Behavioral Mental Health Counselors	4,617	5,906	1,289	27.9	561	Bachelor's	None	None	$27.45
23-0000	**Legal Occupations**									
23-2011	Paralegals & Legal Assistants	6,393	7,940	1,547	24.2	879	Associate's	None	None	$28.34
23-2093	Title Examiners, Abstractors, & Searchers	2,143	2,575	432	20.2	265	High school	None	Moderate OJT	$29.38
25-0000	**Educational Instruction and Library Occupations[3]**									
25-2011	Preschool Teachers, Ex. Special Education	14,563	17,643	3,080	21.2	1,995	Associate's	None	None	$16.46
25-2012	Kindergarten Teachers, Ex. Special Education	3,774	4,415	641	17.0	493	Bachelor's	None	None	$31.71
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Ex. Special Education	36,127	42,558	6,431	17.8	3,257	Bachelor's	None	None	$31.08
25-2022	Middle School Teachers, Ex. Special & CTE	16,664	19,687	3,023	18.1	1,509	Bachelor's	None	None	$31.93
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Ex. CTE	24,588	29,102	4,514	18.4	2,096	Bachelor's	None	None	$31.86
25-2032	Career/Technical Education Teachers, Secondary School	3,020	3,528	508	16.8	252	Bachelor's	< 5 years	None	$32.30
25-2052	Special Ed. Teachers, Kindergarten & Elementary School	3,480	4,071	591	17.0	310	Bachelor's	None	None	$31.54
25-2057	Special Education Teachers, Middle School	1,771	2,072	301	17.0	158	Bachelor's	None	None	$31.91
25-2058	Special Education Teachers, Secondary School	2,493	2,925	432	17.3	224	Bachelor's	None	None	$31.78
25-3011	Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Ed., ESL Instructo	644	655	11	1.7	78	Bachelor's	None	None	$25.44
27-0000	**Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations**									
27-3091	Interpreters & Translators	3,125	3,598	473	15.1	377	Bachelor's	None	None	$26.66

Code	Occupation	2022	2032	Change	%	Openings	Education	Experience	Training	Wage
29-0000	**Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations**									
29-1126	Respiratory Therapists	3,089	3,878	789	25.5	250	Associate's	None	None	$37.49
29-1141	Registered Nurses	60,722	70,730	10,008	16.5	4,535	Bachelor's	None	None	$44.68
29-1292	Dental Hygienists	2,066	2,467	401	19.4	187	Associate's	None	None	$45.03
29-2010	Clinical Laboratory Technologists & Technicians	6,511	7,744	1,233	18.9	576	Bachelor's	None	None	$25.04
29-2031	Cardiovascular Technologists & Technicians	1,043	1,211	168	16.1	85	Associate's	None	None	$21.75
29-2032	Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	1,752	2,290	538	30.7	156	Associate's	None	None	$39.36
29-2034	Radiologic Technologists & Technicians	4,731	5,723	992	21.0	371	Associate's	None	None	$36.82
29-2035	Magnetic Resonance Imaging Technologists	816	991	175	21.4	65	Associate's	< 5 years	None	$41.28
29-2036	Medical Dosimetrists	112	134	22	19.6	8	Bachelor's	None	None	$64.42
29-2055	Surgical Technologists	2,302	2,694	392	17.0	187	Nondegree	None	None	$30.53
29-2061	Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses	12,906	14,764	1,858	14.4	1,233	Nondegree	None	None	$28.37
29-2072	Medical Records Specialists	4,464	5,381	917	20.5	417	Nondegree	None	None	$22.00
29-9021	Health Info. Technologists & Medical Registrars	906	1,187	281	31.0	91	Associate's	None	None	$36.89
29-9093	Surgical Assistants	508	594	86	16.9	42	Nondegree	None	None	$30.24
31-0000	**Healthcare Support Occupations**									
31-2011	Occupational Therapy Assistants	1,002	1,387	385	38.4	201	Associate's	None	None	$34.91
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	1,728	2,308	580	33.6	331	Associate's	None	None	$36.86
41-0000	**Sales and Related Occupations**									
41-9031	Sales Engineers	1,564	1,832	268	17.1	180	Bachelor's	None	Moderate OJT	$56.84
43-0000	**Office and Administrative Support Occupations**									
43-5061	Production, Planning, & Expediting Clerks	7,911	9,104	1,193	15.1	981	High school	None	Moderate OJT	$23.45
47-0000	**Construction and Extraction Occupations[4]**									
47-1011	First-Line Sprvs. of Construction Trades & Extraction	29,299	33,210	3,911	13.3	2,851	High school	≥ 5 years	None	$34.43
47-2011	Boilermakers	1,002	1,105	103	10.3	98	High school	None	Apprenticeship	$32.41
47-2031	Carpenters	13,164	14,223	1,059	8.0	1,228	High school	None	Apprenticeship	$23.00
47-2073	Operating Engineers & Other Construction Equip. Oprs.	11,105	12,615	1,510	13.6	1,142	High school	None	Moderate OJT	$22.94
47-2111	Electricians	20,281	23,770	3,489	17.2	2,267	High school	None	Apprenticeship	$28.60
47-2132	Insulation Workers, Mechanical	1,625	1,750	125	7.7	140	High school	None	Apprenticeship	$24.07
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, & Steamfitters	11,144	12,593	1,449	13.0	1,155	High school	None	Apprenticeship	$28.98
47-2171	Reinforcing Iron & Rebar Workers	2,344	2,571	227	9.7	218	High school	None	Apprenticeship	$23.36
47-2211	Sheet Metal Workers	2,297	2,522	225	9.8	240	High school	None	Apprenticeship	$24.53
47-2221	Structural Iron & Steel Workers	2,166	2,278	112	5.2	199	High school	None	Apprenticeship	$23.38
47-4011	Construction & Building Inspectors	4,483	4,805	322	7.2	556	High school	≥ 5 years	Moderate OJT	$31.49
47-5012	Rotary Drill Operators, Oil & Gas	2,099	2,279	180	8.6	239	No formal credential	None	Moderate OJT	$38.46
47-5013	Service Unit Operators, Oil & Gas	4,169	4,562	393	9.4	480	No formal credential	None	Moderate OJT	$25.99
47-5071	Roustabouts, Oil & Gas	4,817	5,394	577	12.0	574	No formal credential	None	Moderate OJT	$22.53
49-0000	**Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations**									
49-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, & Repairers	17,059	19,509	2,450	14.4	1,743	High school	< 5 years	None	$35.95
49-2098	Security & Fire Alarm Systems Installers	2,482	2,988	506	20.4	334	High school	None	Moderate OJT	$23.45
49-3011	Aircraft Mechanics & Service Technicians	3,465	3,922	457	13.2	312	Nondegree	None	None	$37.85
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians & Mechanics	17,572	19,947	2,375	13.5	1,818	Nondegree	None	Short-term OJT	$22.78
49-3031	Bus & Truck Mechanics & Diesel Engine Specialists	6,779	7,630	851	12.6	677	High school	None	Long-term OJT	$28.29
49-3042	Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Ex. Engines	6,106	7,597	1,491	24.4	711	High school	None	Long-term OJT	$29.75
49-9012	Control & Valve Installers & Repairers, Ex. Mechanical Door	3,506	4,084	578	16.5	334	High school	None	Moderate OJT	$23.34
49-9021	Heating, Air Cond., & Refrigeration Mechanics & Installers	7,414	8,836	1,422	19.2	816	Nondegree	None	Long-term OJT	$26.06
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	13,728	17,253	3,525	25.7	1,543	High school	None	Long-term OJT	$29.90
49-9043	Maintenance Workers, Machinery	2,608	3,089	481	18.4	311	High school	None	Long-term OJT	$27.17
49-9051	Electrical Power-Line Installers & Repairers	3,059	3,554	495	16.2	298	High school	None	Long-term OJT	$36.03
49-9052	Telecommunications Line Installers & Repairers	2,916	3,296	380	13.0	312	High school	None	Long-term OJT	$23.79
49-9062	Medical Equipment Repairers	2,064	2,700	636	30.8	280	Associate's	None	Moderate OJT	$24.30
49-9081	Wind Turbine Service Technicians	1,683	2,742	1,059	62.9	314	Nondegree	None	Long-term OJT	$29.58
51-0000	**Production Occupations**									
51-4041	Machinists	6,264	7,016	752	12.0	718	High school	None	Long-term OJT	$24.11
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, & Brazers	16,666	18,737	2,071	12.4	1,916	High school	None	Moderate OJT	$24.94
51-8091	Chemical Plant & System Operators	4,762	4,785	23	0.5	2	High school	None	Moderate OJT	$51.20
51-9161	Computer Numerically Controlled Tool Operators	4,991	5,067	76	1.5	8	High school	None	Moderate OJT	$23.89
51-9162	Computer Numerically Controlled Tool Programmers	721	899	178	24.7	18	Nondegree	None	Moderate OJT	$30.50
53-0000	**Transportation and Material Moving Occupations**									
53-3032	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	53,795	64,684	10,889	20.2	7,241	Nondegree	None	Short-term OJT	$24.39
53-5021	Captains, Mates, & Pilots of Water Vessels	2,023	2,141	118	5.8	224	Nondegree	< 5 years	None	$57.81
53-7021	Crane & Tower Operators	3,177	3,582	405	12.7	349	High school	< 5 years	Moderate OJT	$35.39
53-7072	Pump Operators, Ex. Wellhead Pumpers	1,379	1,688	309	22.4	184	High school	None	Moderate OJT	$26.60
53-7073	Wellhead Pumpers	3,310	4,181	871	26.3	462	High school	< 5 years	Moderate OJT	$37.24

Notes

High-skill High-growth Scholarship Eligible Occupations targeted by the Gulf Coast Workforce Board are those requiring a bachelor's degree or less that offer the best employment opportunities for the region's residents now and in the future.

1. The criteria used to identify the above occupations are as follows:

　　50% or more of total occupational employment must be found in within Gulf Coast Workforce Board Targeted Industries
　　Projected employment in 2032 greater than or equal to the median for all occupations in the region (≥ 1,668)
　　A projected growth rate greater than or equal to the average of all occupations in the region (≥ 14.9%) between 2022 and 2032
　　Minimum education requirements of a postsecondary degree or certificate, moderate on-the-job training with no less than a high school diploma, long-term on-the-job training, apprenticeship, internship/residency or work experience in a related occupation
　　Median hourly wages greater than or equal to the OES 2023 median wage for all occupations in the region (≥ $22.54)
　　Occupations found on the previous High-skill High-growth Occupation List and which meet four of the five criteria immediately above have been retained

2. Other occupations meeting some but not all of the above criteria have also been included based on the best regional labor market intelligence available. Employers can petition for the inclusion of additional as labor market conditions change.
3. Hourly wages were obtained by dividing the reported median annual wage by 2,080 hours. Note that actual per hour earnings are likely to differ as education-related occupations are typically compensated on a 9 or 10 month basis.
4. Occupations that do not officially require a formal educational credential, but do require moderate on-the-job training, are included due to their importance to the oil and gas industry.
5. Source: Texas Workforce Commission - Labor Market and Career Information. 2023 Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) and 2022-2032 Long Term Projections.

Authorized for use by the Gulf Coast Workforce Board: February 4, 2025

Workforce Solutions
GULF COAST

2025 Targeted Industries[1,2,3]

NAICS	Industry Title	4-Quarter Average Employment 2022 (QCEW)	2022 4 Quarter Avg Weekly Wages
21	**Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction**		
2111	Oil and Gas Extraction	28,786	$5,092
2131	Support Activities for Mining	33,879	$2,893
22	**Utilities**		
2211	Electric Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution	13,890	$2,901
23	**Construction**		
2361	Residential Building Construction	17,113	$1,940
2362	Nonresidential Building Construction	37,400	$1,924
2371	Utility System Construction	35,108	$1,849
2373	Highway, Street, and Bridge Construction	15,748	$1,258
2381	Building Foundation And Exterior Contractors	23,657	$1,357
2382	Building Equipment Contractors	51,950	$1,394
2389	Other Specialty Trade Contractors	19,607	$1,339
31-33	**Manufacturing**		
3251	Basic Chemical Manufacturing	22,661	$3,209
3324	Boiler, Tank, and Shipping Container Manufacturing	4,652	$1,739
3329	Other Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	12,615	$1,653
3331	Agriculture, Construction, and Mining Machinery Manufacturing	21,067	$2,474
42	**Wholesale Trade**		
4234	Professional and Commercial Equipment and Supplies Merchant Wholesaler	14,462	$2,222
4235	Metal and Mineral (except Petroleum) Merchant Wholesalers	10,633	$2,200
4238	Machinery, Equipment, and Supplies Merchant Wholesalers	31,726	$1,968
4247	Petroleum and Petroleum Products Merchant Wholesalers	10,148	$3,925
4251	Wholesale Trade Agents and Brokers	9,845	$2,236
44-45	**Retail Trade**		
4411	Automobile Dealers	29,382	$1,803
48-49	**Transportation and Warehousing**		
4811	Scheduled Air Transportation	18,230	$1,959
4831	Deep Sea, Coastal, and Great Lakes Water Transportation	1,464	$2,543
4832	Inland Water Transportation	1,779	$1,955
4841	General Freight Trucking	17,600	$1,319
4842	Specialized Freight Trucking	11,985	$2,145
4885	Freight Transportation Arrangement	10,396	$1,743
4889	Other Support Activities for Transportation	1,955	$2,920
4931	Warehousing and Storage	36,284	$962
51	**Information**		
5171	Wired and Wireless Telecommunications (except Satellite)	10,039	$1,749

52	**Finance and Insurance**		
5221	Depository Credit Intermediation	28,784	$2,056
5222	Nondepository Credit Intermediation	11,398	$2,155
5239	Other Financial Investment Activities	12,047	$3,766
5241	Insurance Carriers	13,930	$2,091
5242	Agencies, Brokerages, and Other Insurance Related Activities	22,147	$1,906
53	**Real Estate and Rental and Leasing**		
5313	Activities Related to Real Estate	17,923	$1,404
54	**Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services**		
5411	Legal Services	30,521	$2,610
5412	Accounting, Tax Preparation, Bookkeeping, and Payroll Services	26,929	$1,917
5413	Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services	67,397	$2,286
5415	Computer Systems Design and Related Services	36,305	$2,423
5416	Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services	45,759	$2,436
5417	Scientific Research and Development Services	10,705	$2,656
5419	Other Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	18,704	$1,324
55	**Management of Companies and Enterprises**		
5511	Management of Companies and Enterprises	42,794	$4,135
56	**Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services**		
5611	Office Administrative Services	25,181	$2,257
61	**Educational Services**		
6111	Elementary and Secondary Schools	216,076	$1,017
6113	Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools	61,399	$1,748
62	**Health Care and Social Assistance**		
6211	Offices of Physicians	58,634	$1,939
6212	Offices of Dentists	20,190	$1,049
6214	Outpatient Care Centers	18,281	$1,544
6221	General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	97,903	$1,631
6223	Specialty (except Psychiatric and Substance Abuse) Hospitals	28,692	$2,074
81	**Other Services (except Public Administration)**		
8113	Commercial Industrial Machinery Equip. (ex. Auto and Elec.) Repair Maintena	14,705	$1,876

Notes

1. Criteria used to identify the targeted industries:

Industries with year 2022 four quarter average employment of at least 10,762, i.e., average employment across all 4-digit industries
Industries with an average weekly wage of at least $1,498.
Industries meeting at least one of the criteria above and present on the previous targeted industry list.

2. Absolute changes do not represent total demand for labor as they do not reflect demand due to replacements, attrition, turnover, etc.

3. Source: Texas Workforce Commission - Labor Market and Career Information. Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)

Authorized by the Gulf Coast Workforce Board: **February 4, 2025**

WIOA In-Demand Occupations List

SOC	Occupation Title	Employment Growth Annual Averages		Net Change	Percent Change	Total Annual Openings	Typical Education Needed for Entry into Occupation	Median Hourly Wage 2023
		2022	2032					
00-0000	Total, All Occupations	3,465,636	3,982,800	517,164	14.9	454,148	-	$22.54
11-1021	General & Operations Managers	104,811	123,045	18,234	17.4	10,779	Bachelor's	$48.54
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	75,276	83,453	8,177	10.9	12,311	No formal credential	$14.37
35-3023	Fast Food & Counter Workers	71,660	85,032	13,372	18.7	19,224	No formal credential	$11.33
41-2011	Cashiers	69,155	72,634	3,479	5.0	14,037	No formal credential	$13.29
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	66,852	70,023	3,171	4.7	9,509	High school	$18.12
53-7062	Laborers & Freight, Stock, & Material Movers, Hand	61,959	72,723	10,764	17.4	9,764	No formal credential	$17.46
53-7065	Stockers & Order Fillers	60,768	73,017	12,249	20.2	11,935	High school	$17.25
29-1141	Registered Nurses	60,722	70,730	10,008	16.5	4,535	Bachelor's	$44.68
53-3032	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	53,795	64,684	10,889	20.2	7,241	Nondegree	$24.39
35-3031	Waiters & Waitresses	52,621	58,908	6,287	11.9	12,165	No formal credential	$12.32
37-2011	Janitors & Cleaners, Ex.Maids & Housekeeping Cleaners	50,228	58,207	7,979	15.9	8,344	No formal credential	$13.80
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	49,019	51,029	2,010	4.1	6,165	High school	$17.92
47-2061	Construction Laborers	48,532	55,477	6,945	14.3	5,115	No formal credential	$17.91
43-1011	First-Line Sprvs. of Office & Admin. Support Workers	42,002	44,589	2,587	6.2	4,392	High school	$30.08
43-6014	Secretaries & Admin. Assistants, Ex. Legal, Medical, & Exec.	41,655	40,651	-1,004	-2.4	4,462	High school	$20.00
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Ex.Special Education	36,127	42,558	6,431	17.8	3,257	Bachelor's	$31.08
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, & Auditing Clerks	32,830	34,588	1,758	5.4	4,079	Some college	$22.26
35-2021	Food Preparation Workers	32,081	35,554	3,473	10.8	6,354	No formal credential	$13.28
41-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	30,981	33,165	2,184	7.0	3,360	High school	$21.62
49-9071	Maintenance & Repair Workers, General	30,715	35,832	5,117	16.7	3,497	High school	$19.41
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	30,547	42,952	12,405	40.6	6,742	No formal credential	$14.41
13-2011	Accountants & Auditors	30,428	36,022	5,594	18.4	3,089	Bachelor's	$39.29
47-1011	First-Line Sprvs. of Construction Trades & Extraction	29,299	33,210	3,911	13.3	2,851	High school	$34.43
35-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation & Serving Workers	28,955	35,407	6,452	22.3	5,347	High school	$17.01
43-4171	Receptionists & Information Clerks	27,582	30,630	3,048	11.1	4,170	High school	$16.37
33-9032	Security Guards	27,354	31,940	4,586	16.8	4,377	High school	$14.52
13-1082	Project Management Specialists	26,663	30,929	4,266	16.0	2,412	Bachelor's	$46.71
41-4012	Sales Reps., Wholesale & Mfg., Ex.Technical & Scientific	25,166	29,518	4,352	17.3	2,839	High school	$30.05
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Ex. Special & CTE	24,588	29,102	4,514	18.4	2,096	Bachelor's	$31.86
25-9045	Teaching Assistants, Ex.Postsecondary	23,884	27,997	4,113	17.2	3,424	Some college	$14.23
11-9013	Farmers, Ranchers, & Other Agricultural Managers	23,710	23,765	55	0.2	2,455	High school	$36.53
41-3091	Sales Reps. of Svcs., Ex. Ads., Insurance, Fin. Services, & Trave	22,761	26,681	3,920	17.2	2,700	High school	$28.99
11-9199	Managers, All Other	22,624	25,989	3,365	14.9	2,094	Bachelor's	$65.67
39-9011	Childcare Workers	22,565	25,205	2,640	11.7	4,215	High school	$13.41
41-9022	Real Estate Sales Agents	22,401	26,032	3,631	16.2	2,371	High school	$24.36
43-5071	Shipping, Receiving, & Inventory Clerks	21,712	23,022	1,310	6.0	2,385	High school	$17.71
37-3011	Landscaping & Groundskeeping Workers	20,625	23,984	3,359	16.3	3,177	No formal credential	$17.01
47-2111	Electricians	20,281	23,770	3,489	17.2	2,267	High school	$28.60
53-3033	Light Truck Drivers	20,256	25,539	5,283	26.1	2,906	High school	$20.42
15-1252	Software Developers	19,802	28,367	8,565	43.3	2,131	Bachelor's	$60.44
53-7051	Industrial Truck & Tractor Operators	19,521	24,444	4,923	25.2	2,600	No formal credential	$21.04
37-2012	Maids & Housekeeping Cleaners	19,052	21,480	2,428	12.7	3,113	No formal credential	$14.02
11-9021	Construction Managers	18,681	21,498	2,817	15.1	1,696	Bachelor's	$48.50
25-3031	Substitute Teachers, Short-Term	18,247	22,417	4,170	22.9	2,840	Bachelor's	$15.13
31-1131	Nursing Assistants	18,060	20,982	2,922	16.2	3,056	Nondegree	$17.14
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians & Mechanics	17,572	19,947	2,375	13.5	1,818	Nondegree	$22.78
51-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Production & Operating Workers	17,567	19,425	1,858	10.6	1,896	High school	$33.29
23-1011	Lawyers	17,128	21,803	4,675	27.3	1,214	High school	$72.82
49-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, & Repairers	17,059	19,509	2,450	14.4	1,743	High school	$35.95
13-1071	Human Resources Specialists	16,822	20,334	3,512	20.9	1,870	Bachelor's	$30.39
31-9092	Medical Assistants	16,692	21,116	4,424	26.5	2,848	Nondegree	$18.63
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, & Brazers	16,666	18,737	2,071	12.4	1,916	High school	$24.94
25-2022	Middle School Teachers, Ex. Special & CTE	16,664	19,687	3,023	18.1	1,509	Bachelor's	$31.93
11-2022	Sales Managers	16,453	19,466	3,013	18.3	1,601	Bachelor's	$62.50
13-1199	Business Operations Specialists, All Other	16,346	19,510	3,164	19.4	1,843	Bachelor's	$38.10
51-9061	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, & Weighers	15,881	16,641	760	4.8	1,931	High school	$21.68
11-3031	Financial Managers	15,510	20,146	4,636	29.9	1,651	Bachelor's	$78.90
33-3051	Police & Sheriff?s Patrol Officers	15,477	17,650	2,173	14.0	1,474	High school	$33.21
53-1047	First-Line Sprv. of Transport. & Material Moving, Ex. Aircraft	14,930	17,842	2,912	19.5	1,918	High school	$28.13
25-2011	Preschool Teachers, Ex.Special Education	14,563	17,643	3,080	21.2	1,995	Associate's	$16.46
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	13,728	17,253	3,525	25.7	1,543	High school	$29.90
43-6013	Medical Secretaries & Administrative Assistants	13,475	15,818	2,343	17.4	1,753	High school	$18.39
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	13,377	16,212	2,835	21.2	1,254	Some college	$26.45
47-2031	Carpenters	13,164	14,223	1,059	8.0	1,228	High school	$23.00
39-5012	Hairdressers, Hairstylists, & Cosmetologists	12,984	15,197	2,213	17.0	2,120	Nondegree	$14.23
29-2061	Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses	12,906	14,764	1,858	14.4	1,233	Nondegree	$28.37
21-2011	Clergy	12,578	13,750	1,172	9.3	1,186	Bachelor's	$27.59
35-9011	Dining Room & Cafeteria Attendants & Bartender Helpers	12,246	14,764	2,518	20.6	2,763	No formal credential	$11.79
35-3011	Bartenders	12,229	14,447	2,218	18.1	2,502	No formal credential	$12.46
53-3031	Driver/Sales Workers	12,200	15,093	2,893	23.7	1,706	High school	$13.09
45-2092	Farmworkers & Laborers, Crop, Nursery, & Greenhouse	12,040	11,975	-65	-0.5	1,762	No formal credential	$15.39
15-1211	Computer Systems Analysts	11,846	15,417	3,571	30.1	1,151	Bachelor's	$54.10
33-3012	Correctional Officers & Jailers	11,668	11,335	-333	-2.9	959	High school	$23.09
15-1299	Computer Occupations, All Other	11,422	14,460	3,038	26.6	1,104	Bachelor's	$50.04

Code	Occupation	2022 Emp	2032 Emp	Change	%	Openings	Education	Wage
11-9111	Medical & Health Services Managers	11,315	16,032	4,717	41.7	1,419	Bachelor's	$52.00
11-3021	Computer & Information Systems Managers	11,284	14,836	3,552	31.5	1,188	Bachelor's	$78.51
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, & Steamfitters	11,144	12,593	1,449	13.0	1,155	High school	$28.98
47-2073	Operating Engineers & Other Construction Equipment Oprs.	11,105	12,615	1,510	13.6	1,142	High school	$22.94
13-1161	Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	10,791	13,579	2,788	25.8	1,370	Bachelor's	$30.12
11-9141	Property, Real Estate, & Community Association Managers	10,299	12,077	1,778	17.3	1,028	High school	$35.13
53-7064	Packers & Packagers, Hand	9,904	10,967	1,063	10.7	1,594	No formal credential	$14.37
43-6011	Executive Secretaries & Executive Administrative Assistants	9,864	8,584	-1,280	-13.0	808	High school	$33.72
35-2012	Cooks, Institution & Cafeteria	9,822	11,495	1,673	17.0	1,763	No formal credential	$15.34
41-3031	Securities, Commodities, & Financial Services Sales Agents	9,816	10,979	1,163	11.8	875	Bachelor's	$30.70
35-9031	Hosts & Hostesses, Restaurant, Lounge, & Coffee Shop	9,790	11,440	1,650	16.9	2,832	No formal credential	$13.35
43-3021	Billing & Posting Clerks	9,617	10,744	1,127	11.7	1,154	High school	$21.40
25-3021	Self-Enrichment Teachers	9,594	11,315	1,721	17.9	1,417	High school	$15.85
17-2051	Civil Engineers	9,415	10,376	961	10.2	675	Bachelor's	$41.99
35-9021	Dishwashers	9,364	10,542	1,178	12.6	1,831	No formal credential	$12.96
41-3021	Insurance Sales Agents	9,356	10,831	1,475	15.8	945	High school	$21.75
25-1071	Health Specialties Teachers, Postsecondary	9,074	11,413	2,339	25.8	1,031	Doctoral/Professional	$66.37
53-7061	Cleaners of Vehicles & Equipment	8,882	10,408	1,526	17.2	1,421	No formal credential	$13.71
47-2141	Painters, Construction & Maintenance	8,852	9,502	650	7.3	769	No formal credential	$21.22
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	8,713	10,241	1,528	17.5	1,001	High school	$20.92
41-2021	Counter & Rental Clerks	8,525	9,784	1,259	14.8	1,186	No formal credential	$17.03
25-9031	Instructional Coordinators	8,312	9,795	1,483	17.8	921	Master's	$36.70
31-9091	Dental Assistants	7,953	9,433	1,480	18.6	1,338	Nondegree	$18.40
43-5061	Production, Planning, & Expediting Clerks	7,911	9,104	1,193	15.1	981	High school	$23.45
13-1151	Training & Development Specialists	7,798	9,395	1,597	20.5	872	Bachelor's	$30.40
11-9032	Education Administrators, Kindergarten through Secondary	7,707	9,119	1,412	18.3	694	Master's	$46.14
11-2021	Marketing Managers	7,547	8,896	1,349	17.9	776	Bachelor's	$65.85
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, Refrigeration Mechanics & Installers	7,414	8,836	1,422	19.2	816	Nondegree	$26.06
35-2011	Cooks, Fast Food	7,264	7,407	143	2.0	1,112	No formal credential	$10.41
21-1012	Educational, Guidance, & Career Counselors & Advisors	7,235	8,596	1,361	18.8	694	Master's	$33.64
17-2112	Industrial Engineers	7,206	8,725	1,519	21.1	588	Bachelor's	$52.19
53-3051	Bus Drivers, School	7,187	8,385	1,198	16.7	1,300	High school	$21.10
41-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Non-Retail Sales Workers	7,141	7,792	651	9.1	667	High school	$36.38
13-1111	Management Analysts	7,039	8,485	1,446	20.5	769	Bachelor's	$42.18
13-1041	Compliance Officers	7,000	8,167	1,167	16.7	692	Bachelor's	$36.05
51-9198	Helpers--Production Workers	6,934	7,067	133	1.9	1,103	High school	$16.46
13-2051	Financial & Investment Analysts	6,912	8,323	1,411	20.4	617	Bachelor's	$44.79
39-9031	Exercise Trainers & Group Fitness Instructors	6,887	8,982	2,095	30.4	1,665	High school	$18.79
43-5052	Postal Service Mail Carriers	6,811	8,028	1,217	17.9	676	No formal credential	$27.08
49-3031	Bus & Truck Mechanics & Diesel Engine Specialists	6,779	7,630	851	12.6	677	High school	$28.29
13-2052	Personal Financial Advisors	6,730	8,071	1,341	19.9	589	Bachelor's	$38.97
41-4011	Sales Reps, Wholesale & Mfg., Technical & Scientific Products	6,540	7,734	1,194	18.3	746	Bachelor's	$46.88
27-3031	Public Relations Specialists	6,455	7,557	1,102	17.1	659	Bachelor's	$29.06
23-2011	Paralegals & Legal Assistants	6,393	7,940	1,547	24.2	879	Associate's	$28.34
51-4041	Machinists	6,264	7,016	752	12.0	718	High school	$24.11
39-2021	Animal Caretakers	6,261	8,164	1,903	30.4	1,486	High school	$13.70
43-5032	Dispatchers, Ex.Police, Fire, & Ambulance	6,188	6,884	696	11.2	680	High school	$21.44
49-3042	Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Ex.Engines	6,106	7,597	1,491	24.4	711	High school	$29.75
11-9051	Food Service Managers	5,749	6,634	885	15.4	770	High school	$32.41
11-3012	Administrative Services Managers	5,668	6,668	1,000	17.6	571	Bachelor's	$51.82
43-4181	Reservation & Transportation Ticket Agents & Travel Clerks	5,662	5,856	194	3.4	652	High school	$19.77
19-5011	Occupational Health & Safety Specialists	5,589	7,224	1,635	29.3	835	Bachelor's	$38.46
37-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Housekeeping & Janitorial Workers	5,549	6,442	893	16.1	776	High school	$18.62
51-3011	Bakers	5,125	6,240	1,115	21.8	941	No formal credential	$14.23
39-3091	Amusement & Recreation Attendants	5,004	5,631	627	12.5	1,548	No formal credential	$11.51
39-1022	First-Line Supervisors of Personal Service Workers	4,827	5,813	986	20.4	669	High school	$20.87
47-5071	Roustabouts, Oil & Gas	4,817	5,394	577	12.0	574	No formal credential	$22.53
21-1093	Social & Human Service Assistants	4,705	5,472	767	16.3	592	High school	$20.89
51-9111	Packaging & Filling Machine Operators & Tenders	4,590	5,149	559	12.2	575	High school	$17.50
43-4081	Hotel, Motel, & Resort Desk Clerks	4,565	4,983	418	9.2	801	High school	$13.85
35-1011	Chefs & Head Cooks	4,268	5,169	901	21.1	645	High school	$24.92
13-2082	Tax Preparers	4,193	4,952	759	18.1	584	High school	$30.32
25-3041	Tutors	4,181	5,379	1,198	28.7	926	Some college	$15.45
53-2031	Flight Attendants	4,165	4,739	574	13.8	640	High school	ERROR
45-2093	Farmworkers, Farm, Ranch, & Aquacultural Animals	4,025	4,125	100	2.5	610	No formal credential	$21.69
39-9032	Recreation Workers	3,500	4,420	920	26.3	899	High school	$13.80
35-3041	Food Servers, Nonrestaurant	3,471	4,052	581	16.7	672	No formal credential	$13.59
27-2022	Coaches & Scouts	3,455	4,471	1,016	29.4	596	Bachelor's	$17.79
39-3031	Ushers, Lobby Attendants, & Ticket Takers	2,923	3,251	328	11.2	933	No formal credential	$12.75

Notes

1. The Where-the-jobs-are List includes occupations with the largest number of employment opportunities for Gulf Coast residents based on total employment in 2022 irrespective of wages, educational requirements, or projected growth.

2. Occupations shown are limited to those with projected total annual job openings of 568 or more per year (the average number of openings across all occupations in the region over period of 2022-2032). Note that the majority of openings are likely to be the result of workers switching to new careers (transfers) thereby creating vacancies rather than openings due to retirements (exits) or new jobs created.

3. Source: Texas Workforce Commission - Labor Market and Career Information. 2023 Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) and 2022-2032 Long Term Projections.
Authorized for use by the Gulf Coast Workforce Board: February 4, 2025

B. Labor Force Analysis and Trends

References: WIOA §108(b)(1)(C); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(3)

Boards must include an analysis of the regional workforce, including:

- current labor force employment and unemployment data;

- information on labor market trends; and

- the educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

An analysis of the regional workforce, including the following:
☐ Employment data
☐ Unemployment data
☐ Labor market trends
☐ Educational and skill levels
☐ Individuals with barriers to employment

BOARD RESPONSE

As of December 2024, the most recent data available, total nonfarm employment across the Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land MSA reached 3,499,900 (not seasonally adjusted) and 3,473,600 (seasonally adjusted), marking the highest employment level since records began in 1990. (Source: Current Employment Statistics (CES), Texas Workforce Commission Labor Market and Career Information [LMCI] / U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS])

Meanwhile, the most recent seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for November 2024 was 4.6 percent, representing approximately 171,000 unemployed individuals across the region. As noted, 2024 reflected a slower pace of job growth at just 57,800 jobs added compared to the previous three years with growth in excess of 100,000 each year. Accordingly, the unemployment rate has seen an equally gradual climb from a cycle low of 4.1 percent. (Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), TWC LMCI / BLS)

Houston's job growth in 2024 was driven primarily by the construction sector, which led in both absolute and percentage terms, adding 15,200 jobs—a 6.5 percent year-over-year increase—and accounting for more than one in four jobs added across the region. Private Education and Health Services contributed 10,100 jobs, while Leisure and Hospitality added 6,700, rounding out the top three. All sectors reported positive growth for the year; however, as of December 2024, Mining and Logging, representing upstream oil and gas, had yet to recover to pre-pandemic employment levels from February 2020. Employment in this sector remained 5,800 jobs, or 7.4 percent, below pre-pandemic levels. (Source: CES, TWC LMCI / BLS)

Five-year estimates from the 2023 American Community Survey show **continued improvement in educational attainment** across the Houston region. The percentage of adults with only a high school diploma also saw a slight decline, from 23.3 percent in 2013 to 22.5 percent in 2023. Meanwhile, gains were observed among those holding associate degrees (6.4% to 7.8%), bachelor's degrees (19.8% to 22.8%), and postgraduate degrees (10.2% to 13.3%).

These **increases in postsecondary attainment** likely reflect both in-migration of individuals with higher credentials and natural increases among long-term residents, though the exact proportions are unknown based on available data. Nevertheless, this trend is encouraging given the **rising demand for advanced skills** highlighted in the analysis of long-term employment projections. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey [ACS], 5-Year Estimates, 2013 and 2023)

Other demographic trends from 2013 to 2023 also point to **positive labor market implications. Poverty rates declined** from 16.3 percent to 13.6 percent, the percentage of disconnected youth fell from 3.7 percent to 3.2 percent, the **share of residents without health insurance dropped** from 23.9 percent to 18.7 percent, and the proportion of residents who speak English "less than very well" decreased from 16.9 percent to 16.2 percent. (Source: ACS, 5-Year Estimates, 2013 and 2023)

Conversely, some indicators showed little to no change over the past decade, reaffirming **persistent barriers** to employment for certain populations. The percentage of households receiving food stamps remained at 11.5 percent, the **share of individuals with a disability increased slightly** from 8.2 percent to 8.6 percent, and the percentage of children in single-parent families saw only a marginal decrease from 33.8 percent to 33.7 percent. (Source: ACS, 5-Year Estimates, 2013 and 2023)

Educational and Skill Levels of the Workforce
Educational attainment remains one of the most powerful determinants of economic prosperity, shaping employment opportunities, earning potential, and regional competitiveness. Studies show that nearly 60% of regional economic growth is linked to workforce education and skill levels. As industries evolve and technological advancements redefine the nature of work, the demand for postsecondary credentials and workforce-relevant skills continues to grow. According to the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, by 2031, 72% of U.S. jobs will require some form of postsecondary education or training, yet the Houston-Gulf Coast region is behind its economic peers in both educational attainment and workforce readiness. (Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, *Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements Through 2020* and subsequent regional projections)

As the second-fastest-growing metro area in the United States, the region's economy is powered by energy, healthcare, aerospace, manufacturing, technology, and international trade. The Port of Houston, one of the busiest in the U.S., anchors a thriving logistics sector, while the region's life sciences and digital technology industries continue to expand. However, even as industries grow, a widening skills gap is preventing both workers and employers from fully capitalizing on economic opportunities. Houston ranks 40th among the top 100 U.S. metropolitan areas in postsecondary attainment, with only 48% of adults holding a degree or certification. Even more concerning, the Houston-Gulf Coast region ranks 48th in high school diploma or GED attainment among the

nation's 50 largest metro areas. (Source: Kinder Institute for Urban Research, *State of Education 2023*; U.S. Census Bureau, ACS) These statistics reveal a fundamental misalignment between workforce supply and industry demand, threatening the region's ability to sustain economic growth.

According to the National Skills Coalition, while 52% of jobs require education beyond high school but less than a four-year degree, only 43% of the workforce in the region has the necessary skills to fill them. (Source: National Skills Coalition, *Skills Mismatch and Middle-Skill Jobs in Texas*, 2023) This disconnect underscores a workforce readiness challenge that extends beyond K-12 education and into adult literacy, postsecondary persistence, and career transitions. While much attention is given to K-12 education, a larger crisis exists in adult literacy, postsecondary completion, and workforce transitions. One in three adults in Harris County lacks functional literacy skills, significantly reducing their ability to participate in job training, career advancement, or even daily workplace communication. (Source: Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation; Houston State of Literacy Report, 2022) Low literacy is one of the most significant barriers to workforce mobility, disproportionately affecting Black and Latino communities and limiting access to higher-wage, high-growth careers.

Further, Houston's postsecondary enrollment rates do not always translate into successful completion. Although the region benefits from a strong network of community colleges, technical schools, and universities, too many students enroll but do not complete a credential that leads to career success. The six-year college completion rate for Houston students is below the national average, with only 58% of students earning a degree or certificate within six years. (Source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2023 Regional Data)

The numbers are even lower for first-generation college students and economically disadvantaged individuals, who often face challenges such as balancing work, family obligations, and financial instability. For adult learners and returning students, pathways to upskilling remain complex and fragmented. Many working adults are unaware of available workforce training programs or face financial and logistical barriers that prevent them from enrolling and persisting in career-aligned education.

Addressing these disparities requires systemic collaboration that integrates workforce development with holistic wraparound support, ensuring that all workers can access, persist, and successfully complete some level of postsecondary education.

Early Childhood Education and Workforce Development
WFS-GC recognizes that early childhood education is critical to improving academic performance and workforce development. Research consistently demonstrates that high-quality early learning programs lay the foundation for cognitive, social, and emotional development, significantly improving long-term educational and career outcomes. (Source: National Institute for Early Education Research; Heckman Equation; Center on the Developing Child – Harvard University) For working families, access to reliable, high-quality childcare is fundamental to workforce participation, productivity, and economic mobility.

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board (Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast), the largest workforce board in Texas, has been at the forefront of expanding early childhood education services to meet the

growing demands of the region. In the past year alone, the GCWB served 55,536 children and 29,955 families, exceeding enrollment targets and significantly reducing waitlists. This expansion was made possible through strategic investments, streamlined enrollment processes, and increased provider support, demonstrating GCWB's commitment to ensuring that families can access the child care they need to remain in the workforce. Since 2021, GCWB has worked to address the rising demand for early learning services, which grew from 43,380 children in 2020–2021 to over 55,000 children by 2023–2024—a 28% increase in just three years. (Source: WFS-GC internal reports and administrative data, 2020–2024)

This surge reflects broader socioeconomic trends, including population growth, increased labor force participation, and evolving family dynamics. As the Texas Workforce Commission's Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan (2023–2025) highlights, early care and education provide children with safe, nurturing environments while enabling parents to contribute to the state's economic prosperity. (Source: Texas Workforce Commission, *Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan 2023–2025*) However, the **persistent gap** between demand and the availability of childcare presents a challenge for both families and employers. Many businesses—especially those in industries reliant on working parents—face talent **retention and productivity issues** when access to affordable, quality childcare is limited.

Beyond its immediate economic impact, **early childhood education is a cornerstone of long-term workforce development**. Increased access to high-quality early learning directly correlates with higher literacy rates, better high school completion rates, and greater postsecondary attainment—ensuring a stronger, more skilled workforce for the future. **To sustain economic growth and workforce competitiveness**, it is essential to prioritize childcare investments that support both current workforce needs and the development of future talent. **WFS-GC remains committed to fostering an early learning system** that ensures quality, **effectiveness** and measurable outcomes while also providing access. Aligning early childhood education with broader workforce strategies helps WFS-GC build **a resilient, well-prepared workforce** that meets the evolving needs of the Gulf Coast region and beyond.

C. Workforce Development Analysis

References: WIOA §108(b)(1)(D); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(4)

Boards must include an analysis of:

- workforce development activities in the region, including education and training;

- the strengths and weaknesses of the Board's workforce development activities;

- the effectiveness of the Board's programs and services;

- the Board's capacity to provide workforce development activities to address;

  ➢ the identified education and skills needs of the workforce; and

  ➢ the employment needs of employers.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

An analysis of workforce development activities in the region, including the following:
- ☐ General workforce development activities
- ☐ Education activities, including Early Childhood Education (ECE) and K–12
- ☐ Training activities
- ☐ Strengths and weaknesses of activities
- ☐ Effectiveness of programs and services
- ☐ The Board's capacity to provide workforce development activities
- ☐ Individuals with barriers to employment
- ☐ Employment needs of employers

BOARD RESPONSE

WFS-GC's workforce development activities are **designed to align with WIOA's core objectives,** including promoting an employer-driven workforce system, enhancing career pathways, supporting **sector-based training strategies**, and ensuring access to quality workforce services for job seekers and businesses. Through **strategic partnerships** with employers, educational institutions, and community-based organizations, WFS-GC is building a comprehensive and responsive workforce system. To further enhance workforce training and development, GCWB is working with employers to design and implement new, high-impact strategies that directly address industry workforce shortages. These efforts include:

Sector-Based Workforce Strategies WFS-GC is developing industry-led collaboratives in key sectors such as healthcare and life sciences, building and construction, advanced manufacturing, information technology, education, and energy. By designing and developing a cohort driven model, the Board seeks to ensure that training efforts align with real-time employer demand while offering students a more supportive environment to learn and succeed.

Customized Upskilling Initiatives Through partnerships with employers, WFS-GC is expanding work-based learning, on-the-job training programs, incumbent worker training, and industry-specific certifications and training.

Employer-Led Apprenticeship Development To address evolving workforce needs, WFS-GC is enhancing employer engagement in pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs, providing additional pathways to high-quality careers alongside traditional education.

Workforce Solutions for Small and Mid-Sized Employers Smaller companies often struggle to access state and federal workforce training funds. WFS-GC offers counseling and training that help small and mid-sized businesses learn about our services, TWC grants, and customized workforce strategies such as industry-focused hiring events to OJT.

Expanding Career Navigation and Coaching Employers frequently cite career navigation gaps as a barrier to hiring. WFS-GC is working to expand career coaching, mentorship, and work-based

learning opportunities, ensuring that more job seekers are aware of and prepared for available opportunities.

The Gulf Coast region has the **economic momentum, employer investment, and workforce infrastructure** to position itself as a national leader in workforce development. Achieving this vision requires **strong alignment** between education, industry, and workforce systems.

WFS-GC is **well-positioned** to serve as a **strategic convener**, bringing together educational institutions, employers, and workforce partners to strengthen program and curriculum development, expand career pathways, and create earn-and-learn opportunities. WFS-GC remains focused on **bridging the gap between industry and education** by facilitating:

- Expansion of **earn-and-learn** opportunities, including apprenticeships, internships, and career exploration activities, allowing students and job seekers to gain hands-on experience while earning income.
- **Stronger employer partnerships** to increase social capital for residents, connecting them with mentors, networking opportunities, and industry leaders.
- **Workforce-aligned job fairs and career exploration initiatives** within communities, introducing students and job seekers to high-skill, high growth careers and targeted industries.
- **Holistic workforce services**, tying clients to education, employment, childcare, transportation, and financial resources to reduce barriers to upskilling and employment.
- **Education and outreach** to the community about labor market information, targeted industries, and high skill, high growth opportunities via our wide array of communication strategies in partnership with local employers.

Facilitating these collaborations **strengthens the link between workforce preparation and economic opportunity**, ensuring that more workers can transition into meaningful, high-wage careers.

An analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's **workforce development activities** currently includes:

Strengths:

Employer-Focused Workforce Development Approach WFS-GC has consistently prioritized employer engagement and business-driven workforce solutions, aligning with WIOA's mandate to develop a demand-driven workforce system. By partnering directly with employers, the Board ensures that workforce training, job placement services, and labor market initiatives are tailored to meet industry needs and address skill shortages in high-growth sectors.

Strong Representation and Role as a Strategic Convener One of WFS-GC's greatest strengths is its ability to bring together key stakeholders across the workforce ecosystem. The Board serves as a convener of employers, educational institutions, community-based organizations, veterans' groups, labor organizations, childcare providers, and vocational rehabilitation services, creating a

coordinated and comprehensive approach to workforce development. Through collaboration across public and private sectors, WFS-GC plays a pivotal role in aligning workforce efforts to expand access to training, employment, and career advancement opportunities.

Expansion of Earn-and-Learn Opportunities WFS-GC has expanded pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, work-based learning, internships, career exploration activities, and industry-driven hiring events in the community. Further, programs like On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Incumbent Worker Training help existing workers upskill and advance in their careers while ensuring employers develop their talent pipeline.

Strategic Use of WIOA Funds to Scale Workforce Services The number of individuals served through WIOA-funded training programs grew significantly from 2,895 in 2022 to 4,823 in 2024, demonstrating the Board's ability to scale workforce services efficiently. GCWB is refining its assessment framework, ensuring that participants are matched with training programs that lead to strong credential attainment and employment outcomes.

Policy-Driven Enhancements in Training Investments WFS-GC is in the process of implementing ETPL (Eligible Training Provider List) reforms to hold training providers accountable for job placement rates, credential attainment, and post-training earnings. By introducing higher performance benchmarks, GCWB ensures that WIOA-funded training programs lead to sustainable employment.

Enhanced Career Navigation and Community Outreach WFS-GC is strengthening its career coaching, mentorship, and workforce navigation services, ensuring that job seekers receive clear guidance on available career pathways. Labor market awareness initiatives help participants understand high-skill, high-wage career opportunities and the training programs that align with employer demand. WFS-GC is investing in technology and innovation to enhance access to this critical information to both employers and residents.

Data-Driven Adjustments to Training Investments The Board is actively refining its investment strategies, making funding decisions based on regional employment demand and long-term workforce projections.

Increased Access to Child Care Supports Workforce Participation A key strength of the GCWB's early childhood education initiatives is the expansion of childcare services, which has boosted workforce participation. In the past year alone, GCWB served 55,536 children and 29,955 families, exceeding enrollment targets and reducing waitlists. This 28% increase in demand since 2021 underscores the vital role of childcare in keeping parents employed.

Commitment to Continuous Data-Driven Improvement in Workforce Strategies GCWB continuously refines its policies and guidelines, adapting to the region's complex economic landscape. The Board has developed a new Strategic Plan and is taking proactive steps to refine training assessments, workforce planning, and policy enforcement to create a more focused and high-impact workforce system.

Weaknesses:

Persistent Workforce Readiness and Skills Gaps Despite expanded training programs, a significant portion of the regional workforce still lacks postsecondary credentials, limiting access to high-growth, high-wage jobs. Given the scope of the work, we must convene a large consortium of partners to address the persistent skills gap that challenges our region.

Low Postsecondary Completion Rates & Adult Literacy Barriers Addressing this regional challenge is significant given the enormity of our region, and the GCWB is strategically convening an-array of partners to successfully braid resources to design and development strategic interventions.

Child Care Availability and Affordability Gaps Remain Despite progress, a significant gap remains between childcare supply and demand, with over 20,000 children still on the waitlist for subsidized care. Rising childcare costs further limit access, particularly for low-income families, forcing some parents to reduce work hours or leave the workforce altogether. Without additional investment, these barriers could undermine workforce stability and economic growth in the region. Addressing affordability and expanding provider capacity will be crucial to maximizing early childhood education's impact on workforce development.

Challenges with Technology & Real-Time Data GCWB faces technology limitations that prevent real-time access to customer data, making it difficult to track client progress, assess workforce trends and intervene proactively. Data lags—sometimes persisting for months—delay insights that could be used for case management, strategic interventions, and program improvement. To compensate for systemic delays in workforce data availability, GCWB must develop alternative strategies to monitor client progress, often requiring additional staff effort and manual tracking.

Investment Inefficiencies CDL training accounts for 6% of enrollments but 45% of funds, despite lower job placement rates, highlighting workforce investment inefficiencies. We are addressing this issue with the development of new policies, training efforts, and data-driven accountability measures.

Limited Access to Work-Based Learning Our region's residents still face barriers to accessing apprenticeships, internships, and work-based learning opportunities, and the GCWB must conduct significant outreach in educating the community about the importance of work-based learning in today's economy and developing stronger programmatic activities. This includes the active enlistment and partnership with local employers to create a larger network of opportunities.

Small and Mid-Sized Business Participation Barriers Approximately 71% of the Houston-Gulf Coast region's employers are small to mid-sized businesses, but many lack the capacity to engage in workforce training or apply for state and federal grants. The GCWB must continue to offer technical assistance and conduct employer outreach to support these businesses in taking advantage of workforce programs and funding.

Mismatch Between Labor Market Needs and Education/Training Offerings Some Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs remain misaligned with employer needs, leading to low job placement rates. Further, training, apprenticeships, and credentials are not always recognized by employers, creating disconnects between training and employment.

Challenges in Employer Engagement & Scaling Workforce Solutions While employer participation is increasing, some industries struggle to engage with workforce training efforts, particularly in emerging industry sectors. Expanding sector-based workforce strategies across a broader range of industries, especially emerging industries, remains a work in progress.

Balancing WIOA's Customer Choice Requirement with Program Integrity and Quality One of the fundamental principles of WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) is customer choice, allowing job seekers to select training programs that align with their interests and career goals. Ensuring quality, effectiveness, and labor market relevance while maintaining customer choice has proven to be a challenge. WFS-GC is working to enhance assessment tools, career counseling, and career development planning to guide customers toward high-demand, high-wage occupations. However, ensuring that participants make informed choices while safeguarding program integrity requires continuous policy refinement.

Increasing Awareness of Industry Needs and Labor Market Trends Many job seekers lack awareness of industry needs and labor market trends, leading to misalignment between customer-selected training programs and regional employer demand. This has resulted in participants choosing programs with low completion rates or weak job placement outcomes.

Designing Policy Reforms and Guidelines in a Complex Region As WFS-GC reforms policies and guidelines, the region's size and complexity make it difficult to develop a targeted and quality-focused system that balances choice, program accountability, and strong workforce outcomes. Additionally, some training providers take advantage of customer choice provisions, marketing their programs to job seekers without demonstrating strong employment outcomes. WFS-GC is designing an updated **ETPL (Eligible Training Provider List)** policy to address this, but ongoing oversight is required to ensure strong credential attainment and subsequent employment rates.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Solutions-Gulf Coast in Working with the K-12 System

While early learning programs establish the **foundation for workforce success**, the **K-12 system is essential** in equipping students with the skills needed for postsecondary education and careers. Assessing its effectiveness in workforce development reveals both **strengths and challenges**.

WFS-GC plays an important role in **aligning K-12 education with workforce demands,** particularly in Career and Technical Education (CTE). **Collaborating** with school districts, employers, and postsecondary institutions, WFS-GC has **expanded career pathways in high-demand industries**. Despite these achievements, challenges persist in expanding the availability of quality CTE programs, strengthening employer engagement, and bridging gaps in career readiness..

Strengths: Strong Partnerships and Career Pathway Development

WFS-GC has been a **regional convener**, facilitating collaboration between **school districts, workforce partners, and employers** to strengthen career preparation. Partnerships with **11 school districts across its 13-county region** have helped expand **work-based learning and career exploration opportunities** so that students gain exposure to in-demand careers (GCWB Regional Gap Analysis, p. 9). Employers recognize the value of these collaborations, particularly in shaping CTE programs that lead to **better-prepared job candidates**.

Research from the **Houston Education Research Consortium (HERC)** found that **students completing STEM-focused CTE programs are more likely to enroll in postsecondary education and secure employment in high-demand industries** (KI HERC Report-CTE Brief Part 4-A, p. 3). The **GCWB Regional Gap Analysis** highlights that students earning **industry-recognized certifications through CTE programs outperform their peers in both postsecondary enrollment and workforce participation** (GCWB Regional Gap Analysis, p. 11). These findings reinforce WFS-GC's focus on expanding **CTE pathways in key industries, including healthcare, IT, and advanced manufacturing**, so that students develop skills aligned with employer needs.

A key initiative demonstrating this approach was the **Regional Convener Conference at the ION Houston in January 2024**, where **233 students, educators, employers, and postsecondary institutions gathered to discuss career exploration, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship** (GCWB Regional Gap Analysis, p. 14). Data collected at the event revealed that:

- **77.9% of students had never heard of Workforce Solutions or its services.**

- **42.1% were unfamiliar with apprenticeship programs.**

- **76.8% wanted more career planning resources from their schools.**

This data highlights gaps in career awareness and access to workforce guidance. WFS-GC has expanded outreach efforts so that more students learn about available career pathways and postsecondary options.

Employers have also emphasized the **importance of foundational literacy and numeracy skills** for long-term success, particularly in STEM-related careers. Research from **the Kinder Institute's Postsecondary Trajectories Report** shows that students who **struggle with literacy and math in early grades are significantly less likely to complete STEM pathways or pursue technical careers** (Kinder Institute, p. 7). WFS-GC has placed greater emphasis on **early education interventions that strengthen foundational skills**, so that students are prepared for higher-level coursework and workforce training.

To further enhance workforce exposure, WFS-GC is expanding **the Hire Gulf Coast Youth initiative**, which connects students to **paid employment, job shadowing, mentorship, and career exploration activities** (GCWB Regional Gap Analysis, p. 20). These efforts help students **build social capital and real-world career skills**, bridging the gap between education and the workforce.

Weaknesses: Gaps in CTE Access and Employer Engagement

Despite these strengths, **employer feedback and regional research indicate persistent gaps** in the alignment between **K-12 career pathways and labor market needs**. One of the most pressing concerns is the **unequal access to CTE programs** across school districts. (GCWB Regional Gap Analysis, p. 15). Research highlights that students in these districts **face barriers to STEM-focused CTE pathways due to limited program availability, lack of employer engagement, and minimal exposure to STEM careers** (GCWB Regional Gap Analysis, p. 18).

Employers have reported that **some CTE graduates still lack critical job-ready skills**, making it difficult for companies to transition students directly into employment (GCWB Regional Gap Analysis, p. 22). While classroom instruction provides technical knowledge, there are **disconnects between CTE coursework and industry expectations**, leaving students unprepared for high-demand jobs.

The **lack of structured employer engagement with CTE programs** further complicates this issue. Some advisory councils are not consistently utilized, limiting the **ability of employers to influence curriculum updates in response to changing labor market needs** (GCWB Regional Gap Analysis, p. 25). Employers

have expressed frustration that schools are not always **equipped with real-time labor market insights**, making it difficult to guide students toward viable career paths.

Career navigation resources for students and educators are another major concern. As highlighted at the **Regional Convener Conference**, **the majority of students were unaware of Workforce Solutions services and apprenticeship opportunities** (GCWB Regional Gap Analysis, p. 14). Without clear guidance, students struggle to make informed choices about postsecondary education, workforce training, and career pathways.

Addressing the Gaps: Strengthening K-12 Workforce Alignment

WFS-GC is advancing several key strategies to address these challenges:

- **Increasing employer participation in K-12 CTE advisory councils** so that curriculum reflects workforce needs (GCWB Regional Gap Analysis, p. 27).

- **Expanding paid work-based learning experiences** through **Hire Gulf Coast Youth**, particularly in **STEM and high-growth industries** (GCWB Regional Gap Analysis, p. 20).

- **Enhancing career navigation resources** so that students and educators have access to real-time labor market insights, career counseling, and mentorship opportunities (GCWB Regional Gap Analysis, p. 14).

- **Focusing on school districts with fewer existing CTE resources** to expand access to industry-aligned training and early work experience for all students, regardless of background. (GCWB Regional Gap Analysis, p. 18).

These strategies strengthen the bridge between education and employment so that students complete workforce-aligned programs and successfully transition into sustainable careers.

Effectiveness of the Board's Programs

An analysis of education and training activities facilitated by the Gulf Coast Workforce Board through the use of WIOA funds determined that **the number of individuals served grew** from 2,895 in program year 2022, to 4,736 in 2023, and to 4,823 in 2024, scaling with increases in funding over that timeframe. In total, **229 Eligible Training Provider programs** comprised the suite of opportunities available to WFS-GC customers during this period, with healthcare, precision production/manufacturing, computer and information sciences, and engineering technology programs comprising roughly 60 percent of these opportunities. However, **discrepancies in funding distribution and job placement rates** have revealed areas where investment strategies must be refined.

Programs designated as **Transportation and Material Moving**, dominated by heavy tractor-trailer truck driving programs, **accounted for only 6% of training enrollments but consumed 45% of total training funds**. While demand for heavy tractor-trailer truck drivers remains elevated, particularly **since the pandemic,** evidence suggests that many individuals receiving this training fail to secure employment upon completion. Anecdotally, WFS-GC career advisors have identified several **barriers** preventing successful labor market entry for truck driving program graduates, including:

- Programs offering **only a written component without a practicum**, leaving participants unprepared for real-world job requirements.
- **Insurance costs** for new drivers being prohibitively high, making it difficult for employers to hire recent CDL graduates.
- **Difficult working conditions**, long hours, and high turnover rates, leading to rapid attrition in the industry.

In response, WFS-GC is taking steps to balance its investments in education and training across key sectors to better support critical areas of the economy, such as healthcare, information technology, and manufacturing. As part of this rebalancing effort, the WFS-GC is **developing enhanced assessment criteria** to ensure that job seekers are matched with training programs that align with their skills, career goals, and labor market demand. The **updated assessment framework** now evaluates:

Skill Level & Work History Ensuring applicants have the baseline skills and aptitude needed for the training, and if not, then they are successfully referred to Adult Education and Literacy services. Enhanced assessment leads to better career counseling and the development of more suitable interventions and training plans for our customers.

Labor Market Demand Requiring Workforce Solutions career advisors to verify that selected training aligns with regional employment opportunities.

Provider Performance Reviewing credential attainment rates, job placement outcomes, and wage earnings of graduates to ensure program effectiveness.

Job Readiness & Employer Partnerships Requiring certification-based training providers to demonstrate verified employer partnerships, ensuring that graduates receive practical training and employer linkages before entering the workforce.

WFS-GC is **enhancing assessments and refining funding strategies** to reduce training attrition, improve credential completion rates, and direct WIOA funds toward programs with strong employment outcomes.

Ensuring that **training investments lead to meaningful employment opportunities** remains a core **priority**. To support this, WFS-GC is **developing new performance standards** for ETPL training providers, tying funding to programs that demonstrate high credential completion and job placement rates. Minimum benchmarks include:

- **Employment Rates:** At least 70% of graduates must be employed in Quarter 2 and Quarter 4 post-exit.
- **Earnings Thresholds:** Median earnings must be at least $7,800 per quarter following program completion.
- **Credential Attainment:** A minimum of 50% in 2025, increasing to 60% by 2027, ensuring programs provide industry-recognized credentials.
- **Completion Rate:** At least 60% of enrollees must successfully complete their training.

These **performance-based** funding requirements ensure that WIOA investments are directed toward programs with **clear pathways to sustainable employment.** Additionally, WFS-GC is strengthening its monitoring and evaluation procedures, allowing for periodic reviews of provider outcomes and realignment of funding as necessary.

Enhancing Apprenticeship Opportunities

WFS-GC is placing a **stronger emphasis on apprenticeships** as a means of ensuring better alignment between training programs and employer needs. These structured, hands-on learning opportunities **lead to full-time employment** alongside employers. Under the new proposed **ETPL policy,** DOL-registered apprenticeships are now automatically eligible for inclusion on the statewide ETPL, **streamlining access to these programs**. Additionally, **ETPL policy updates** will require that online healthcare training providers secure formal agreements with hospitals and clinics to ensure that students receive hands-on clinical training, **preventing past issues** where graduates were left without the necessary experience to obtain licensure.

Strengthening Employer Engagement

WFS-GC continues to strengthen employer engagement strategies, ensuring that **WIOA-funded training aligns** with real-world hiring needs. In FY24, the Texas Talent Assistance program **exceeded expectations**, with employer engagement metrics **reaching 132.42% of performance targets.**

WFS-GC is presently developing an **Employer Engagement Advisory Council**, which will report to its Employer Engagement Committee, comprised of **employers, chambers of commerce, economic development corporations, and industry associations**. Our employer-focused **strategic improvements** will allow WFS-GC to **better anticipate hiring trends**, strengthen employer partnerships, and develop training and programs that lead to **high-quality jobs.** Further, these **employer-driven collaboratives** create customized solutions for skill shortages in targeted industries. This approach ensures that **training investments are demand-driven** and employer-responsive, **maximizing job placement outcomes for job seekers**. **Enhancing Supportive Services for Job Seekers**

Recognizing that **barriers to employment** extend beyond skills gaps, WFS-GC provides **comprehensive supportive services** to ensure job seekers can fully participate in training and employment opportunities. These include **access to childcare, transportation assistance, career counseling, and financial literacy education**. Integrating these services with workforce training allows WFS-GC to enhance **job seeker success rates** and **reduce drop-off** in education and employment transitions.

Board's Capacity to Address Workforce and Employer Needs

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board has the organizational infrastructure, industry partnerships, and policy expertise to **execute WIOA-aligned workforce strategies effectively**. With robust employer engagement mechanisms, a **data-driven decision-making framework**, and a strong

network of training providers, the Board is equipped to provide **high-impact workforce services** that **respond** to both job seeker and employer needs. The Board's **investment in technology improvements, policy reforms, and strategic convening efforts** further solidify its capacity to enhance regional workforce development.

WFS-GC is **integrating data-driven, employer-aligned strategies** to build a **responsive, efficient, and effective** workforce development system that supports employers, job seekers, and the regional economy. Moving forward, WFS-GC will:

- **Continue adjusting training investments** to balance sectoral funding and improve job placement rates.
- **Expand employer-led training models,** including pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, work-based learning, and on-the-job training (OJT) programs, to create clearer hiring pathways.
- **Strengthen workforce assessments and career counseling** to match individuals with programs where they are most likely to succeed.
- **Develop stronger case management strategies** to provide timely interventions and support for individuals in their upskilling journey.
- **Improve oversight and accountability** for training providers, ensuring that credential completion and job placement targets are met.

These efforts reinforce WFS-GC's **commitment to making education and training investments lead to meaningful employment opportunities**, strengthening the workforce development system across the Gulf Coast region.

Part 3: Core Programs

A. Workforce Development System

References: WIOA §108(b)(2); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(1)

Boards must describe how the local workforce development system will work with entities carrying out core and required partner programs to support alignment to aid in the provision of services that support the strategies identified in TWC's WIOA Combined State Plan.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

☐ A description of the local workforce development system will work with entities carrying out core and required partner programs to support alignment.

Note: The plan must describe how the Board's system will work with the entities carrying out the core programs. **The following checklist is for reference only.**

Core programs:

☐ Youth workforce investment activities

☐ Adult employment and training activities

☐ Dislocated worker employment and training activities

☐ Adult education and literacy activities

☐ Employment services

☐ Vocational rehabilitation services

Required programs:

☐ WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs

☐ Wagner-Peyser Employment Service program

☐ Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs

☐ Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program

☐ Choices, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) employment and training program

☐ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance program (SNAP)

☐ Child Care Services

☐ Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) programs

☐ Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) programs

☐ Vocational Rehabilitation programs

☐ National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) program

☐ Apprenticeship programs

☐ Career and Technical Education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) (20 USC §2301, et seq.)

☐ Job counseling, training, and placement services for veterans (38 USC §41, et seq.);

☐ Job Corp programs

☐ Native American programs

☐ US Department of Housing and Urban Development programs

☐ Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act

☐ Reintegration of Offenders programs

☐ Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker programs

☐ Senior Community Service Employment Program

BOARD RESPONSE

WFS-GC is **committed to delivering** a comprehensive suite of workforce services designed to **meet the needs** of job seekers and employers. These services are built on a foundation of intake and assessment processes, personalized career counseling, job search support, skills training, and long-term job retention services. Through these efforts, the Board promotes ~~universal~~ access to opportunities and ensures meaningful employment outcomes for all customers, contributing to regional economic growth.

The Board's approach is in **alignment** with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which focuses on supporting both job seekers and employers **through a range of core programs**. These programs—Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) are **designed to work together**, integrating resources to meet workforce development needs across the region.

Service to Universal Customers

To broaden access to workforce services, the Board offers universal access to core services for all job seekers, regardless of background or skill level. Key components of this service include:

- **Access to Services:** All customers have access to essential services such as job search assistance, career counseling, and basic skills assessments, helping them navigate their career pathways.

- **Labor Market Information and Resources:** Job seekers receive access to real-time labor market data, resume-building tools, and job search resources, which equip them with the information needed to make informed decisions and align their skills with high-demand careers.

- **Workshops and Training:** The Board offers a range of in-person and virtual workshops, including job readiness, resume building, and interview skills. These workshops are designed to accommodate the needs and accessibility preferences of all customers.

- **Referral to Additional Services:** When appropriate, the Board connects job seekers to more advanced services, such as training programs, education opportunities, and supportive services (e.g., childcare, transportation) that address individual barriers to employment.

- **Data Collection and Reporting:** The Board tracks service usage and customer engagement through data collection, which is critical for evaluating service effectiveness and ensuring continuous improvement in meeting the needs of universal customers.

Key Workforce Development Processes

- **Intake:** The intake process gathers essential information about job seekers, including personal, employment, and educational history, as well as career goals and support service needs. This process forms the basis for developing individualized service plans that guide job seekers toward employment.

- **Assessment:** A comprehensive assessment evaluates job seekers' skills, experience, education, and career interests. The assessment also identifies potential barriers such as childcare or transportation and helps determine readiness for employment or training opportunities. Tools like career inventories, skills proficiency tests, and labor market analysis support this process.

- **Career Counseling and Job Search Support:** The Board provides personalized career counseling to help job seekers define their goals, understand labor market trends, and develop effective strategies for securing employment. Services include resume building, interview preparation, networking guidance, and tailored job search plans based on individual skills and market demands.

- **Skills Training and Education:** The Board connects individuals to relevant training programs, certifications, and educational opportunities that enhance employability. Referrals are made to local vocational schools, community colleges, online learning platforms, and apprenticeship programs aligned with industry demand and career goals.

- **Supportive Services Coordination**: The Board coordinates supportive services that help job seekers access resources such as childcare, transportation, or housing assistance, ensuring these challenges do not impede their ability to secure and retain employment.

- **Follow-Up and Job Retention Services:** The Board offers ongoing support after job seekers secure employment. Follow-up services include periodic check-ins, workplace problem-solving, career advancement resources, and continued job coaching to ensure long-term success and job satisfaction.

Recruiting and Job Matching

- WIT and Other Job Boards: The Board leverages platforms such as WorkInTexas (WIT) and other regional job boards to match qualified candidates with employer job postings. Services include managing job postings, candidate identification, interview coordination, and ensuring both job seekers and employers find the right fit.

- Technology, Social Media, Job Boards: The Board incorporates social media platforms like LinkedIn, virtual career fairs, and AI-powered job matching systems to enhance recruitment efforts. These tools expand access to job opportunities and allow job seekers to stay updated on trends and industry developments.

B. Core Programs—Expand Access, Facilitate Development, and Improve Access

References: WIOA §108(b)(3); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(2)

Each Board must include a description of how the Board will work with entities carrying out core programs to:

- expand access to employment, training, education, and support services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment;

- facilitate the development of career pathways and coenrollment, as appropriate, in core programs; and

- improve access to activities that lead to a recognized postsecondary credential (such as an industry-recognized certificate or certification) that is portable and stackable.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of how the Board will work with entities that facilitate core programs to do the following:

☐ Expand access to employment training, education, and support services for the
   following:
       ☐ Eligible individuals
       ☐ Eligible individuals with barriers to employment
☐ Facilitate development of career pathways and coenrollment in core programs

☐ Improve access to activities that lead to a recognized postsecondary credential (such as an industry-recognized certificate or certification) that is portable and stackable

Core programs:
☐ Youth workforce investment activities
☐ Adult employment and training activities
☐ Dislocated worker employment and training activities
☐ Adult education and literacy activities
☐ Employment services
☐ Vocational rehabilitation services

BOARD RESPONSE

For many job seekers, the path to a stable career isn't always clear. WFS-GC is changing that by **removing obstacles and creating opportunities** that lead to long-term success. Whether it's a young adult exploring career options, a dislocated worker looking for a fresh start, or someone facing barriers to employment, we provide the training, education, and support needed to **move forward.** Our strong partnerships with education providers and community organizations connects people to resources that make a real difference, and our **tailored services** equip individuals with industry-recognized credentials and hands-on experience, turning potential into possibility and opening doors to meaningful, sustainable employment.

Expanding Access to Workforce Services

WFS-GC expands workforce access by integrating technology, increasing service locations, and strengthening community partnerships to connect more individuals with employment and training opportunities.

- **Virtual and Hybrid Services** – Career coaching, job search assistance, workshops, and training programs are available online, giving job seekers the flexibility to access services remotely. A streamlined appointment scheduling system allows individuals to manage their engagement with workforce programs on their terms.

- **Career Navigation Support** – Career Advisors provide one-on-one guidance to help individuals explore career options, secure financial aid, and connect with supportive services like childcare and transportation. A new **asset mapping tool** will identify resources near job seekers' homes, training sites, and potential workplaces to simplify access to essential services.

- **Industry-Focused Outreach and Training** – Targeted programs focus on **high-demand fields** such as healthcare, manufacturing, energy, and IT, aligning training with regional economic needs and creating **real employment opportunities**.

Expanding Access through Community Engagement

WFS-GC is committed to **meeting people where they are** to expand access to employment opportunities and workforce services throughout the 13-county region. In April 2020, WFS-GC began **partnering with KTRK-TV, Houston's ABC-owned station,** to host a weekly series of virtual job fairs using Facebook and the ABC13 connected app. In April 2024, these virtual job fairs evolved into **in-person events**, now held on the third Thursday of every month. KTRK-TV / ABC13 **continues to support** these efforts by promoting

the job fairs through news stories and **live interview segments** during its 10 a.m. streaming newscast.

Each job fair is designed to **meet the specific needs** of different job seekers, from veterans and individuals with disabilities to those in specific communities like Pearland, Texas. These events do more than match people with jobs, they **create direct connections** between employers and job seekers, making the hiring process more personal and accessible. Through partnerships with media outlets and community organizations, **WFS-GC expands its reach**, helping more people find the right opportunities while supporting employers looking for skilled workers.

Recent Media Coverage

Job Fairs:

Hiring Red, White & You 2024: https://abc13.com/post/jobs-hiring-houston-thousands-job-seeking-houstonians-attended-networking-event-help-veterans-looking-employment/15497594/

https://cw39.com/veterans-voices/nrg-to-host-the-largest-red-white-you-job-fair-for-veterans-in-texas/

Healthcare Job Fair: https://abc13.com/post/health-care-jobs-abc13-hiring-job-fair-focuses-texas-top-employment-industry/15933586/

NDEAM Job Fair: https://abc13.com/post/abc13-hiring-job-fair-host-employers-looking-hire-people-disabilities/15460547/

Rodeo Houston Job Fair: https://abc13.com/post/abc13-hiring-job-fair-looks-how-rodeo-houston-helps-students-20-schools-land-jobs/15803335/

Skilled Trades Job Fair: https://abc13.com/post/abc13-hiring-job-fair-focuses-trade-skill-jobs/15003494/

Helping Job Seekers

How Workforce Solutions Helps Jobs Seekers: https://www.fox26houston.com/video/1476796

Manufacturing Jobs are Back https://abc13.com/post/data-shows-texas-leads-us-adding-more-manufacturing-jobs-covid-19-pandemic/15465692/

Navigating the Job Market https://www.click2houston.com/video/news/local/2024/08/16/experts-share-guidance-on-navigating-the-job-market/

Child Care Resource Coverage:

Resources to Help Families Struggling with Childcare Crisis: https://www.fox26houston.com/news/resources-help-families-struggling-childcare-crisis

Apprenticeships:

Fox 26 Skilled Trades Apprenticeships: https://www.fox26houston.com/news/free-class-open-prepare-paid-apprenticeships-skilled-trades

Disaster Assistance

Hurricane Beryl Disaster Assistance**:** https://www.click2houston.com/news/local/2024/07/10/critically-important-workforce-solutions-urges-those-affected-by-hurricane-beryl-to-fill-out-damage-assessment-survey/

Workforce on Wheels Initiative

WFS-GC is expanding its reach beyond traditional career offices, bringing workforce services directly to the community. Through the development of a Workforce on Wheels initiative, we are reimagining service delivery to meet people where they are—whether at libraries, community centers, faith-based organizations, or neighborhood events. This effort reflects our commitment to breaking down barriers to employment, making job search assistance, career coaching, and training resources more accessible to those who may not otherwise seek out workforce services. Embedding workforce services within the communities we serve will help us strengthen partnerships and create new pathways for job seekers to connect with opportunities and build brighter futures.

Creating Career Pathways and Expanding Co-Enrollment

Structured career pathways help job seekers **progress from education to employment** with clear steps toward in-demand careers. WFS-GC collaborates with education and workforce partners to integrate training, support services, and work-based learning opportunities.

- **Integrated Education and Training (IET)** – Programs combine adult education with workforce training, allowing participants to **earn credentials while strengthening literacy, numeracy, or English language skills**.

- **Youth and Young Adult Initiatives** – Work-based learning, pre-apprenticeships, and career exploration programs expose young people to high-growth industries, equipping them with skills to transition into **full-time employment or postsecondary education**.

- **Co-Enrollment Across Core Programs** – Job seekers benefit from **simultaneous enrollment** in Adult Education and Literacy (AEL), Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), and workforce training programs, creating **a seamless system of support** that expands employment opportunities.

Expanding Access to Industry-Recognized Credentials

A postsecondary credential is often the key to higher wages and career advancement, so WFS-GC prioritizes training programs that lead to **portable, stackable, and employer-recognized credentials**, so that job seekers, particularly those facing barriers, can secure quality jobs and build long-term careers.

- **Stackable and Portable Credentials** – Training programs focus on **credentials with labor market value**, helping workers move up career ladders without repeating coursework or training. WFS-GC is also incorporating career lattice and pathways strategies into our system to build greater capacity and support, helping residents seamlessly navigate career opportunities at every stage of life. By aligning workforce services with industry needs, we are creating a more adaptable and resilient workforce.

- **Registered Apprenticeships and Work-Based Learning** – We build partnerships with employers, and industry groups to create apprenticeships and on-the-job training opportunities that provide both income and recognized credentials.

- **Data-Driven Decision Making** – The Board continuously **analyzes labor market trends** and employer needs, refining the **Target Occupations List** to keep training programs relevant and connected to current and future job demand.

Part 4: One-Stop Service Delivery

A. One-Stop Service Delivery System

References: WIOA §108(b)(6); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(5)

Each Board must include a description of its workforce area's one-stop delivery system, including explanations of the following:

- How the Board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers and how providers will meet the employment needs of local employers, workers, and job seekers

- How the Board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including to remote areas, using technology and other means

- How entities within the one-stop delivery system, including Boards, contracted service providers, and one-stop partners, will comply with WIOA §188 (related to Non-Discrimination), if applicable, and with applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals who have disabilities.

- The roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of the one-stop delivery system, including explanations of the following:

☐ How the Board will ensure continuous improvement of eligible providers

☐ How providers will meet the employment needs of employers, workers, and job seekers

☐ How the Board will use technology and other means to facilitate access to services, including referrals to VR and AEL services and access to remote areas

☐ Compliance with non-discrimination provisions consistent with WIOA §188 and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 ☐ Roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners

BOARD RESPONSE

The GCWB is dedicated to ensuring that eligible training providers meet the evolving needs of job seekers and employers. **To facilitate continuous improvement,** the Board will focus on several key strategies:

1. **Data-Driven Performance Monitoring:** The Board will regularly track the performance of eligible providers, analyzing outcomes such as job placement rates, wage gains, and customer satisfaction. This data will inform decisions about which providers are performing well and where improvements can be made.
2. **Feedback Mechanisms:** Ongoing feedback from both employers and job seekers will be gathered through surveys and engagement sessions. This will provide insights into the relevance of training programs and the effectiveness of service delivery. Providers will be encouraged to adapt their curricula and services to align with the most up-to-date labor market needs.
3. **Collaboration with Employers and Industry Experts:** Providers will be held accountable for maintaining close relationships with employers and industry leaders to ensure that training programs are responsive to market demands. The Board will support industry partnerships to enhance workforce readiness and fill skills gaps.
4. **Outcome-Based Contracting:** The Board will implement outcome-based contracts for workforce programs and special initiatives with training providers, ensuring that funding is tied to measurable performance, such as job placement and career progression. Providers will be incentivized to continuously refine their offerings to improve these outcomes.

Meeting Employer Needs: Supplying a Skilled Workforce

Eligible training providers (ETPs) play a vital role in fueling the regional economy by ensuring that workforce training aligns with employer needs, equipping workers with in-demand skills, and helping job seekers secure meaningful employment. **WFS-GC ensures that providers meet the employment needs** of all stakeholders through the following strategies:

- **Industry-Aligned Training** – ETPs provide high-quality training aligned with regional economic needs, ensuring that graduates possess skills sought by employers in high-demand industries.
- **Customized & Sector-Based Training** – Providers collaborate with industry councils, economic development organizations, and employer groups to design programs that address specific workforce shortages.
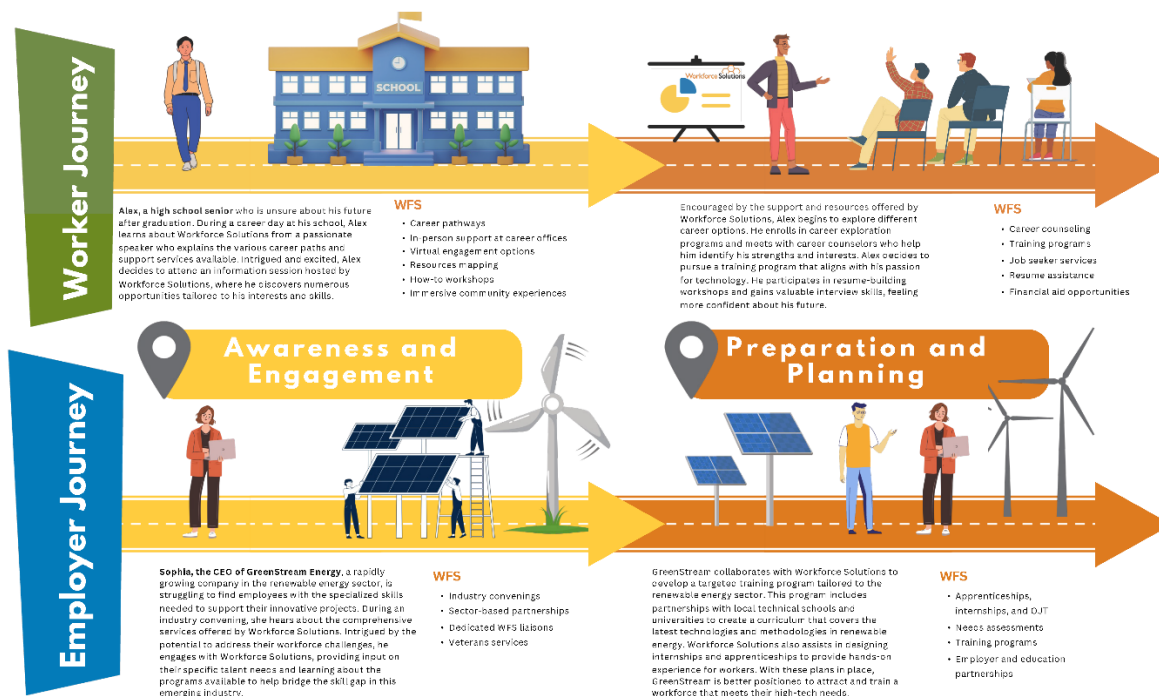
- **Work-Based Learning & Apprenticeships** – Many training programs integrate on-the-job training (OJT), internships, and apprenticeships, helping employers build a strong talent pipeline while reducing hiring costs.
- **Rapid Response Training** – Providers deliver short-term, high-impact upskilling solutions that quickly respond to economic shifts and evolving employer demands.
- **Technology-Driven Employer Engagement** – Employers can connect with job-ready candidates through technology-enhanced platforms such as WorkInTexas.com, virtual job fairs, and employer hiring portals.

Meeting Worker Needs: Career Advancement & Economic Mobility

- **Pathways to High-Wage Careers** – Training programs lead to industry-recognized credentials, certifications, and degrees that help workers secure high-growth, high-wage employment.
- **Flexible Learning & Accessible Services** – ETPs offer online, hybrid, and evening courses, ensuring that workers can access training while balancing employment and family responsibilities.
- **Comprehensive Support Services** – In line with the Board's focus on improving service delivery, Workforce Solutions helps workers access financial aid, childcare, transportation, and career coaching to reduce barriers to completion.
- **Upskilling & Lifelong Learning** – Programs support continuous skill development and career mobility, ensuring that workers remain competitive in evolving industries.

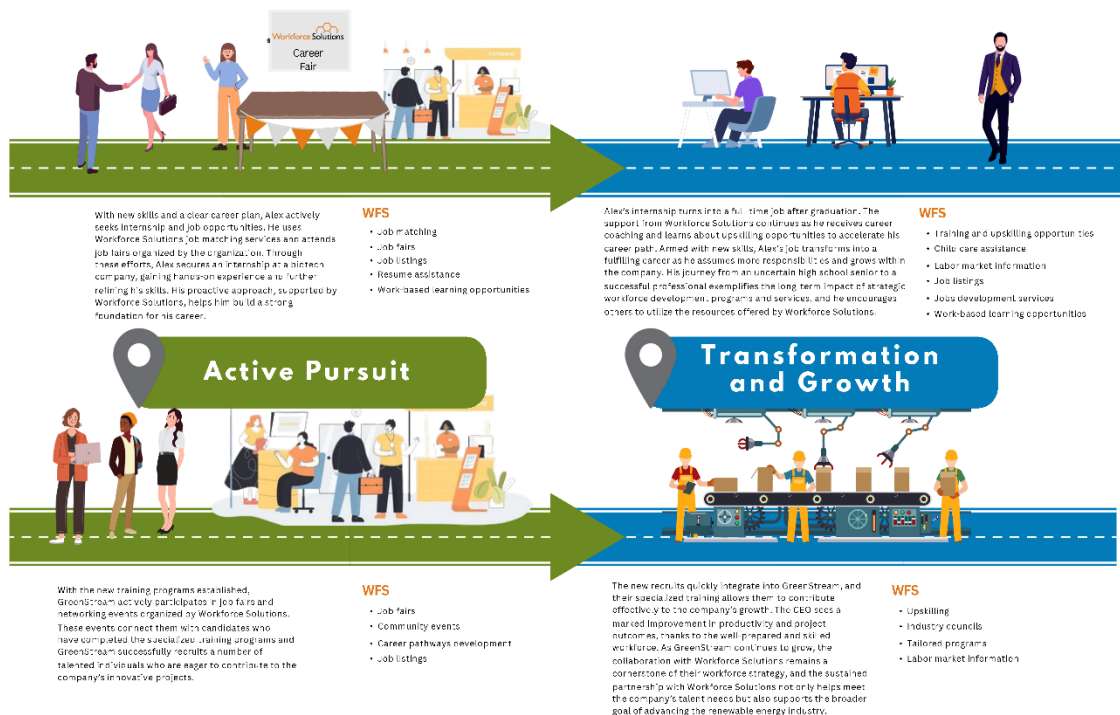**Meeting Job Seeker Needs: Stronger Employment Outcomes**

- **Employer-Integrated Career Services** – Career centers embed business engagement into service delivery, aligning job seeker skills with local labor market demands and strengthening partnerships with training providers to address employer workforce needs.
- **Technology-Enhanced Service Delivery** – Mobile and virtual platforms expand access for individuals in rural areas and remote locations, while employer hiring portals and WorkInTexas.com streamline job matching and workforce planning. A VR referral pilot is also improving access to services for individuals with disabilities.
- **Industry-Focused Career Pathways** – Job seekers gain structured support for apprenticeships, internships, and on-the-job training in high-demand fields, with employers playing an active role in workforce development.
- **Supportive Services and Resource Access** – Recognizing barriers such as childcare, transportation, and housing, providers integrate supportive services to help job seekers overcome challenges and stay on track toward employment.
- **Job Matching and Placement Services** – Workforce Solutions leverages WorkInTexas.com to connect qualified candidates with employer job postings, while job seekers receive personalized career counseling, résumé building, and interview preparation to enhance employability.

Worker Journey

Awareness and Engagement

Alex, a high school senior who is unsure about his future after graduation. During a career day at his school, Alex learns about Workforce Solutions from a passionate speaker who explains the various career paths and support services available. Intrigued and excited, Alex decides to attend an information session hosted by Workforce Solutions, where he discovers numerous opportunities tailored to his interests and skills.

WFS
- Career pathways
- In-person support at career offices
- Virtual engagement options
- Resources mapping
- How-to workshops
- Immersive community experiences

Preparation and Planning

Encouraged by the support and resources offered by Workforce Solutions, Alex begins to explore different career options. He enrolls in career exploration programs and meets with career counselors who help him identify his strengths and interests. Alex decides to pursue a training program that aligns with his passion for technology. He participates in resume-building workshops and gains valuable interview skills, feeling more confident about his future.

WFS
- Career counseling
- Training programs
- Job seeker services
- Resume assistance
- Financial aid opportunities

Employer Journey

Sophia, the CEO of GreenStream Energy, a rapidly growing company in the renewable energy sector, is struggling to find employees with the specialized skills needed to support their innovative projects. During an industry convening, she hears about the comprehensive services offered by Workforce Solutions. Intrigued by the potential to address their workforce challenges, he engages with Workforce Solutions, providing input on their specific talent needs and learning about the programs available to help bridge the skill gap in this emerging industry.

WFS
- Industry convenings
- Sector-based partnerships
- Dedicated WFS liaisons
- Veterans services

GreenStream collaborates with Workforce Solutions to develop a targeted training program tailored to the renewable energy sector. This program includes partnerships with local technical schools and universities to create a curriculum that covers the latest technologies and methodologies in renewable energy. Workforce Solutions also assists in designing internships and apprenticeships to provide hands-on experience for workers. With these plans in place, GreenStream is better positioned to attract and train a workforce that meets their high-tech needs.

WFS
- Apprenticeships, internships, and OJT
- Needs assessments
- Training programs
- Employer and education partnerships

From Internship to Advancement: A WBL Success Story

We would like to highlight the remarkable success of Hailey, one of our Work-Based Learning (WBL) program participants. Hailey, sought a career that would allow her to positively impact others. Approved for WBL on July 5, 2024, she began her internship at our Workforce Pearland office on July 11, 2024.

Hailey swiftly developed valuable customer service skills, supported off-site hiring events, and contributed to insightful productivity reports. Her exceptional performance led her to apply for, and successfully interview for, the Program Assistant position. We are delighted to announce that Hailey has accepted the job offer, with a tentative start date of August 16, 2024. This success story underscores the effectiveness of our WBL program in facilitating career exploration and placement for our youth.

WFS
- Job matching
- Job fairs
- Job listings
- Resume assistance
- Work-based learning opportunities

With new skills and a clear career plan, Alex actively seeks internship and job opportunities. He uses Workforce Solutions job matching services and attends job fairs organized by the organization. Through these efforts, Alex secures an internship at a biotech company, gaining hands-on experience and further refining his skills. His proactive approach, supported by Workforce Solutions, helps him build a strong foundation for his career.

Alex's internship turns into a full-time job after graduation. The support from Workforce Solutions continues as he receives career coaching and learns about upskilling opportunities to accelerate his career path. Armed with new skills, Alex's job transforms into a fulfilling career as he assumes more responsibilities and grows within the company. His journey from an uncertain high school senior to a successful professional exemplifies the long-term impact of strategic workforce development programs and services, and he encourages others to utilize the resources offered by Workforce Solutions.

WFS
- Training and upskilling opportunities
- Child care assistance
- Labor market information
- Job listings
- Jobs development services
- Work-based learning opportunities

Active Pursuit

Transformation and Growth

With the new training programs established, GreenStream actively participates in job fairs and networking events organized by Workforce Solutions. These events connect them with candidates who have completed the specialized training programs and GreenStream successfully recruits a number of talented individuals who are eager to contribute to the company's innovative projects.

WFS
- Job fairs
- Community events
- Career pathways development
- Job listings

The new recruits quickly integrate into GreenStream, and their specialized training allows them to contribute effectively to the company's growth. The CEO sees a marked improvement in productivity and project outcomes, thanks to the well-prepared and skilled workforce. As GreenStream continues to grow, the collaboration with Workforce Solutions remains a cornerstone of their workforce strategy, and the sustained partnership with Workforce Solutions not only helps meet the company's talent needs but also supports the broader goal of advancing the renewable energy industry.

WFS
- Upskilling
- Industry councils
- Tailored programs
- Labor market information

Success Story:

Upon joining WFS, Beyza, a recent college graduate facing homelessness, encountered challenges securing local employment despite having held various positions during her university years. With a keen interest in office work and a desire to broaden her skill set in HR or accounting, Beyza was matched with an administrative role at the Fort Bend Women's Center (FBWC), a position the FBWC was eager to fill permanently. They saw it as an opportunity to both fulfill a staffing need and to train a potential staff member. Beyza quickly adapted to her role, expressing interest in a permanent position midway through her internship. As her internship ended, Beyza was in the final stages of the hiring process, with the FBWC extending her an offer of employment. Both Beyza and the FBWC expressed gratitude for the collaborative opportunity with WFS

Throughout her internship, WFS provided Beyza with essential support services such as a uniform and financial assistance for transportation, along with coaching and supervision to aid her professional development

Beyza successfully completed the WBL internship and was offered a permanent position at the conclusion of her internship.

"I want to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude for finding me this internship opportunity and for all the support and guidance you've provided throughout my time here. Your mentorship has been invaluable, and I am truly appreciative of the opportunity to learn and grow under your leadership. Once again, thank you for everything!" **– Beyzanur Bozyigit, WBL intern**

'Beyza is doing well. She is engaged and not afraid to ask questions. We will likely move forward with the hiring process with her." **Tina Hood, Fort Bend Women's Center**

Technology-Enhanced Service Delivery

Consistent with the Board's goal to **improve service delivery through innovative solutions**, technology plays a crucial role in expanding access to workforce services across urban and rural areas. Key initiatives include:

- **VR Referral Pilot** – Partnering with Vocational Rehabilitation Services to streamline referrals through WorkInTexas.com, enhancing coordination and service access for individuals with disabilities.
- **Mobile & Virtual Platforms** – Expanding career services to reach more communities, with a focus on increasing access to job search support, training, and employment resources.
- **Accessible Career Office Technology** – Providing screen readers, adjustable furniture, and auxiliary aids to support full participation in workforce services.
- **Web & Mobile Accessibility** – Ensuring digital platforms comply with WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards for independent and equal access to programs and services.
- **Technology-Enabled Workforce Systems -** Strengthening service delivery through automation, real-time labor market insights, and digital case management. By modernizing our systems, we are breaking down geographic barriers, improving responsiveness, and ensuring that workforce services are accessible anytime, anywhere—whether in the heart of the city or the most rural parts of our region.

The Board utilizes a variety of technology-enabled intake and case management systems to effectively deliver programs under WIOA and streamline operations across workforce services. These systems include:

- **WorkInTexas (WIT)** – Texas' comprehensive online job-matching platform, connecting job seekers with employers and offering tools for job searches, résumé building, and career exploration. Employers use WIT to post jobs, screen candidates, and manage recruitment efforts
- **TX3C KinderConnect** – An online attendance tracking system for childcare subsidy programs, allowing providers to electronically record attendance, integrate with the Texas Child Care Availability Portal, and ensure accurate reporting and compliance
- **Texas Educating Adults Management System (TEAMS)** – A web-based platform that maintains student-level data for adult education, tracking demographics, assessments, outcomes, program performance, and staff development activities.
- **Cash Draw and Expenditure Reporting (CDER)** – TWC's web-based system for Boards to manage program funding, reducing manual processing and improving financial reporting efficiency.
- **Quarterly Wage Records** – A system used for WIOA, Wagner-Peyser, and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) reporting, utilizing Texas wage records and data from other states through the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS)

- **DocuWare** – A digital document management system used for securely storing and accessing customer files that cannot be entered into TWIST, streamlining processes across career offices
- **QLess (Transitioning from Appointy) –** To further enhance customer experience and improve service efficiency, the Board is implementing QLess, a queue management system that allows customers to join virtual lines, receive real-time updates, and better plan their visits. This transition will help reduce wait times, improve accessibility, and create a more seamless scheduling process across our workforce system. **PandaDoc** – An electronic signature software that facilitates simultaneous document circulation, currently in use by the Board with plans for systemwide implementation.
- **GovDelivery** – A mass communication tool that enables the rapid and broad dissemination of email and text messages to job seekers and employers.
- **Microsoft Teams & Zoom** – Online meeting platforms that support systemwide communication and collaboration, ensuring seamless virtual engagement across workforce services.
- **Convene** – A Board-specific technology platform designed to enhance strategic planning, collaboration, and decision-making. Convene allows Board members and stakeholders to efficiently access reports, meeting materials, and key workforce data, fostering more informed discussions and streamlined governance.

Compliance with non-discrimination provisions consistent with WIOA §188 and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

WFS-GC is committed to building a workforce system that offers universal access to services for all individuals, regardless of ability, background, or circumstances. The Board supports its mission to connect people to jobs, prepare a skilled workforce, and fuel the regional economy by focusing on an individual's abilities, removing barriers and leveraging innovation.

Universal Access to Services

The Board ensures equal opportunity and non-discrimination in all programs, services, and facilities, enabling all customers to access resources and achieve their employment goals. This includes:

- Reasonable Accommodations for individuals with disabilities
- Accessible Workstations in every Career Office are equipped with assistive technology such as FUSION software, JAWS screen reader software, ZoomText screen magnifying software, headphones or speakers, large print keyboard, and trackball mouse;
- TTY/TTS Access;
- Video Relay Service (VRS) phone;
- Hearing Aid Compatible phone with volume control;
- Pocket Talker sound amplifier; and
- Adjustable height tables and chairs
- Specialized Workshops, Job Coaching, and Sign Language Interpreters
- Referrals to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services through partnerships with Texas Workforce Solutions

Capacity Building and Staff Training

To ensure high-quality, customer-centered service, staff participate in continuous professional development, focusing on:

- **Strength-Based Approaches** to identify customers' abilities and connect them to competitive, integrated opportunities
- **Disability Awareness** and trainings on disability-related topics including the use of auxiliary aids, assistive technology, service animals, as needed.
- **Equal Opportunity Standards,** including providing reasonable accommodations, engaging in effective communication, ensuring all nondiscrimination provision are met.
- **Effective use of Assistive Technology** to support individuals with disabilities

Access Coordinators

The Board's system-wide Access Coordinator play a critical role in creating a level playing field for individuals with disabilities. Their responsibilities include:

- Building relationships with other community organizations
- Training staff on disability awareness, assistive technologies, and effective communication by use of Video Relay Services, language access providers, or other tools
- Collaborating with Vocational Rehabilitation Services and community organizations to support customers
- Organizing employer education events on hiring and accommodating individuals with disabilities or individuals with limited English proficiency
- Supporting hiring initiatives to connect individuals with disabilities to meaningful employment
- Supporting community engagement special initiatives to include connecting services to ensure the needs of individuals with disabilities are being met, as needed, as a subject matter expert.

Leveraging Technology for Accessibility

Consistent with the Board's goal to improve service delivery through innovative solutions, technology is used to expand access in both urban and rural areas. Initiatives include:

- A VR referral pilot through WorkInTexas.com to streamline connections between workforce and VR services
- Mobile and virtual platforms are used to expand access to workforce services for individuals in communities that may face barriers to in-person support.
- Accessible technology in Career Offices, including screen readers, adjustable furniture, and auxiliary aids.
- Ensuring web and mobile apps meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1, Level AA success criteria and conformance requirement so individuals with disabilities can access programs and services quickly, easily, independently, and privately. ~~and equally.~~

Commitment to Compliance and Continuous Improvement

The Board's Equal Opportunity Officer ensures compliance with WIOA Title I, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable federal regulations. Responsibilities include:

- Serving as the liaison with the Texas Workforce Commission EO Officer and the U.S. Department of Labor Civil Rights Center
- Conducting annual reviews of program, physical, and technological accessibility

- Monitoring and investigating Gulf Coast Workforce Board and contractor activities to ensure they are not violating nondiscrimination and EO provisions of Federal and State Laws and Regulation
- Investigating discrimination complaints and coordinating outreach on Equal Opportunity standards
- Developing, implementing, and monitoring procedures for processing discrimination complaints and ensuring compliance with Federal laws
- Ensuring continuous improvement as it relates to providing access to program, services, aids, trainings, and benefits
- Acting as the point of contact for customers and contractors in regard to Equal Opportunity issues or concerns

B. Employer Engagement, Economic Development, and Unemployment Insurance Program Coordination

References: WIOA §108(b)(4); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(3); WIOA §108(b)(5); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(4)

Boards must include a description of the strategies and services that will be used in the workforce area to:

- facilitate the engagement of employers, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations, in workforce development programs;

- support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the workforce area;

- coordinate workforce investment activities with regional economic development activities that are carried out in the local workforce area;

- promote entrepreneurial-skills training and microenterprise services; and

- strengthen the linkage between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs.

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

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of strategies and services to:
  ☐ Facilitate the engagement of employers in workforce development programs, including small employers and employers of in-demand industry sectors and occupations

☐ Support a local workforce development system that meets needs of businesses
☐ Better coordinate workforce development and economic development activities
☐ Promote entrepreneurial-skills training
☐ Promote microenterprise services
☐ Strengthen the links between one-stop and unemployment insurance

BOARD RESPONSE

WFS-GC integrates employer engagement, economic development collaboration, entrepreneurial training, and UI coordination into a cohesive workforce strategy. These efforts align with WIOA §108(b)(4) and §108(b)(5), ensuring the workforce system meets regional business needs while supporting economic growth and individual career success.

Facilitating Employer Engagement in Workforce Development Programs

WFS-GC actively engages employers of all sizes, including small businesses and those in high-demand industries, to address workforce needs. These strategies align with **WIOA §108(b)(4)** by prioritizing employer-driven workforce development initiatives.

- **Customized Workforce Solutions**: WFS-GC builds strong relationships with employers across key sectors by identifying their unique challenges and offering tailored workforce development programs. These include assistance with recruitment, onboarding, and retention strategies to reduce turnover and meet long-term workforce needs.
- **Support for Recruitment and Retention**: Services such as job description development, job advertising, and targeted outreach are offered to help employers fill vacancies and retain talent, particularly in critical industries such as healthcare, technology, construction, and manufacturing.
- **Engaging Small Employers**: WFS-GC recognizes the unique needs of small businesses and offers support through workshops, direct outreach, and access to training opportunities for upskilling their workforce.

Supporting a Local Workforce Development System That Meets Business Needs

WFS-GC ensures its workforce system is employer-driven and responsive to the region's economic landscape, aligning with **WIOA §108(b)(4)**.

- **Employer Engagement Unit**: The dedicated Employer Engagement Unit (Board's Employer Engagement staff and SERCO of Texas) collaborates directly with businesses to assess workforce challenges, such as skills gaps, hiring barriers, and retention issues. This feedback drives the alignment of training programs and recruitment efforts to address regional priorities.
- **Education-Employer Partnerships**: WFS-GC facilitates partnerships between employers and educational institutions to create career pathways for young adults, connecting businesses with future talent pipelines. These efforts ensure employers can access workers with the skills they need for sustainable growth.
- **Workforce Training and Upskilling**: WFS-GC identifies training opportunities to upskill incumbent workers and prepare job seekers for in-demand occupations, leveraging programs such as **on-the-job training (OJT)** and **customized training** to support business needs.

Expanding Paid Youth Employment through Hire Gulf Coast Youth – WFS-GC engages employers to provide high-quality, paid opportunities for youth, ensuring job placements align with industry needs. Through strategic outreach and partnerships, the initiative connects youth with meaningful work experiences that build skills and career readiness while helping businesses develop future talent.
Coordinating Workforce Development and Economic Development Activities

WFS-GC works closely with regional economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, industry councils, and local governments to ensure workforce strategies align with economic priorities, as outlined in **WIOA §108(b)(5)**.

- **Collaborative Planning**: Regular collaboration with economic development partners identifies priority industries and occupations, such as renewable energy, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing. This ensures workforce initiatives target high-demand fields that support regional economic growth.
- **Emerging Industry Tracking**: WFS-GC stays informed about changes in emerging industries and new occupations through discussion with employers and through participation in chambers of commerce and economic development discussions, ensuring training programs remain relevant.
- **Labor Market Insights**: WFS-GC provides data on industry trends, in-demand skills, and employment projections to guide workforce and economic development decisions, enabling targeted investments in training and recruitment.
- **Attracting New Employers**: By showcasing the region's skilled workforce and robust training infrastructure and regularly engaging with chambers and other economic development partners, WFS-GC helps attract new businesses and industries to the Gulf Coast.

Promoting Entrepreneurial-Skills Training and Microenterprise Services

WFS-GC supports the development of entrepreneurial skills and microenterprises, focusing on underrepresented groups and low-income communities, as outlined in **WIOA §108(b)(4)**.

- **Entrepreneurial Training**: Workshops and training sessions are offered to develop critical entrepreneurial skills such as financial management, marketing, and operational planning. These programs empower microbusiness owners to compete in the marketplace.
- **Access to Funding and Resources**: WFS-GC connects microenterprises to funding opportunities, including **Self-Sufficiency Fund Grants, Skills Development Grants, and Texas Industry Partnership Grants**, providing tailored guidance on the application process.
- **Support for Underrepresented Populations**: Programs are designed to ~~address~~ remove barriers ~~faced by~~ that may limit opportunities for disconnected and disadvantaged persons. By providing greater access to resources and supports, WFS-GC seeks to provide fair and universal access to entrepreneurship resources and support

Strengthening the Linkage Between One-Stop Delivery Systems and Unemployment Insurance Programs

WFS-GC strengthens the connection between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance (UI) programs to ensure seamless service for job seekers and employers.

- **UI Integration**: Workforce centers provide individuals receiving UI benefits with access to job search assistance, career counseling, and training programs that facilitate a quick return to work.

- **Mass Claims Support**: WFS-GC works with employers during layoffs to assist with mass claims filing, providing resources to affected workers through **Rapid Response** sessions.
- **Cross-Training Staff**: One-stop center staff are trained to assist clients with UI-related questions, ensuring alignment between workforce services and UI programs.

C. Coordination of Wagner-Peyser Services

References: WIOA §108(b)(12); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(11)

Boards must include a description of the strategies that are used to maximize coordination, improve service delivery, and avoid the duplication of Wagner-Peyser Act services and other services that are provided through the one-stop delivery system.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of the strategies that are used to:
- ☐ Maximize coordination
- ☐ Improve service delivery
- ☐ Avoid duplication of Wagner-Peyser Act services and other services that are provided through the one-stop delivery system

BOARD RESPONSE

WFS-GC is committed to delivering high-quality, accessible, and efficient employment services that connect job seekers with meaningful employment and employers with skilled talent. As part of our implementation of the Wagner-Peyser rule, WFS-GC is working closely with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to align employment services staff with the requirements of Wagner-Peyser. Our goal is to create a cohesive service model that ensures job seekers receive comprehensive career services, effective job placement support, and ongoing workforce guidance that meet the needs of our local economy.

To expand access, we are enhancing our reach through mobile and virtual workforce services, making it easier for job seekers in rural communities and across the region to access employment services remotely or at local community sites.

Enhancing Wagner-Peyser Services through Coordination

Workforce Solutions plays a key role in the planning, coordination, and delivery of Wagner-Peyser services within our one-stop workforce system. We actively develop strategies to streamline services, avoid duplication, and enhance job matching efforts to maximize efficiency and impact.

Through our collaboration with TWC, we are ensuring that employment services staff are fully aligned with the latest Wagner-Peyser regulations and best practices. Our approach emphasizes:

- **Integrated service delivery** to provide seamless career support.
- **Alignment with WIOA programs** to ensure job seekers receive comprehensive workforce solutions.
- **Employer engagement strategies** that connect businesses with qualified candidates.

Expanding Wagner-Peyser Service Offerings

Wagner-Peyser services are **at the core of our workforce system**, providing **universal access** to job seekers at all levels of experience and background. To **expand access and flexibility**, Workforce Solutions now offers:

- **Mobile Workforce Services** – Deploying career specialists and workforce resources directly into communities through mobile units, expanding access to career counseling, job search assistance, and employer services in rural areas and across the region.
- **Virtual Employment Services** – Offering remote job search assistance, career workshops, and employer connections through virtual platforms, allowing job seekers to access services from anywhere.
- **Career Exploration and Job Search Assistance** – Helping individuals identify career pathways and connect with employment opportunities.
- **Labor Market Information** – Providing real-time insights into job trends, wage data, and hiring industries.
- **Resume Writing and Interview Preparation** – Supporting job seekers in developing strong applications.
- **Employer Services** – Assisting businesses with job postings, candidate referrals, and hiring events.
- **WorkInTexas.com Support** – Ensuring job seekers effectively use the state's online job matching system.

Professional Development & Staff Training for Employment Services

To ensure that employment services staff provide high-quality support to both job seekers and employers, Workforce Solutions has implemented a comprehensive professional development program.

- Onboarding training for new employees to familiarize them with service expectations.
- Annual and biannual continuing education on job search strategies, customer service, and employer engagement.
- Ongoing technical assistance to ensure staff can efficiently utilize WorkInTexas.com and labor market tools.
- Responsive training solutions, such as classroom instruction, webinars, and one-on-one coaching, to address emerging workforce challenges.

Connecting Job Seekers & Employers through Wagner-Peyser Services

One of the key priorities of Workforce Solutions' Wagner-Peyser implementation is ensuring that job seekers have direct access to employment opportunities and employers can efficiently find the talent they need.

For Job Seekers, We Provide:

- One-on-one career coaching and job readiness workshops.
- Direct job referrals through WorkInTexas.com.
- Resume development and interview preparation assistance.
- Reemployment services for those recently unemployed or transitioning careers.
- Mobile workforce services to bring career assistance directly into communities.

- Virtual career assistance to increase accessibility.

For Employers, We Offer:

- Targeted recruitment services to match candidates with job openings.
- Labor market information to support hiring decisions.
- Work-based learning and internship programs to develop local talent.
- Assistance with job postings and candidate screening.

Supporting Unemployment Insurance Claimants through Wagner-Peyser

Workforce Solutions also leverages Wagner-Peyser services to support unemployment insurance (UI) claimants, ensuring that individuals receiving UI benefits have access to:

- Job search assistance to help claimants quickly return to work.
- Automated coordination between WorkInTexas.com and the UI automation system to track registration and job search compliance.
- RESEA (Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment) program, which provides targeted assistance to UI claimants at risk of long-term unemployment through one-on-one career coaching, job search planning, and referrals to employment opportunities.
- A Regional Reemployment Team, which works closely with the RESEA program to provide personalized career guidance, targeted job matching, proactive outreach, and employer connections to UI claimants. This team ensures that claimants receive coordinated support and direct pathways to employment, reducing the time spent unemployed.

Looking Ahead: Strengthening Workforce Solutions through Wagner-Peyser

Our approach to implementing the Wagner-Peyser rule is centered on enhancing career services, supporting job seekers, engaging employers, and ensuring compliance through a well-coordinated system.

- Strengthened alignment with TWC to coordinate employment services staff and policies.
- Expanded Wagner-Peyser service offerings to provide robust job seeker and employer support.
- Ongoing staff training and professional development to ensure high-quality service delivery.
- Integrated technology and data analytics to track progress and improve workforce outcomes.
- Employer partnerships and labor market alignment to connect job seekers with high-demand opportunities.
- Mobile and virtual workforce services to ensure accessibility across all communities.

D. Integrated, Technology-Enabled Intake and Case Management

References: WIOA §108(b)(21); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(20)

Boards must include a description of how one-stop centers are implementing and transitioning to WorkinTexas.com for the programs that are carried out under WIOA and by one-stop partners.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of the following:

☐ How one-stop centers are implementing and transitioning to WorkinTexas.com for programs carried out under WIOA and one-stop partners

BOARD RESPONSE

Workforce Solutions is fully utilizing WorkInTexas.com (WIT) to support the implementation and transition of programs carried out under WIOA and one-stop partner programs. WIT serves as a centralized platform for determining eligibility, providing case management, and tracking performance across all WIOA programs.

To ensure a seamless transition and effective utilization of WIT, we have:

- Integrated WIT into intake, assessments, ongoing case management, and follow-up services, ensuring a streamlined experience for job seekers and staff.
- Provided ongoing training and support for staff to maximize system capabilities.
- Established workgroups to streamline service delivery and identify best practices for system integration.

Explored using WIT as our primary document storage system, ensuring all program-related documentation is efficiently managed, easily accessible, and securely stored.

WFS-GC affirms its commitment to planning for and supporting the expansion of Texas Postsecondary Pathways (TPP). As part of our integrated, technology-enabled service delivery model, we are investing in systems and processes that facilitate co-enrollment, dual credit tracking, and career pathway navigation. These tools support students and job seekers as they move through aligned secondary, postsecondary, and credentialed training programs. The Board's data systems and case management infrastructure are being designed to strengthen collaboration with education and training partners, ensure seamless service delivery, and expand access to stackable credentials and high-quality work-based learning opportunities.

Part 5: Workforce Investment Activities

A. Rapid Response Activity Coordination

References: WIOA §108(b)(8); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(7)

Each Board must include a description of how the Board will coordinate workforce investment activities that are carried out in the workforce area with the statewide rapid response activities described in WIOA §134(a)(2)(A).

Minimum Plan Requirements:

☐ A description of how the Board will coordinate local workforce investment activities with statewide rapid response activities described in WIOA §134(a)(2)(A).

BOARD RESPONSE

WFS-GC coordinates local workforce investment activities with statewide rapid response activities as outlined in **WIOA §134(a)(2)(A)**. Rapid Response services are designed to minimize the time workers impacted by layoffs or closures spend unemployed by quickly connecting them to reemployment and training opportunities. These services are initiated promptly upon receipt of a layoff notification and are delivered through a collaborative effort involving the **Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Dislocated Worker Unit**, the **Local Rapid Response Coordinator (LRRC)**, and other key partners.

Layoff Notification and Employer Engagement

Layoff notifications are received from multiple sources, including:
- **Worker Adjustment Retraining Notification (WARN) Act notices**
- Direct employer or labor union communication
- Employee reports through Workforce Centers
- Community organization referrals
- Local Government officials (i.e. City Judges, Mayors,)
- Media announcements, such as articles in newspapers
- **Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) petitions** filed with the U.S. Department of Labor

Upon receiving a notification, the LRRC establishes contact with the employer within **48 hours** to confirm details and offer Rapid Response services. An **Onsite or Virtual Management Meeting** is scheduled with the employer, union representatives, and other key stakeholders to provide an overview of available services.

On-Site Services for Affected Workers – Rapid Response teams visit the employer's site to provide career counseling, job search assistance, retraining opportunities, and unemployment benefits information.

- **Activating the Rapid Response Team** – Workforce board staff quickly mobilizes to assess the scope of the layoff or closure and coordinate with the employer.
- **Schedule On-Site or Virtual Meetings** – Rapid Response specialists meet with affected workers as soon as possible to provide information about available services which can lead to additional one on one offsite meetings.
- **Provide Career Transition Workshops** – These sessions include résumé building, job search

strategies, interview preparation, and LinkedIn optimization.
- **Connect Workers to Training and Upskilling Programs** – Individuals are guided toward short-term certifications, apprenticeships, or training for in-demand jobs and overview of available job training programs, and services provided by workforce solutions
- **Facilitate Job Matching & Hiring Events** – The workforce board collaborates with local employers to organize job fairs and direct placement opportunities.
- **Ensure Access to Supportive Services** – Workers are connected to unemployment benefits, healthcare, childcare, and transportation assistance to help them stay stable during their transition.
- **Career Counseling** – Provide the affected workers relevant LMI on trending occupations related to their experience and employers with similar positions currently hiring.
- **Unemployment Insurance** (UI) processes and mass claims guidance
- Shared Work program information

The meeting ensures the employer is informed about resources and creates a tailored Rapid Response plan to support affected workers.

Worker Services and Transition Assistance

Rapid Response sessions for workers are held onsite or virtually and provide information on:
- **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Dislocated Worker Program**
- Registration and navigation of **WorkInTexas.com (WIT)**, the state's job matching platform
- **Career counseling and job readiness workshops**, including résumé preparation and interview skills
- **Education and training opportunities**, including information on occupational skills training and credentials available through Workforce Centers
- Health benefits, pensions, and other transitional support including COBRA related questions
- Recruiters are available onsite collecting and assisting with resume writing to help prepare affected workers for their next career opportunity.

These sessions are tailored to meet the needs of the affected workforce and connect individuals to longer-term employment or training services as appropriate.

Collaboration and Continuous Support

WFS-GC integrates its **Industry & Workforce Engagement team** into Rapid Response efforts to identify opportunities for hiring events and direct connections to employers in similar industries. This proactive approach has facilitated successful reemployment strategies for dislocated workers in previous years.

The TWC Rapid Response Coordinator assigns a **Rapid Response event number** to track services provided to employers and participants within TWC's Workforce Information System of Texas (WIT). Data collected through these efforts are used to evaluate program outcomes and improve service delivery.

This comprehensive coordination with TWC, employers, and other stakeholders, WFS-GC ensures that dislocated workers receive timely, targeted support to transition into new employment or training opportunities. This collaborative approach minimizes unemployment duration, aligns local services with statewide rapid response activities, and strengthens the regional workforce.

B. Youth Activities and Services

References: WIOA §108(b)(9); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(8)

Boards must include a description and assessment of the type and availability of workforce investment activities for youth in the workforce area, including activities for youth with disabilities. This description must include an identification of successful models of such activities.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description and assessment of the type and availability of workforce investment activities for:
☐ youth;
☐ youth with disabilities; and
the identification of:
  ☐ successful models of such activities.

BOARD RESPONSE

Hire Gulf Coast Youth: Igniting Potential, Launching Careers, and Landing Success

In January 2025, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board **launched *Hire Gulf Coast Youth*** to bridge critical gaps in workforce development for youth ages 14-24. Backed by Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth funding, this initiative delivers the full spectrum of 14 WIOA youth elements, ensuring young people across the Gulf Coast region have access to comprehensive services that prepare them for high-demand careers.

Addressing the Needs of Disconnected and Opportunity Youth

The Gulf Coast region, like much of the nation, faces a growing challenge: an increasing number of youth who are disconnected from both education and employment. National data shows that approximately 4.5 million young people in the U.S. fall into this category—often referred to as *opportunity youth*. These individuals face significant barriers to success, including lack of career guidance, financial hardship, and ~~limited~~ less access to work experiences. Additionally, trends indicate a shift in postsecondary preferences, with many youth seeking industry-recognized certifications rather than traditional four-year college degrees. *Hire Gulf Coast Youth* is designed to meet these evolving needs, offering a career-focused, skills-based approach to workforce development.

Comprehensive Workforce Development: More Than Just a Job Program

WFS-GC's **Hire Gulf Coast Youth (HGCY) program** supports both in-and out-of-school youth, providing opportunities for career exploration, hands-on training, and real work experience that **prepare young adults** for long-term success. A **combination of strategic partnerships, innovative workforce initiatives, and comprehensive wraparound services** equips youth with the tools they need to build successful careers in high-demand industries.

What sets HGCY apart is its **holistic approach** to workforce development. Through career exploration, paid work experience, and employment opportunities, the program follows the Ignite, Launch, and Land model:

- **Ignite**: Youth engage in career exploration to discover high-skill, high-growth fields in healthcare, building construction and trades, education, and information technology. This phase includes mentoring, career counseling, and access to industry-based certifications that help young people make informed career decisions.

- **Launch**: Participants gain hands-on, paid work experience, including internships, pre-apprenticeships, and industry-based training programs, allowing them to develop essential workplace skills and confidence.

- **Land**: Youth transition into sustainable employment through on-the-job training (OJT), Registered Apprenticeships, and direct job placements, ensuring they secure high-quality, long-term careers.

Ignite (Career Exploration & Skill Building)

Through **Career Galaxy Exploration**, young people can participate in **Career Constellation Fairs**, where they interact with industry professionals, explore hands-on demonstrations, and attend career panels. Virtual **Orbit Career Tours** utilize AI-driven career exploration tools that allow youth to "orbit" different career paths, helping them visualize potential futures in various industries. Another initiative, **Mission: Skill Boost**, offers STEM and skilled trades training camps, providing short-term boot camps in **coding, healthcare, and construction trades** that lead to industry certifications. The **STEM & Skilled Trades Mission Training Camp** creates hands-on learning opportunities for high-demand careers.

To further support career readiness, the **Rocket Fuel Mentorship** initiative connects youth with experienced professionals through the **Astronaut Advisor Program**, fostering one-on-one mentorship. The **Mission Control Career Coaching** workshops equip participants with resume-building strategies, mock interview preparation, and career guidance, ensuring they are prepared for workforce entry.

Launch (Work-Based Learning & Employment)

The **Summer Orbit Jobs** initiative provides real-world work experiences. The **Launchpad Work Experience** program develops paid summer internships in **healthcare, energy, IT, construction, and skilled trades**, offering hands-on learning and work-based skill-building. To provide further career exposure, partnerships with businesses and nonprofits facilitate job shadowing and apprenticeship opportunities.

Encouraging entrepreneurial ambition, the **Zero Gravity Entrepreneurship** program features a **Youth Business Start-Up Accelerator**, where participants develop business ideas and pitch them in a **"Shark Tank in Space"** competition. To support financial literacy and business acumen, the **Galactic Finance Academy** offers courses on economic self-sufficiency and wealth-building strategies.

The **Workforce Spacewalks** initiative connects youth with employers through **Employer Expedition Days**, where they visit job sites, participate in networking events, and shadow industry professionals. Additionally, **Sector-Based Internship Cohorts** allow youth to gain practical experience tailored to their chosen career paths.

Land (Sustainable Employment & Career Success)

The **Mission Accomplished Hiring Hub** supports young job seekers in transitioning into sustainable careers. The **Ignition Hiring Fair** serves as an annual event where participants engage with employers hiring for full-time jobs that offer sustainable wages. **Post-Internship Career Pathways** help ensure that youth continue on their career trajectories with job placement support and guidance.

The **Starship Success Academy** is designed to provide ongoing career coaching, leadership development, and professional skills training for long-term career success. The **Lift-Off Leadership** workshops help youth transition into high-growth careers by fostering professional confidence and career-readiness skills. The **Education Opportunity Connector** builds strong partnerships between career offices and adult education providers, ensuring that youth receive guidance in higher education and skills training.

Providing comprehensive support, the **Ground Control Support Network** partners with community organizations to offer essential wraparound services such as **housing, childcare, mental health, and transportation assistance**. The **Flight Navigation Services** program ensures case management and career goal tracking, keeping young job seekers on course toward sustainable employment and financial stability.

Maximizing Impact for Both Youth and Employers

For youth, this program provides a structured path to self-sufficiency, equipping them with skills, certifications, and real-world experience. Every participant will receive financial literacy training, helping them build a strong foundation for managing earnings, budgeting, and wealth-building. Additionally, through Metrix Learning, youth will have access to career exploration tools, soft skills training, and industry-based knowledge and certifications, strengthening their readiness for the workforce.

Employers across the Gulf Coast region also benefit significantly. *Hire Gulf Coast Youth* serves as a pipeline for skilled, job-ready talent, reducing hiring costs and addressing labor shortages in key industries. Businesses gain access to motivated, well-prepared young workers, many of whom have received training tailored to their industry's specific needs.

Ensuring Consistency and Quality Across the Region

To guarantee that every participant receives consistent, high-quality support, WFS-GC is actively procuring contractors to provide:

- Mentoring and Leadership
- Career Exploration and Immersive Experiences
- Counseling and therapy services to address personal and emotional barriers
- Industry-based certifications aligned with employer needs

Integrating these critical services into all One-Stop Service Centers helps ensure consistent availability of workforce development opportunities across the entire region.

Strategic Partnerships & Community Engagement

Collaboration is key to the success of **Hire Gulf Coast Youth**. The **Regional Youth Workforce Alliance** brings together businesses, schools, training providers, and nonprofits to create a comprehensive support

system for young job seekers. Through digital engagement, AI-powered job matching, and **virtual career counseling**, we expand accessibility and awareness of workforce development services.

Our commitment to inclusivity extends to justice-involved and homeless youth. Programs supporting these populations provide work experience, re-entry assistance, and career guidance, ensuring that every young person has the opportunity to **ignite their potential, launch their careers, and land in a fulfilling job**.

Building a Stronger Future for the Gulf Coast Region

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board is **committed to empowering the next generation of workers** by providing them with the tools, training, and opportunities needed to thrive in today's economy. Through *Hire Gulf Coast Youth*, we are igniting passions, launching careers, and helping young people land in sustainable, high-wage jobs that fuel both individual success and regional economic growth.

This initiative is **more than just a workforce program**—it's a transformational investment in the future of Gulf Coast youth and the employers who depend on them. We are shaping a dynamic and sustainable workforce for the Gulf Coast region, expanding opportunities for all young people to pursue meaningful careers and long-term success.

Youth Activities and Services

WFS-GC **shares essential career information** with educators, parents, and students, helping young people understand career exploration and the necessary steps to prepare for future job opportunities. The Board focuses on **equipping tomorrow's workforce with the skills and knowledge they will need to succeed.** Whether in school, recently graduated, or out of school, young people can access career planning, local employment opportunities, job application assistance, and guidance on marketing their skills and excelling in interviews.

Supporting the region's **88 school districts**, WFS-GC aims to **reduce dropout rates and allocate resources to prepare youth for in-demand jobs**. By providing parents and students with valuable career and coursework information, the Board's Education Committee offers guidance and oversight, ensuring schools produce graduates with skills that meet employer needs. **Career offices work directly** with middle and high schools, providing services within the school system and expanding outreach to youth outside the traditional education pipeline.

Beyond individual career services, the Board collaborates with schools to deliver labor market insights and career planning resources. Publications such as the **High Skill, High Growth Magazine**, **Focus on Industry and Occupation Profiles**, and the **Career Exploration Tool** offer valuable data to students, parents, and educators. Additionally, partnerships with universities and community colleges enhance workforce initiatives, providing degree programs, technical certifications, adult education, and English language instruction. Colleges also assist with **employer-customized training programs** and workforce development proposals, making them key allies in addressing the region's skilled labor shortages.

A successful youth workforce model includes collaboration among **Student HireAbility Navigators**, **Vocational Rehabilitation partners**, and **career office staff**. These partnerships ensure that youth receive career guidance, training access, and employment opportunities through technology-driven outreach and social media events.

Support for Foster Youth

WFS-GC **expands opportunities for foster youth** to access education, training, and employment that set them up for long-term success. **Many face challenges** transitioning to independence, and WFS-GC works closely with The Hay Center, a Foster Youth Transition Center, and the Department of Family and

Protective Services (DFPS) to **provide targeted support.** Programs include career exploration, job readiness training, paid internships, and direct job placement assistance.

Foster youth can **receive financial aid for workforce training**, **industry-recognized credentials, and tuition assistance** for postsecondary education. To **remove barriers**, WFS-GC offers childcare, transportation assistance, and connections to housing support, helping young people **focus on building their careers**. An annual **Foster Youth Conference connects** participants with employers, training providers, and career advisors, creating opportunities for **hands-on guidance** and networking.

WFS-GC **strengthens outreach** by working with school districts, community organizations, and child welfare agencies each month. These efforts provide foster youth with **early and ongoing support**, equipping them with the skills, confidence, and opportunities to build a stable future

Entrepreneurial and Specialized Workforce Initiatives

The **Entrepreneurial Boot Camps for Youth and Young Adults** empower aspiring young business owners by connecting them with existing regional efforts and technology incubators. These virtual training events, available in both English and Spanish, provide hands-on learning in business creation, planning, ownership, and expansion. Partnering with community organizations, the Board ensures continued support beyond the initial training, fostering long-term success for young entrepreneurs and contributing to economic growth.

For **Justice-Involved Youth**, the Board collaborates with reentry programs, faith-based organizations, nonprofits, and government agencies to facilitate successful transitions back into the workforce. Key partners, such as the **City of Houston Re-entry Program**, **Career and Recovery Incarcerated Veterans Program**, and **Texas Department of Criminal Justice reVision**, provide employment readiness assistance. Participants gain access to work experience opportunities, earning up to $12 per hour for ten weeks while also receiving financial aid for essential resources such as clothing, transportation, training, and certification fees.

The **Homeless Youth Workforce Initiative** works in partnership with **Coalition for the Homeless** and **The Way Home – Rapid Rehousing** to mitigate the effects of housing instability. By offering career services, job placement, and training opportunities, the program enables young individuals to secure employment that provides livable wages, supporting long-term self-sufficiency.

Career Readiness and Training Programs

The **Student HireAbility Navigator Program**, established in 2018, expands pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities. These efforts are complemented by **Summer Earn and Learn**, which provides youth aged 14-22 with paid internship opportunities that help develop essential job skills and confidence in workplace settings.

Tri-Agency Partnership: Expanding Workforce Opportunities for Youth

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board has participated in the Governor's Tri-Agency Regional Convener Initiative, a collaboration between the Texas Workforce Commission **(TWC),** Texas Education Agency **(TEA),** and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board **(THECB)**. We are spearheading collaborative efforts among education, workforce, and industry partners to strengthen career pathways for youth. Through strategic partnerships with K-12 schools, post-secondary institutions, employers, and community organizations, the WFS-GC provides immersive learning opportunities and work-based experiences that prepare young people for high-demand careers in healthcare, building and construction, and education.

Our initiatives include expanding apprenticeship programs, developing digital tools for career exploration, offering paid internships, and hosting career fairs and industry-led conferences. Additionally, the Board

provides paid employment experiences that enable youth to earn wages while gaining critical workplace skills and industry exposure. These comprehensive services ensure that young people have access to hands-on learning, career guidance, and direct connections to employers, supporting their transition from education to meaningful, sustainable careers. The Board's commitment to data-driven strategies and active stakeholder engagement fosters a robust ecosystem where young people can build skills, earn credentials, and contribute to the region's economic growth and long-term resilience.

At the heart of this effort is the work being done to connect students with real-world training, industry-recognized credentials, and direct pathways to employment. WFS-GC plays a critical role in making this happen by working with school districts, colleges, and employers to strengthen career and technical education (CTE) programs, expand work-based learning, and provide labor market insights that help students make informed career choices.

A major focus is ensuring students don't just complete a program but graduate with a skill set that employers need. Through stronger coordination between education providers and businesses, WFS-GC helps align training programs with regional workforce demands, so young people leave high school or postsecondary training with certifications and experience that make them competitive in the job market. WFS-GC also provides educators and career advisors with labor market data, and these insights help students understand that career education isn't just theoretical, it's tied to real opportunities.

WFS-GC is advancing career preparation through the Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative, helping to expand opportunities for young people, strengthen training programs, and create clearer pathways to long-term success.

Tri-Agency Regional Convenings

A key component of WFS-GC's strategy is its participation in **Tri-Agency regional convenings**, which bring together education leaders, workforce professionals, and industry partners to:

- Expand career pathways through **Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs**, combining adult literacy services with technical training.
- Enhance WBL opportunities by **aligning K-12 education with postsecondary training and employer expectations**.
- Develop **teacher apprenticeship models** to strengthen the educator workforce pipeline, ensuring long-term sustainability for regional workforce efforts.

The **Regional Convener Conference**, held annually, serves as a platform for fostering employer-education partnerships. In 2025, the conference welcomed over **400 students from multiple school districts**, offering tailored career exploration sessions, professional development workshops, and direct engagement with industry leaders.

At the latest conference in **January 2025**, over **400 students** from **across the Gulf Coast region** participated in career readiness sessions, industry panels, and hands-on workshops. The event featured engaging breakout sessions that helped students assess their skills, develop professional branding through resumes and LinkedIn, and understand the importance of maintaining a professional digital presence. A keynote address by **Andre'a Streeter**, a Microsoft leader with a background in **aerospace engineering and cloud infrastructure strategy**, gave students a real-world look at the power of persistence and innovation in STEM careers.

Additionally, the conference highlighted **regional labor market trends**, with **Parker Harvey, GCWB's Manager for Regional Economic Analysis**, demonstrating the **HSHG Tableau Dashboard**, a tool designed to help students identify sustainable career opportunities. The event also showcased the **Hire Gulf**

Coast Youth initiative, and its mission to connect young people with internships, job opportunities, and career training programs in high-demand industries.

The conference is a key part of the **Gulf Coast Workforce Board's efforts to bridge education and workforce development**, ensuring students have access to the information, training, and industry connections needed to transition into meaningful careers. Through events like this, the WFS-GC continues to strengthen collaboration with schools, employers, and regional partners to shape the future workforce of the Gulf Coast region.

Jobs Y'all Career Exploration

The **Jobs Y'all Career Exploration Campaign** introduces youth to high-growth industries such as Advanced Technologies, Construction, Aerospace, Energy, IT, Petroleum Refining, Transportation, Biotechnology, and Healthcare. Through interactive resources and real-world testimonials, students gain exposure to career opportunities that align with Texas's evolving job market, and WFS-GC has held job fairs tailored to job seekers in these areas.

Pathways to Employment and Higher Education

The **Youth Job Skills Initiative** supports young individuals who lack a secondary credential or are at risk of not graduating. This program provides structured pathways to **complete high school education while gaining hands-on experience** in fields such as construction, healthcare, and information technology. Similarly, **Bridges to College and Careers** helps disconnected youth—many of whom do not hold a diploma or lack access to higher education—by partnering with community colleges, workforce organizations, and employers to create new educational and training opportunities.

Career Education and Outreach Specialists work with schools across multiple districts to deliver career exploration resources and labor market data. Through direct engagement, these specialists introduce students to available training programs, job readiness workshops, and internship placements that align with the needs of today's employers.

The **Education Opportunity Connector** bridges workforce solutions and adult education providers, fostering collaboration between career offices and education programs. By aligning training services and employer needs, this initiative strengthens career pathways and ensures young job seekers can seamlessly transition into postsecondary education and employment opportunities.

Through strategic workforce partnerships, technology-driven service delivery, and community engagement, **Hire Gulf Coast Youth** provides young individuals with the tools they need to build successful careers, contributing to a thriving regional economy.

C. Coordination with Secondary and Postsecondary Education Programs

References: WIOA §108(b)(10); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(9)

Boards must include a description of how the Board will coordinate workforce investment activities with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid the duplication of services.

> **Minimum Plan Requirements:**

> A description of how the Board will:

☐ coordinate its workforce investment activities with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities; and

☐ coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services

BOARD RESPONSE

WFS-GC actively collaborates with education partners to ensure that Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs align with relevant education and training initiatives. Our approach includes:

- **Partnering with Educational Institutions** – We work closely with community colleges, universities, school districts, adult education providers, and apprenticeship programs to align workforce training with employer needs.
- **Integrated Career Pathways** – WIOA programs are designed to connect job seekers with career pathways that incorporate both education and training, ensuring individuals acquire skills valued by regional industries.
- **Co-Enrollment Strategies** – We promote co-enrollment in WIOA, Adult Education and Literacy (AEL), and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, providing job seekers with a combination of education, job training, and support services.
- **Support for In-Demand Credentials** – Workforce Solutions works with training providers to ensure that WIOA-funded training leads to industry-recognized credentials that align with high-demand occupations.
- **Early Career Awareness and Work-Based Learning** – Collaborating with K-12 schools and community organizations, we support career exploration, internships, apprenticeships, and dual-credit opportunities, preparing students for future careers.

Enhancing Services and Avoiding Duplication

To maximize efficiency and effectiveness, WFS-GC employs strategic coordination to enhance services while reducing redundancy across workforce and education programs:

- **Cross-Agency Coordination** – Workforce Solutions works with educational institutions, economic development organizations, and employers to align services and resources, avoiding fragmented service delivery.
- **Technology-Enabled Integration** – Systems such as WorkInTexas.com, TEAMS (for adult education), and KinderConnect (for childcare services) ensure seamless data sharing and case management across programs, reducing duplication.
- **Unified Service Plans** – Career offices develop individualized employment plans (IEPs) and training plans that incorporate multiple funding sources, eliminating redundant assessments and service overlaps.
- **Joint Staff Training and Professional Development** – We train workforce staff, education partners, and service providers on shared goals, eligibility requirements, and best practices, ensuring streamlined service delivery.
- **Employer Engagement Alignment** – By working directly with regional employers, chambers of commerce, economic development groups, and industry councils, we ensure training and employment services are **employer-driven**, minimizing unnecessary or duplicative efforts.
- **Case Management and Follow-Up Services** – Workforce Solutions provides ongoing case management, support services, and performance tracking, ensuring job seekers progress efficiently through workforce and education programs without repetitive steps.

D. Child Care and Early Learning

References: 40 TAC §809.12

Boards must include a description of how the Board is strategically managing child care and early learning within the workforce system to enhance school readiness and strengthen and support the child care industry.

Efforts include:

- coordinating with employers, economic development programs, and other industry leaders to increase the awareness and importance of early learning as a workforce and economic development tool;

- supporting improved school readiness through higher quality childcare, including through the Texas Rising Star program and partnership opportunities; and

- supporting the needs of the childcare industry, such as by providing assistance with business development or shared services, or by providing opportunities to support professional growth and career pathways for early education.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of how the Board will:

☐ incorporate and coordinate the design and management of the delivery of child care services with the delivery of other workforce employment, job training, and educational services;

☐ maximize the delivery and availability of safe and stable child care services that assist families seeking to become independent from, or who are at risk of becoming dependent on, public assistance while parents are either working or attending a job training or educational program;

☐ use strategies for contracted slot agreements, including any local priorities and how the contracted slot agreements to help increase access to high-quality care for targeted communities;

☐ develop and implement strategic quality improvement goals to enhance school readiness; and

☐ strengthen and support the child care industry

BOARD RESPONSE

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board (WFS-GC) strategically manages childcare and early learning services to enhance school readiness, support families' economic independence, and strengthen the childcare industry. The Board's initiatives focus on integrating childcare services with workforce programs, improving access

to high-quality care, and fostering professional development within the childcare sector. Key strategies include:

Integration of Child Care Services with Workforce and Education Programs

- **Coordination with Workforce Services**: Childcare services are integrated into the broader workforce system, connecting families to employment, job training, and educational opportunities. Career Advisors assist families receiving childcare services by providing information about high-demand careers and training programs to promote economic mobility.
- **Employer Collaboration**: Childcare directors and owners are connected to employer services to strengthen business practices and explore innovative models, such as on-site childcare or employer-subsidized childcare benefits.
- **Needs Assessments**: Regular needs assessments are conducted to identify gaps in training, job readiness, and other support services for childcare staff and families, ensuring services remain responsive to community needs.

Maximizing Access to Safe and Stable Child Care

- **Contracted Slot Agreements**: The Board uses strategies such as contracted slots to prioritize access to high-quality childcare in **targeted communities**, including those designated as childcare deserts. These agreements focus on programs serving **infants and toddlers** to address critical gaps in care.
- **Child Care for Economic Independence**: Childcare services support families at risk of dependency on public assistance by ensuring access to stable care while parents work or pursue education or training.

Success Story: *Erika Ramirez, a 31-year-old single mother from Houston, Texas, faced the daily struggles of raising two children on her own, especially with the high cost of childcare. Determined to find a solution, she discovered Workforce Solutions at her local mall and quickly signed up for their assistance programs. To her surprise, she was approved for financial aid, allowing her to enroll her children in a daycare of her choice. With childcare secured, Erika turned her focus toward her own future and attended a job fair, where she first considered truck driving school. However, a mix-up at Houston Community College led her to the law enforcement building, reminding her of a childhood dream—becoming a police officer. In that moment, she made a life-changing decision and enrolled in the police academy in May 2023.*

Although she initially failed the physical test, Erika's perseverance never wavered. Encouraged by a supportive classmate, she re-enrolled and trained relentlessly, even running during lunch breaks to prepare for the physical exam. Her dedication paid off, and she graduated in April, securing a job with a law enforcement agency. However, the financial burden of purchasing her own duty gear posed another challenge. Once again, Workforce Solutions stepped in, with career advisor Leroy Tobias securing a grant to cover her essential equipment. Within days, Erika received the necessary supplies, allowing her to step into her new role with confidence. Now a proud police officer, Erika has become an inspiration to others, even returning to speak to new academy students.

Erika Ramirez Success Story*: https://youtu.be/oNK6jsiX0To*

Quality Improvement Goals to Enhance School Readiness

- **Professional Development**: WFS-GC supports childcare staff through wage supplementation, scholarships for higher education, and upskilling opportunities. These initiatives create career pathways for early childhood educators, leading to higher-quality care and retention in the childcare industry.
- **School Readiness Tracking**: Childcare programs are provided with resources and training to observe, assess, and track preschoolers' school readiness outcomes. This ensures children enter school with the foundational skills needed for success.
- **Texas Rising Star (TRS) Expansion**: The Board promotes participation in the **Texas Rising Star program**, supporting providers with resources and technical assistance to achieve and maintain higher quality ratings.

Strengthening the Child Care Industry

- **Support for Business Development**: Childcare providers receive assistance with business operations, including shared services models and financial planning, to promote sustainability and growth.
- **Incentives for Quality Providers**: Financial incentives are offered to **quality-rated childcare programs** to encourage continuous improvement and recognize providers' commitment to excellence.
- **Recruitment and Upskilling**: New early childhood educators are recruited and trained to address workforce shortages, with a focus on creating accessible career pathways within the childcare industry.

Employer Engagement to Expand Access

The Board collaborates with the **Employer Engagement team** to educate businesses on the benefits of supporting childcare, including offering on-site childcare facilities or subsidized childcare as part of employee benefits packages. This partnership increases awareness of early learning as a critical workforce and economic development tool.

WFS-GC's approach to managing childcare services ensures alignment with the workforce system's broader goals, enhances school readiness, and supports the childcare industry's growth and sustainability. These efforts strengthen families, promote economic independence, and create lasting impacts on the region's workforce.

E. Transportation and Other Support Services

References: WIOA §108(b)(11); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(10)

Each Board must include a description of how the Board will provide transportation, including public transportation, and other appropriate support services in the workforce area in coordination with WIOA Title I workforce investment activities.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of how the Board will provide:
  ☐ transportation, including public transportation; and
  ☐ other support services

BOARD RESPONSE

WFS-GC provides support services to empower individuals to secure employment, maintain their jobs, and advance in their careers—aligning with our mission to fuel the regional economy and improve service delivery through innovative solutions. We recognize that financial and logistical barriers can hinder workforce participation, and we aim to remove these obstacles through targeted assistance.

Our support services include:

- **Work Support** – Assistance to help individuals accept a job offer, transition into employment, and maintain long-term job success.
- **Work Search Support** – Resources that enable individuals to actively seek and secure employment opportunities.
- **Education Support** – Aid designed to help individuals obtain training or education that meets the needs of employers in our region and supports career advancement.

Financial Aid Categories

To ensure our customers have access to the resources they need, we provide financial aid in the following areas:

- **Education-Related Support** – Assistance with tuition, books, fees, and other education-related expenses to help individuals gain skills aligned with employer demand.
- **Early Education and Childcare Support** – Access to quality early education and childcare to support working parents in maintaining employment.
- **Transportation Support** – Assistance with transportation costs, ensuring individuals can reliably travel to work, training, or job interviews.
- **Healthcare and Health-Related Support** – Support for necessary health-related expenses that impact a customer's ability to work or train effectively.
- **Work-Related Support** – Aid for items such as uniforms, tools, or licensing fees necessary for employment.

Support services are determined through a staff assessment of customer needs during the employment planning process or upon request. When a customer applies for financial aid, we evaluate the request based on their need to obtain, retain, or advance in employment, ensuring alignment with our guidelines for financial assistance.

F. Coordination of Adult Education and Literacy

References: WIOA §108(b)(13); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(12); **WD 18-23, Change 2, Adult Education and Literacy Grant Application Review – Update**

Boards must include a description of how the Board will coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with AEL activities under WIOA Title II. Boards must also include the process used to review the local applications submitted under Title II, as consistent with WIOA §§107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA §232.

> **Minimum Plan Requirements:**
>
> A description of:
> ☐ how the Board will coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with AEL activities under WIOA Title II, including the process used to review local applications submitted under WIOA Title II; and
> ☐ the local application review process.

BOARD RESPONSE

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board integrates **WIOA Title I workforce investment activities** with **Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) activities** under **WIOA Title II** through strategic partnerships, data-driven collaboration, and shared service delivery models. These efforts align workforce training with foundational education, providing individuals with literacy and language barriers clear pathways to employment and career advancement.

WFS-GC partners with local **AEL providers** such as Houston Community College, Lone Star College, San Jacinto College, and various community-based organizations to deliver **integrated education and training (IET) programs**. These programs **combine workforce training with literacy and numeracy instruction**, allowing individuals to **develop technical skills while improving foundational competencies** needed for career success. Co-enrollment strategies enable AEL participants to access **wraparound services** such as career navigation, job search assistance, and supportive services like childcare and transportation.

To **prevent service duplication and maximize resources**, GCWB conducts cross-agency meetings and workforce training sessions that include bot**h Title I workforce staff and AEL providers**. These meetings focus on coordinating referrals, aligning **WIOA performance measures,** and improving service delivery based on data analysis and customer feedback. The Board also maintains an **integrated performance dashboard** to track participant outcomes across both Title I and Title II programs, allowing for real-time monitoring of education, credential attainment, and employment results.

Local Application Review Process

GCWB follows a structured process to **review and evaluate local applications** submitted under WIOA Title II to ensure alignment with **regional workforce priorities and economic needs**. In accordance with **WIOA §§107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA §232**, the Board assesses applications based on:

- **Alignment with regional industry needs** and in-demand occupations.

- **Ability to integrate AEL with workforce training**, including co-enrollment options for participants.

- **Effectiveness in serving individuals with barriers to employment**, such as those with limited English proficiency or low literacy levels.

- **Capacity to provide high-quality instruction** that supports the transition to postsecondary education or employment.

The review process includes consultation with economic and workforce development partners, and applications are evaluated through a **data-driven approach that incorporates program performance metrics, employer input, and labor market intelligence**. The Board provides **recommendations to the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)** based on this review, ensuring that **funding decisions align** with local workforce development strategies.

Part 6: Adult and Dislocated Workers

A. Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training

References: WIOA §108(b)(7); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(6)

Boards must include a description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the workforce area.

Minimum Plan Requirements:
☐ A description and assessment of the type and availability of adult, dislocated worker employment and training activities
☐ A list assessment instruments (tools) used for adults and dislocated workers

BOARD RESPONSE

Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities
WFS-GC provides comprehensive employment and training activities for adults and dislocated workers, aligning with **WIOA §134(c)(2)**, which outlines required career and training services. These activities are designed to meet the needs of job seekers while addressing the skill demands of the Gulf Coast region's employers. Our comprehensive approach includes targeted training and individualized career services to address the specific needs of priority populations while building a resilient workforce.

Description and Assessment of Activities
Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast (WFS-GC) offers a robust array of employment and training activities for adults and dislocated workers, ensuring alignment with regional economic priorities and WIOA requirements. Employment services are tailored to meet varied needs of job seekers, with a focus on skills development, career advancement, and reemployment opportunities, including:

- **Individualized Career Services**: Career counseling, skills assessments, résumé preparation, and job search assistance are provided to help individuals navigate the labor market.
- **Job Placement Services**: WFS-GC connects job seekers to employers in high-demand industries using tools like **WorkInTexas.com** and local job fairs.
- **Supportive Services**: Assistance with childcare, transportation, and other wraparound services ensures job seekers can participate in employment and training activities effectively.

WFS-GC offers the following **Training Activities**:

- **Occupational Skills Training** WFS-GC funds short-term and long-term training programs aligned with the region's **Target Occupations List**, focusing on high-growth sectors like healthcare, construction, and information technology.
- **On-the-Job Training (OJT)** Participants gain hands-on experience through OJT placements, allowing them to earn wages while developing critical job skills.
- **Work-Based Learning** Programs such as internships and apprenticeships provide individuals with real-world experience in their chosen fields.
- **Customized Training** WFS-GC partners with employers to deliver training programs tailored to their specific workforce needs, enhancing worker retention and career growth.

Availability of Activities

These services are accessible through the region's network of **27 career offices**, ensuring broad coverage across the Gulf Coast area. Specialized staff, including **Dislocated Worker Liaisons**, work to connect individuals affected by layoffs with appropriate reemployment and training opportunities. Services are **available virtually and in person**, maximizing **accessibility** for job seekers in all communities.

Assessment Instruments (Tools)

WFS-GC uses a variety of assessment tools to evaluate participants' skills, interests, and career readiness, including:

- **Skills Assessments**: Tools like **TORQ** and **WorkKeys** assess transferable skills and identify gaps for targeted training.
- **Career Interest Inventories**: Online tools such as **O*NET Interest Profiler** help individuals explore potential career paths.
- **Basic Skills and Literacy Testing**: Instruments like the **Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE)** measure basic skills proficiency to guide training placements.

B. Service Priority

References: 20 CFR §679.560(b)(21)

Boards must include the Board policy to ensure that priority for adult individualized career services and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient, as consistent with WIOA §134(c)(3)(E) and 20 CFR §680.600, along with veterans and foster youth, according to the priority order outlined in the WIOA Guidelines for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth. Boards must also include a list of any Board-established priority groups, if any.

> **Minimum Plan Requirements:**
> A description of the Board policy to ensure priority for adult individualized career services and training services will be given to the following:
> ☐ Recipients of public assistance
> ☐ Other low-income individuals
> ☐ Individuals who are basic skills deficient
> ☐ Veterans

☐ Foster youth
☐ List of Board priority groups (if any)

BOARD RESPONSE

Service Priority Policy

WFS-GC ensures that priority for adult individualized career services and training services is given to populations as outlined in **WIOA §134(c)(3)(E)** and **20 CFR §680.600**. The policy reflects the Board's commitment to serving the most vulnerable individuals in the region, including veterans and foster youth, in accordance with federal guidelines.

The following groups **are prioritized for services**:

- **Recipients of Public Assistance**: Individuals receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or other public assistance.
- **Other Low-Income Individuals**: Job seekers whose household income falls below the poverty line or 70% of the Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL).
- **Individuals Who Are Basic Skills Deficient**: Those scoring below 8th grade level in literacy or numeracy, as identified through assessments such as the TABE.
- **Veterans and Eligible Spouses**: Veterans are given priority for all services under WIOA, ensuring they have access to reemployment and training opportunities.
- **Foster Youth**: Current and former foster youth receive targeted support to address unique barriers to employment and education.

Board-Established Priority Groups

In addition to federally mandated groups, WFS-GC prioritizes:

- **Individuals Impacted by Layoffs**: Dislocated workers who have been affected by industry downturns or mass layoffs.
- **Individuals with Disabilities**: Participants with physical, intellectual, or developmental disabilities are provided with additional supports and accommodations to succeed in employment and training programs.

Implementation of Priority Policy

- **Career Advisors** make certain priority groups are identified during the intake process and are referred to services designed to meet their unique needs.
- **Data systems** track participant eligibility and ensure compliance with federal and local priority guidelines.
- **Outreach campaigns** are designed to reach communities with limited access to workforce services, helping connect individuals to available resources and support.

WFS-GC opens doors for adults and dislocated workers by connecting them to training, career services, and real job opportunities. Priority populations gain the skills and support needed to secure lasting careers, strengthening the workforce and fueling regional growth.

Part 7: Fiscal Agent, Grants, and Contracts

A. Fiscal Agent

References: WIOA §108(b)(15); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(14)

Boards must identify the entity responsible for the disbursal of grant funds described in WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III), as determined by the CEOs or the governor under WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i).

Minimum Plan Requirements:

☐ The entity responsible for disbursal of grant funds

BOARD RESPONSE

The Workforce and Economic Competitiveness Act of 1993 reshaped workforce development in Texas by enhancing regional authority, streamlining programs for greater efficiency, and strengthening local control over workforce decisions. This legislation laid the foundation for the state's workforce system by promoting regional collaboration and local decision-making. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 expanded on these reforms by formally establishing local workforce development boards nationwide, empowering them to lead and tailor workforce strategies to meet the specific needs of their communities.

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board was created through a consortium of chief elected officials from the 13-county Gulf Coast region and certified by the governor. In 1997, the Board formalized its partnership with the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC), which was designated as the fiscal agent and administrative entity, in accordance with **WIOA §108(b)(15)**.

As the decision-making body, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board holds primary responsibility for setting regional workforce priorities, allocating resources, selecting service providers, and establishing performance standards. While H-GAC oversees the disbursement of funds using standardized reporting systems and ensures compliance with state and federal regulations. The Workforce Board provides strategic leadership and direction, ensuring that investments are aligned with regional workforce needs and economic priorities.

One of the Workforce Board's key responsibilities is the competitive selection of service providers. In adherence to **WIOA §108(b)(16)**, the selection process:

- Guarantees full competition, offering all qualified entities an opportunity to participate.

- Evaluates proposals based on demonstrated competence, past performance, and the ability to meet the requirements outlined in the RFP.

- Ensures transparency by publishing a detailed Request for Proposals (RFP) and conducting evaluations through a standardized process.

This competitive process, conducted periodically and at least once every four years, ensures that the services provided are high-quality, efficient, and aligned with the region's evolving workforce needs and priorities. The Board also conducts regular monitoring to ensure accountability, compliance, and continuous improvement in service delivery.

B. Subgrants and Contracts

References: WIOA §108(b)(16); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(15)

Boards must include a description of the competitive process that will be used to award the subgrants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

☐ A description of the competitive process used to award subgrants and contracts

BOARD RESPONSE

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board (WFS-GC) follows a **competitive procurement process** to award subgrants and contracts for **WIOA Title I activities**, ensuring transparency, efficiency, and alignment with federal and state regulations. This process adheres to **WIOA §108(b)(16) and 20 CFR §679.560(b)(15)** and is designed to promote full and open competition while selecting high-performing service providers that meet regional workforce needs.

Full competitive procurements are conducted for each contract exceeding $50,000 **at least once every four years** unless circumstances necessitate a shorter cycle. Contracts are negotiated for one-year terms with the right to renew up to the four-year limit. The **Request for Proposals (RFP)** process is the primary mechanism for awarding contracts. It begins with a **public solicitation**, inviting qualified organizations to submit proposals detailing their capacity to provide workforce services. Proposals are evaluated based on criteria such as demonstrated competence, experience, past performance, cost-effectiveness, and alignment with Board priorities.

A **review committee** composed of Board staff or independent evaluators assesses submissions against established scoring criteria. This ensures selections are **data-driven and performance-based**, with awards granted to providers that demonstrate the ability to deliver high-quality, cost-effective workforce services. The Board also considers factors such as **innovative service delivery models, partnerships with industry and education, and the ability to serve priority populations effectively**.

After evaluation, **contract negotiations** are conducted to finalize performance expectations, compliance measures, and reporting requirements. Contracts include **clear performance benchmarks** and **continuous monitoring provisions** to ensure adherence to federal and state guidelines. The Board reserves the right to terminate contracts if providers fail to meet contractual obligations or performance outcomes.

This **structured, competitive approach** guarantees that workforce services are **efficient, ~~equitable,~~ fair, and responsive** to evolving labor market demands. By maintaining a transparent and accountable procurement process, WFS-GC ensures that WIOA funds are utilized effectively to benefit job seekers, employers, and the broader Gulf Coast economy.

Part 8: Performance –

A. Board Performance Targets

References: WIOA §108(b)(17); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(16)

Boards must include a description of the local levels of performance that were negotiated with TWC and the CEOs, consistent with WIOA §116(c), that will be used to measure the performance of the workforce area and for measuring the performance of the local fiscal agent (where appropriate), eligible providers under WIOA Title I subtitle B, and the one-stop delivery system in the workforce area.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of local levels of performance to be used to measure performance of:
☐ the workforce area; and
☐ local fiscal agent (when appropriate)

BOARD RESPONSE

We are developing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) aligned with the four strategic goals of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board to measure progress and drive impact. These KPIs will track our efforts to support business-forward strategies, forge strategic partnerships, increase awareness of services and opportunities, and enhance service delivery through technology and innovation. By establishing clear metrics, we ensure accountability, monitor outcomes, and make data-driven decisions to strengthen our regional workforce and economy.

In addition to our internal KPIs, we adhere to performance targets established by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). These targets set benchmarks for key workforce outcomes, including employment placements, training completions, and business engagement. By aligning our strategies with both Board-driven goals and state-mandated performance measures, we ensure a comprehensive approach to workforce development that delivers meaningful results for job seekers, employers, and the community.

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

	Board Measures	Target	Note
Performance	**Employed in the 1st Qtr. after Exit**	**78.0%**	**These will be replaced with new KPI when available.**
	Employed in 2nd and 3rd quarters after exit	**83.0%**	
	Exiters with Earnings Gains	**46.0%**	
	Exiters with Earnings Gains of at least 20%	**37.0%**	
	Achieve Education Credential	**76.0%**	
	Achieve Post-Secondary Certificate or Degree	**86.0%**	

	TWC Measures	Target	Note
WIOA Adult	**Employed Q2 Post Exit - WIOA Adult**	**74.0%**	**Negotiated with TWC**
	Employed Q4 Post Exit - WIOA Adult	**72.7%**	
	Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit - WIOA Adult	**$7,000**	
	Credential Rate - WIOA Adult	**71.1%**	
	Measurable Skills Gains - WIOA Adult	**69.7%**	
WIOA DW	**Employed Q2 Post Exit - WIOA DW**	**77.8%**	
	Employed Q4 Post Exit - WIOA DW	**78.3%**	
	Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit - WIOA DW	**$10,130**	
	Credential Rate - WIOA DW	**76.6%**	
	Measurable Skills Gains - WIOA DW	**75.0%**	
WIOA Youth	**Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit - WIOA Youth**	**73.2%**	

	Employed/Enrolled Q4 Post Exit - WIOA Youth	74.6%	
	Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit - WIOA Youth	$3,900	
	Credential Rate - WIOA Youth	59.0%	
	Measurable Skills Gains - WIOA Youth	64.3%	
Career & Training(C&T)	**Active Job Seeker New Employment Connection Rate**	58.52%	
	Maintaining Employment Connection	42.62%	
	Credential Rate - C&T	71.0%	
Reemployment and Employer Engagement	**Claimants Reemployment within 10 weeks**	60.0%	
	Texas Talent Assistance Rate	TBD	
	Successful Texas Talent Assistance	56.58%	**NOT Part of the negotiations with TWC, However, targets are set by TWC**
Program Participation	**Choices Full Engagement Rate**	53.0%	
	Average Children Served Per Day	35,355	
	Initial Job Search Child Care Success Rate	62.4%	
Child Care Quality	**Matching level needed to secure local match**	$10,277,193	
NCP	**NCP Entered Employment Rate**	65.0%	
	NCP Employment Retention Rate	50.0%	
Program Participation	**RESEA Outreach and Scheduling Rate**	100.0%	
	RESEA Initial Appointment Rate	77.0%	
	RESEA Failure to Report Rate	23.0%	

Part 9: Training and Services

A. Individual Training Accounts

References: WIOA §108(b)(19); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(18)

Boards must include a description of how the training services outlined in WIOA §134 will be provided through the use of individual training accounts (ITAs), including if the Board will use contracts for training services, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of ITAs under that chapter, and how the Board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs, regardless of how the training services are provided.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

A description of the following:
☐ How training services will be provided using ITAs
☐ How contracts for training services will be coordinated (if contracts are used)
☐ How the Board will ensure informed customer choice

BOARD RESPONSE

WFS-GC provides training services through **Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)** to support participants in gaining skills and credentials aligned with local labor market needs. ITAs are used to fund training programs from providers listed on the **Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)**, ensuring participants have access to high-quality education and training opportunities.

Participants eligible for training services, as defined by WIOA guidelines, collaborate with Career Advisors to develop **Individual Employment Plans (IEPs)** that outline career goals and appropriate training programs. Together, they explore **career pathways** that align with participants' interests, skills, and **regional workforce needs**. Training services are designed to **help individuals progress** from foundational skills to advanced certifications and employment in high-demand fields, **creating clear opportunities for** long-term career growth.

Training services include programs targeting occupations on the local **HSHG Scholarship Eligible Occupations List** and those with high potential for sustained demand and growth. All training providers and programs must **meet compliance standards** set by the **Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).** These standards are designed to ensure that programs **effectively prepare** students for employment. They include maintaining appropriate licensure (except for Registered Apprenticeship programs), adhering to nondiscrimination statutes, and sharing data with TWC— in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)—to facilitate audits, evaluations, and program assessment.

ETPs must also meet approved minimum **performance standards** to ensure program effectively prepare students for employment. **Key performance measures** include:

- **Employment Rate in the Second Quarter After Exit:** The percentage of program participants who are employed during the second quarter after completing the program.

- **Employment Rate in the Fourth Quarter After Exit:** The percentage of participants employed during the fourth quarter post-program completion.

- **Median Earnings in the Second Quarter After Exit:** The median earnings of participants during the second quarter after program completion.

- **Credential Attainment Rate:** The percentage of participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential or a high school equivalency credential during the program or within one year after exit.

Beyond compliance with performance measures, WFS-GC tracks participant progress to assess the effectiveness of training investments. Data on credential attainment, job retention, and wage growth inform continuous improvements to training programs, ensuring they deliver meaningful outcomes for both job seekers and employers.

When contracts for training services are utilized, they are reserved for situations where ITAs may not be practical, such as cohort-based training for specialized skills or where economies of scale are needed. These contracts are coordinated to complement the ITA system and ensure no duplication of services.

To promote **informed customer choice**, WFS-GC provides participants with access to detailed performance data for training providers, including program completion rates, employment outcomes, and wage gains. Career Advisors guide participants in selecting training programs that align with their career goals, financial circumstances, and local labor market opportunities.

The Board revisits the list of Eligible Training Providers (ETPs) every two years to confirm that programs continue to meet compliance requirements and align with workforce needs.

B. ITA Limitations

References: 20 CFR §663.420; WD Letter 14-19, Change 2

Boards may impose limits on the duration and amount of ITAs, of which such limitations must be described in the Board Plan. If the state or Board chooses to impose limitations, such limitations must not be implemented in a manner that undermines the WIOA requirement that training services are provided in a manner that maximizes customer choice in the selection of an Eligible Training Provider. Exceptions to ITA limitations may be provided for individual cases and must be described in Board policies.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

☐ Identify whether the Board imposed ITA limits
☐ Provide a description of the limitations, if applicable
☐ Provide a description detailing how customer training services selection is continuously maximized despite ITA limitations
☐ Provide a description of any exceptions to ITA limitations and the process for requesting an exception

BOARD RESPONSE

WFS-GC imposes limitations on the **amount and duration** of ITAs to ensure efficient use of resources while maintaining alignment with WIOA's emphasis on customer choice. These limitations include:

- **Funding Cap**: ITAs are capped per participant based on the cost of high-demand training programs in the region, with limits applying to a 12-month period as part of the total available for a Workforce Solutions scholarship. Participants may receive up to $3,000 for basic skills training and up to $6,000 for career or career advancement training, with additional limits as applicable.

- **Duration Limit**: ITAs are generally limited to two years, ensuring participants can complete training within a reasonable timeframe to re-enter the workforce quickly.

Despite these limitations, WFS-GC maximizes customer choice by maintaining a wide range of training options on the ETPL and providing individualized career counseling. Participants are encouraged to compare training providers and programs to select options that best meet their needs and goals.

Exceptions to ITA Limitations

Exceptions to ITA limitations are evaluated on a case-by-case basis and require documented justification. Exceptions may be granted for:

- Training programs in emerging industries with higher-than-average costs.

- Participants with extenuating circumstances requiring extended program durations.

Requests for exceptions must include a financial plan and evidence of the participant's ability to complete the program. These requests are reviewed and approved by Workforce Solutions management to ensure compliance with local policies and WIOA guidelines. Through informed decision-making and the implementation of structured ITA policies, WFS-GC ensures training services are delivered efficiently while empowering participants to achieve their career objectives.

Part 10: Apprenticeship

A. Registered Apprenticeship Programs

Each Board must include a description of how the Board will encourage Registered Apprenticeship programs within its workforce area to register with the Eligible Training Provider System to receive WIOA funding.

> **Minimum Plan Requirements:**
>
> ☐ A description of how the Board will encourage Registered Apprenticeship programs to register with the Eligible Training Provider System to receive WIOA funding

BOARD RESPONSE

Encouraging Registered Apprenticeship Participation in the ETP System

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board (WFS-GC) is committed to expanding access to Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs by encouraging employers and training providers to register with the Eligible Training Provider (ETP) System to receive WIOA funding, as outlined in **WIOA §122**. This approach strengthens workforce pipelines, enabling apprentices to access tuition assistance and support services while ensuring employers benefit from a well-trained talent pool.

WFS-GC works closely with apprenticeship sponsors, industry leaders, and training institutions to streamline the ETP registration process and promote the benefits of becoming an approved provider. Key efforts include:

- **Employer Outreach and Education** – WFS-GC partners with local businesses and apprenticeship sponsors to **inform them of the advantages of registering with the ETP System**, including funding for apprentices and program expansion opportunities.

- **One-on-One Technical Assistance** – The Board's Apprenticeship Navigator provides **personalized support** to employers interested in launching or expanding apprenticeship programs, guiding them through ETP eligibility and the application process.

- **Industry-Led Engagement** – Working with major employers such as **Burckhardt Compression and Texas Injection Molding**, WFS-GC has helped apprenticeship programs align with ETP requirements, ensuring industries reliant on skilled labor have access to sustainable workforce pipelines.

- **Union and Trade Apprenticeship Partnerships** – WFS-GC collaborates with Joint Apprenticeship Training Committees (JATCs) such as the **Houston Electrical JATC and Pipefitters Local 211** to help structured apprenticeship programs gain ETP approval and **access WIOA-funded workforce development support.**

These initiatives strengthen the region's apprenticeship network and expand training capacity, creating more opportunities for job seekers while addressing employer demand for skilled workers. The Board's focus on expanding apprenticeship pathways aligns with state and federal workforce priorities, reinforcing long-term talent development in key industries.

Driving Apprenticeship Growth Through Partnerships

WFS-GC is **driving apprenticeship expansion** across multiple industries, creating **accessible pathways** to sustainable careers. Working alongside employers, educators, and labor organizations, we are **building talent pipelines that** provide hands-on training, industry-recognized credentials, and long-term employment opportunities for individuals throughout the **Gulf Coast region.**

Expanding Access to Construction Careers

The **Apprenticeship Readiness Program/Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (ARP/MC3)** is a nationally recognized pre-apprenticeship training program designed to prepare individuals for careers in the building and construction trades. It offers a **direct pathway** into a Department of Labor **Registered Apprenticeship Program**, allowing participants to **earn while they learn**. Graduates work 40+ hours a week while attending apprenticeship classes one to two nights a week, earning college credits and receiving healthcare and pension benefits at no cost. **More than just technical training,** the program provides critical support

and connections, **helping individuals overcome barriers and** build stable, well-paying careers in the trades.

The Houston Gulf Coast Building and Construction Trades Council plays a key role in preparing workers for union-backed apprenticeships through the **MC3 pre-apprenticeship training program**. It builds **foundational skills** in carpentry, electrical work, pipefitting, and HVAC, equipping participants with the knowledge needed to advance in the trades.

Key components include:

- **Standardized Industry Curriculum** – A structured program ensuring all participants receive consistent, high-quality training.
- **Hands-On Experience** – Practical exercises that develop skills relevant to multiple construction trades.
- **Workplace Readiness** – Training in safety, communication, financial literacy, and labor history.
- **Direct Apprenticeship Pathways** – Graduates gain priority access to union-affiliated Registered Apprenticeship programs.

The **MC3 program** is **particularly beneficial for high school graduates, veterans, and career changers** looking to enter **high-demand, high-wage construction careers.** It has **also been leveraged** for workforce development in renewable energy, including solar, wind, and energy-efficient building projects.

More than just technical training, however, the program **provides critical support** and connections, helping individuals **overcome barriers and build stable, well-paying careers in the trades**. Registered apprenticeship programs such as this one can be **life-changing,** as in the story of one participant who faced incredible challenges but persevered.

Success Story: From Homelessness to a Thriving Career

At 25, a young man entered the MC3 apprenticeship program, determined to build a future in the trades. About a week into the program, he revealed he was homeless, living out of his car and sleeping in a Walmart parking lot. Despite his situation, he never missed a class. When the program manager learned of his situation, he and other staff rallied around him—providing gift cards to Whataburger and Walmart to help him along. The Insulators Union Local 22 went even further, providing him with a key to their union hall, where he had access to a sofa to sleep on, a small bathroom with a shower, and a kitchen.

With that support and his own relentless determination, he completed the program and entered the apprenticeship. Five years later, at 30 years old, he's a journeyman in the electrical union, earning $28/hour, living on his own, and fully supporting himself. His story is a testament to how an apprenticeship can change lives—not just by providing skills, but by opening doors to stability and opportunity.

Success Story: Career Change and a Life Saved

In his early 50s, a man looking for a career change enrolled in an MC3 program cohort. One of the first skills he learned was CPR—something he had never been trained in before. After completing the program, he joined the insulators' apprenticeship program, landing a job at the South Texas Nuclear Facility in Bay City. In his first week on the job, he was walking behind a coworker when the man suddenly collapsed from a massive heart attack. Remembering his training, he performed CPR until EMTs arrived. Doctors later said that his quick response was the only reason the man survived. What started as a career change also gave him the skills to save a life.

Building a Pipeline of Skilled Educators

WFS-GC has helped launch Texas' first **Early Childhood Education Registered Apprenticeship**, creating pathways for apprentices to earn Child Development Associate (CDA) and Montessori credentials. This model serves as a **scalable framework for expanding apprenticeship opportunities in early education statewide**. Similarly, the **K-12 Teacher Apprenticeship Program**, developed in **partnership with Region 4 Inspire Texas, Brazosport College, and Brazosport ISD,** has set a new standard for addressing teacher shortages. These initiatives strengthen the talent pipeline by integrating structured training with on-the-job experience, ensuring schools have access to well-prepared educators.

B. ApprenticeshipTexas

Each Board must include a description of the Board's strategy and commitment to support ApprenticeshipTexas efforts across the state, as applicable.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

☐ A description of the Board's strategy and commitment to support ApprenticeshipTexas

BOARD RESPONSE

Strategy and Commitment to Support ApprenticeshipTexas

WFS-GC actively supports ApprenticeshipTexas initiatives through **targeted outreach, partnerships, and advocacy efforts** that align with WIOA §108(b)(2). The Board's commitment includes the following strategies:

Outreach Campaigns WFS-GC conducts targeted campaigns to promote the value of apprenticeships in critical industries such as advanced manufacturing, construction, healthcare, and information technology. Campaigns feature success stories, case studies, and testimonials to **demonstrate the effectiveness of RA programs** in fostering career advancement and creating skilled workers.

Employer and Partner Engagement WFS-GC **collaborates** with organizations such as the Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center (TMAC), chambers of commerce, and industry associations to host employer roundtables and advisory group meetings. These events **raise awareness** of apprenticeship benefits and provide resources for employers interested in launching or expanding RA programs. WFS-GC also works closely with educational institutions, community-based organizations, and local employers to **develop new RA programs** tailored to regional needs.

Training and Informational Sessions WFS-GC **organizes workshops and webinars** for employers, workforce partners, and educators to align workforce training initiatives with the goals of ApprenticeshipTexas. These sessions include **guidance** on program design, best practices, and funding opportunities available through WIOA.

Advocacy and Best Practices Board staff participate in statewide conferences, workshops, and discussions, sharing feedback and best practices with other boards to advance apprenticeship efforts across Texas.

Data-Driven Decision-Making WFS-GC **leverages labor market data** to identify emerging opportunities for apprenticeships, ensuring efforts align with high-demand sectors and evolving workforce needs.

Part 11: Public Comment

References: WIOA §108(d); 20 CFR §679.550(b) and §679.560(b) and (e)

Boards must provide a description of the public comment process, including:

- making copies of the proposed local plan available to the public through electronic and other means, such as public hearings and local news media;

- an opportunity for comment by members of the public, including representatives of business, labor organizations, and education;

- providing at least a 15-day, but no more than a 30-day period for comment on the plan before its submission to TWC, beginning on the date that the proposed plan is made available, before its submission to TWC.

Minimum Plan Requirements:

☐ Describe the public comment period process
☐ Provide any comments received which were in disagreement with the plan; or a statement that no public comments were received which disagreed with the plan

In accordance with WIOA §108(d) and 20 CFR §679.550(b), the Gulf Coast Workforce Board made its draft Local Workforce Development Plan for 2025–2028 available for public comment for a minimum of 15 days and no more than 30 days, as required by law.

The draft plan was posted on the Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast website on March 4, 2025, where it remained for 22 days. The Board invited comments via an online submission form and accepted written feedback through an email address. The Board also made a printed copy of the draft plan available at career offices beginning March 5, 2025, where staff and visitors could provide written comments in person for a period of 21 days.

No public comments were received during the comment period through either the online or in-person channels.

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board is committed to a transparent planning process and values the opportunity to share the plan with stakeholders, partners, and the broader public.

Appendix: Texas Workforce Investment Council Requirements

Local Board Plan Requirements
for Alignment to the Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan

Requirement for Workforce Systemwide Alignment

State law requires local workforce development boards (local board) to adopt a plan that "sets broad goals and objectives for all workforce development programs in the local area consistent with statewide goals, objectives, and performance standards,"[1] as outlined in the workforce system strategic plan, *Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031*.

The Texas Workforce Investment Council (Council) reviews each board plan to ensure that local goals and objectives are consistent with the workforce system strategic plan. Under state law and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the Council is charged with recommending the local board plans to the Governor for consideration and approval.

Demonstrating Local Alignment with Texas' Workforce System Strategic Plan

The local board planning process highlights the importance and interdependence of the constituents and partners of the Texas workforce system. Local boards oversee the delivery of workforce programs and services and are essential in both the development and implementation of system goals and objectives in the system strategic plan. The planning requirements help local boards inform the Council of innovative practices and articulate how local plans translate the workforce system strategic plan into local action that moves the system forward.

Local board responses apprise the Council—and, with the Council's recommendation, the Governor—of system alignment, including program implementation, strategic initiatives, and innovative practices. All 28 boards will be represented in the briefing for the approval of the local plans and subsequent Council recommendation to the Governor for consideration for approval in the spring of 2025. Board responses may be included in the Council briefing materials verbatim.

Board response cover the three strategic opportunities and four system goals in *Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031* that focus system partners on the Council's mission to produce an agile and resilient workforce. Building on a foundation of continuous innovation and increased collaboration, the system plan calls for accelerated engagement around three strategic opportunities: engagement of employers, improving outcomes for Texans with barriers, and use of data to support investment decisions. Each of these envisions a desirable future state for Texas and lays out essential actions to be implemented that support system goals and stronger outcomes across the Texas workforce system.

The system goals drive accelerated action by system partners in service to Texas employers, learners, partners, and those with policy and planning responsibilities, as follows:

- Employers System Goal: Accelerate the delivery of relevant education and training programs to meet the demand of employers.
- Learners System Goal: Accelerate the expansion of and access to work-based skill and knowledge acquisition to respond to the needs of learners.

- Partners System Goal: Accelerate the development and use of models to support and build system partners' capacity, responsiveness, continuous improvement, and decision-making.
- Policy and Planning Goal: Accelerate the availability of relevant workforce, education, and other data sets and the use of applied analytics to evaluate program outcomes to respond to the needs of policy makers and planners.

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(Texas Government Code Sec. 2308.304, Local Plan.).

Directions for Demonstrating Alignment with the Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan

Local board plan responses must demonstrate alignment with the workforce system plan and, therefore, require both summary information and citations to the strategies and initiatives that advance progress towards the workforce system goals in *Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031*. Please refer to the workforce system plan for definitions of specific terms.

1. Provide a summary describing how the processes, activities, or initiatives in the local board plan align with the specific system goal and objective and each strategic opportunity. Response guidelines are provided.

2. Accurately cite the referenced information in the local board plan by providing the corresponding page number(s) in the plan.

System Goals and Objectives

1. **Employers Goal – Delivery of Relevant Education and Training Programs**

   Describe local board activities, initiatives, or processes that accelerate the delivery of relevant education and training programs to meet employers' needs, specifically by increasing:

   ➤ upskilling and reskilling programs that address employers' needs for middle skill workers,
   ➤ adult learners transitioning to employment through integrated education and training programs, and
   ➤ attainment of short-term credentials in programs aligned with high-demand occupations.

   Response should address the following:

   - the institution and/or expansion of upskilling and reskilling programs to meet employers' needs for middle-skill workers,
   - the identification and delivery of programs, including with adult education and literacy providers, that support attainment of short-term credentials, industry-based certifications, and licenses,
   - populations that require supportive services to improve program completion, certification or attainment of short-term credentials, and employment, and
   - data used to track reskilling and upskilling program enrollments and outcomes, including program completions, attainment of short-term credentials and industry-based certifications or licenses, and employment directly related to the credential, license, or certification.

2. **Learners Goal – Expansion of Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship**

    Describe local board activities, initiatives, or processes that are expanding work-based experiences, including apprenticeship, to accelerate skills and knowledge acquisition that improves system outcomes for learners.

    Response should address the following:

    - work-based learning opportunities with system stakeholders as a pre-employment strategy for youth and adults, including those requiring supportive services and resources,
    - the expansion of the employer network participating in and sponsoring work-based learning opportunities, including registered and industry-recognized apprenticeship programs, and
    - partnerships that address regular engagement with employers and system stakeholders, including collaboration with a Regional Convener for the Tri-Agency Texas Regional Pathways Network and input on the quality of existing apprenticeship programs and development of new programs.

3. **Partners Goal – Alignment to Support Career Pathways**

    Describe local board activities, initiatives, or processes to build the board's capacity, responsiveness, continuous improvement, and decision-making to:

    - support the identification of credentials of value, and
    - streamline and clarify existing career pathways and models to increase alignment between secondary and postsecondary technical programs.

    Response should address the following:

    - system stakeholders' input to assess the alignment and articulation of secondary and postsecondary technical programs supporting career pathways; and
    - collaboration with secondary and postsecondary institutions to engage employers to identify credentials of value that respond to local labor market needs, including postsecondary technical sub-baccalaureate credit and non-credit credentials, industry-based certifications, apprenticeship certificates, and licenses; and
    - processes to continuously improve career pathways.

4. **Policy and Planning Goal – Relevant Data Sets**

    Describe local board activities, initiatives, or processes that support the availability and coordination of relevant workforce, education, and employment data to evaluate program outcomes to respond to the needs of policy makers and planners to:

    - expand high-quality childcare availability,
    - identify and quantify quality outcomes, including industry-based certification data, and
    - enhance wage records.

    Response should address the following:

    - engagement with childcare providers and employers to establish on-site or near-site, high quality

childcare facilities and expand Texas Rising Star certifications,
- collaboration with employers to identify enhanced employment and earnings data to gain deeper insight into program outcomes, and
- how the board and its system partners identify, evaluate, and implement ways to streamline and improve timeliness and completeness of data matching and sharing, specifically with industry-based certification attainment, to evaluate program effectiveness and outco

SYSTEM GOAL 1: EMPLOYERS - Delivery of Relevant Education and Training Programs

*System Goal 1- Employers: Accelerate the delivery of relevant education and training programs to meet the demand of employers. **Response should address the following**:*
- *the institution and/or expansion of **upskilling and reskilling** programs to meet employers' needs for middle-skill workers,*
- *the identification and delivery of programs, including with **adult education and literacy** providers, that support attainment of **short-term credentials**, industry-based certifications, and licenses,*
- *populations that require **supportive services** to improve program completion, certification or attainment of short-term credentials, and employment, and*
- ***data** used to track reskilling and upskilling program enrollments and outcomes, including program completions, attainment of short-term credentials and industry-based certifications or licenses, and employment directly related to the credential, license, or certification.*

BOARD RESPONSE

Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast (WFS-GC) focuses on accelerating the delivery of relevant education and training programs by implementing targeted initiatives that directly respond to employer needs in the Gulf Coast region. These efforts align with the strategic emphasis on upskilling, reskilling, and credential attainment as outlined in the *Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan*.

Upskilling and Reskilling Programs

WFS-GC collaborates with key industries across the region, including energy, manufacturing, healthcare, and aerospace, to develop comprehensive career pathways that address the demand for middle-skill workers. The Board ensures upskilling programs are aligned with evolving labor market needs by working with employer-led initiatives in **industry-specific partnerships** such as healthcare and petrochemical manufacturing, where businesses directly contribute to curriculum development and training priorities.

WFS-GC also collaborates with community colleges and technical training providers to expand access to short-term, **high-impact training programs** that allow workers to reskill efficiently. The Board supports **customized training grants** through the Texas Workforce Commission's Skills Development Fund, allowing businesses to directly train their workforce for specific job roles (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 23*).

Adult Learners and Integrated Education Programs

To support adult learners seeking employment, WFS-GC has established programs that integrate workforce training with adult education services. Through partnerships with **Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) providers**, the Board ensures that job seekers receive literacy and numeracy support alongside occupational skills training.

For example, the **Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs** allow adults to concurrently enroll in basic education and technical training, accelerating their transition to employment. This model has been

particularly effective in industries such as healthcare and logistics, where foundational literacy and math skills are essential for certification programs (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 23*).

Additionally, WFS-GC has partnerships with educational institutions such as **Houston Community College (HCC) and Lone Star College** to offer **bridge** programs that prepare adult learners for middle-skill careers by combining academic support with industry-recognized training (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 23*).

Short-Term Credentials

WFS-GC recognizes the importance of industry-recognized credentials, actively supporting short-term credential attainment through targeted training programs. The Board collaborates with industry partners and training providers to offer **fast-track certification programs** in high-demand fields, such as:

- **Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and Medical Coding Certifications** (Healthcare)
- **Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Training** (Logistics)
- **Process Technology Certifications** (Petrochemical Industry)
- **Welding and HVAC Certifications** (Manufacturing and Construction)

These programs align with employer demand and allow job seekers to quickly obtain credentials that lead to employment in high-growth industries (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 22*).

Supportive Services for Program Completion

Those in our region who face barriers to employment often struggle to complete workforce training programs, and so we provide comprehensive **wraparound services** to support retention and completion. These services include:

- **Childcare assistance** for parents enrolled in workforce training programs.

- **Transportation stipends** to help ensure participants are able to attend training and interviews.

- **Support for those impacted by the justice system** through the **Reentry Workforce Program**, which provides job coaching and industry-specific training for formerly incarcerated adults. (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 24*).

Data Tracking for Continuous Improvement

WFS-GC employs a **data-driven approach** to evaluate program effectiveness and inform strategic decisions. We use **labor market intelligence tools**, such as real-time job postings data and employer surveys, to ensure training investments align with industry needs.

WFS-GC also works with **TWC's Texas Workforce System Performance Dashboard** to track outcomes related to credential attainment, employment placement, and wage growth among program participants. This evidence-based approach ensures accountability and continuous improvement, supporting WFS-GC's commitment to aligning workforce training with employer demand (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 25*).

SYSTEM GOAL 2: LEARNERS - Expansion of Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeships

System Goal 2: Learners Goal
Response should address the following:

- *work-based learning opportunities with system stakeholders as a pre-employment strategy for youth and adults, including those requiring supportive services and resources,*
- *the expansion of the employer network participating in and sponsoring work-based learning opportunities, including registered and industry-recognized apprenticeship programs, and*
- *partnerships that address regular engagement with employers and system stakeholders, including collaboration with a Regional Convener for the Tri-Agency Texas Regional Pathways Network and input on the quality of existing apprenticeship programs and development of new programs.*

BOARD RESPONSE

WFS-GC is committed to expanding work-based learning (WBL) opportunities, including apprenticeships, to enhance skills acquisition and improve outcomes for learners. These efforts align with the *Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan*'s vision for increasing access to work-based learning as a proven pathway to economic opportunity.

Expanding Work-Based Learning Opportunities

WFS-GC invests in a range of work-based learning (WBL) initiatives designed to prepare youth and adults for meaningful employment. Programs such as pre-apprenticeships, registered apprenticeships, internships, and on-the-job training align with the demand for hands-on, practical experience in high-skill, high-demand industries such as healthcare, energy, and manufacturing. These initiatives emphasize skill-building and career development, providing a foundation for long-term employment success *(Accelerating Alignment, pg. 23).*

One example is the Apprenticeship Readiness Program/Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (ARP/MC3), offered in partnership with the Houston Gulf Coast Building and Construction Trades Council. This program equips participants with foundational industry skills and transitions them into apprenticeships where they work full-time while attending classes one to two evenings a week. The apprenticeship model provides participants, including opportunity youth, with access to sustainable career pathways in the building and construction trades, helping them develop practical skills and earn industry-recognized credentials. *(Accelerating Alignment, pg. 23).*

Building Employer Networks

WFS-GC collaborates with employers to expand WBL opportunities through **industry partnerships**, such as those supporting the **MC3 program** in the construction sector. WFS-GC's new five-strategic plan, adopted in October 2024, calls for expanding the network of employers sponsoring apprenticeships and internships. These efforts will strengthen regional talent pipelines and create accessible career pathways for learners. *(Accelerating Alignment, pg. 22).*

Collaboration with Education Partners

WFS-GC works closely with secondary and postsecondary institutions to align WBL opportunities with industry standards. Our partnerships with **local ISDs and community colleges** ensure that dual-credit and career technical education (CTE) programs connect learners with apprenticeships and work-based experiences (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 23*)

SYSTEM GOAL 3: PARTNERS - Alignment to Support Career Pathways

System Goal 3 – Partners Responses should address:

- *system stakeholders' input to assess the alignment and articulation of secondary and postsecondary technical programs supporting career pathways; and*
- *collaboration with secondary and postsecondary institutions to engage employers to identify credentials of value that respond to local labor market needs, including postsecondary technical sub-baccalaureate credit and non-credit credentials, industry-based certifications, apprenticeship certificates, and licenses; and*
- *processes to continuously improve career pathways.*

BOARD RESPONSE

WFS-GC is committed to building capacity and promoting collaboration to streamline career pathways, aligning secondary and postsecondary education programs with local and regional labor market needs. The following efforts support the Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan.

Engaging System Stakeholders

WFS-GC collaborates with employers, education providers, and economic development organizations to enhance career pathways and improve workforce readiness. The Board also facilitates **industry sector partnerships** that engage employers in curriculum development and credential alignment. Through convenings such as **industry summits, legislative summits,** and **employer roundtables**, WFS-GC gathers input from stakeholders so that training programs remain aligned with industry needs and workforce development priorities across the region (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 23*).

WFS-GC will work with employers and training providers to develop targeted programs that ensure local talent is prepared to meet the needs of this emerging industry. These efforts reinforce WFS-GC's commitment to **strategic workforce planning and industry collaboration**, strengthening the region's position as a leader in aviation innovation and workforce readiness (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 23*).

Collaboration with Educational Institutions

WFS-GC actively partners with **local independent school districts (ISDs), community colleges, and universities** to align workforce programs with industry-recognized credentials. This includes:

- Expanding **dual-credit programs and career and technical education (CTE) pathways** that lead to industry certifications and postsecondary credentials.

- Strengthening **articulation agreements** to ensure seamless transitions from secondary to postsecondary education.

- Supporting **early college high school programs** that enable students to earn workforce-relevant credentials while completing high school.

WFS-GC works with postsecondary institutions to improve credential transferability and ensure clear pathways for students moving from training programs into careers (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 23*).

Streamlining Career Pathways

To improve access and reduce barriers, WFS-GC collaborates with **adult education providers, workforce training organizations, and employers** to develop stackable credential programs. These programs enable learners to accumulate credentials over time, increasing their employment prospects and mobility within high-demand sectors (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 24*).

WFS-GC provides job seekers with career coaching and guidance on available career pathways. This includes hosting **career exploration and hiring events** to connect job seekers with employers and training opportunities.

These efforts provide job seekers with the resources, information, and opportunity to pursue careers in high-demand sectors, strengthening workforce engagement and economic mobility. (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 23*).

Continuous Improvement through Data employs a **data-driven approach** to assess career pathway effectiveness, using labor market intelligence and performance metrics to refine training and credentialing programs. The Board works with **TWC's Workforce System Performance Dashboard** to track:

- Credential attainment rates
- Employment outcomes
- Industry demand and workforce supply gaps

WFS-GC ensures career pathway programs remain aligned with employer needs and regional economic trends by using real-time labor market data *(Accelerating Alignment, pg. 25).*

SYSTEM GOAL 4 : POLICY AND PLANNING

SYSTEM GOAL 4: Policy and Planning. Response should address the following:

- *engagement with childcare providers and employers to establish on-site or near-site, high quality childcare facilities and expand Texas Rising Star certifications,*
- *collaboration with employers to identify enhanced employment and earnings data to gain deeper insight into program outcomes, and*
- *how the board and its system partners identify, evaluate, and implement ways to streamline and improve timeliness and completeness of data matching and sharing, specifically with industry- based certification attainment, to evaluate program effectiveness and outcomes.*

BOARD RESPONSE

WFS-GC is committed to ensuring the availability and coordination of relevant workforce, education, and employment data to evaluate program outcomes and inform policymakers and planners. The Board engages in data-driven decision-making to support strategic workforce initiatives that address regional labor market needs, expand access to high-quality childcare, and improve employment outcomes (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 26*).

Expanding High-Quality Childcare Availability

WFS-GC collaborates with **childcare providers, employers, and community organizations** to enhance access to **on-site and near-site high-quality childcare facilities**. By working with employers to explore **childcare benefit models and subsidy programs**, WFS-GC facilitates solutions that support working parents while ensuring workforce participation remains strong. Additionally, WFS-GC promotes the

expansion of **Texas Rising Star (TRS) certifications**, working with childcare providers to improve **quality standards, professional development, and business sustainability**. These efforts ensure that parents have access to **affordable, high-quality childcare**, enabling them to fully participate in the workforce (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 27*).

Identifying and Quantifying Quality Outcomes

WFS-GC collaborates with **employers and training providers** to collect and analyze **industry-based certification data**, ensuring that workforce programs align with employer needs and lead to meaningful employment outcomes. The Board actively engages in:

- **Tracking credential attainment rates** to assess workforce program effectiveness.
- **Partnering with employers** to validate the relevance of industry-recognized certifications in high-demand sectors.
- **Using performance data** to refine training offerings and ensure alignment with labor market demand.

Through these efforts, WFS-GC enhances its ability to quantify workforce program impact, ensuring that training investments lead to strong employment and wage outcomes (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 28*).

Enhancing Wage Records and Employment Data

WFS-GC collaborates with **employers, economic development partners, and state agencies** to improve wage record tracking and employment outcome reporting. By working with **TWC's Workforce System Performance Dashboard and local employer wage data**, the Board gains deeper insights into earnings trends, employment retention rates, and long-term program success.

Additionally, WFS-GC and its system partners focus on **improving timeliness and completeness of data sharing**, particularly related to **industry-based certification attainment and job placement tracking**. This includes:

- **Enhancing data integration across workforce and education systems** to provide a more complete picture of training outcomes.

- **Leveraging employer-reported hiring data** to evaluate program effectiveness and inform continuous improvement efforts.

- **Strengthening partnerships with postsecondary institutions and industry leaders** to refine data collection processes and improve program evaluation.

WFS-GC leverages real-time labor market intelligence, industry credential data, and enhanced employment tracking systems to WFS-GC ensures that workforce programs remain responsive to regional labor market needs while supporting policy and planning efforts. These data-driven strategies enable the Board to **expand childcare access, measure workforce training effectiveness, and improve employment outcomes**, reinforcing WFS-GC's role as a key partner in regional economic development (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 29*).

Strategic Opportunities

Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031 envisions a collaborative workforce system capable of accelerating the delivery of workforce programs, services, and initiatives to meet the needs of a thriving economy. The strategic opportunities focus system partners on three critical success factors that will lead to broad achievement of the system plan goals and objectives. Review each strategic opportunity and provide the information requested.

Strategic Opportunity 1 – Employer Engagement

Describe how the local board coordinates with its stakeholders to gain insight into the needs of employers and minimize "asks" that burden employers.

Response should address the following:

> ➢ coordination efforts that gain more insight from employers, including participation in the Tri- Agency Texas Regional Pathways Network, if applicable, and
> ➢ reducing the number of regional system partners individually making requests of employers.

Strategic Opportunity 2 – Improving Outcomes for Texans with Barriers to Employment

Describe how the local board engages Texans with diverse needs — including those with disabilities, foster youth, sex-trafficking victims, incarcerated juveniles and adults, and opportunity youth — by designing programs that address their needs, maximize outcomes, and improve career opportunities.

Response should address the following:

> ➢ models, initiatives, programs, or processes that effectively engage these populations; and
> ➢ promising practices in supportive services models and outcomes that consistently demonstrate success.

Strategic Opportunity 3 – Use of Data to Support Investment Decisions

Describe how the local board uses data and evidence to identify and target strategic investments to improve system performance.

Response should address the following:

> ➢ evidence-based practices and data to strategically implement and fund initiatives; and
> ➢ programs that have successfully demonstrated previous program participant credential attainment and employment.

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY 1: Employer Engagement

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY 1: Describe how the local board coordinates with its stakeholders to gain insight into the needs of employers and minimize "asks" that burden employers Response should address the following:

- *coordination efforts that gain more insight from employers, including participation in the Tri- Agency Texas Regional Pathways Network, if applicable, and*
- *reducing the number of regional system partners individually making requests of employers.*

BOARD RESPONSE

Coordinating Employer Engagement Efforts

WFS-GC actively engages employers through industry partnerships and industry sector councils, which provide a platform for business to gather insights and collaborate on training solutions. This ensures that workforce programs remain aligned with labor market needs while reducing the burden of multiple requests from various workforce partners (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 26*). We also partner with industry associations and chambers of commerce to consolidate employer outreach efforts, reducing redundancy and enhancing engagement

Reducing Employer Burden and Aligning Requests

The Board participates in the Tri-Agency Texas Regional Pathways Network to streamline workforce alignment across agencies and minimize redundant employer engagement (Accelerating Alignment, pg. 27). WFS-GC also collaborates with Workforce Solutions offices and industry partners to centralize employer input on hiring trends and training needs. These efforts ensure employer feedback is gathered efficiently, shaping workforce development while reducing repetitive engagement requests *(Accelerating Alignment, pg. 27).*

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY 2: Improving Outcomes for Texans with Barriers to Employment

Strategic Opportunity 2: Describe how the local board engages Texans with diverse needs — including those with disabilities, foster youth, sex-trafficking victims, incarcerated juveniles and adults, and opportunity youth — by designing programs that address their needs, maximize outcomes, and improve career opportunities. Response should address the following:

- *models, initiatives, programs, or processes that effectively engage these populations; and*
- *promising practices in supportive services models and outcomes that consistently demonstrate success.*

BOARD RESPONSE

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board (GCWB) is committed to designing workforce programs that improve employment outcomes for individuals with barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities, foster youth, opportunity youth, and justice-involved individuals. This aligns with the *Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan*'s emphasis on workforce equity and accessibility.

Workforce Program Development for Broad Community Reach

WFS-GC implements workforce training programs designed for underrepresented populations, including:

- **Pre-apprenticeship and work-based learning initiatives** targeting at-risk youth.

- **Customized employment programs** for individuals with disabilities, developed in collaboration with disability service providers.
- **Job readiness and reentry workforce programs** supporting justice-involved individuals (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 28*).

Through partnerships with **community-based organizations, educational institutions, and training providers**, WFS-GC ensures that workforce initiatives are tailored to meet the unique challenges of populations facing employment barriers.

Supportive Services and Wraparound Programs

WFS-GC provides essential supportive services, including childcare assistance, transportation support, and case management, to help individuals complete training programs and transition into employment. These services are designed to remove obstacles that often preclude individuals from securing employment and building a career. (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 29*).

To reduce employment barriers, WFS-GC integrates **wraparound services** such as:

- **Childcare and transportation assistance**, enabling participation in training and employment.
- **Case management and mentorship programs**, providing individualized career coaching and job search support.
- **Digital literacy and soft skills training**, ensuring job seekers develop the competencies necessary for long-term success (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 29*).

WFS-GC also connects individuals with **financial assistance** so that **training and credentialing programs** are more accessible and affordable for those seeking careers in high-demand sectors

Promising Practices and Continuous Improvement

GCWB collaborates with community-based organizations and social service agencies to implement best practices for serving individuals with barriers to employment. These efforts include

- Expanding **on-the-job training (OJT) opportunities** for underrepresented groups.
- Partnering with **local employers** to adopt accessible and **flexible hiring practices**.
- Enhancing **data tracking and performance evaluation** to refine program effectiveness.

These initiatives align with the Accelerating Alignment plan by promoting workforce equity and expanding career opportunities for individuals facing systemic barriers (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 30*).

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY 3: Use of Data to Support Investment Decisions

STRATEGIC GOAL 3: Describe how the local board uses data and evidence to identify and target strategic investments to improve system performance. Response should address the following:

- *evidence-based practices and data to strategically implement and fund initiatives; and*
- *programs that have successfully demonstrated previous program participant credential attainment and employment.*

BOARD RESPONSE

WFS-GC leverages data analytics and performance tracking to drive strategic investments and enhance workforce system performance. This approach ensures that workforce initiatives are evidence-based and aligned with industry needs, in accordance with the *Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan*.

Utilizing Evidence-Based Decision-Making

WFS-GC utilizes labor market intelligence tools to analyze industry trends and determine workforce investment priorities. The Board examines real-time job postings data, employer surveys, and wage records to ensure training programs align with economic demand and provide the skills employers require (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 31*).

To improve workforce decision-making, WFS-GC partners with regional economic development organizations, training providers, and industry leaders to assess regional talent supply and demand. These collaborations help direct investments into high-growth industries and occupations that align with regional labor market projections.

Enhancing Data Coordination for Better Insights

WFS-GC collaborates with community colleges, workforce training providers, and employers to improve data-sharing mechanisms related to credential attainment, employment tracking, and wage progression. These efforts enhance program evaluation and ensure that training investments generate strong employment outcomes (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 32*).

The Board also works with state and local workforce system partners to integrate case management and performance data across workforce programs, allowing for more precise tracking of participant success and program impact.

Targeting Strategic Investments

WFS-GC analyzes workforce data trends, directing resources toward initiatives that have demonstrated success in increasing credential attainment and employment rates. The Board prioritizes funding for programs that support:

- High-demand, high-wage occupations in growing industries.

- Short-term credentialing programs that provide immediate employment opportunities.

- Work-based learning models such as apprenticeships and on-the-job training, which offer a direct pathway to employment (*Accelerating Alignment, pg. 33*).

WFS-GC leverages labor market analytics, employer feedback, and performance metrics to base workforce funding decisions on real economic data, maximizing the impact of public investment in training and workforce development.

These data-driven efforts align WFS-GC with the *Accelerating Alignment* plan's goal to strengthen workforce investments and improve program performance. This strategic use of labor market data helps direct resources to programs that deliver strong employment and wage outcomes for Texas workers.